

From Sallie Jiko Tisdale, Sensei

December 30, 2010

Dear Mr. Dowling and the Board of Zen Studies Society:

I am writing as a sister in the Dharma, a teacher in American Soto Zen, and a member of the American Zen Teachers Association, to urge you to remove Eido Shimano from authority of any kind in your sangha, and from any contact with students.

I have been aware of the difficulties involving Eido Shimano for some time, and feel deep dismay and discomfort at the current situation. I am frankly shocked that the situation has gotten this far.

I understand that he has been of great importance to many people and to American Zen. However, the damage that has been done by his misconduct may be of equal importance. His students and sangha have collaborated for many years in excusing and covering up this misconduct. This situation must stop for ZSS to have any credibility in the American Zen community. I know Genjo and Roko and feel respect and compassion toward the integrity of their practice and qualities as leaders in your community. This does not, unfortunately, relieve the sangha of ZSS and, especially, its board from responsibility to completely remove Mr. Shimano from power, including contact with senior students. I can't imagine Roko or any other ethical teacher could succeed in a community which continues to minimize, hide or otherwise ignore such serious acts.

I could not possibly recommend that any student study at ZSS until the Board acts firmly, publicly and irrevocably to dissociate from Mr. Shimano and work to repair as much as possible the terrible injuries he has done. His recent letter proves that he has not accepted the situation and will not protect the community.

I work as a health care professional and I am aware that such situations are terribly painful. But I also know that if Mr. Shimano had acted as he has done in another profession – in academia, health care, law, or business – the result would have been devastating to him and to anyone who protected him.

I trust in the Dharma regardless of all human frailties, and I ask that you all reach into its great well at this time for the strength to do what is right.

In the Dharma,

Sallie Jiko Tisdale