

To: Joe (Soun) Dowling, Board President, Zen Studies Society
From: Adam Genkaku Fisher
Subject: Eido Tai Shimano

Dear Mr. Dowling:

Given the number of ranking Zen teachers who have recently broken their silence on Eido Tai Shimano's misadventures, I write to you with some hesitance. By this time, you know the gist of the argument and may well be overwhelmed by the work that that argument entails. Nevertheless, I wish to add my non-ranking voice to theirs and say simply that I hope you will act decisively and divest Zen Studies Society of any connection with Mr. Shimano. It may be difficult, but there comes a time when we all have to speak the one word that covers the topic. That word is a resounding, "No!"

As someone who lived through three of Mr. Shimano's aptly-titled Fuck Follies in the late 1970's and early 1980's, I was and remain keenly aware of the confusion, anger, defensiveness and remorse that the current uproar occasions. I would be a liar if I said there were not some personal interest in my concerns.

But overriding my own feelings are two important aspects of the case: 1. To decline or sidestep taking decisive -- and I mean decisive -- action to remove Eido Tai Shimano carries with it the implication that Zen Buddhism in fact condones such malicious behavior ... and this sullies and demeans the Zen Buddhism that holds out an unsullied promise. Zen Buddhism is not just some good ol' boys club in which people act with impunity because they are something called "Zen Buddhists;" and 2. The importance of Sangha cannot be overstated. That's two-arms-and-two-legs, living, breathing, weeping and laughing individuals. Sangha is not called one of the Triple Gems just because that sounds good or sounds holy or sounds laudable. Sangha really is what makes Buddhism what it is. Sangha creates temples. Sangha creates teachers. Sangha works hard ... and anyone who messes with that or demeans that declares him- or herself an outcast, a lawless person, a person worthy of consideration, perhaps, but NOT of embrace.

There are those who would like to imagine that compassion fills their hearts when they excuse or explain or find meaning in the actions of a man like Eido Tai Shimano. But when the evidence spans decades, when the endless offers of help are consistently met with lies and evasions, and when the depredations continue unabated, the case becomes very simple. No more yes-but's, no more 'compassionate understanding' that simply masks a lack of will. Under the circumstances, the response deserves to be an unmitigated, "No!" Whatever the cost -- "No!"

Please do your best to bring Zen Studies Society back into a credible -- rather than 'unconditioned' -- realm. Please sever all connection with Eido Tai Shimano. As there is no such thing as being "a little bit pregnant," so there is no compromise in this situation that will do anything more than assure a continuation of what has been both painful and malicious.

I wish you the best,

adam genkaku fisher