

ZSS & Chobo-Ji

a report by Genjo

As we are all well aware, back in June of [2010 a scandal broke](#) about Eido Shimano Roshi having yet another sexual liaison with a female student. Immediately pressure was put on Eido Roshi to resign from the Board of the Zen Studies Society (ZSS), which has the legal and fiduciary responsibility for the two ZSS properties, Dai Bosatsu Zendo (DBZ) in the Catskill Mountains and the New York City center, Shobo-Ji. This was done so that the extent of his ethical breach could be fully investigated before any further remedies were sought. Eido Roshi resigned from the ZSS Board July 4th, 2010. I was a board member of ZSS at the time, and had been training in earnest with Eido Roshi since 1996. 1996 was the year that Genki Roshi first seriously started talking about retirement, and it was his instruction that I complete my formal Zen training with Eido Roshi.

To assist with our ethics investigation the ZSS Board enlisted the help of the [FaithTrust Institute](#), a Seattle based group skilled at such work. What we discovered over the course of months was credible evidence that the most recent incident was not the only recent breach of ZSS ethical guidelines. However, we often heard Eido Roshi claim that this sort of behavior ended many years ago. In fact, what we learned was that over the course of decades, Eido Roshi abused his position of power and authority repeatedly, and was in the habit of aggressively [pursuing the most vulnerable](#), attractive female students under his spiritual care. In addition, it became increasingly clear that his many so-called [apologies](#) over the years were [vacuous of any serious understanding](#) of the harm he had done. Most disturbing of all was hearing a credible first person account that [not all sexual encounters were started "consensually,"](#) and the fact that [he transmitted STDs to his own students](#).

Eido Roshi resigned as Abbot of ZSS on December 8th, 2010. Shinge Roshi, my Dharma Sister, was installed as the new abbot January 1st, 2011. In February 2011, ZSS announced that Eido Roshi would no longer teach Zen under their auspices. However, since the recent scandal broke in

June 2011, five ZSS board members, including myself, have resigned because we became frustrated with the board's inability to more aggressively address the sins of the father. Three different meetings have been held to give the ZSS sangha a chance to voice their concerns; the most recent was a weekend late in August 2011. This meeting was facilitated by [An Olive Branch](#), a professional group dedicated to fostering peaceful and effective solutions for Buddhist groups in turmoil. I so wanted to attend this meeting but was turned back by Hurricane Irene. [Much was accomplished](#) at this meeting, but in my mind so [much more needs to be done](#).



Genki Roshi & Eido Roshi in 1999

Recently I was asked by Rev. Marie Fortune, one of the founders of the FaithTrust Institute, and one of two people who investigated Eido Roshi's breach of ethical guidelines at the Zen Studies Society, if I knew that Chobo-Ji's listing at the [Northwest Dharma Association](#) (NWDA) still listed me as a student of Eido Roshi. I responded, "I was his student and I still am, in that he is teaching me even now many unexpected, uncomfortable lessons. The Historical Buddha said take what works and leave the rest. I might say, learn as much, if not more, from what doesn't work." I also spoke to Rev. Fortune about what I see to be the failure of ZSS to adequately respond organizationally to Eido Roshi's serial ethical breaches over decades that seriously harmed and alienated many in his own sangha and repeatedly tarnished the reputation of American Zen.

A few months back I asked the Chobo-Ji board to consider terminating our affiliation

with ZSS as a "Related Zen Center" on their web pages. After two months of deliberation, when it became clear that ZSS was ready to move on without taking further steps to address those sangha members who have been most harmed or alienated by Eido Roshi's behavior, the [Chobo-Ji Board wrote a letter](#) requesting that our temple be removed from their listing of [Related Zen Centers](#). It has been nearly two months since the letter was sent, and still the listing persists on their web pages. Please be assured that neither this temple nor I are any longer in any way officially associated with the Zen Studies Society. In my mind, this is one of the saddest outcomes of this whole tragedy; I have now joined a cast of hundreds that feel so alienated by the organization's woefully inadequate response that we find ourselves unable to train there any longer.

It would have been relatively simple for ZSS to respond more adequately to those who were most harmed. For example, the ZSS board, led by Shinge Roshi, has never made a public organizational apology for its part in historically under-responding to Eido Roshi's serial abuses of power. What the ZSS board has done is spend well over a year trying to finalize a highly questionable [Deferred Compensation Agreement](#). ZSS is paying Eido Shimano Roshi and his wife well in excess of 70% of their expensive base salaries, when other benefits are added, rather than working to set aside funds to deal with the trauma of his sexually traumatized victims. The ZSS board has also failed to adequately rework its bylaws to prevent abuses of power of anyone in the abbot's role; namely, they still don't have a board that is in large part elected by the ZSS Sangha. I can't tell you how disappointed this all makes me feel. The properties associated with ZSS are some of the finest practice spaces in American Zen. I fear they will never reach their full potential without better dealing with the history of Eido Roshi's abuses of power. At the very least while Eido Roshi remains delusionary and in denial about his part in this fiasco and [schemes to find ways he can resume teaching](#), he should be excluded from setting foot on ZSS property. Even this simple break has not been possible under Shinge Roshi's leadership; clearly, the ZSS board's continued attachment to the man precludes serious effort to reach out compassionately to those alienated or harmed. This is such a shame, and flies in

the face of the deepest insights that Eido Roshi himself tried to impart about uniting with great compassionate Bodhisattva spirit, *Namu Dai Bosa*. (For a more detailed view of the steps that I think are necessary to turn ZSS around see http://www.choboji.org/ZSS_steps.pdf.)

My mind and heart have gone through periods of anger, frustration, disappointment and doubt concerning my long association with Eido Roshi and ZSS, but I have learned some invaluable lessons. First and foremost among them is that Zen practice can indeed nurture true insight, but true insight alone, especially when bounded by a bubble of arrogance and self-aggrandizement, is insufficient for deep maturity in the Way. Genuine maturity requires that we examine our lives and vow to root out any repeating pattern or program that harms others. We must always be on the lookout for patterns that cause harm.

These patterns represent gaps in our development and we must vow to expose, examine and face our shortcomings so thoroughly that they are transformed from liabilities to assets. This effort will likely be the hardest and most important work we will ever do. Our gifts will come to nought without this heroic effort. How can we hope to live our Great Vow to care for all beings without truly facing our own shadow?

Some have asked why I don't reject any association with Eido Roshi. I will not throw out the baby with the dirty bath water. I will not deny Eido Roshi's strengths and gifts, in fact one of the most important lessons he helped me realize is that one can never find Buddha in isolation from Bumpkin. We are all a mix of strengths and weaknesses, just because we are weak in some areas, doesn't mean that we can't excel in others. Genki Roshi taught me something that is so important to remember, that from wherever we are, we are just beginning. I love Eido Roshi; nevertheless, I will not enable his grandiosity or delusional denial by keeping quiet about his harmful behaviors or his [schemes to resume teaching](#). We all have work to do; unfortunately, it appears that with the help of others who continue to indulge and financially support him, he won't be facing up to the work he has to do anytime soon.

About Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji

In 1978, Zen Master Genki Takabayashi was invited by the Seattle Zen Center, founded by Dr. Glenn Webb (at the time a UW Art History professor), to become the resident teacher. He accepted, and by 1983 he formalized his teaching style around a small group of students, and founded Dai Bai Zan Cho Bo Zen Ji, translated as *Great Plum Mountain Listening to the Dharma Zen Temple*.

Before Genki Roshi came to Seattle, he trained for nearly twenty years at Daitoku-Ji, the head Rinzaï temple in Japan. In addition, Genki Roshi directed a Rinzaï temple in Kamakura, Japan. He entered the monastery when he was 11 years old.



After 20 years of tirelessly giving himself to the transmission of Buddha Dharma to the West, in 1997 he retired as our teacher, got married and moved to Montana. In retirement he has been doing the activities he loves best: gardening, pottery, calligraphy, writing and cooking. One day we hope he will return to Seattle to live in our developing residential practice center.

Genjo Osho began his Zen training in 1975, was ordained in 1980, and became our Abbot in 1999. In 1981-82 he trained at Ryutaku-Ji in Japan. Genjo Osho is assisted by Genko Kathy Blackman Ni-Osho. In addition to his Zen duties, Genjo Osho is a psychotherapist in private practice and a certificated spiritual director. Our temple is in the Rinzaï Zen School. Since Genki Roshi retired, Genjo Osho-san continued his training with biannual retreats at Dai Bosatsu Kongo-Ji monastery in New York until 2011. On May 21, 2008, Eido Shimano Roshi confirmed Genjo Osho as a Rinzaï line Dharma Heir.

Chobo-Ji Schedule

Introduction to Zazen

Tuesdays, 7:30-8:30 p.m.

Zazen (except during quarterly retreats)

Monday - Friday, 5:30 a.m., 1 hr.

Saturdays, 6:30 - 8:00 a.m.

Sundays, 6:30 p.m., 1 hr.

Monday & Wednesday, 7:30 p.m., 1 hr.

Dharma Talks

1st and 3rd Sundays, 7:30 p.m., 1 hr.

(most Sundays during Spring Intensive)

Sesshins: Quarterly week-long retreats

last week in March, June, September

and early January.

Mini-Sesshins: Half-day retreats

with breakfast, Dharma Talk and Dharma

Interview. 5 - 11:30 a.m., Sundays:

3/11, 4/8, 5/13, 5/27, 6/10, 7/8, 8/12, 9/9

Spring Sesshin: 3/23/12 - 3/30/12

Summer Sesshin: 6/22/12 - 6/29/12

Autumn Sesshin: 9/21/12 - 9/28/12

Rohatsu Sesshin: 12/2/12 - 12/9/12

We Are Located: at 1727 & 1733 S.

Horton St., (one block west of S. Beacon). Main entrance and off-street parking is accessible behind the building off Lafayette Ave. S. After entering the main entrance, remove your shoes and socks in the entry hall and proceed to the Zendo (meditation hall) on your right. 206-328-3944

Dues and Fees: go to support the life of this temple. We have no outside support from any organization. Dues are \$75 a month or whatever one can afford. Any amount received monthly means that you will receive this quarterly newsletter, receive discounts on retreats, and be considered an active member.

The suggested fee for any morning or evening practice period, including Tuesday night introduction and Sunday night Dharma Talk is five dollars. The \$5 fee is waived for all members. The suggested fee for mini-sesshins is \$25. Fees for the March, July, and September sesshins are \$250, and Rohatsu Sesshin is \$390. Members may subtract their monthly dues from the week-long sesshin cost. For more information see:

www.choboji.org