

Hardcore Zen by Brad Warner



Everybody Knows?

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Hello from your roving Zen reporter, reporting to you today from Glasgow, Scotland where the weather is damp and rainy. “That’s nowt rrrrain, laddie!” they tell me, “That’s nowt bot **smirr!**” Yet it seems like rain to me. Or drizzle at least.

Yesterday I visited my old friend Nick Wilding aka Vic Wild Thing the fiddle player of the band [My Niece’s Foot](#) for whom I played bass in Japan way back in [nineteen-diggity-two](#) or whenever the hell I lived in Japan. Nick’s into human ecology, sustainability, community action and all of that wonderful stuff. He has two lovely children who are extremely energetic. Zing! And a lovely wife Tara and two kitty-cats.

The talk and one-day retreat in Glasgow last weekend were amazing. You should’ve been there! Judi Ferrell of Merchant City Yoga hosted and her friend Cynthia McVey did the first night’s talk in an “In Conversation” format. She interviewed me on stage. This is a lot more fun than the usual thing where I just talk at the audience for a while to try to stimulate them to ask questions or otherwise respond. Part of it was video’d and all of it was audio recorded. As long as I don’t lose the files before I can upload them, maybe you’ll be seeing or hearing the results soon.

There are still a few UK dates left. They are:

Nov. 23-25 (Fri-Sun) Weekend Sesshin at Fawcett Mill Fields, Penrith, Lake District UK Sponsored by [Yoga Manchester](#)

Nov. 25 (Sun) Manchester, England Sponsored by [Yoga Manchester](#)

Nov. 27-28 (Tues-Wed) Hebden Bridge Zen Group, UK contact Rebecca at rebeccahabs@googlemail.com

Dec. 2 (Sun) London, England, The Vibast Community Centre, 163 Old Street, EC1V 9NH, for info sacredalchemyevents@hotmail.com

The Lake District thing and the Hebden Bridge thing are both longer retreat type events. Although you can also come on Tuesday night to Hebden Bridge and just hear the talk if you don't want to commit to sitting all day on Wednesday. The events in Manchester and London are just talks. Easy-peasy! As always, all of my events are on my [Events Page](#).

It's amazing to me that I can come to places like Glasgow, Berlin, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Warsaw and a host of other (to me) exotic locales and get rooms full of people, while I only seem to be able to attract the same six people to my regular sittings in Los Angeles. What is up with LA people? You can't sit still for a little while?

In Buddhist news, Joshu Sasaki Roshi, Leonard Cohen's Zen master and one of my first teacher's teachers, a guy whose book I often recommend as one of the best on Zen practice, has been [outed on Sweeping Zen](#) as a sex pervert by my buddy Eshu Martin up in Victoria, BC.

Like Eshu says, "everybody knows" and has known about this for ages. It's one of those things you hear about in Zen circles. Yet nobody really knows precisely what went on other than those who were present at the time.

The very first commenter on Eshu's piece when it appeared on Facebook said, "Glad you're saying it. It needs to be outed and stopped in every community." He is a man, by the way*. This is the common response. I don't find it very interesting or useful. It's the same old stuff. Everybody loves a lynching. Even you. Trust me. You do. (Yes, I'm talking about you.) So when we find someone who falls into our own personal category of "lynchable" we are ready to go after him. All of us. But is that really where we want to go?

If you are keen to seriously dig into this and not just opt out for the knee-jerk response, there are some comments on Eshu Martin's Facebook page from a woman who was... Well, what was she exactly? One would generally say she was a "victim" of the Roshi's abuse. But she doesn't feel that way at all.

She says, in part, "It's so easy to make someone wrong. I 'suffered Roshi's abuse' and it was the closest I ever got to god." She goes on to state that, "Everyone knew about it, everyone talked about it. Oshos (Sasaki Roshi's higher level assistant priests) were distressed about it. Processes were put in place. We were constantly being offered support around it... well handled I thought." She says a whole lot more. But I already feel like maybe I'm overstepping some of those unknowable Internet protocols by quoting her here. The post I'm referencing appeared on Eshu's Facebook profile page on November 16th. Dig for yourself and maybe you'll find it.

This is very interesting to me. It's incredibly easy to slip into habitual modes of thinking around hot button issues like this. It's important to be very careful about that sort of thing. Which isn't a way of saying that I think hetero male Zen teachers ought to grope their female students so they can get closer to God. There really is such a thing as sexual abuse and some of it happens with Zen teachers. But then there are far more complicated things that also happen for which there is no category.

I feel like our need to slot things into established categories may be one of the deepest problems we have to uproot as human beings pursuing the dharma. It's a survival skill we need, this categorizing of things. It's what keeps us alive. If I'm walking down the street in a foreign country at night, as I often am these days, I have to watch people closely. If a group of guys is giving off signals I read as potentially dangerous, I walk down another street.

Maybe they're perfectly nice people. Maybe they're just excited about a football match they just saw. But I have no way to know. So I categorize quickly and act accordingly. This is what we all do all the time.

But we also have a tendency to go too far with this. Or to believe that the categories in which we place things are true or absolute. That becomes a problem if our aim is to see all of life just as it is.

I feel like Eshu's article and the response it is generating are very important and interesting. I'm glad he said what he said. I'm waiting for more.

I've always wondered what was really going on around Joshu Sasaki. He is one of the best expounders of what Zen is all about that I have ever encountered. His book *Buddha is the Center of Gravity* is absolutely one of the best out there. He knows his stuff. His teaching methods in all areas have always been unorthodox. Not just the sex stuff that's now being talked about, but everything he does.

The female commenter on Eshu's Facebook clearly states that she does not consider what Sasaki did to her or to the other women at his center that she talked to as "sexual abuse" or even as sex at all.

Curioser and curioser. This deserves a closer look.

* I was wrong. The commeter in question was female.

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