

December 19, 2012

To the Rinzai-ji Oshos:

Bob Seiju Mammoser  
Chris Koshin Cain  
Edgar Genshin Kann  
Cheryl Eko Schnabel  
David Giko Rubin  
Christiane Hosen Ranger  
Larry Seido Clark  
Richard Gido Schnabel  
Les Chinzan Fehmi  
Roland Dokuro Jaeckel  
Chuck Koyo Engennach  
Marc Shozan Joslyn  
Geoffrey Sokai Barratt  
Chris Genshu Ro  
David Yoshin Radin  
Michael Tekio Radford  
Diane Myokun Seghesio  
Judith Myokyo McLean  
Steve Gento Krieger  
William Kigen Ekeson  
Raul Kigen Davila  
John Eshin Godfrey  
Bruno Doan Schadarum  
Eric Kido Berhow

I am attaching to this letter a copy of the letter I am concurrently sending to the Rinzai-ji Board of Directors. I believe I have stated my feelings clearly there and feel no need to repeat myself on the points I made in that letter. I do, however, have a few other things I would like to say to all of you.

I am encouraged that many of you will be attending the meeting in January, and that there is a movement to address this very deep issue with professional mediators. It will be a long and tedious process to give birth to the healing that is needed. Now that Joshu Sasaki no longer holds power over you by threatening to stop teaching, I believe that many of you will be able to see your way clearly through this and begin to take responsibility for your own failures to deal with this situation. Please know that I am intimately familiar with the dilemma many of you have struggled with in trying to fully understand the situation and to find a way to end it. For those of you who have placed the responsibility on the women and refused to see this as anything but a "teaching, I hope that you can move past this and into a more compassionate awareness.

I have known some of you over the years and have great admiration for those of you who have refused to blame the victims, who have refused to veil Joshu Sasaki's sexual misconduct as "teaching", and who have understood that there are secular laws that apply to this issue. Our local attorney here, Liz Kuniholm, recently stated: *If a person who is in a position of power wields that power by physical force, it is rape. When a person in a position of power wields that power by spiritual force and implicitly threatens to ostracize another from a community, much less from God/Wholeness/Enlightenment if they don't participate, it is rape just the same. She added that when an accounting for the acts is done, a woman's neediness can never be a justification or excuse for the teacher's acts of violence and exploitation. Exploitation of a dependent and less powerful person by a spiritual leader can never be described as serving a spiritual purpose. In fact, the more needy the spiritually dependent person, the greater the responsibility upon the mentor to respect and nurture that person's boundaries and individual needs. The doing of good deeds in other spheres cannot overcome the evil inherent in any single act of using one's power to serve a selfish, individual purpose. It is wholly the duty and responsibility of the spiritual leader to protect those who seek guidance from exploitation by anyone.*

Clearly most of you have never fully appreciated the gravity of the situation. Those of you who were complicit in this activity by enabling Sasaki with his sexual misconduct for decades would help bring forth healing if you at least made a gesture of contrition with your own personal public apology or by resigning.

The first sentence in Sasaki's current form of apology states "Currently, I am suffering, but it seems that everyone else is suffering more." Notice that he mentions his own suffering first. I hope all of you can do much better than that.

Those of you who know women who have stories to tell, please encourage them to get in touch with any of the members of the Witnessing Council for support and confidential, safe sharing of information:

Jan Chozen Bays Great Vow Zen Monastery, Clatskanie, Oregon  
[chozen@greatvow.org](mailto:chozen@greatvow.org)

Hozan Alan Senauke, Berkeley Zen Center, Berkeley, California  
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Myoan Grace Schireson, Empty Nest Zendo, North Fork, California  
[grace@schireson.com](mailto:grace@schireson.com)

You will be in my thoughts during the upcoming reconciliation process. It is my hope that all of you as well as countless women will experience the healing to which we all are entitled.

Susanna Stewart