

Kaihan

The Newsletter of the North Carolina Zen Center

Fall/Winter 2012



A NOTE FROM THE OSHO

Editor's note: *Gentei Sandy Stewart, NCZC's osho, began his study of Zen with Joshu Sasaki Roshi in Los Angeles, California, in the 1960s and has maintained a student-teacher relationship with him for almost 50 years.*

In 1992, after about nine years of dialogue with Sasaki Roshi, his oshos and board of directors, I resigned from Rinzaï-ji, his Zen organization. The issue was the Roshi's sexual misconduct with his female students and the lack of action in his organization to stop the abuse. In the late 1990s, I was informed that his misconduct had stopped, due to the action of the monks at Mt. Baldy Zen Center. I returned to Rinzaï-ji and practiced with my teacher and his sangha. In 2007, after I had become vice-abbot of Rinzaï-ji, I learned that he was continuing his forceful, unwanted sexual behavior with some of his female students. In December of 2007, after futile attempts to bring about change at Rinzaï-ji, I again resigned and our North Carolina Zen Center cut all official ties with that organization.

In October 2007, shortly before my resignation, I wrote to the Rinzaï-ji Board of Directors. Here is the closing paragraph of that letter:

"As to the whole of Rinzaï-ji, silence on this topic creates the impression that we condone illegal sexual behavior. We already have this reputation. If we don't speak out against it, we are creating a culture of Rinzaï-ji in which roshis and oshos will think that having sex with students is an acceptable teaching tech-

nique. If, by remaining silent, Rinzaï-ji wishes to permit sexual misconduct, then I will not be able to continue my relationship with our organization and will again separate from it, as I did in the past for the same reason – inactivity on this issue. Meanwhile, at a meeting last week, my board of directors decided to discontinue the North Carolina Zen Center's official relationship with Rinzaï-ji until this issue is resolved to their satisfaction. They will send you official notice once the requirements for changing the by-laws have been met."

In mid-November of 2012, Eshu Martin of the Victoria Zen Centre posted a short piece on the website *Sweeping Zen* about Joshu Sasaki's behavior. On account of the outpouring of comments following this posting, some of the Rinzaï-ji oshos realized that the time had come to deal with this issue and are now engaged in the process of examining what has happened and attempting to reorganize so as to prevent further harm. A second website www.sasakiarchive.com contains a number of postings on this subject.

I also love Joshu Roshi as a person and as my teacher. I am absolutely grateful for his teachings, which, he has said, are what his teacher taught him. To me these teachings are the most profound and complete of any I have heard from any of the other Zen masters, teachers, scholars, geshees and rinpoches that I have met. However much I have said and done against his treatment of women, I will continue to carry on his teachings.

If you have any questions or comments about any of this, please contact me, sandy@nczencenter.org.

