

## 105-year-old Zen Buddhist master is accused of groping female students

- **Elderly Zen Buddhist teacher accused of sexually abusing his students**
- **Joshu Sasaki, aged 105, groped and harassed women for 50 years**
- **Complaints have circulated since the 70s but have been ignored**
- **Majority of those who brought up abuse were isolated or excommunicated**

By SARA MALM

PUBLISHED: 07:36 EST, 12 February 2013 | UPDATED: 07:37 EST, 12 February 2013

A 105-year-old Zen Buddhist master has been accused of sexually assaulting his female students during private teaching sessions.

Joshu Sasaki, best known for being the teacher of artist Leonard Cohen, has allegedly groped and sexually harassed women across the U.S. for over 50 years.

An independent council of Buddhist leaders recently admitted to ignoring years of accusations against the famously charismatic 'roshi'.

Last month, a 'witnessing council' of senior teachers of Mr Sasaki's Zen Buddhist community published a statement, admitting that they have 'struggled with our teacher Joshu Sasaki Roshi's sexual misconduct for a significant portion of his career in the United States'.

Originally from Japan, Mr Sasaki moved to the U.S. in 1962 where he set up the Rinzaï-ji Zen Center in Los Angeles and the Mount Baldy Zen Center, in Mt Baldy, California.

As well as heading these facilities, he has also been teaching at Zen centers across the United States.

Accusations have been circulating since the early 70s and in 1997 members of the Mount Baldy Zen Center put forward a letter to the then 90-year-old Mr Sasaki, with no consequences.

It was not until a letter was published on the popular practitioners' website Sweeping Zen in October last year that the true story of the abusive Zen master began to unfold.

Eshu Martin, a former student of Mr Sasaki and monk in Rinzaï-ji Zen Center accused Mr Sasaki of getting away with decades of sexual abuse.

More...

- [Police officer 'groped pregnant woman while she was handcuffed during patdown in her own driveway'](#)
- ['Massages, naked photos and sex-obsessed teacher': Another six women claim abuse at top music school](#)
- [Married teacher caught in catfishing scam as he 'tried to get male students to send him sexually explicit pictures on Facebook'](#)

Mr Martin wrote: 'His career of misconduct has run the gamut from frequent and repeated non-consensual groping of female students during interview, to sexually coercive after hours "tea" meetings, to affairs and sexual interference in the marriages and relationships of his students.'

He also said that those who have confronted Mr Sasaki and the Rinzaï-ji Zen Center have found themselves alienated or excommunicated from the center, whilst others have resigned 'in frustration'.

'For decades, Joshu Roshi's behaviour has been ignored, hushed up, downplayed, justified, and defended by the monks and students that remain loyal to him.'



Taking advantage: Mr Sasaki is accused of abusing his female students at Mount Baldy Zen Center in Mount Baldy California and at Zen Buddhist temples across the U.S.

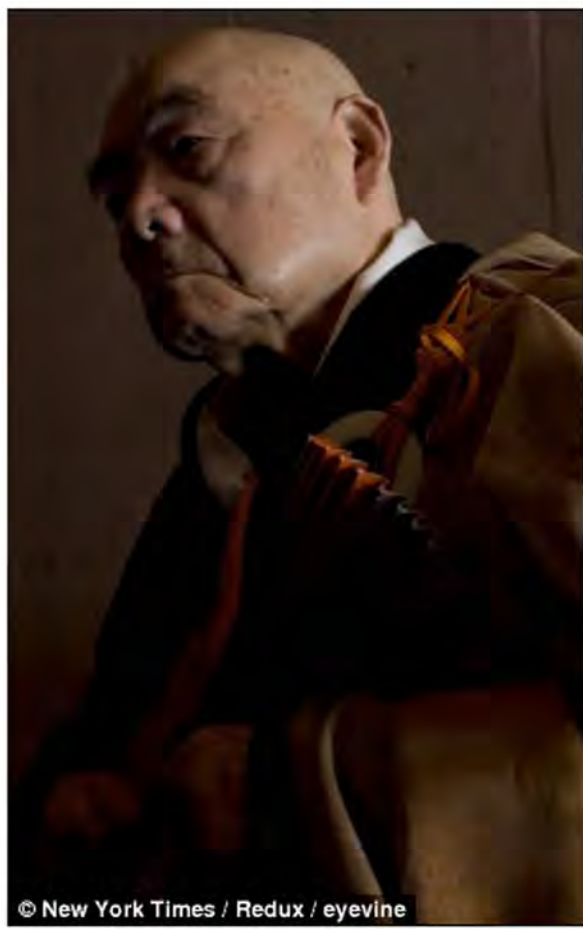
The letter rocked the close-knit Zen Buddhist community where a majority of practitioners are aware of and have studied Mr Sasaki.

Shortly afterwards the letter's publication senior teachers of the 'independent witnessing council' began to investigate Mr Sasaki's behaviour towards his female students.

Several victims, interviewed by the [New York Times](#), said they were shunned or ignored when they brought up the abuse.

Nikki Stubbs, who spent three years studying under Mr Sasaki in the early 00s, said that when she spoke up about Mr Sasaki touching her breasts during private lessons and asking her to massage his penis, a monk told her 'sexualizing was teaching for particular women'.

His theory, she told the newspaper, was that 'such physicality could check a woman's overly strong ego'.



© New York Times / Redux / eyevine

Accused: Joshu Sasaki, 105, allegedly groped and sexually harassed female students for 50 years

### ZEN AND RINZAI

Zen Buddhism derives from Mahayana Buddhism and is believed to have originated in China during the 6th century.

The Rinzaï-tradition practiced by Mr Sasaki focuses on 'kensho', which is the insight to one's true nature.

True knowledge and insight into 'kensho' - finding inner peace - is reached through meditation and self-study, as taught by Mr Sasaki.