



In Memory of Chizuko Karen Joy Tasaka (1951-2010)

To Joshu Sasaki Roshi: Roshi You Are a Sexual Abuser

Because Chizuko Karen Joy Tasaka did not live to see the Rinzaï-ji community acknowledge the “sexual abuse” she described in her poetry, I felt it was especially important to give voice to her poem of vivid accusations and her cry of pain on behalf of herself and her Dharma sisters and brothers. Her family and friends now feel that she would want to speak to us, to tell her story if she were alive today. While I have heard (and continue to hear) many women speak out about their experience of the confusing web, within which they were caught during their Zen practice at Rinzaï-ji, I was deeply affected by Chizuko’s poem and cry for help because it was interrupted by her death. As the Witness Council and others worked together to tell the Rinzaï-ji story, I often wondered if Chizuko’s spirit was still guiding us to complete her work-- to acknowledge and end these abuses.

I understand that this poem was written and sent to Sasaki or his community in 1988. Chizuko died, after a long illness, in 2010. She was a poet, a mother, a wife and a loving relative to all of her family members. She captures in her poem her visceral experience of violation, her sense of helplessness and shame, her concern for other women and their partners, her articulation of the precious teacher-student boundary and the painful non-response of the oshos. Chizuko’s wonderful life is to be honored, and her poem is a particularly evocative and illustrative expression of the complexities of so-called adult consensual sex with one’s teacher in a sacred practice space.

Chizuko! Wherever you are, may you receive our ongoing love and admiration for your life and struggle on behalf of Zen and all of us.

Myoan Grace Schireson

Roshi, you are a sexual abuser
“Come” you say as you pull me from a handshake onto your lap
“Open” you say as you push your hands between my knees, up my thighs
fondle my breasts
rub my genitals
french kiss me

you put my hand on your genitals
stroke your penis
jack you off?
this is sanzen?

my friend—she was inji
sex with roshi

she tried to say no
you demanded, demanded, demanded
demon demand the force of a tornado

sex with roshi
for whose best interest?

I told you I don’t like it.
I asked you why you do this?
You said, “nonattachment, nonattachment, you nonattachment

I told you as shoji, “women very angry, very upset”
I asked you why you do this.
You said: “Be good daughter to roshi, and good wife to G. [her husband].
Roshi, that is incest So many women trying to shake the shame from their voices of
Sex with roshi

We came to you with the trust of a student
You were our teacher
You betrayed us
You violated our bodies
You rape our souls

You betrayed our previous student-teacher relationship
You abuse us as women
You emasculate our husbands and boyfriends

Roshi, you are a sexual abuser
Your nuns you make your sexual servants
Your monks and oshos are crippled with denial
Roshi, Sexual Abuser.

By Chizuko Karen Joy Tasaka (1951-2010)