

# University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library — Archives

## Women's Workshop Minutes October 22-24, 1993

### Attendees

Jikei Jean Bankier  
Tashi Linda Baylor  
Kiun Joan Block  
Roko-san Sherry Chayat  
Shiun Valerie Foote  
Reiho Ellen Meyers  
Frances Perriello  
Kanze Elizabeth Roberts  
Kuon Marcia Spitz  
Jiun Ewa Tarasewicz  
Kochi Kathy Woodworth  
Joshin Marci Ziese

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On Friday evening the attendees arrived at the DBZ guest house and were given copies of letters written by Eshin Brenda Lukeman, Agetsu-san, and [REDACTED] [REDACTED] very kindly sent gifts to all of the workshop attendees. There was an informal supper at the guest house and optional zazen at the monastery.

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On Saturday morning there was optional morning service, zazen, meals and morning meeting at the monastery. There was also a zazen period for workshop attendees only in the guest house zendo.

Two discussion periods were held. Before beginning the first discussion Kuon outlined various rules of procedure. Everyone was encouraged to be completely open regardless of their opinions. Courteousness and tolerance towards the other participants was requested. It was agreed by all the attendees that everything said at the workshop would remain confidential. Fran Perriello was asked to act as Secretary and mail copies of the meeting minutes to all attendees. [REDACTED] sent along copies of three articles (ie; "Zen Teachers and Sex: A Call for Enlightened Standards," "Abuses of Power and the Precepts," and "The Dharmasala Conference" ) for the workshop attendees to read.

The issues of trust in student-teacher relationships and the responsibilities of

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women in practice were discussed. Kuon and Roko-san acted as moderators.

The views/concerns/questions expressed by one or more attendees were:

- Many of the women who have been involved with Roshi have been traumatized by the experience-some for years. Roshi doesn't seem to have been adversely affected by these relationships but the women have been.
- Roshi has the reputation of "loving them and leaving them."
- What is the demarcation between "ignorant" v. "enlightened" behavior?
- Is it possible to surmise the nature of behavior by looking at the end results of a person's actions?
- Roshi is a human like everyone else but is being judged by a harsher standard than we are.
- The mass exodus of people in 1967, 1975, 1979, 1982, 1986 and 1993 has caused a loss of extremely talented people and very few senior students remain.
- Some of the people who left would like to come back but can't because they do not feel safe and/or can't practice at a ZSS facility as long as teacher/student relationships are allowed to happen.
- Others feel that so much had happened that they are not sure a reconciliation is possible.
- People want Roshi to "stop it!." This wish is framed within the context of compassion and gratitude.
- The scandals have been destructive to the Sangha and to individuals.
- People are dismayed about Roshi's apparent view that members can easily be replaced and feel he does little to try to heal the wounds that have been created.
- Telling people to "get out" when they don't agree with him is arrogant and unacceptable.
- The scandals have hurt everyone-not just women.
- Roshi's advances toward women are indicative of emotional immaturity, thoughtlessness, and insecurity.
- Roshi has a compulsive addiction that needs to be cured.
- Perhaps Roshi displayed affection towards certain women because he felt they needed some warmth and/or kindness in their lives.
- Roshi is an excellent koan teacher but he is not strong on the Precepts.
- Roshi's behavior and lifestyle do not epitomize that of a Buddhist priest.
- The Dalai Lama is a teacher many consider a very "moral," compassionate person. Some felt it was easier for him than Roshi to stick to the Precepts because he is constantly surrounded by monks and nuns (ie; he never has the opportunity to get in trouble)-and Roshi isn't.
- In Japan the women monks are not allowed to marry-the males are. Any fraternizing between the sexes is monitored carefully by the jisha.
- Roshi is a lonely person and his whole lifestyle (ie; traveling constantly etc.) is very hard on him.
- One can be enlightened yet not actualize certain behavior.
- Students (especially new ones) are vulnerable-many view a Zen master as a "godlike" being who would never consciously hurt anyone. They trust such an individual implicitly.

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- Zen is loaded with exotic cultural trappings. This creates a great deal of confusion, especially among newer students, because they may not know what is "appropriate" within the context of the practice.
- All of the ritual etc. used in Zen causes a further separation of the teacher from his/her students.
- Roshi is isolated from his students and has too much power.
- Roshi and Aiho-san do not want students to talk to each other. They want a "veil of secrecy" to surround everything.
- The Japanese model can be used as a vehicle to abuse power by an "unscrupulous" teacher. Dokusan is an example.
- Roshi and Aiho-san consider public discussions of the student-teacher issue as a loss of face.
- Japanese culture has a tremendous impact on the practice. American students consider this a problem but Roshi and Aiho-san don't.
- Americans are very forthright and expect total disclosure of all facts-the Japanese are more subtle.
- Sometimes Roshi feels victimized too. The whole Zen master mystique may be an attractant to some women. Some women do throw themselves at him.
- Even if a women does try to initiate a liaison, it is still Roshi's responsibility to not allow it to happen.
- No one is aware of any instances where Roshi propositioned a women-was turned down-and then refused to continue being her teacher.
- The student-teacher issue is just symptomatic of deeper problems.
- Roshi's won't change his behavior to correct the problem. He refuses to take responsibility for his actions.
- Roshi doesn't perceive himself as having a problem.
- There is a need to abandon idealism.
- Teaching comes in amazing forms. Some have learned more from Roshi's mistakes than his triumphs.
- Regardless of what has happened some people still consider Roshi their teacher.
- Roshi has engaged in other behavioral patterns such as deception which have also caused tremendous hurt and pain.
- Roshi has the reputation of being untrustworthy and manipulative. This has also been a "turn off" for some people.
- Roshi has not been a leader. He refused to prevent Junpo from engaging in certain types of unacceptable behavior.
- Junpo's behavior and his being made a dharma heir caused alot of people to become disillusioned and angry. Many people didn't want to come back to DBZ as a result. Some people left the Sangha permanently.
- Junpo also propositioned women but he was more open about it then Roshi was.
- The Zen Studies Society has no long-term viability.
- American Zen has a horrible reputation because of sex, drug and money scandals.
- Zen is very patriarchal-all of the real power rests with men. Women are not treated as

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equals and are under-represented in the power hierarchy.

- Roshi does not treat women differently from men.

- Student-teacher liaison incidents would be less common if there were more women Roshis.

- There has been the illusion that silence would make everything alright.

- The Ethical Conduct Guidelines enacted by the Board were the best thing that's happened to the organization in a long time.

- These Guidelines should be read as part of sesshin cautions at both DBZ and Shobo-ji.

- The Board needs to be more proactive. The Board has not stood up to Roshi enough.

- The Board has been very active this year and the Directors do care about how the Sangha feels.

- Soen Roshi felt there were problems with Eido Roshi but even he couldn't affect any change in his behavior.

- Some American Zen teachers have had problems with Roshi's behavior but they are really spread thin and there is not a well organized network to speak out against what has happened.

- Add more teachers so that Roshi is not the only person who trains students.

- Have sesshins with Roshi not present.

- The Bylaws should be changed to make the Zen Studies Society more democratic. It is currently an autocratic organization where no one has any say in what happens.

- Don't throw everything out to correct a few problems. Try to affect change within the framework of what you already have.

- Women who come to a Zen Studies Society facility should be warned in advance about Roshi.

- Roshi has to be willing to learn from his students. He refuses to "grow."

- Suggesting any reform/improvement could be interpreted by Roshi as a lack of gratitude and/or trying to remove his power.

- There is a problem with unenlightened people telling others what to do.

- Roshi sometimes misjudges people and their motives.

- The argument that there is nothing to judge/no one to judge has been used to justify abusive behavior.

After a lengthy discussion of the above-mentioned items, the group came up with a list of action items. These were:

- 1. Create a Big Sister/Big Brother mentoring program for new /resident students.
- 2. Request the Board of Directors call an annual Sangha meeting.
- 3. Change the Bylaws to help the organization move towards a more democratic/American model.
- 4. Have "women only" and "old timer" sesshins in the guest house without Roshi present.
- 5. Role modeling of other Zen centers.

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-6. Sangha responsibility/accountability.

After the afternoon discussion was adjourned the participants enjoyed an informal dinner in the guest house. Evening zazen and a dharma talk by Louis Nordstrom at the monastery were optional.

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On Sunday morning there was optional morning service, zazen and morning meeting at the monastery. A zazen period for workshop attendees only was held in guest house zendo.

The group discussed the issue of fear. Kiun acted as the moderator.

The views/concerns/questions expressed by one or more attendees were:

- Why didn't all of the women at DBZ attend the workshop? Were they afraid of retribution from Roshi and/or Aiho san?
- Some of the people who attended the workshop were asked how they had the courage to come.
- A lot of people have some/a lot of fear of Roshi as well as Aiho-san.
- People have heard Roshi say he wouldn't seduce women students again before and don't believe him anymore. They are afraid he will do it again.
- There is a total lack of trust within the organization that can't be easily cured.
- There is fear that nothing will change within the organization until Roshi retires/leaves.
- There is fear that nothing will come out of this workshop and/or our concerns will not be taken seriously.

After dialoguing about this issue, the group discussed what would be the best vehicle (if any) for presenting the conclusions and suggestions that came out of the workshop. A debate ensued and it was decided by the majority of attendees that a letter should be written. The document would be addressed to Roshi, the Board of Directors and the Sangha and would outline the topics discussed. The letter was composed and typed at DBZ. Eleven attendees signed it (see attached.)

It was agreed that Kuon would mail out the letters and request the Shobo-ji and DBZ Directors to post a copy on the zendo bulletin boards for Sangha members to read.

After the discussion adjourned the participants held a closing ceremony with chanting and zazen. An informal lunch at the monastery was optional.

All participants departed in the afternoon.

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