

# University of Hawai'i at Mānoa Library — Archives

March 23, 2003

To: The Board of Directors, The Zen Studies Society, Inc.  
From: Jiro Fernando Afable, Vice-abbot of Dai Bosatsu Zendo Kongo-ji.  
Regarding: My tenure as Vice-abbot of Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak to the Board of Directors at the beginning of this meeting about a matter of great importance and urgency for the Zen Studies Society and me personally. Public and private statements by Roshi have caused me to undertake a serious and searching review of my continuing tenure as Dharma Heir, Vice-Abbot and General Manager of Dai Bosatsu Zendo. On deep reflection I am convinced that there are irreconcilable differences between Roshi's vision and mine for Dai Bosatsu Zendo and that Roshi has initiated a process of change to implement his vision that has excluded me.

All that has been spoken and done to date is a direct expression of the depth of Roshi's decision. I cannot and will not challenge Roshi's authority. In my meeting with Roshi on January 16, 2003, Roshi repeatedly called for a harmonious parting and suggested some form of compensation to facilitate my departure. I wholeheartedly agree with Roshi on this matter.

At this time I want share with you the results of my review and reflection.

In 1993, I was living in the suburbs of Washington DC. I was active in running a zendo, had a house and a thriving business that I owned and had developed over many years. My wife to be was in the last year of working on her Ph. D. thesis.

In April, I was entreated by Roshi to come to Dai Bosatsu Zendo to assist it at a time of deep crisis. He asked me help him to manage Dai Bosatsu Zendo, and to lend my support and presence to the monastery.

Before agreeing, I attended board meetings and made it clear to this board that I was not looking for a job. This board and Roshi actively encouraged me to take on the position of General Manager. Having been assured of the full support of Roshi and this board, I made the momentous commitment to move to Livingston Manor. I was gratified that I could work in a Dharma setting that was larger and different from Kashin Zendo. In the ensuing ten years I devoted my life and energies to Dai Bosatsu Zendo. I gave up my cabinet making business, my home, the community of family and Sangha I had in Washington, and my wife left her career opportunities in Washington D.C, and she and I agreed to raise our daughter in Livingston Manor. You witnessed my efforts, and always encouraged and supported me, for which I shall remain grateful.

You can understand my surprise, when, during last Rohatsu Sesshin, 2002, Roshi publicly announced his vision for DBZ. In a Teisho, he said, "I have thought about how we can transmit authentic Rinzai Zen practice .... We need a younger person, about 40 or so, and he or she should preferably be trained in Japan. In his closing speech Roshi added, "As long as I am alive, nothing will change." These statements were made passionately, and there could be no doubt to those present about what they meant. They caused me to reflect on my situation as Dharma Heir and Vice-abbot of Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

Firstly, it was clear that so long as Roshi maintained his authority as Abbot, indeed, as long as he was alive, I would not be permitted make any of the changes that I strongly believe are necessary for the future health of DBZ. Secondly, and most significantly, that I would not, despite the expectation that I and the Board have had, succeed Roshi as Abbot of Dai Bosatsu Zendo.

At my request, in January 16, 2003, Roshi and I agreed to have a meeting. Remembering what he had said during Rohatsu, 2002, I started the meeting by saying that I was thinking of asking the board for a year's sabbatical, to think about my situation at Dai Bosatsu Zendo and to give my family a break from our isolated situation.

Roshi then inquired about my family situation, and asked whether it was possible for me to return to Washington, where Kashin Zendo, my old zendo, still existed. I told him that it was impossible for me to return: I said, "Roshi, I left my workplace and my home to come here." He inquired about the cost of renting a house in Washington and I simply said, "impossible."

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Next, Roshi said that Zen Studies could afford some kind of payment to make my move from Dai Bosatsu Zendo easier. I did not respond to this. Roshi then inquired if I had a contract. I said that I did. He further inquired about who could fire me, and I replied that my contract was with the Board of Directors.

Third, Roshi said, "DBZ needs a change.... Some change.....I am not the one to lead DBZ into the future, and neither are you. Supposing I left, and you left, and a new person comes in." I did not comment except to say there was a lot for me to think about. Roshi, during this meeting, repeated three times: "Jiro, if we part, it should be done in harmony."

I said, "of course."

This line of questioning and these statements left no doubt in my mind that Roshi wanted me to leave. In reviewing my experience at Dai Bosatsu Zendo. I cannot remember a single suggestion I made regarding substantive changes in the way things are done to which he responded positively.

Recognizing that the irreconcilable differences in our view of Dai Bosatsu Zendo would make it impossible for either of us to fully achieve our visions for Dai Bosatsu Zendo and mindful of our by-laws by which Roshi is appointed Abbot for life, I have made a decision that in order to achieve the harmony that both Roshi and I want for Dai Bosatsu Zendo, I must respectfully and regretfully, request you, The Board, to release me from an obligation to serve as the Vice-abbot and the General Manager, an obligation to which you called me in 1993. In 1998, wearing monk's robes and a mendicant's hat, I was received and welcomed into the monastery as the Abbot-to-be by Eido Roshi in a publicly witnessed ceremony. I was declared to be the next Abbot in a ceremony that included a public speech by Roshi. These public events identified ~~and~~ a Dharma-heir and Abbot-to-be in the event that Roshi for whatever reason could not function as Abbot. I hope you see these events as having more weight than a year to year employment contract: They clearly and publicly declare my place in the succession and lineage of Abbots for Dai Bosatsu Zendo. In addition, recognizing my years of service, and anticipating many more years of service, three years ago this Board approved my being vested in a 403(b) Individual Retirement account, whereby the Zen Studies Society contributed funds towards my retirement.

I trust that you recognize that this is a matter of great personal importance and urgency to me and that you will resolve this matter before the end of this meeting.

My willingness to proceed in this fashion is of course contingent upon the board resolving to provide mutually agreeable financial consideration to enable to me to support myself and my family during this period of transition, and, equally important, for the continuation for my work as a Dharma heir going out into the world.

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We the Board of Directors of Zen Studies Society recognize that Fernando Afable was actively recruited by the Abbot and this Board and with our full endorsement was appointed General Manager of DBZ in 1993.

We recognize and gratefully acknowledge his unceasing effort and dedication to bringing stability to the monastic community and The Zen Studies Society during a time when our organization was in crisis.

We remember with joy his Dharma Transmission and his elevation to the position of Vice-abbot in 1998.

We further take notice of his success in fund raising, particularly for the roof replacement of the Dai Bosatsu monastery building.

We thank him for working with legal counsel (Taizo Robert Greene) to bring to completion a retirement document for Eido Shimano Roshi and Aiho-San Yasuko Shimano.

We acknowledge that when he responded to our call it came at a great cost to him and his family, and we fully understand the untenable situation in which he has now been placed.

## THEREFORE WE RESOLVE:

To express our deep gratitude and appreciation to Fernando Afable for decade-long service to the ZSS as a Vice-Abbot and General Manager of DBZ, to facilitate a transition into the next phase of his life and to support his dharma activity, and in consideration for his relinquishing his right to continued employment as Vice-Abbot and General Manager and his rights as Dharma Heir and successor to the Abbot, the Board of Directors of Zen Studies Society, Inc. grants Fernando Afable the following:

1. a gift of money equal to two years of his current annual salary: \$97702.32  
[Monthly gross of \$ 4070.93 X 24]
2. Health insurance coverage for one year, in the amount of: \$11976.00  
[\$ 998.00 X 12]
3. housing allowance for one year: in the amount of: \$ 14400.00  
[\$ 1200.00 X 12]
4. Moving expenses, in the amount of: \$ 2000.00

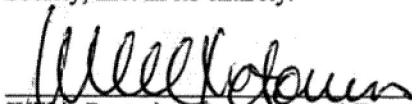
For a total amount of \$ 126078.32

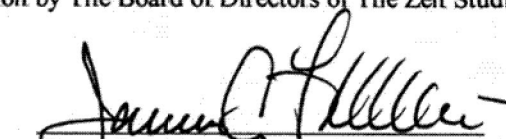
<sup>WP</sup>  
The board of directors, ~~by unanimous vote~~, authorizes the Treasurer of the Zen Studies Society to pay Fernando Afable, from funds currently on hand in existing Zen Studies Society, Inc. accounts, by Cashier's Check, or by electronic bank transfer to an account specified by Fernando Afable, the amount of \$126078.32 no later than April 30, 2003.

This decision is a final agreement with Fernando Afable upon which we recognize that he is relying and cannot be amended, revoked, or challenged in future proceedings of the Board of Directors.

It is understood by all parties that this financial settlement with Fernando Afable shall not affect his capacities with the Zen Studies Society as Vice-abbot of Dai Bosatsu Zendo, as General Manager and Director of Dai Bosatsu Zendo, and as President of the Board of Directors until such time as the board adopts a resolution addressing these matters.

By our signatures below, we, Members of the Board of Directors of the Zen Studies Society, Inc., are witness to the unanimous approval of this Resolution by The Board of Directors of The Zen Studies Society, Inc. in its entirety.

  
Wilkie Pretorius, Secretary and Treasurer

  
James Frechter, Board Member

  
John Mortensen, Vice President