



Nonin
Global Moderator

Posts: 3022
Joined: Wed Feb 04, 2009 3:30 pm
Location: Omaha, Nebraska, USA
antispam: No

Re: Sexual misconduct by Buddhist teachers (was Eido Tai Shimano)
by **Nonin** on Sat May 22, 2010 10:53 pm

I don't know if it's clear to all of us or not that the allegations about Eido Shimano are more than fifteen years old and that many of Eido's students, current and past, say that there have been no new allegations since, so it seems as if he changed his behavior. Part of the reasons for this may have been the work behind the scenes by members of the American Zen Teachers Association, but I can't be sure. I didn't become active with the group until just after this issue was addressed.

One priest who's been working with Eido for the past fifteen years tells me that he's not seen nor heard of any sexual misconduct for those fifteen years.

We all have karmic baggage that we are working out. It seems that Eido Shimano has been working on his, as I have been working on mine. His past behavior is not excusable in my view, and no one that I know of is currently denying it, although Eido and some sangha members did deny it when it first occurred many years ago. However, all of us can and sometimes do change. Eido's past behavior has created many adverse karmic consequences for him and for his sangha, and he and they are living the consequences right into the present day.

Also, one of Eido's long-term students regards the latest round of postings on the internet as nothing more than "sanctimonious vilification." Most of it has been circulated by Stuart Lachs, who was a long-term student of a teacher whose sangha exploded as the result of the teacher's sexual misconduct. Stuart has put a great deal of effort over the past years in trying to discredit not only specific Zen teachers but also the dharma transmission process itself. I don't even bother to read what Stuart writes anymore because he has too many personal axes to grind. Another person behind the recent internet postings has had a running feud with Eido and his sangha for many years over a variety of issues. I know the person, and I wouldn't trust what he says on this issue.

I have no idea why Robert Aitken is bringing this issue up again at this time. As I said earlier, the events described in the letters that have been released and posted on the internet and the subsequent postings discussing them describe events that are over fifteen years old.

Another of Eido's long term students writes: It makes more sense "to look at our present generation's teacher-student relationships with a keen eye rather than reaching into the past to point accusatory fingers at our Asian teachers." I wholeheartedly agree, and I would add that it would also serve us all well to point those fingers at ourselves and take a good look at our behavior in all areas, not only sexual misconduct but also pointing fingers at and judging others.

Hands palm-to-palm,

Nonin

Soto Zen Buddhist Priest. Transmitted Dharma Heir of Dainin Katagiri Roshi.

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<http://www.prairiewindzen.org>



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Re: Sexual misconduct by Buddhist teachers (was Eido Tai Shimano)
by **Nonin** on Sun May 23, 2010 3:00 am

genkaku,

The sting that you feel is yours, no one else's, and you alone are responsible for what you are carrying. Eido Shimano is no longer stinging you. Take responsibility for your pain and own it. If you still are carrying the sting of events fifteen years old, you need to work them out, either on your own -- through zazen and other spiritual practices such as metta meditation -- or with the help of a mental health professional.

Hands palm-to-palm,

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Re: Sexual misconduct by Buddhist teachers
by **Nonin** on Wed May 26, 2010 12:51 am

christopher:: wrote:

I could be wrong, but it seems like this topic is being kept alive here (and in the larger Zen community) because there has been no resolution, probably because no clear mechanism for resolution exists presently.

When sexual misconduct occurred in the San Francisco Zen Community the teacher (Robert Baker Roshi) was asked to step down by community members. There have since been processes and procedures for dealing with teacher misconduct put into place by Soto Zen organizations. Rev. Nonin described these in detail many months ago.

Is this what is lacking within Rinzaï Zen? Robert Aitkin Roshi is part of the Sanbo Kyodan school, as such seems powerless to do anything beyond what he has done which is make his private letters and correspondances known and issue public statements such as he did a few weeks ago.

Stuart Lachs and Adam (genkaku) are simply sharing what Aitkin Roshi has made public. But everyone seems to be powerless to do anything, all waiting for Shimano sensei to speak up, which he hasn't.

Please correct me if wrong, but if Shimano sensei were a Soto priest, or a Theravadan ajahn, there would have been efforts made to have him disrobe and give up his position long ago, no?



Eido Shimano has spoken for the past fifteen years. He's been teaching the dharma, building a strong lay and ordained sangha, maintaining a vibrant monastery, ordaining priests, transmitting them, and, as far as I and his closest disciples know, has changed the behavior that got him in trouble so many years ago. In other words, he has kept his nose clean as regards sexual relationships with students. If Robert Aitken, Stuart Lachs, and Adam cannot let this go after so many years, it's their problem.

Hands palm-to-palm,

Nonin

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Re: Sexual misconduct by Buddhist teachers (was Eido Tai Shimano)
by **Nonin** on Wed May 26, 2010 12:00 pm

genkaku wrote:

If Robert Atken, Stuart Lachs, and Adam cannot let this go after so many years, it's their problem.

Nonin -- I freely acknowledge my complicity -- my problem, which is far from simply black or white in my mind -- in this matter.

But as I acknowledge my complicity and the fact that my problem does not toe the establishment mark, I wonder to what extent you might as well be willing to acknowledge your complicity as regards the people who have been wounded.

People who are wounded need to heal their wounds, and if they can't do it by themselves they need to get some help. If zazen, metta practice, and other practices don't do it for them, I suggest that they seek professional help from a good counselor or therapist.

Blaming others for our problems only compounds suffering.

Hands palm-to-palm,

Nonin

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antispam: No

Re: Sexual misconduct by Buddhist teachers (was Eido Tai Shimano)
by **Nonin** on Wed May 26, 2010 5:45 pm

Dan74 wrote:

Nonin wrote:

People who are wounded need to heal their wounds, and if they can't do it by themselves they need to get some help. If zazen, metta practice, and other practices don't do it for them, I suggest that they seek professional help from a good counselor or therapist.

Blaming others for our problems only compounds suffering.

Hands palm-to-palm,

Nonin

In other words it has nothing to do with the perpetrator? It is a totally internal affair - just up to the "wounded" to get over it. Probably was just up to the wounded to get wounded in the first place. "Mind is the forerunner", right?

Of course if the mind is untrammled, empty and free where can the wound reside?

Is anyone here like this?

Speak! Speak!

For my part, it is perhaps more useful to show some compassion and understanding for the suffering rather than barricade oneself behind a position, but I may be missing the point here. There may be things unsaid, politics or other intentions that are not really clear.

Maybe some light can be shed on this?

/

Dan,

No one in this thread has condoned or excused Eido Shimano's past behavior. Organizationally, it wasn't handled properly at the time at either of the places where the alleged misconduct occurred.

You said:

"In other words it has nothing to do with the perpetrator? It is a totally internal affair - just up to the wounded to get over it."

No one here has said anything like this. The organization has a responsibility to deal with sexual misconduct issues when they arise. It is the organization's responsibility to investigate the matter, to discipline the wrongdoer, and to see that whoever is "wounded" is helped to heal.

You also said:

"For my part, it is perhaps more useful to show some compassion and understanding for the suffering rather than barricade oneself behind a position, but I may be missing the point here."

If you go through the posts on this thread, you'll find that no one is showing a lack of compassion and understanding of anyone's suffering. Also, if you read our temple's ethics statement, you'll find that it stems from compassion and from an understanding of the suffering that sexual misconduct, and other kinds of misconduct, can cause.

You are missing the point here, which is: What good does it do at this point in time to re-hash events from fifteen years ago? Things are the way they are, and it's up to all of us to deal with things as they are. If someone is carrying ill-will, hard feelings, or whatever from events fifteen years past, he or she has to deal with them, and if an apology never came or is not forthcoming, he or she has to deal with that. If Zen practice (zazen, metta practice, pastoral counseling, etc.) has not helped the person move on, seeing a counselor or therapist is in order. Some psychological issues need the kind of help provided by a professional. Many of us who teach Zen recommend this kind of help when necessary.

Hands palm-to-palm,

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