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August 9, 1995

Richard Rudin
President of the Board of Directors, Zen Studies Society
1018 Imperial Place, Hayward, CA 94501

Dear Richard Rudin,

We write to you as colleagues of your teacher, Eido Shimano, Roshi, and as your fellow students in the Maha Sangha of Buddhists in North America. Our concern in this letter is the Buddha Dharma and the well-being of the women and men who invest themselves in its practice.

Over the past three decades, we have interviewed many former students of Shimano Roshi. Their stories are consistent: trust placed in an apparently wise and compassionate teacher, only to have that trust manipulated in the form of his sexual misconduct and abuse. Some of these students elected to continue their practice with us; most of them wanted nothing further to do with Zen Buddhism.

With report after report of the same depressing story, it is clear to us that our colleague, Shimano Roshi, is not simply one who slips into an occasional love affair. We have no hesitation in judging from first-hand accounts that the quality of these relationships is not loving but exploitative and extremely damaging to his victims.

A teacher in another lineage presently faces a multi-million dollar law suit for alleged sexual abuse. Superficially speaking, we are on the sidelines of this controversy, but actually we are deeply involved, for the Dharma is one. We would not encourage the remedy of legal action in the case of Shimano Roshi, but we sense that it is only a matter of time until he faces his accusers in a court of law.

The most obvious solution to the problem would be Shimano Roshi's resignation. There may be another option in the form of a program designed to help him with his harmful predilections, although of course the mere completion of such a program does not guarantee a cure.

Neither option is easy in the face of the emotional and financial investments of the Sangha and the teacher. However, we urge you to consider that your teacher is jeopardizing the Buddha's noble teachings. The situation is grave and calls for action to prevent further harm. We offer you our wholehearted support in your deliberations.

We can suggest that some of us are willing to consult with the Board about "what to do," having faced similar situations in our own and related communities. Thinking about the women and their families who have been hurt by Shimano Roshi, please consider underwriting the therapy they need. Our deepest wish is for a healing on all sides: for those who have suffered abuse, for your Sangha, and for Shimano Roshi.

We look forward to your timely response to this letter. If we do not hear from you within a reasonable period, we will consider making this an open letter. Please address your reply to the first signator.

Respectfully yours,

Robert Aitken Roshi, 2747 Waiomao Road, Honolulu, HI 96816
Yvonne Rand, Alan Senauke, Jan Chozen Bays, Susan Jion Postal,
Helen Yuho Harkaspi, Bodhin Kjolhede, Philip Kapleau, Roshi

cc: Eido Shimano Roshi, Andy Afable, Jane Bankier, Karen Barnes, John Brady, Ed Glasing,
Vasken Kalayjian, Dennis Kelly, ██████████, Susan Morningstar, Fran Perriello,
Wilkie Pretorius, Aurora Russell, Bernard Spitz

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To Richard Rudin, President and members of the Board of Directors, Zen Studies Society

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