

Notes on Resident Council 2.26.10

MHAE-CAAW has met with Zen Center staff. This meeting is with residents. And there will be a future meeting with the wider sangha.

Those not present: Susanna, Karen, Pine Ocean, Bodhisong, Gemmon.

Some Concerns/Observations That Were Made

- Who's going to be in charge?
- Who's the point person?
- Who is going to be the teacher on Wednesday nights and Friday mornings?
- Without weekday face-to-face, it is difficult for residents to see a teacher.
- Where will correspondence (mail, packages, email, etc.) for the Abbot go?
- Do the teachers talk about students amongst each other?
- Are we going to rely on homegrown teachers or import a teacher?
- Will Roshi be involved in the Center while she is away?
- Concerned about ZCLA archives.
- Opportunity for our new teachers to grow. See the other teachers stepping up.
- Concerned about finances because membership/participation will drop. (mentioned by several people)
- "Participation drops like a rock when Roshi is not here."
- Good opportunity for us to step forward.
- Worry about the Day Group being over burdened.
- What freedom will the leaders of ZCLA have during this time to try new directions?
- Haven't heard an official position on the exact length of sabbatical from Roshi herself.
- Concerned that most of the MHAE-CAAW group doesn't live here.
- Don't trust that there will be full transparency.
- Feel decisions are being made without consulting with the whole sangha.
- Concerned about difference in the Zendo when Roshi is not here.
- Concerned about maintaining a strong ZP1/ZP2 program (mentioned by several people)
- Concerned about Roshi's announcement that she would only work with people working on koans and senior students. "Is that me?"
- What are the different functions that Roshi has been handling?
- What are the effects of her handing off her functions to other people?
- We have an incredibly capable sangha. Strong group of people. (expressed by several)
- "The process is a good one."
- "Who's Roshi?"

Person by Person Summary

Person

Request for comments to have no attribution in written summary.

Person 1

Who's going to be in charge? Who's the point person when she is gone? Who is going to be teacher on Wed night and Fri morn. If a resident doesn't see a teacher on Saturday, it's hard to get in on Sunday. "Abandoned" one word that comes up. But not directed at Roshi. No teacher here during the week.

Person 2

Bothered by need for anonymity mentioned by person at beginning. Why would that be? Need for transparency in this process. This intention to clarify concerns is more effective if there is transparency.

Person 3

Request to stick to the meetings original topic, but understand person #2's point.

Person 4

Concern over the communication that is received at the Center for the Abbot. Who will these go to? Mail, etc. Which will get forwarded to Seattle?
I have been investigating different teachers at the Center. Do the Zen teachers talk about students amongst each other? What confidence do I have that information about me will be shared amongst the different teachers?

Person 5

This is a really big deal. Face to face transmission between student and teacher. When originally announced, Roshi's exit was mentioned as a 2 year departure. Don't visit her. Don't call her. (Roshi said these things.)
Are we going to rely on homegrown teachers or import a teacher from somewhere else. Current teachers don't have 30 years experience of leading/guiding people's practice. Now it's not 2 years, but it's one year. Maybe/maybe not. A transition is going to come. Having a Zen Center without an abbot for a year is a big deal. "Consortium" is a word that came up. Perhaps the sangha would be run by consortium of people. Evolution of Buddhism in the west.

Person 6

Holy shit. What?!! (first reaction to Roshi's announcement) Now people have started to calm down. I do believe it is a one year commitment that Roshi has made. It's going to be different when she comes back - plan for different - Roshi has been clear that she can't wear as many different hats. We are developing a much longer view than 1 or 2 years - 4,5 or 6 years down the road. 1998 I came here...changed my life...acknowledging all the changes - grateful for togetherness with the sangha to shape what the Center is going to be like. That original "holy shit" has changed to "Ok...we can do this."

Person 7

Impressed with the quality of living here. People give so much. Most solid place I've ever been apart of. Have confidence that it's going to be a good year. Many people will

step forward. Excitement. A little anxiety. Roshi will be in contact...hopefully we'll have a sense that she's involved in plans for the future. Concerned about ZCLA archives. If Roshi was not coming back or if this was a long sabbatical I would have a different view. Been here two years...feels like it has gone fast. When she is in Seattle..."we don't bother her." Things happen in dokusan with Roshi that don't happen with other teachers. Perhaps it's eye contact...her interruptions with the bell...feels like "a little bit of a transmission." Special. Amazing 2 years. It's never been comfortable. But it's been entirely reliable.

Person 8

What about Sanghas that don't have a teacher. Big deal for them to have a guest teacher come. We've been fortunate to have this. People are making do with a lot less.

Person 9

14 years been here. The change has been impressive. Roshi worked hard. She is taking a rest that she needs and I want to support that. I feel abandonment on a cellular level and will have to work with that.

Person 10

My take is different. No strong student/teacher relationship with a particular teacher here. Troubling when other people talk about how they have a strong relationship with a teacher. Benefit: my practice doesn't depend on any one person. Not going to change if a teacher leaves. But I may be missing out.

Originally, I thought "good for her." I've heard comments such as "Other teachers are not the same." These comments baffle me. People talk about Roshi doing interview 10 years ago and "she wasn't so great then." People say that. We expect the new teachers to instantly have decades of experience. We see the other teachers when the line to see Roshi is too long. It's a great gift to entrust our emerging practice to these new teachers.

Best thing she can do for our new teachers. We should develop relationships with new teachers. I haven't been going to dokusan.

Concerned about finances...the reality is that membership/participation will drop.

Sense of vulnerability without Roshi here. It's time for me to grown up. How can I expect someone else to deal with things for me? How we are working with the Statement of Right Conduct. You step forward to address the problem yourself. Her leaving is a great opportunity to be independent. I think it'll all be just fine.

Person 11

I used to sit with a sitting group that was a married couple, their dog and me. That was good. We drove to Kansas for retreats and dokusan. It was great to just sit.

In 2007, Roshi took a 3 or 4 month sabbatical. Impressed by how this place ran without her. Real display of the fruits of a leader's labor.

This is a good opportunity for us to step forward.

I worry about the Day Group. People struggling with burn out. Roshi not the only person wearing too many hats.

I try to contribute while also working over 40 hours each week.

Frustration about unanswered questions: who is going to be doing interviews? who is going to be in charge? Would like to hear some sort of answers. I feel a little infantilized.

Person 12

We are at the beginning of the process. We are committed to tackling the problem. We don't have the answers. What's important is the nuance of everyone's voice. This is the most important part. These abandonment issues. Cranky questions. The plan will not be tackled until we hear the questions.

Person 13

What would the interim dean of a University do? Keep a steady course. Keep a low profile. Some parallels to what we are going through. What freedom will the leaders of ZCLA have during this time to try new directions? new projects? Will they be freer than an interim dean?

Person 14

Cranky question: What I heard Roshi say was she was leaving for 2 years. She said, "Don't call me. I will have nothing to do with the Center. Eb is now 70 years old" And I thought, "She's moving out." Now it sounds different, but I haven't heard any change in nuance directly from Roshi.

Person 15

I think it's all going to fall apart...and then it will all fall together. I heard that it was 2 years. But now I heard that it is 1 year. But not from Roshi. Concerned that most of the MHAE-CAAW group does not live here. It bothers me. Who is going to do dokusan during the week? This was 1 year ago (Roshi's announcement) and we're just now having meetings? I feel like there is a wall. I don't trust that there will be full transparency. Fear: attendance will fall greatly. People don't come when there is no Roshi. Someone came Wednesday night and then drove away when they found out that Roshi was not here. I blame Roshi for wearing so many different hats. Why didn't hats go on other teachers? I hear this often: "It's up to Roshi." When she is gone, who is going to decide?

Person 16

Not a whole lot of concerns. We have an incredibly capable sangha. Strong group of people. Process is a good one. All questions will have an answer. Even "whose going to call the shots?" One concern I have is of participation levels. Drops like a rock when Roshi is not here. Puzzled by that. Our practice is our practice. Burden for all of us to maintain a strong practice. In one year, perhaps we'll be saying, "Roshi who?"

Person 17

Impressed by the anxiety level. As if we're not capable. As if Roshi were the whole show.

When I sit and zendo is empty and a new person comes in. That's very important for us to participate and fill the zendo. Where's the sincere/strong practice? For new people, we can be friendly and evident.

It's too soon to want decisions. There are many months to go.

Person 18

Our bodhisattva vow is to practice for others. The sangha is the teacher too. The student/teacher relationship is not all of it.

Concern over the attendance issue - when she left before - never achieved those levels again.

The dynamic is changing. People aren't coming on Thursday nights. Traffic. Lots of reasons. We're going to have to get real. What kind of creative ideas? It's hard to make the trek to the Center. Perhaps it's pods elsewhere in the city. Saturdays have stopped being a big day. Something has shifted in LA. Keeping the mother center "integral". Outlying urban areas. We are ready for something like that.

Person 19

Everywhere I land everything changes. Been here 6 months. I am building relationships with teachers. Knew this was coming. Going to Santa Monica/Woodland Hills - building relationships with teachers. "Let's say goodbye to adolescence." A mother figure making a change and it's up to me to deal with that.

Person 20

Enjoyed listening. Roshi might get hit by a bus tomorrow (let's hope not). Came to ZCLA. I got fired by my other Zen teacher. She said, "Go see Egyoku". I didn't want to. I was content sitting at my house. I resisted. I came. A wonderful practice - hasn't come in the way that I expected. Roshi was gone before - the other teachers were gone too. But this time, I don't have that sense. All the dharma transmissions that have happened. I see other teachers stepping up. Give new teachers a chance to step up. Freedom to change the Center.

Wed. night and Fri. morn. 2 weeks a month there isn't a teacher. I've been seeing Ryodo on Wednesday night at his group. Going to a lot of dokusan on weekends. I really resisted that (meeting with other teachers). Go wherever I am uncomfortable. This transition will be uncomfortable.

Worry: finances/attendance.

But not a lot of anxiety. A lot of confidence. People have a good practice here. Inspiring to watch everybody. Would like to see more people step forward. "One leader on the top" and others get overlooked. "It's all about Roshi" - I get this impression, with no disparagement meant towards Roshi. There will be no absence in my life with everybody in this room.

Person 21

3 suggestions:

1. Partition the back wings of the zendo so the space doesn't seem so empty and big when there are few people.
2. Double the ad budget to bring in more people.
3. Make sure ZP1 and ZP2 are really strong. If new people don't stick, they bounce off. Limiting myself to those observations. I don't know where I'll be in a year - maybe not LA. I appreciate that no one has knocked on my door to get me into the zendo.

Person 22

Wondering what the process is to get people more involved at the Center. How does it happen?

Solidify their connection to the Center. I don't talk to people that I don't know. More hospitality effort (from everyone).

Person 23

Come park cars with me. It's a great way to know the sangha. I'm out there every weekend.

Closing Remarks

Person 1

I get a paternal feeling. It feels more hierarchical around the Center. We have Circles and the decisions are made there without consulting with the sangha. Not making decisions as a group. Where was the open call for volunteers recently? And then the assignments were just emailed out.

Person 2

What would the Center be without residents? Makes it different from other Centers. I don't know if I would come here if residents were not here. People here all the time. I'm in a different space when I come to the Center. I want to appreciate that this is a very complex organization. I am an organizational junky. Very complex on so many different levels. We've created it. It's a very foundational thing here that people live here. So many aspects of the Center are as important as the Abbot.

Person 3

Most of my concerns were mentioned.

Person 4

No lack of faith in the governance of the Center. The strength of the residents. Concern: impact in the Zendo. I notice it in the Zendo when Roshi is not here. Ryodo was my primary teacher first and I switched to Roshi when Ryodo left on sabbatical. That is where this word "abandonment" comes from - not having alternatives.

Person 5

Expect a certain vitality from these meetings. Honest and diverse. Always with deep respect. I leave here fuller and have warm hearted feeling. Glad. My deepest respect. This is the beginning of the process. Getting it right in the mind and in the heart and that's the way it expands.

Person 6

Concern: hierarchical nature of some emails. Concern: for the shared stewardship process. But now I realize that this meeting is the current iteration of the shared

stewardship of the Center. I will let go of clinging to the old shared stewardship and embrace this new one. This is a new birth of shared stewardship. We will examine how to do without and then how to welcome back a strong leader.

Person 7

In listening, I thought of documentary about Jesuit monastery in France. The filmmaker called them and asked to do a film about them and 16 years later they called him up and said, "We're ready." Interested and thankful that this process is being so carefully handled. Fascinated about other's comments about how complicated ZCLA is as an organization and appreciative of other's handling of this transition. When I came into the room and saw that the MHAE-CAAW people were here, I thought, "Oh, the authority figures are here." I need to examine my position as a resident and what my role is here, while also understanding that my role is developing.

Person 8

A lot of my concerns were voiced.

Sense of confidence in the sangha. Strength in the sangha. Feel that sense of authority in the CAAW group. Maybe I'm not a CAAW. How do I step in and take part in the process? Appreciate this idea that people feel different when they come to the Center. People feel that way. How important it is to talk to people that you don't know. Concerned about attendance dropping and of maintaining a strong ZP1 program.

Person 9

Great respect to the CAAW. I don't want to do that work. I do the Dharma Buddy thing. Introducing old people to new people. New people are eager to meet.

Person 10

The stewarding I do was made public. I stepped forward publicly after there was a public request for volunteers, so I don't understand these comments about lack of transparency. I don't know where people are. It's about stepping forward. The residents are stewards of the Center. If you can. It's a lot of work.

Person 11

I appreciate the mandala of the Center. So many circles within circles. This Center has a uniqueness. The residential sangha is 1 part of our uniqueness as a Center.

Person 12

I try to listen to each person intently. And appreciate and see the different expressions of life coming from each person. The subtle differences that make each person unique.

Person 13

I have a dharma buddy. We have lunch every 5 weeks. I was talking to this person when they were relatively new to the Center and asked what they thought of Roshi's announcement and they almost said, "Who's Roshi?" They thought of the Center as "this is the place to come and sit." This was a refreshing thought for me.

Person 14

It's an enormous honor to live here. Commuters amaze me. Concerned about tightening up ZP1 and ZP2. I don't like the \$20 suggested donation for ZP1 and ZP2. I don't like that ZP1 is not held in the Zendo.

Also wanted to mention Roshi's announcement that she would only meet with people working on Koans and senior students.

Person 15

On this concern with drop of participation: I've sat in the Zendo with no people and ZCLA is still here.

On budget concerns: almost everything is paid for here. There is only 1 mortgage. Maezumi Roshi said, "If this Center has to go, it will go." But it looks like it won't.

Person 16

I feel better after this meeting. I appreciate it being clarified that we are at the beginning of the process.

Person 17

Curious: so many functions that Roshi has been doing. What are they? What are the effects of her handing off her functions to other people?

Person 18

This is not the beginning of anything. It started before it started and it will keep on going after it ends.

When Maezumi Roshi left for a year to study in Japan, the Zendo was empty in the morning and a small scattering of people were there in the evening. I sat in the morning. Even after a year of empty dawn zendo, look where we are now.

First thought about becoming a teacher: "I've gotta fill these shoes?" You guys are my teachers. I learn from all of you. Thank you for all of your patience. We'll do the best we can.

Person 19

It takes awhile to move into a different role. I appreciate people coming to face to face meeting. The ancient feeling of energy here at the Center is palpable. There were several upheavals here at the Center. 2 major fallouts before Roshi came here. None of us knew what would happen. Many people left. I appreciate the uniqueness. Loved being here this evening.