

ZEN CENTER OF LOS ANGELES
GREAT DRAGON MOUNTAIN - BUDDHA ESSENCE TEMPLE

STATEMENT OF RIGHT CONDUCT

PREFACE

Practicing in a Sangha carries with it certain responsibilities, and it is important that the proper environment be continually actualized for the practice of the Buddha Way. To this end, we commit to right conduct by endorsing the following statement.

STATEMENT

The Zen Center of Los Angeles (ZCLA) Great Dragon Mountain-Buddha Essence Temple is committed to providing an open, supportive and nurturing environment for the practice of the Buddha Way. The ground for right conduct is the practice of the sixteen bodhisattva precepts, which are:

The Three Treasures

Be one with the Buddha, the awakened nature of all beings.

Be one with the Dharma, the ocean of wisdom and compassion.

Be one with the Sangha, the community of those living in harmony with all Buddhas and Dharmas.

The Three Pure Precepts and The Three Tenets

Do not commit evil: I will practice the First Tenet of Not-Knowing, thereby giving up fixed ideas about myself and the universe.

Do good: I will practice the Second Tenet of Bearing Witness to the joy and suffering of the world.

Do good for others: I will practice the Third Tenet of Taking a Liberating Action that serves the whole.

The Ten Grave Precepts

Do not kill: I recognize that I am not separate from all that is.

Do not steal: I am satisfied with what I have.

Do not be greedy: I encounter all creations with respect and dignity.

Do not tell a lie: I listen and speak from the heart.

Do not be ignorant: I cultivate a mind that sees clearly.

Do not talk about others' errors and faults: I unconditionally accept what each moment has to offer.

Do not elevate yourself and put down others: I speak what I perceive to be the truth without guilt or blame.

Do not be stingy: I use all of the ingredients of my life.

Do not get angry: I transform suffering into wisdom.
Do not speak ill of the Three Treasures: I honor my life as an instrument of peacemaking.

INTENTION

We recognize that the study and practice of the precepts is a life-long effort and is the responsibility of each person who endeavors to live the Buddha Way. These guidelines are intended to encourage each of us continually to examine the basic attitude and conduct necessary to accomplish the Way and to mature fully as human beings.

We also recognize that the resolution/dissolution of conflicts can consume a significant amount of time and energy for those whose position it may be to attend to these situations as members of the Senior Stewards Circle, allies or facilitators. We appreciate and support the generous attitude and efforts of these people, who take on the practice of attending to people in such situations in wise and compassionate ways.

As human beings striving collectively to awaken and accomplish the refined life of the Buddha, the responsibility rests with each one of us, with the collective, and with the organization. We urge all who come to practice here to assume this responsibility for themselves, for the Zen Center organization, for the welfare of others and the Sangha, and for the Buddhadharma. It is through our efforts that mutual trust and respect and the joy of practice will flourish in our Sangha.

HARMFUL CONDUCT

Harmful conduct is conduct that is harmful to ourselves or others. It includes forms of violence, sexual impropriety, drug or substance abuse, gossip, abusive language, triangulating (See Attachment A: Triangulation: Definition and Description.), or not dealing with problems directly. People who encounter inappropriate conduct from any member of the ZCLA Sangha, including its abbot, teachers, priests, instructors, stewards, staff, or who themselves practice such conduct, should be aware that these actions violate the spirit and practice of right conduct and seriously undermine the harmony of the Sangha. Sangha members should also know that each person is expected to take the actions necessary to address one's own harmful conduct.

ADDRESSING HARMFUL CONDUCT

We are committed to working through conflicts and difficulties that arise from violations of right conduct. Sangha members who bring conflicts to be addressed through the Zen Center process, as explained below, will not be subject to reprisal in any form and will be expected to participate in the resolution process.

It is common courtesy not to talk about others' problems. Doing so feeds energy into the problem, making it harder for the parties directly involved to resolve it, weakens the container of the Sangha and puts each person at risk of defamation. Discussion of conflicts shall be limited to those with a bona fide "need to know." Where a problem potentially affects the whole Sangha, it will be the

responsibility of the Abbot or Teachers Circle to call a meeting of the Sangha to discuss the issue(s) in an expeditious manner.

Different forms of harmful conduct call for different responses. We set out below five categories of harmful conduct, and outline the procedure that should be followed for each. The five categories of harmful conduct are:

1. Situations involving conduct that is not criminal in nature.
2. Situations in which conflicts are not being addressed.
3. Situations involving conduct of an egregious or criminal nature.
4. Situations in which a ZCLA Sangha member is in conflict with person(s) of another sangha.
5. Situations in which a change of teacher might result for an individual student.

1. The Procedure For Addressing Situations Involving Harmful Conduct That Is Not Criminal In Nature.

STEP ONE: go directly to the person(s) involved.

- (i) When a conflict arises, the person(s) who is involved should go directly to the person(s) in question and make every effort to work out the situation. (See Attachment B: Guidelines for Speaking Directly with a Person With Whom One is in Conflict.)
- (ii) We encourage people to speak directly to each other. This is the practice of the Three Tenets: (1) not knowing, or being open and not fixing our position; (2) bearing witness by listening and speaking from the heart and being candid, open, and specific; and (3) arriving at a liberating action that serves all parties. It is our experience that many difficulties can be satisfactorily addressed in this way, even if it takes several meetings.
- (iii) A good-faith effort should be made by the Sangha member to exercise this step within fourteen calendar days from the date of the incident, and for there to be a response from the other person(s) in question within fourteen calendar days from the date of request.
- (iv) We recognize there may be situations where speaking directly to another person is not appropriate. When in doubt, please consult with a member of the Senior Steward Circle. When speaking directly is inappropriate to the situation or when attempts at speaking directly are unsuccessful, please go to STEP TWO.

STEP TWO: go to a member of the Senior Steward Circle.

- (i) When going directly to the person involved is unsuccessful or unwise, contact a member of the **Senior Steward Circle**. The Senior Steward Circle is comprised of Preceptors, members of the Teachers Circle, the Abbot/Abbot Seat Holder, the Resident Steward, and the Stewards of the Board of Directors, the Executive Circle, and the Buddha Hand Circle. A current list of the people holding these positions may be found in the Shared Steward Roster. The complainant should make a good faith effort to exercise this step within fourteen calendar days from the date of the incident.
- (ii) The Senior Steward Circle member contacted will immediately notify the other members of the Senior Steward Circle. The Senior Steward Circle member who is contacted will serve as an impartial ally. The impartial ally will hold the space by listening and helping to assess and discern the situation and explore with the complainant various ways to address it. The ally may need to speak to the other party(s) involved and consult with the Senior Steward Circle as needed. The impartial ally should make a good faith effort to respond within fourteen calendar days from the date initially contacted by the complainant.
- (iii) In a situation where a facilitator is advisable, the impartial ally will help the parties to the conflict to choose an appropriate facilitator. All parties to the conflict should make every effort to agree to the choice of facilitator and method of facilitation (i.e., council, conversation, mediation, etc.) before proceeding. If the parties cannot come to agreement, the Senior Steward Circle will appoint a facilitator.
- (iv) We understand that situations arise when a quick solution is not forthcoming. We commit to practicing with these situations by continuing to hold a space for introspection, deep listening, speaking our truth, and working towards action(s) that will serve all parties. Effort should be made by all parties to move forward to a satisfactory dissolution of the problem.

STEP THREE: file a formal grievance.

- (i) A formal, written grievance can be made against any person in the Sangha when STEPS ONE and TWO do not work, or when the offense is egregious.
- (ii) A formal grievance is written, signed, and dated by the person filing the grievance. The written grievance will include all the pertinent details of the issue(s), what (if any) previous attempts have been made to resolve the issue(s), and why the previous attempts (if any) have not been satisfactory.
- (iii) The written grievance is submitted to a member of the Senior Steward Circle. The member contacted will immediately forward the written grievance to the other members of the Senior Steward Circle. Upon receiving the written grievance, a

minimum of three members of the Senior Steward Circle will convene and decide what the appropriate next steps should be. The Senior Steward Circle will make a good faith effort to respond to the member filing the written grievance within fourteen calendar days from the date it is initially submitted to inform them of how the written grievance is being addressed. These next steps could include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Further investigation.
 - (b) An arbitrated meeting between the parties.
 - (c) Referral of the issue to an independent party for investigation and recommendation. Independent parties may include White Plum Asanga teachers or someone with expertise in the subject area of the grievance.
 - (d) When conflicts are referred to an outside investigator, the Senior Steward Circle will contact legal counsel for advice and to assess potential liability to the Zen Center.
- (iv) A response in writing will be submitted from the Senior Stewards Circle within a mutually agreed-upon time limit. The Senior Stewards Circle should make a good faith effort to respond to a written grievance within sixty calendar days from the date the written grievance is initially received.

2. The Procedure For Addressing Situations In Which Conflicts Are Not Being Addressed.

- (i) Any Sangha member may step forward to bring to the attention of a member of the Senior Stewards Circle any issues or conflicts ongoing in the community that are not being attended to by those involved. Ongoing unaddressed issues or conflicts can seriously undermine the harmony of the Sangha.
- (ii) Examples of such conflicts include ongoing acting out emotionally or psychologically unstable behaviors, addictions, the spreading of gossip or rumors, triangulating, and behaving in ways that are not in alignment with Zen Center practices or policies.
- (iii) The Senior Stewards Circle will determine an appropriate response depending on the situation.

3. The Procedure For Addressing Situations Involving Egregious Or Criminal Offenses.

- (i) Examples of egregious offenses include malicious gossip, written, verbal or electronic abuse, bullying, and sexual harassment. Examples of criminal actions include theft, physical violence, sexual violence such as rape, threats of violence,

stalking, and embezzlement. Crimes will be reported to the appropriate legal authorities.

- (ii) Anyone who is aware of such conduct should contact a member of the Senior Stewards Circle, and the Senior Stewards Circle will determine an appropriate response depending on the situation.

4. The Procedure for ZCLA Sangha Member Conflict with A Member of Another Sangha.

Where a problem occurs between a ZCLA Sangha member and a member of another Sangha, the problem-solving process will defer to the policies and practices in place with the Sangha of the person that the complaint is about. The ZCLA Abbot and Teachers Circle will be informed about the situation. The situation shall be discussed with the ZCLA Sangha only where there is a bona fide need to know.

5. The Procedure for Change of Teacher for an Individual Student.

For Senior Students (shuso or head trainee) or Ordained Priests (tokudo), if the parties deem it necessary and/or desirous, the procedure for changing to a teacher in another Sangha or Lineage as outlined by the White Plum Asanga (See Attachment C: Procedure for Changing Teachers Within the White Plum Sangha) will be followed.

ATONEMENT

Any person(s) who violates right conduct is also expected to make every effort to realign his/her conduct with the precepts and to take the action(s) necessary to restore the harmony of individual relationships and of the Sangha. Such atonement is an integral part of right conduct.

Atonement can take many forms, including but not limited to person-to-person apologies, letters of amends, financial restitution, and acts of service as amends. The formal practice of atonement is held regularly at the Zen Center and members are strongly encouraged to make this an ongoing practice.

SUMMATION

It is our sincere intention to continually realign our lives in accord with the precepts and to provide an open, supportive, and nurturing environment for the practice of the Buddha Way. The Zen Center upholds core values and core practices to support us in continually facing and shifting our individual and collective conduct for the mutual awakening and benefit of all. We are committed to maturing fully, both individually and collectively.

ENDORSEMENT

This Statement of Right Conduct has been adopted by the Abbot, Board of Directors, and Sangha on _____.

(This statement was first issued on October 28, 1991 and approved and endorsed by the Abbot and Board of Directors of the Zen Center of Los Angeles on March 10, 1993, in Los Angeles, CA; it was revised and updated in 1999 and again in 2011.)

I have read, understood and agree to comply with the above guidelines.

Print Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

SRC Attachments:

Attachment A Triangulation: Definition and Description.

Attachment B Guidelines for Speaking Directly with a Person With Whom One is in Conflict.

Attachment C Procedure for Changing Teachers Within the White Plum.