



Buddhist Project Sunshine Phase 2

Final Report

A 3-month Initiative To Bring Healing Light

To Sexualized Violence At The Core Of The Shambhala Buddhist Community

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Respectfully offered by Andrea M. Winn, MEd, MCS

With Collaborators:

Richard Edelman

Carol Merchasin, J.D.

Elizabeth Monson, PhD

and Women Survivors

*This report is dedicated with honour
to the brave women who
each found her own way
to survive sexual abuse by her guru.*

*May each of these women
find a true and lasting peace
and benefit from the deep healing
of the truth coming to light.*

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Welcome

Welcome to this sacred space of Truth Telling and community healing. There are Shambhala teachings that say that we can *invoke Drala* through *telling the truth*. I imagine we have all had the experience when someone speaks the truth of a situation, it invokes an environment of clarity and humanity that opens up true possibilities. That is the purpose of this report.

This report was written with great care for how you will receive it. We know these topics are of the most intimate nature. Great care must be taken so that what is shared here will be of genuine benefit to you and your path. Please join us in a collaboration of giving and receiving, creating space to meaningfully digest the information that is shared herein.

And please join us for the Buddhist Project Sunshine discussion group happening in June and July 2018 at: http://andreamwinn.com/offerings/project_sunshine_discussion_group/

Buddhist Social Activism

We are Buddhists. We have taken vows binding ourselves to reflective and compassionate action. Please bring to mind your refuge and bodhisattva vows. By each of us taking responsibility for caring for our own heart, and our own mind space, we can bring a reflective, step-by-step approach to mixing our Buddhist values with the social action that is now called for in our community.

An Invitation For How To Read The Report

Sexualized violence is a scary topic. Most of us will have reactions to any mention of it. These reactions can happen unconsciously, as we may shut down and perhaps even try to shut down the person talking about it. This is a topic that has been suppressed for a long time.

We must take a moment to acknowledge that this moment in time is powerful. It is powerful when survivors break the silence about abuse. When a community opens its mind and starts to acknowledge the violence that has happened, it can shake the community's foundation. What has happened in our community touches on fundamental beliefs and held truths of our community. People reading this report may have reactions to what is here.

I'd like for you to be able to engage reading this report in a way where you are conscious of what reactions are happening inside of you. Please try using a method called, "Horizon

Analysis”, that I introduced in the Phase 1 report. This is an emotionally safer way to engage the material in this report. I strongly encourage you to schedule quiet "retreat" time in your calendar, print this entire report, and do a Horizon Analysis, as explained in Appendix 1.

What is Buddhist Project Sunshine?

Why I Started Buddhist Project Sunshine

I started this project out of compassion. Something has gone tragically wrong in the Shambhala community. We appear to have allowed abuse within our community for nearly four decades, and it is time to take practical steps to end it.

In early 2017 I came to a point in my life where I was ready to come out from under the rock of oppressive silence and bring change that has been long needed in the Shambhala community. I was sexually abused as a child by multiple perpetrators in our community. When I was a young adult, I spoke up about the community’s sexual abuse problem and was demonized by my local Shambhala center, ostracized and forced to leave. The shocking truth is that allegedly almost all of the young people in my age group were sexually harassed and/or sexually abused. I don't know the statistics on the generations of children after mine. What I do know is that many of us have left the community, and for those who have stayed, their voices have been unheard. Beyond child sexual abuse, it appears women and other vulnerable people continue to be abused in relationships with community leaders and by their sanghas.

I experienced profound abuse in this community, and I don't want to see it continue to happen to others like me. I saw a way to help through creating Buddhist Project Sunshine to establish a strong foundation for change.

Buddhist Project Sunshine Phase 1

I launched Buddhist Project Sunshine Phase 1, a one-year project, on Shambhala Day 2017 to (1) establish a working body of concerned citizens to look into the suggestion of sexual and social abuse in the Shambhala community, and (2) create a promotional campaign to start a productive conversation about this situation on a community-wide level.

Phase 1 resulted in Shambhala International publicly declaring 'ABHORRENT SEXUAL BEHAVIOR' by Shambhala teachers. This initiated our community's healing process.

Buddhist Project Sunshine Phase 2

It became clear to me that Shambhala International leaders were not grounded enough to help our community heal from the dynamics of sexual abuse. It is alleged that some of the worst abuse has been perpetrated by key Shambhala leaders, and therefore, more energy was likely to go into covering up the abuse than bringing it into the light. A woman emailed me who said she was abused by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. She shared the image of an apple that is rotten at the core, and she asked, how can the community heal if the core is rotten? I took her question to heart.

At the same time, Carol Merchasin, an experienced sexual misconduct investigator wrote to me saying, *"Andrea: You do not know me but I have watched what has gone on at Vajradhatu and then Shambhala since 1982 and I am glad there is some chance that sanity may now reign, even if Shambhala International does not have the fearlessness to confront the problems. I am a lawyer with many years of experience in sexual issues in the US workplace and I know that unless perpetrators are held to account, it is very hard for organizations to heal. I haven't seen much willingness for SI to do that. Just know that there are folks out here supporting you."*

Receiving messages like these showed me the next step was to reveal the alleged clergy sexual misconduct of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. It is important to acknowledge that Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche perpetrated equally damaging abuses, and his actions will definitely need to be held to account as well in our community's healing process. However, in discussion with Carol Merchasin, it became clear that the place to start is with the current living teacher, who can be held to account for his actions.

A third major player came forward at this time, Richard Edelman, who has done years of research into the history of abuse in Tibetan Buddhism, the broader spectrum of trauma and abuse happening in Buddhist communities in the West, and the nature of cult dynamics within Buddhist communities.

At that point I asked Carol Merchasin to do a preliminary investigation into the alleged clergy sexual misconduct of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, and I asked Richard Edelman to assist me in overseeing the investigation. I can assure you that this investigation was done with care, professionalism and thoroughness. I have complete confidence in the findings.

We presented the findings to Shambhala International's mediator, Kathleen Franco, on May 24th, with our direct call for the Kalapa Council to hire a third-party neutral investigator to conduct a full investigation into the allegations of Sakyong Mipham's sexual assaults and sexual misconduct. It has been more than a month, and we have still received no response from Shambhala International to the findings or our call for an investigation. I now respectfully present the findings to the Shambhala community in the memo attached to the end of this report.

Impact Of Violation On Members and Communities

The following two lists of impacts are adapted from "*Client Rights in Psychotherapy & Counselling: A Handbook of Client Rights and Therapist Responsibilities*"

Impact Of Violation On Members

Note: "Leader" refers to anyone in a position of authority, such as a community leader, teacher, meditation instructor, program coordinator, dorje kasung, kusung, Shambhala patron, and direct family members of the principle or teacher/guru.

If your rights are violated by a leader of the Shambhala community, the impact is similar to other kinds of abuse. The effects of the violation will depend on factors such as: the length of your relationship with the leader and how long the violation went on; your degree of vulnerability while in the relationship; your history of abuse; and the kinds of support available to you.

If your rights have been violated, you may experience any of the following:

- *general distrust and fear of others (especially anyone in the Shambhala community)*
- *rage and anger at the leader who has violated you*
- *deep sense of betrayal and abandonment*
- *loss, grief, sadness and helplessness*
- *self blame, shame and guilt ("If only I said 'no' sooner")*
- *self doubt ("maybe I've misunderstood or maybe I'm being too critical of the leader")*
- *overwhelmed and in crisis (wanting to harm yourself)*
- *fear that others will not believe you*
- *depression or deep sense of despair*
- *feeling as though you have been "raped", even if the violation was not sexual*

- *a need to protect the leader who has violated you*
- *a need to protect other members who are at risk*
- *a need for resolution and compensation*
- *confusion when other members working with the same leader are not violated*
- *confusion because the leader was also helpful to you*
- *fear the leader may cause you further harm if you speak out*
- *resentment for the loss of time and money*
- *isolation from the lack of resources and support*
- *a disruption in your intimate relationships*
- *an inability or disruption of carrying out your daily activities*

Impact Of Violation On Communities

The personal violation of one member, by one leader, will affect the lives of many people. If the violation is not addressed on a community level, the impact of the violation will, in time, erode the general sense of trust and safety within that community.

When your rights have been violated, your community may experience any of the following:

- *general sense of fear or distrust of leaders and the Shambhala organization in general*
- *feelings of division and suspicion (dividing leaders into “the unethical” and “the ethical”)*
- *leaders protecting themselves or one another instead of the rights of members*
- *feelings of betrayal and abandonment by those who witness the violation and by members who are not believed or are unsupported*
- *feelings of guilt and confusion by community members who struggle to find ways to support violated members*
- *feelings of confusion by community members who are searching for ways to confront and hold offending leaders accountable for their actions*
- *loss of solidarity and faith among members and leaders, among member, and among leaders*
- *the disruption or destruction of intimate relationships because of the distress the violation brings to the lives of violated members, offending leaders, and other members of a community who witness the violation*
- *frustration because of the lack of education and training about ethics and member rights*

Clergy Sexual Misconduct And Its Impact

Clergy sexual misconduct is an even more concerning form of sexualized violence, as it exponentially increases damage through the intersection of two of the most intimate and damaging forms of abuse: sexual abuse and spiritual abuse. I am including an excerpt on this topic from An Olive Branch's white paper, "Clergy Sexual Misconduct and the Misuse of Power":

What Constitutes "Sexual Misconduct"?

Sexual misconduct is defined on The Criminal Defense Lawyer website as follows:

Clergy Sexual Misconduct and the Misuse of Power

"A person in a position of power commits the crime of sexual misconduct by taking advantage of that position to enter into a sexual relationship with a person under his or her authority. For example, a psychiatrist who has sex with a patient may be charged with sexual misconduct. Some states have specific laws that criminalize sexual misconduct. In other states, sexual misconduct is prohibited under other criminal statutes, such as statutory rape or sexual battery."

The website article focuses on sexual activity between two people whose relationship is not on equal footing. It states that "...in most sexual misconduct cases, it does not matter if the victim consented to the activity or even initiated it, because lawmakers have determined that a person in the victim's position is legally unable to consent to sex with a person in the defendant's position."

The prohibition of sexual conduct between people in fiduciary relationships is based on the theory that the victim cannot truly consent to the activity because he or she is under the influence or authority of the person in the position of power. "The factors that characterize a fiduciary relationship -- trust, reliance, emotional intimacy and vulnerability -- ...are such that liability is imposed even if the sexual contact is facially consensual and imposed without regard to the wrongdoer incidentally occupying the role of a clergyperson."

Examples of fiduciary relationships include:

- *Therapists/psychologists/counselors and their patients*
- *Doctors and their patients*
- *Teachers and their students*

- *Lawyers and their clients*
- *Spiritual leaders and their congregants.*

FaithTrust Institute's definition:

It is clergy misconduct when any person in a ministerial role of leadership for pastoral counseling (clergy, religious, or lay) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, or staff member (adult, teenager, or child) in a professional relationship. Such misconduct is a violation of the ministerial relationship in which a person in a position of religious leadership takes advantage of a vulnerable person instead of protecting her/him.

According to Jack Kornfield, "There are four major areas where teachers and communities most often get into difficulties." They are misuse of power, money, sexuality, and addiction to alcohol or drugs. He writes that the misuse of power "...happens most often in communities where all the power is centered on one teacher and their wishes are followed no matter what the consequence..." As for misuse of sexuality, Kornfield writes, "Sometimes a secret sexual encounter is carried out in the name of 'tantra,' or in the name of special teachings." He writes that clandestine sex, exploitation, and sexual abuse on the part of many lamas, Zen masters, swamis, and gurus have wreaked havoc on the lives of students and their community.

Read the full white paper at: <http://www.cbelakodesign.com/journal/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/An-Olive-Branch-White-Paper-on-Clergy-Misconduct-and-the-Misuse-of-Power.pdf>

Stories From Women Survivors of Sakyong Mipham's Alleged Clergy Sexual Misconduct

A number of women came forward to be interviewed for the Buddhist Project Sunshine preliminary investigation of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. You will find the results of this investigation in Appendix 5.

Some, but not all, of these women were also willing to write their story and the impact the alleged abuse had on them for this report. They did this to help the community more fully understand the depth of the problem we must now face so we can make informed decisions as we move forward as a community.

Anonymous Story & Impact Statement #1

Some months ago, I read Project Sunshine's Phase I report. What powerfully stood out for me were the impact statements of those who had experienced sexual abuse within the Shambhala Buddhist mandala. It was the heartbreaking details – from what happened, to how what happened had affected and continues to affect the lives of those women and men who suffered these abuses and transgressions, that pierced my heart and branded themselves in my mind's eye. How true it is that the devil is in the details! For this reason, I have decided to write my own impact statement – so that light may be brought into a darkness that has persisted over many years and to encourage anyone who reads this statement to learn the truth about not only the abuses described, but also to peer into the larger culture of collusion and blindness that has functioned to sanction and excuse such abuses. This impact statement seeks to present both a description of SMR's sexual misconduct as well as the larger context in which the events and experiences I experienced unfolded.

The first time I saw Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, I knew he was my teacher – not just a teacher for this life, but a teacher I had known before and with whom I was now reconnecting in this lifetime. I sobbed with joy after my first conversation with him – a conversation whose content was irrelevant to my sense that our communication had nothing to do with what was said, but that it was part of a larger recognition of the open wisdom and compassion that forms the bedrock of our lives. From that day on, I turned my entire life toward the Dharma and toward my teacher. I did whatever I could to offer myself to the Shambhala world and to serve SMR.

Over years I studied, practiced, and trained to serve. I completed almost every practice available in the Shambhala Buddhist mandala. I studied every text. In particular, I trained in service to the Shambhala mandala on multiple levels. First, I trained as a server in the Sakyong's household. It was in serving in this role, often late at night at banquets or dinner parties that extended into the wee hours, that I first saw the patterns of heavy drinking that I later became intimately familiar with. As I moved up through the ranks of service, I was around SMR more and more. I trained as a kasung and as a kusung-in-training. I left behind

my secular life, my friends, and almost my family. Shambhala was my world, my home, my deepest joy. I loved serving, I loved practicing, I loved studying. My dearest friends were sangha. At the center of all of this was my teacher, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche.

I provide this background as context for what happened. Shambhala was my world and the inner mandala was my home.

Over these years another story played itself out. Part of this story, the part I take responsibility for, was my romantic fantasy of a Tibetan Buddhist guru who could see in and through me, who intimately knew exactly who I was and who could and would orchestrate whatever conditions were required to wake me up. The other part of the story was the clergy sexual misconduct enacted by the Sakyong and condoned, supported and hidden by those who served him.

From early on, I watched myself and others (both men and women) strive to secure a place near SMR. One way this dynamic evolved took place around the “parties” that occurred wherever SMR was staying. Sometimes there would be only one party, other times more. These parties formed a secret world behind the regular programs and events of SMR’s visits to different centers. They lingered in the shadows, tantalizing us with their promises of unusual and intimate experiences with the otherwise distant-seeming guru. To be invited to such a party signaled a kind of acceptance to the inner mandala, the secret mandala. When I first began to be invited to these parties, I was elated. I felt as though my devotion was being recognized and acknowledged and that I now genuinely “belonged.”

The parties all followed a similar pattern. They began with socializing and drinking, music and banter. At some point food was served and the drinking continued. Most of us became highly intoxicated, but few so much as SMR himself. The more intoxicated he became, the more he demonstrated various kinds of outrageous activities – spontaneous poetry competitions, long monologues, harangues of some people who had displeased him. Alongside these (mostly) harmless demonstrations, SMR also pursued another activity. He went after whichever woman took his fancy.

For me, this manifested in an experience that occurred repeatedly over years. When he was completely intoxicated, SMR would pull me into a dark corner. He kissed me and groped me while aggressively encouraging me to come to bed with him. Most of the time, another woman who had been invited to the party was already present. For me to comply with SMR’s wishes, I would have had to displace this other woman. Knowing how painful this would be for her, I couldn’t do it. Year after year, I resisted. There was only one night that I slept in SMR’s bed. There had been no girlfriend present that night. He was so drunk that I spent much of the night holding a bowl for him to vomit into. I snuck out of the room before dawn feeling bewildered and ashamed. Several days later, when he had recovered from the alcohol and I saw him, there was no mention of what had happened. Indeed, there was never any mention of these encounters.

This pattern continued year after year. Trying to make sense of how he could desire me while drunk, but act as if this abuse had never happened the rest of the time, I became more and more confused about what devotion to the teacher meant. And since I was often present at the court, I began to recognize another repeating pattern. This pattern consisted of SMR calling women to his bedroom, spending intimate time with them, and then losing interest. Without any warning or communication, they would be dismissed. This pattern occurred with women SMR culled from seminaries for one-night stands, sending out the Kusung to bring one or another newbie to his bed and it also occurred with longer-term girlfriends. All these women were one moment close and the next minute invisible.

Observing this pattern and experiencing the push and pull of his intoxicated desire for me, my sense of devotion became mixed with ordinary emotional needs to be seen, appreciated, valued, and wanted. I never had any strong sexual desire for SMR, but, I wanted to be special and indispensable. I wanted to be "the one" that was never discarded or abandoned and, for many years, by keeping myself at arm's length, I believed that I had found a way to stay protected from the pattern of harm that I saw him repeatedly enact.

At the same time, this kind of sexual intimacy appeared as the primary way that an attractive woman could be valued or recognized. Although this horrified me, because he was my teacher, I harbored fear that if I resisted his desires, I would be exiled – I would lose the Dharma, lose my friends, lose my teacher, lose my world. Like so many other women, I continued to hope that he would eventually realize that I was his true consort. I clung to the idea that an intimacy would eventually develop between us outside of drunken midnight groping. But, year after year, this same pattern continued and, year after year, I found myself struggling to rationalize his behavior by telling myself I was being shown the patterns of my own poverty mentality and grasping, my desire for recognition and connection. These patterns were wrong and SMR's actions were meant to purge me of them.

Finally, however, common sense and the reality of how ashamed, anguished, and bewildered I felt prompted me to speak out. I could no longer rationalize what was happening. After one particularly egregious night, I spoke my mind. I told him, after he'd recovered from his hangover three days later, that if he thought I was waiting around for him to ask me to marry him, he could think again. I told him that I'd seen how he treated women and I wanted no part of it. Years of frustration and wondering what he wanted from me bubbled up. As I spoke, SMR sat with a stunned look on his face and for some time said nothing. When he finally did speak, he said that he was sorry, that he had not meant to hurt me. That was it. He left the room. From that time on, he never spoke to me privately again and bit by bit, I was pushed from the inner circle. There was never any form of clear communication but slowly and steadily I was dismissed, my jobs were taken over by others, and I found myself grasping at clues trying to figure out what was happening. A staff member eventually confirmed that I was being dismissed and he himself would be taking over my tasks.

My final meeting with SMR took place about a year after the incident where I told him what I really thought about his treatment of women. He was sitting in his father's old bedroom. I was on the floor. I begged him to tell me if he didn't want me around anymore. I asked him to tell

me the truth. I acknowledged that hearing the truth would be hard for me, that I didn't want to leave, but that knowing was far preferable to trying to figure it out in the dark. He got up and walked out of the room.

When SMR walked away, after so many years and so much work, after so much time together and sense of connection, when he abandoned me with so much ease and without a second thought, I was devastated. Had I made this whole thing all up? Was it all just a one-sided daydream? I doubted everything about the Dharmic connection I had before felt so much confidence in. I found myself in a miasma of distrust of my own intuition, those deeper levels of knowing. I questioned all the times he had drawn me aside, alone, or with others, to talk to us about his plans for his first teachers, describing how we would be his first teachers, trained by him to teach in the Dharma as we received it from him. I was tortured recalling how it seemed that I was only desirable to him when he was drunk and that my primary value was as an object to be groped and seduced.

And there was no one to turn to. As soon as I was dismissed, the inner court and almost all my "friends" turned their backs on me as if I never existed. I was ghosted, ignored, and at the few programs I attended in a desperate effort to reconnect, those who had been my closest friends were cool, distant, and even actively unfriendly. The few public conversations I had with SMR were brief and general. I continued to struggle with the feeling that I had done something wrong.

When I think back on these events now, I wonder that I was willing to endure these experiences for so long. SMR played this game with me for many years, holding me at a distance, bringing me in close, and dangling me out again. I had tried strategies to break this cycle of torture by distancing myself from him and engaging in other romantic relationships. All along, I wondered what I would do if he ever truly beckoned me in a real way to be with him. By a real way, I mean, in the light of day, with full faculties and honesty, a genuine and real communication of the heart rather than the surreptitious midnight liaisons from which the woman must sneak away before dawn so as not to be seen or known to have been with him. I had seen so many women have that experience. I was there when women were brought to SMR in the middle of night and pushed out the door before dawn to stumble back to their beds and await his choice for the next night. Wondering if they would be chosen again. Waiting day after day to see where his fancy might fall.

At one point, SMR asked me to take care of some of the women and to try to help them "understand." Understand what, I never quite knew and even if I had "understood" what could I say? But, like a good student and sycophant, I tried to help others with the emotional distress they were experiencing, particularly when it became clear that SMR was about to turn his back on them.

Writing this now, I can still feel the bafflement that has been with me ever since SMR turned his back on me as my teacher. I genuinely believed in the understanding of samaya between the guru and the student that states that samaya is a two-way street in which both teacher and student uphold and support the connection. When SMR turned his back on me because I

told him what I thought about how he treated women, it was clear that there was no room for honesty, no room for genuine communication and no room for the exposure and purification of neuroses. One was either with SMR all the way or out. I had believed that SMR and I shared a deep level of both intellectual and non-conceptual intimacy. I had felt this connection in my bones, my blood, my skin. It wasn't a conceptual thought, it was a deep awakening in my nature that resonated with the Dharma as it came through him. I had trusted this intuitive level of my being, deeply trusted it, and had relied on it for protection from the surface whims and painful vicissitudes of his desires. And then it was gone.

Since those days, I have had to rebuild my dharma path from the bottom up. For many years, I struggled in silence and shame, without anyone to confide in or rely on for help. It was only when I finally realized that the Dharma could never be taken away from me, that it was folded into the very marrow of my bones, that I began to recover some semblance of confidence and clarity. This confidence has allowed me to reclaim my path and to turn the abuse and pain I experienced into a catalyst for growth and compassion. It is my hope that by sharing my story, others who have experienced similar, and often, much more egregious and harmful experiences with SMR will feel encouraged to find healing and resolution.

I continue to hope that deep down, SMR possesses the kind of integrity, compassion and wisdom that I had believed him to possess. I pray that he can find the courage to take responsibility for the harm he has caused. It is unconscionable that he should be speaking of intolerance for sexual misconduct without taking responsibility for all the years of his own enactment of clergy sexual misconduct with so many women. Even if he is no longer engaging in these kinds of activities at this present moment, what about those women who experienced abuse from him for many years who have suffered in silence, isolation and shame? Isn't their suffering just as important now as it was then? The excuse that all of this happened many years ago holds no water. Wouldn't the three daughters of SMR want to know that their father cares about the welfare and the spiritual paths of all his students - male, female, transgender, gender-fluid, etc.? Harm was experienced. I experienced it. My honesty is what lost me my home in Shambhala and any sense of a genuine connection with my teacher, who could not face the truth of his actions.

Anonymous Story & Impact Statement #2

When I first learned of Project Sunshine and the conversation that was happening on Facebook I became completely engrossed, reading all that I could find. I was surprised to see that there seemed to be no mention of the Sakyong in the conversation except for people saying how relieved they were that this pattern of abusive behavior was isolated to the old days of the Vidyadhara. Reading through the discussion made me realize how much I longed to hear from other women like myself who had kept the shameful secret of the Sakyongs' behavior to myself for all these years.

Over many years I had several sexual encounters with the Sakyong that left me feeling ashamed, demoralized and worthless. Like many young women in the sangha, I was deeply devoted to the Sakyong and did whatever I could to serve him and be close to him. I witnessed the steady stream of attractive women that were invited into his quarters and I longed to be the one that he fell in love with and was worthy of being his wife.

During a program you could often tell who the Sakyong was going to pursue that night by who he made eye contact with during the teaching or feast. One night I received a call from his kusung at 11pm or 12pm saying that the Sakyong would like to see me and that I should come to his suite. I was thrilled and nervous. When I got there, he was dressed solely in a robe with no clothes underneath. We chatted for a while. Then he led me into his room and began kissing me and removing my clothes. I said that I couldn't have sex with him. He seemed stunned. He thought for a while and then pushed my face down towards his penis and said "Well you might as well finish this." I was so embarrassed and horrified I did it. He rolled over in bed and didn't say another word to me.

On another occasion I was invited to a dinner party where the Sakyong was encouraging everyone to drink a lot. He then insisted that we take off our clothes. He led one woman into his bedroom while the rest of us danced. After a while his kusung came out to get me to come to the Sakyong's bedroom. I went into the room and discovered the Sakyong and the woman on his bed having sex. He said to me "She won't come. Do something to help." I stood there stunned and he said "Play with her tits. Do something."

On another occasion I was serving in the household and took some tea to him in his bedroom where he was watching tv. He asked me to sit down with him on the bed. He was only wearing a bathrobe. After a while he opened his robe to reveal his penis and said "I was hoping you could help me out." Again, I did it and felt completely disgusted with myself, but I was so conflicted with doing what my teacher asked of me, feeling so devoted to him and not wanting to displease him or fall from his graces. This time especially felt even more demeaning as I was in uniform. More and more it felt like he had no interest in me or my well-being. Only his pleasure.

For years I struggled with these memories and my devotion to him as my guru and the brilliant teacher I believed him to be. I pushed them aside, instead internalizing the tremendous shame and feelings of unworthiness.

It has been one of the great heartbreaks of my life to leave the Shambhala Sangha. It was my life and my family for so many years but I could no longer hold the dichotomy of the Sakyong as my guru and a man who made me feel like I meant nothing.

A Last-minute Story Submission

A second generation Shambhalian, or “dharma brat,” wanted to contribute her story at the last minute after she saw the Sakyong’s “apology” letter (See Appendix 3). She gave me permission to re-print something she shared previously in another forum.

Hello friends.

The last 6 months have been both treacherous and clarifying as conversations have unfolded, dragged on and danced around the topic of Shambhala sexual abuse. I have often thought it deserves its own unique brand. It’s as if a collective community trauma has been triggered and we are drawn to replay, revisit, deny and avoid patterns that seem so engrained to the community. I’ve watched, listened and engaged in these conversations both online and off—some held really close and privately, some that spread far. I have followed and at various points engaged both Project Sunshine and Shambhala Initiatives to Address Harm and the various strategies being churned up this time around. After being harassed and manipulated to ultimately STFU (sometimes asked really kindly) by ‘friends,’ court staff and various leaders (of which pretty much everyone is), after being given this “incredible opportunity” to stand in the deep river of this community’s relationship to sexual abuse and feel how its currents continue to impact me, I realize that the (false) hope I had reignited for change in December has died.

I was sexually assaulted by the Sakyong in the kitchen of the Halifax Kalapa Court after his wife, the Sakyong Wangmo, retired for the night with her first daughter, following the celebration of her first birthday in August, 2011. This experience was traumatic for me. It took place one year after we welcomed Jetsun Drukmo home on that very lawn. It also marked the one year anniversary of meeting my then partner, who stood in the same room as me that night and watched, did nothing, turned the other way. As time went on, the community’s formal responses and members’ processes of relating to this disclosure and fact have overall exacerbated my confusion and suffering and eroded my mind and body’s health. The responses and denials continue to trigger me and prevent me from moving on from that harm and I believe are preventing the community from its own “healing”. It is truly sad, hard and painful for me to admit this and I would encourage people who deeply care about this community and this family you serve to realize that nothing can change if it doesn’t begin with honesty and recognition of the facts and factors we are working with. The Sakyong’s Chief of Staff is most certainly aware of this incident of “sexual misconduct” despite what he has said to the contrary and to the Project Sunshine Mediator. Kalapa Council members know about this sexual misconduct, one of whom was supposed to be my MI around this time but never followed up. I have told several personally. And I know I am not the only one.

For me, these past 6 months have strengthened relations, turned up new alliances, softened family members and neighbors, challenged, stretched and at times snapped long-held friendships. I have wondered if and how connections with those I adore and appreciate could continue and be cultivated, how our experience of our relationships might have meaning beyond and regardless of our relationship to Shambhala. I met a lot of you through training, practicing, staffing, being socialized in and socializing as an adult in the community and with community members. And although I love you dearly, the Sakyong and his family included (and this is actually true—it's pretty fucked up), I can't keep "doing" Shambhala and shambhala as we have been taught and are restricted to do it anymore. I know this because it forces me to twist my heart in ways I know it should not have to be twisted. I know there are many meaningful connections with those I've met 'there' and I invite you to continue to cultivate those with me without the filter of Shambhala the Thing, The Project.

Come be a friend, become a Velveteen —please do. But please don't ask me to grapple with this experience through a Shambhala lens. Please consider the contradictions in your practice of the teachings if you have to omit the teacher. I cannot have the guru suspended from teaching duties and remove his body, speech and mind from the throne at programs where he tells me how and what to do with my mind, like you might an abusive Acharya or a sangha member. So because none of these initiatives are addressing the Sakyong and the community is not willing to include him in the remedies being touted, I have no choice but to step away. Don't come to me and ask me to explain my experience in detail, don't tell me write it up or file a report, don't propose mediation, don't try to pull me in and close to keep me quiet, don't tell me I'm breaking samaya when it has already been broken by him. The labour required to repair that relationship from his end will require much more than a private meeting. Stop coming to me and asking me to talk about my traumatic experience in your way, or on the terms of Shambhala the organization, the vision, the Sakyong. Don't tell me to not have any dark hidden corners of my mind and then insist Shambhala and the Sakyong need some. Don't instruct me to lean in and visualize and dissolve into someone who deeply violated not just my physical/sexual boundaries, but who took advantage of my spiritual boundaries/experience/practice too. Don't tell me to push myself to the brink of suicide and just accept it because Marpa was abusive. Stop accusing me of wanting the headlines, attention or money. I've had the unfortunate opportunity to become really familiar with all the tactics over the course of my life and I can see them — including "kindness"—coming a mile away. I will not keep grappling and replaying this by conceptualizing or justifying trauma as Tibetan crazy wisdom. I will not keep quiet and pretend it's all ok by embodying some fucked up version of British colonial denial. But what I will do is invite you to be a friend, and I will be yours if you become real.

Love, always,

(The woman's name has been omitted)

Note: If you are a woman who feels she has been abused by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, please see Appendix 4, as we are organizing a healing group for you.

Preparing For What Is Ahead

How Have Other Buddhist Communities Dealt With Learning The Leader/Guru Was Abusing His Students? – Richard Edelman

I asked Richard Edelman to contribute some words to give context for what we are going through as a community right now in Shambhala. I hope you will find Richard's perspective helpful.

SANGHAS AND SCANDALS

The way that a Buddhist group responds to revelations of clergy sexual misconduct or other unethical behavior can make a big difference for those who have suffered and can have powerful consequences for the well-being and survival of Buddhism and Buddhists globally. This situation is real, global, and historic and is not going away. It is therefore important to know which responses benefit or harm human beings, including dharma practitioners, and also which benefit the Sangha and Buddhadharma, including their integrity, and which produce catastrophic consequences.

We can distill vital lessons from exploring how various sanghas have responded to revelations of clergy misconduct.

Joshu Sasaki Roshi

Joshu Sasaki Roshi, a major pioneer of Zen in America and founder of one of the largest American Zen communities, indulged in many decades of “frequent and repeated non-consensual groping of female students during interviews, to sexually coercive after hours ‘tea meetings,’ to affairs and sexual interference in the marriages and relations of his students.” According to his New York Times obituary, he was a “tainted Zen master” who coerced hundreds into sex with him, resulting in many wrongful excommunications and painful departures from his community during the decades when his circle of complicity colluded in his abuse. According to reporting by Tricycle, his behavior was “hushed up, downplayed, justified, and defended by the monks and students that remained loyal to him.” Thus the

community surrounding Joshu Sasaki Roshi covered up his sexual misconduct for decades, colluded in the revictimization of those he abused, and were complicit in many painful departures from the community. None of this coverup succeeded and the truth inevitably emerged into the light of day and became public knowledge. Sasaki Roshi died in 2014 and today his community and reputation are deeply damaged due to collusion and complicity in massive sexual abuse, leaving a profoundly tainted legacy and a questionable capacity to benefit sentient beings.

Sogyal Rinpoche

Sogyal Rinpoche has been among the ranks of the most famous Tibetan lamas in the world and his Rigpa community has been one of the largest Tibetan Buddhist communities in the world for many years. The first public revelations regarding Sogyal's abusive behavior arose during the early 1990's when Sogyal was sued by one of his female American students and settled out of court. Over twenty years later, a group of eight of his senior students published an open letter decrying his "unethical and immoral," "abusive and violent behavior," "physical, emotional, and psychological abuse of students," "sexual abuse of students," and "lavish, gluttonous, and sybaritic lifestyle," concluding that Sogyal's "actions have tainted our appreciation for the practice." Sogyal would be one of the first of several Tibetan lamas exposed for clergy sexual misconduct, including Lama Norlha, Thomas Rich, and others. Although Rigpa attempted to do damage control, when an audience of thousands witnessed Sogyal punching a nun in the belly, a global public condemnation ensued. Sogyal and Rigpa became the paradigm case for abusive gurus and their circles of complicity and collusion, a model of disgraced dharma. The Dalai Lama himself has publicly denounced Sogyal as a disgrace, and vehemently criticized the conditions, beliefs, and behaviors which allow Sogyal-like behavior to fester and damage sentient beings.

Eido Shimano Roshi

Eido Shimano Roshi, also one of the early pioneering Zen roshis in America, sexually abused his students almost upon arrival in America during the early 1960s, resulting right from the start in some of his female victims suffering nervous breakdowns which required hospitalization. According to Robert Aitken Roshi, Shimano's original sponsor and host in America, Shimano was guilty of the "ruthless exploitation" of women. Shimano Roshi's toxic behavior was kept secret by his circle of complicity and collusion, enabling him to become the "pillar" of New York City Zen and one of the major Zen roshis of our time, gathering a large dharma community around him, all the while continuing his abuse of women. According to students quoted in an investigative journalism article published in the Atlantic, Shimano

especially targeted women he perceived as vulnerable. In 1979, letters by students both named and anonymous began calling Shimano out but were ignored by the sangha leadership. By 1982, when the board president tried to rally the board to address the problem, he was ignored and then resigned. Nearly thirty years later, new revelations again surfaced, and Shimano was forced to apologize and resign. In 2011, Shimano's community dismissed him as their teacher and in 2012, the Japanese headquarters of his lineage disenfranchised any Zen qualifications of Shimano or his dharma heirs. After over fifty years of the coverup of his sexual misconduct, Shimano and his entire enterprise were ruined and stripped of any lineage affiliation. Shimano died in 2018, his life and teaching disgraced.

TAIZEN MAEZUMI ROSHI

Taizan Maezumi Roshi, also among the pioneering masters who introduced Zen practice and sangha to America, was also the teacher of many great American Zen teachers, including Bernard Tetsugen Glassman, Joan Jiko Halifax, Jan Chozen Bays, John Daido Loori, Peter Muryo Mathiessen, and others. In 1983, Maezumi Roshi remorsefully issued a public acknowledgement of his own alcoholism and entered recovery. During this time, revelations emerged regarding extramarital affairs Maezumi had been having with some of his students, for which he also repented. Although his sangha erupted in crisis, they did not cover up his behavior or silence those damaged by it. Although his sangha shrank in members and property, his life as a teacher and his reputation recovered and now the seeds he planted flourish around the world. He and his community are an example of how a brilliant yet very human spiritual master can address his imperfections and misdeeds and recover to benefit sentient beings.

SAN FRANCISCO ZEN CENTER

The San Francisco Zen Center was founded by another pioneering luminary of American Zen, Suzuki Roshi. Suzuki Roshi died in 1970 and was succeeded by his dharma heir, Richard Baker Roshi. The San Francisco Zen Center and its many enterprises flourished under Baker Roshi's guidance, but he was forced to resign as abbot in 1984 upon disclosures of his inappropriate sexual behavior with various women, as well as his reported extravagant lifestyle, abuse of power, and other issues. Baker left the sangha and eventually founded another sangha. He much later acknowledged that he had been unconscious of his "insecurity and self-importance" which was a "bad dynamic in the community." Following his resignation as its abbot, the San Francisco Zen sangha then switched to a democratically elected leadership model and flourished. Baker Roshi went on to receive significant acknowledgement of his teaching gifts and later reconciled with the San Francisco Zen Community. Like the Los

Angeles Zen Center, the San Francisco Zen Center did not silence critics or victims but addressed their concern and instituted reforms empowering itself to move forward as a highly regarded and flourishing sangha.

SANGHAS BEYOND SCANDALS

It should be clear from these and other sangha scandals that colluding with the perpetrator in a circle of complicity to cover up misdeeds and silence victims and critics doesn't work. Fortunately, sooner or later, the truth comes to light, and the sooner the better. Failure to face the challenge of clergy sexual abuse with integrity, candor, and authentic compassion, failure to walk the talk of the dharma, inevitably results in great damage to those harmed and in disaster for sanghas and the dharma overall. This is the first of many lessons we can distill from the experiences of sanghas which have addressed this challenge with integrity and from those which have not. This is a challenge of global and historic significance which is not going away. The Buddhadharma is transitioning into a very challenged world and its future may well be influenced by how it meets the scandals which emerge from within its own sanghas.

Excerpted from Trauma and Dharma

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Richard Edelman

Testimony to the Resiliency and Resourcefulness of the Shambhala Community - Dan Montgomery

I received many, many emails from community members since I published the Phase 1 report. I am including Dan Montgomery's email with his permission in this report because he remembers a vibrant time when our community worked well together without a guru at the head of the community. Dan's remembrance can help us to know that we have the resource to carry this lineage of teachings, even when the formal head of the lineage is unable to lead the community. I feel this is important for us to remember and to know at this time.

Hi Andrea,

I just wanted to connect to tell you how much I admire what you're doing. I'm an "old" student having connected with CTR in 1972 and lived in Halifax from 1989-2005.

I quit FB last fall because it was so addictive and agitating, and it was great to come back into [your Project Sunshine Phase 1 report discussion] closed group with good boundaries, thanks to the way you set it up. I've since continued the conversation with some old friends I'd rediscovered through that process.

I can appreciate the perspective you have, having grown up in Shambhala, of wanting to reform it. There is a lot of good there, and I devoted most of my adult life to it.

At the same time, I think there are some fatal flaws in it, particularly the notion of an inherited lineage and the guru-knows-all-worship. As someone who remembers the Sakyong as a shy and insecure teenager it was quite bizarre to see how many of my friends were willing to lionize him just because of the inherited position he had. I think the West was wise to ditch this idea several hundred years ago.

But I also think the years I lived in Halifax between the death of CTR and the Sakyong "taking his seat" were some of the best of my life. We had strong ideas about enlightened society and people were doing a lot with it, without needing a king. Many people in Halifax who weren't buddhists appreciated us for the ideas and uplifted attitude we brought. After 1995 it became an issue of whether one was with the Sakyong or not, and I felt that things degenerated. I finally left it all in 2005 and came back to Colorado. I wonder if there can be a Shambhala without the Mukpo dynasty?

In any case, you're gutsy lady, and I wish you success and strength dealing with all the shadows you are addressing. It's a modern-day story about taming the demons, and so necessary.

Dan Montgomery, Boulder

Suggested Next Steps For Shambhala International

Raising Further Questions About The Care And Conduct Process

In the Buddhist Project Sunshine Phase 1 report I raised questions about the Shambhala Care and Conduct Process. Further questions have arisen as Shambhala International has recently admitted that people are no longer coming forward to use the Care and Conduct Process. They claim there is no longer a sexualized violence problem in the community. I would suggest, however, that trust in the process has broken down so that victims no longer consider using the process. Internal justice systems typically break down in communities over run by sexualized violence.

Furthermore, they have made it clear the Care and Conduct Process does not apply to the Sakyong, and that has become a point of failure at this juncture.

Dealing With The Allegations Regarding Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

Given the information obtained during the preliminary investigation, a full investigation must now be initiated by Shambhala International into the alleged sexual misconduct and sexual assaults by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. A neutral third-party investigator must be hired, and that this third-party investigator work in collaboration with Buddhist Project Sunshine's investigator.

In addition to this initial first step, the Buddhist Project Sunshine team spent time envisioning what could lie beyond a completed investigation. These are the kinds of things the community will need to come to grips with should a full investigation find these findings have been validated. Depending on the results of a full investigation, there are many avenues and/or remedies that could be undertaken, for instance:

1. Sakyong Mipham and Shambhala International pay a large settlement to fund healing programs for the survivors of his abuse and women survivors of sexual

abuse by other leaders in the community. We know that he owns significant assets, and that assets could be sold to pay such a settlement.

2. SMR and SI fund the continued work of Buddhist Project Sunshine, an organization that has a proven track record of working to change the culture that has allowed these problems to rise up.
3. SMR enters into appropriate rehabilitation for a suitably extended period of time before engaging with the Shambhala community and his students again.
4. A truth and reconciliation process be designed to bring reconciliation between Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche and the women who were abused, and with the greater Shambhala community

At the same time, Buddhist Project Sunshine encourages women who feel they were sexually abused by Sakyong Mipham to consider filing civil and criminal lawsuits, if this feels like the right course of action for restoring integrity for themselves and their relationship with Shambhala.

Suggested Next Steps For Community Members

The Importance Of Good Self-Care

On an individual level, we need to find ways of centering ourselves so we can take a step-by-step journey of personally comprehending this situation. Pacing is important. Honouring your limits is important. If you are feeling flooded by information, it is important to take an adequate break and refresh your spirit. Also, basic self care is very important – I encourage things like eating healthy food, drinking plenty of water, getting exercise, sleeping well, and taking at least a few minutes every day to work with your mind through a formal meditation practice. It can also be helpful to have a regular daily routine. Routine is grounding, and we need to have our feet firmly planted on the ground as we engage this situation both individually and as a community.

Explore Ways To Talk With Others About Your Thoughts And Experience

We also need to find ways of engaging each other in conversations about how to deal with the pervasive dynamic of abuse within the Shambhala community. Please talk with your neighbors and friends. And please join us for our moderated online discussion in June and July; see below.

Buddhist Project Sunshine Offers A Leading Edge Moderated Discussion Forum In June and July 2018

Buddhist Project Sunshine is hosting a thriving moderated discussion group, including healthy discussion threads about Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche's abuses and Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's abuses. I (Andrea Winn) have specialized in the research and development of distance healing programs for the past 7 years. I have brought the best of what I know to designing a leading edge moderated discussion forum for anyone with a heart connection to Shambhala, so you can receive support for digesting this information and envisioning a bright future for yourself personally, and for the community. Learn more and register at: http://andreamwinn.com/offerings/project_sunshine_discussion_group/

Ahimsa: Envisioning A New Buddhism In The West – Dr. Elizabeth Monson

By Lopon Elizabeth Monson, PhD., Harvard University

In light of the ongoing disclosures of the abuse of power and the enactment of clergy sexual misconduct in different Buddhist organizations throughout the western world, I wish to consider some ideas about what the legacy of Buddhism in the west could, and perhaps should, strive to embody. It is important to ask questions that might prompt us all, as practitioners in the Buddhist tradition, as teachers and as students, to hold a larger view around the kind of culture for Buddhism in the west we wish to foster. Do we wish to continue to foster cultures of collusion and silence, of shame and isolation – cultures in which women are viewed and used as objects to satisfy sexual appetites? Do we wish to uphold romanticized ideas of the spiritual path that include bracketing out our discrimination, integrity, and sense of ethically positive action?*

It may be both helpful and important to recognize that the larger picture is not about us as individuals, although as individuals our experiences make up the ground from which any progress can unfold, including the willingness to expand our concerns from the level of the individual to the wider world. But a larger vision might be to ask ourselves, "Is what we have experienced and continue to experience with teachers committing clergy sexual misconduct and creating habits and patterns of silence and shame really what we want for Buddhism in the west?" If we consider this question, if we expand our vision, then as women who come together to tell our stories, our process is not only about finding ways to heal ourselves (although this must be first and foremost), but it is also about how, by doing so, we are

participating in the creation of a Buddhism that is ethical, open, and clear. Our voices can be powerful catalysts in the flourishing of a Buddhist path that adheres to the truth of how things are and which encourages the development in individuals of radical self-responsibility – the knowledge that we must all be accountable for our thoughts and our actions. We must become more and more aware of how our actions have ripples that affect others. We cannot, and no one who claims to be a Buddhist should sit by, while patterns of clergy sexual misconduct continue unchecked and even, on some level, endorsed.

How can we envision a Buddhism in the west that includes, at its base, a genuine and clear understanding of the foundation of ahimsa (non-harm), the primary tenet of the Buddhist path? This pattern of clergy sexual misconduct is rampant in all schools of Buddhism - it is certainly not limited to Tibetan Buddhism. The practice of accommodating teachers' every wish without question appears to often result in such individuals exhibiting a profound lack of awareness of and marginal socialization to the basic norms of human ethics and moral behavior. How can we raise awareness about what it means to practice ethics and reflection on self-hypocrisy, to pay close attention to the real consequences of the actions of an abusive teacher? With teachers who commit clergy sexual misconduct and other abuses, a commitment to self-reflection and a willingness to see into and through self-deception and hypocrisy appears to be lacking. Is this lack due to willful ignorance? To habit? Is it the product of childhood emotional neglect? Is it the result of growing up in rarified environments with little exposure to the basic norms of ordinary human societies and their complexities? Is it simply the unfortunate but common consequence of becoming intoxicated by power? Likely, it is a combination of these factors and many more.

For Buddhism to succeed and thrive in the west, we also need to recognize how so many western Buddhists these days come to Buddhism from abusive backgrounds and with unresolved trauma. Many times, not knowing any differently and being seduced by the idea that meditation and embarking on a spiritual path is a cure-all, some people believe that Buddhism, Buddhist teachers, and Buddhist practices can heal them of emotional turmoil and psychological torment. In my experience running and teaching in a Dharma vessel, we are seeing more and more persons entering the Buddhist path with pre-existing trauma and/or childhood abuse.

Fortunately, we also live in a time when psycho-therapeutic opportunities are widely available for helping individuals to address these issues so that they can safely engage the spiritual path. Many Buddhist teachers, such as Tsoknyi Rinpoche are now actively teaching about the necessity of the formation of a healthy sense of self as a critical foundation for entering a spiritual path. Can we direct ourselves and others towards methods of self-healing and maturation that address these issues directly and which may enable people to safely engage with the profoundly transformative skillful means and practices contained in the Buddhist path?

When we tell our stories, when we ask the kinds of questions set out above, and when we take steps for healing and transparency in our communities, we also must consider what kind of a person we want to be in this process. Do we want to be vindictive, angry seekers of revenge? Or might we try to develop another kind of stance from which to address our needs? In other words, and this concern is central to me, how can we use our experiences as fuel for waking up on the path? How can we take experiences that have been so confusing, so harmful, and so disruptive to our paths and turn them into something that facilitates our maturity as practitioners of the Buddhadharma? How do we transform this poison into wisdom for ourselves? This isn't at all to say that we should drop an emphasis on disclosure, transparency, and accountability, as well as the goal of healing and the promotion of a change in the culture altogether, but along the way, can we discover a path whereby what has profoundly harmed us becomes an antidote and empowerment for us as women and as Buddhists? Frankly, my vision is to explore and develop this kind of a path.

Concomitant with these questions is the issue of holding teachers accountable for harmful actions that significantly impact a student's ability to continue with or even maintain a peripheral connection with their spiritual practice. Should we hold teachers accountable for their harmful actions? Absolutely. Should we question the assumption on the side of both students and teachers concerning the absolute power wielded by the god-king teacher both locally, within our own sanghas, as well as within the larger cultural context? Can we explore ways of intervening in this kind of entitlement and what it might mean to shift entitlement to commitment, with a basis of compassion, to the vision of the bodhisattva whose every action is aimed at the benefit of others?

It follows from this that we also need to carefully consider the role of the community (sangha) in relation to the development of the teacher. Do we want our teachers to be autonomous and free from accountability to the sanghas within which they teach? Are we so invested in idealistic ideas of the guru as all-powerful, special, endowed with the power of insight into each person's specific needs that we are willing to throw away our discrimination, our intelligence, and our intuitions?

The sangha is one of the most important factors in the development and creation of the teacher. Without a sangha, there can be no teacher and no Dharma will be taught. These factors are deeply interrelated and the sangha would be served by recognizing their role as equal to, if not more important than, that of the teacher's. This means that the sangha must learn what it means to simultaneously respect and honor a teacher as a transmitter of the Dharma, while at the same time recognizing that teacher as a human being. We can practice providing clear and direct feedback to our teachers when necessary and holding him or her accountable for harmful behaviors. Seeing the teacher as a Buddha who can do no harm misses the point of the basic ethical responsibility of the sangha at large.

Obviously, this is a fine line that requires clear self-awareness, insight, and wise discrimination to determine what is “harmful” and what is not, but this is one job of the sangha. It is one of the roles of the sangha to develop in this way, especially if the teacher does not appear to be aware of how he or she is causing not only harm, but lasting trauma. If we consider Title 9, we see that there are laws in place that federally mandate that teachers in colleges or schools are prohibited from sleeping with their students. Why is this not the case in our religious communities? We should consider what kinds of power dynamics are in place in situations where the appropriate boundary between teacher and student is broken. Abuses of power, especially in the realm of clergy sexual misconduct are rampant.

As might be clear by now, this vision is large, but that’s what a vision should be, large. For myself, I am determined to think through these kinds of issues and to find strategic means for addressing them. My vision is to first enable and create safe spaces of witnessing and communion for women who have been abused by their spiritual teachers. This is already happening in many spiritual communities. Once forums for communication among ourselves exist and are flourishing, my hope is to bring these larger issues into view, with the primary goal of providing at least one element of the process of healing – a way to make productive use of our experiences as powerful forces for development and insight on the Buddhist path. Those who have had to live through these experiences can find both insight and wisdom, as well as compassion, that can significantly ripen our ability to be awake, alive, whole, and aware on the spiritual path. We can reclaim our paths.

The true Dharma, the Dharma that forms the substrate from which the Buddha taught, the Dharma that is the truth of things as they are, can never be lost, never be tainted and is always available both within us and for us. By finding the courage to face our experiences as they are, we are in turn empowered by and liberated from these experiences. Rather than obstacles to our path, the energy that was previously locked down by feelings of shame and humiliation, loneliness, sorrow, fear, and anger can be freed. These energies are powerful stimuli for maturing us as practitioners and enabling us to take the necessary steps to promote healthy communities and relationships. From this orientation or stance, we may decide to take strong action – lawsuits or other forms of legal action or public declaration for the abuses we are learning about may be a necessary step. We may also find the strength to question the ideas that have served to bind us to patterns of rationalization, confusion, and fear – such as those concerning the true meaning of samaya, devotion, and the guru-student relationship – and seek new understandings and experiences of these.

It is important to bring our own misunderstandings and naivete, as well as the abusive behaviors perpetrated by teachers, into the light and out of the darkness of collusion and secrecy. This is not only to prompt teachers to take responsibility and stand accountable for their actions, but also to encourage all the practitioners who put their faith and love in a teacher who has triggered experiences of profound pain and suffering to participate in the

processes of change that must take place. Whether we love and respect a teacher or not, we should recognize that anyone who serves as a Buddhist teacher and role model is responsible for upholding a standard of moral behavior and a vision of what true liberation, true compassion, and true wisdom really look like on a practical, daily level. Whether the teacher's teachings are brilliant or not, his or her actions must be in accord with the view. As Padmasambhava taught back in the eighth century, "Though the view should be as vast as the sky, keep your conduct as fine as barley flour."

**Definition of Clergy Sexual Misconduct: We are witnessing an increasing number of Buddhist community leaders and gurus who are being exposed by their students for committing clergy sexual misconduct. Clergy sexual misconduct is defined as sexual advances or propositions made by religious leaders to a person in the congregations they serve who is not their spouse or significant other. Jack Kornfield writes that "clandestine sex, exploitation, and sexual abuse on the part of many lamas, Zen masters, swamis, and gurus have wreaked havoc on the lives of students and their community." (From: An Olive Branch's "Clergy Sexual Misconduct and the Misuse of Power".)*

Next steps for Buddhist Project Sunshine

I began working on Project Sunshine in January 2017. It has been over a year and a half of gruelling work. I put my heart out in this way in the hope that genuine healing can happen for the Shambhala community. I am grateful for the healing that has already begun. At the same time I have gone into personal financial debt of \$37,500. Therefore, as Buddhist Project Sunshine is coming to the end of the funds raised, I am going on a semi-sabbatical as of Friday June 29th as I begin a small paid job to make money to support myself. I will continue to host the Buddhist Project Sunshine Discussion Forum through July 31st, as promised.

In light of financial uncertainty, and in the hopes that Buddhist Project Sunshine can continue, I am initiating a dialog with a number of people who contributed to Phase 2. We will explore possibilities for group leadership of the project. All decisions about the future or possible closing of the project will be announced on the Buddhist Project Sunshine community email list.

Concluding Wishes

May we work together well as we take intelligent and caring steps forward into the sacred territory of cleaning up our lineage, for the benefit of ourselves and all sentient beings.

Acknowledgement And Gratitude

For The Contributions Of The Women Survivors

First and foremost, I would like to acknowledge the extreme bravery and compassion of the women who came forward to give testimony of their experiences with Sakyong Mipham. They have lived in silence and isolation for years, and yet they came forward to share their stories for their own healing and for the healing of this community. I am astounded at their resiliency to land on their feet after having gone through devastating experiences that not only impacted their physical and emotional lives, but the very core of their vajrayana spiritual paths. They have put pen to paper and shared their stories in a clear way that I suspect nearly anyone can relate with. I cannot express my gratitude and appreciation in a big enough way for what these women have given us through their stories. May their healing and spiritual paths be richly blessed for all they have contributed to this community's healing process.

For Carol Merchasin's Contributions

By Andrea Winn and Richard Edelman

Buddhist Project Sunshine would like to express its deep appreciation for the contribution of Carol Merchasin to its mission of bringing light to a challenged spiritual community. Carol is an experienced lawyer and investigator of sexual misconduct in the workplace. She generously worked in a volunteer capacity to conduct a forensic investigation into allegations of clergy sexual misconduct of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. She engaged this work with great energy, wisdom, and integrity, establishing with fairness and impartiality that a factual situation of abuse exists within Shambhala. This investigation posed unique challenges beyond those found in the workplace, and Carol navigated intense and sometimes confusing twists and turns with exemplary grace. Carol's passion for pursuing truth and justice has demonstrated both balance and heart, and her sense of humor and keen insight brought a refreshing energy to our team. May what unfolds manifest the spirit of enlightened leadership that she has modeled for all of us.

For Richard Edelman's Contributions

Buddhist Project Sunshine would also like to express its deep appreciation for the contribution of Richard Edelman to its mission of bringing light to a challenged spiritual community. In our team meetings, Richard brought calm reflectiveness to the sometimes intense and fierce feminist discussions, helping us to have more productive and fun discussions. Richard's biggest contribution to Buddhist Project Sunshine was through providing context. His expertise in cult dynamics was a sanity saver throughout this journey, as he explained the exceedingly strange behaviours of Shambhala International as typical of a cult. His extensive knowledge of trauma dynamics in Buddhism helped to contextualize what has happened within Shambhala, and he was able to light a path forward for us by sharing success stories from other Buddhist communities. Having no current connection with Shambhala, it is remarkable that Richard would contribute his expertise and numerous hours in meetings all from the goodness of his heart of bodhichitta. Tremendous thanks to Richard for his contribution.

For Elizabeth Monson's Contributions

I met Liz Monson shortly after the Phase 1 report was published, and this has been one of the most life-giving collaborative relationships I've had in Phase 2. She has contributed heavily to the vision for Buddhist Project Sunshine Phase 2, and beyond. She has also greatly helped me in my efforts to build a community that is safe, welcoming and empowering for women survivors of clergy sexual misconduct. Liz is a gem and someone I feel we can look to as we move forward in envisioning a new Shambhala that is a healthy and vibrant place where all can benefit from and contribute to the propagation of our sacred lineage.

For Our Financial Donors

I will be forever grateful for the generosity of the people who funded Buddhist Project Sunshine Phase 2. Ninety-three people contributed a total of \$6,742 enabling this noble work to happen. Heart thanks!

For Our Chöd Practitioners

Some people have been stunned by what has been accomplished by Buddhist Project Sunshine in such a short time. A key feature that distinguishes us from other Buddhist activist projects is my request for Chöd practice to be done on our behalf and the behalf of the Shambhala Buddhist community. For those unfamiliar, Chöd is a uniquely feminine-oriented approach to dealing with "demons", which is surely what we are dealing with in regard to sexual abuse in the Shambhala community. Chöd was established in 11th century Tibet by a famous woman teacher, Machig Labdrön.

I first spoke publicly about Buddhist Project Sunshine at a Feeding Your Demons retreat in late January 2018. Feeding Your Demons is a contemporary adaptation of Chöd practice brought to us by Lama Tsultrim Allione, head of Tara Mandala Retreat Center and recognized reincarnation of Machig Labdrön. I found that my sharing about the sexual abuse problem was received well, without fear, in the context of this retreat. This stood out to me in a pronounced way, and I wanted to foster such a powerful environment of acceptance and healing in a greater way for the Shambhala community.

Barbara Berry approached me at that Feeding Your Demons retreat and offered to help. I knew she was an experienced Chöd practitioner, so I asked her to do Chöd practice for us. She has been doing regular dedicated practice for us over the past 5 months.

Lama Tsultrim Allione came to Halifax in May, and I had an opportunity to meet her for the first time. I shared with her about Buddhist Project Sunshine, and she was immediately interested and supportive. She herself has stood up to sexual abuse in Tibetan Buddhism for years. She has stayed in constant contact with me since we met, supporting me and also doing Chöd practice on behalf of Buddhist Project Sunshine and the Shambhala community.

The support has not stopped there! The two leaders of the January Feeding Your Demons retreat, Charlotte Rotterdam and Pieter Oosthuizen, have also at my request been doing regular Chöd practice for our project for the past two months.

Charlotte also generously donated hours of time and her expertise in guiding me in a 4-month intensive February-May 2018 so I could immerse my mind in Allione's Prajnaparamita practice. This helped me enormously to connect with the sense of space needed to grasp and work with the horrors I learned through talking with the women survivors, and for my holding a deeper sense of space for all the people working with this project and the greater Shambhala community.

Given the energetic dynamic of sexual abuse and its cover up, having this powerful team of Chöd practitioners working at the emotional energetic level has been a big part of the success of Buddhist Project Sunshine. My sincere thanks to the Chöd practitioners!

For The Blessing Of Yeshe Tsogyal

It would not feel right to overlook the contribution of the blessing of Yeshe Tsogyal, as it has been the engine behind Buddhist Project Sunshine. Frankly, I had given up on there ever being sanity in the Shambhala community. I had tried to speak up, as others have, and the dynamics of silencing and systemic complicity were so great in this community that I left long ago with no hope of ever having a community to come back to.

However in the Fall of 2016 I was strongly and mysteriously drawn to attend a Yumka – Yeshe Tsogyal empowerment, and it seems that her powerful determination for the continuation of Padmasambhava's teachings in this age was planted in me. Honestly, I don't know where else all this fire in me could have come from! All I know is that it started at that time, and it has not let up.

I can't take credit for what has been accomplished here. First, it has involved many people who have contributed. But second, there has truly been forces beyond me, working through me for the benefit of Shambhala and for all sentient beings who can and will benefit from the Shambhala teachings. The only thing I will take credit for is the hard labour and sacrifices I have made as a person to enable this greater force to have it's life and to bring this community problem to the light for healing. For this greater force, who I recognize as the most powerful woman leader who has ever lived on this earth - the most blessed Yeshe Tsogyal, I give most profound heart thanks.

Appendix 1: HORIZON ANALYSIS: Method of Reflection on Readings

I learned this method in my studies at Regis College in Toronto. This is a Jesuit run college, and the Jesuits are known for their skilful ways for observing internal responses. The idea with this method is that when we have an immediate reaction to something, this is like the tip of the iceberg that is visible at the surface of the ocean. However, if we take the time to look beneath the surface, there is also a large unconscious response happening. The Horizon Analysis method gives a structure for accessing the large material beneath the surface of our response, in this case, to sexualized violence.

Here is the way the Horizon Analysis is done:

1. Print the text (this report)
2. Create an hour of quiet time where you will not be disturbed (Alternatively, you may choose to do several short sessions where you simply read as much as you feel like reading)
3. Use two different coloured pens, and as you read through the text, notice (1) when you are attracted to something you read and (2) when you feel upset or resistant to something you read. Underline those things that attract you with one coloured pen. Underline those things you have resistance to in the other coloured pen.
4. Then fill in the Horizon Analysis form on the next page

I am providing an example of a filled in Horizon Analysis method in Appendix 2, where I share my own Horizon Analysis of Dzongsar Khentse Rinpoche's "Public Statement on Recent Criticism of Sogyal Rinpoche."

Kitchen Table Discussions

After you have taken your personal reflection time with this report, it would be wonderful for people to gather in their kitchens and talk about this informally over tea and other tasty beverages.

Your ideas matter! How you feel matters. In informal conversations like this, you can share your ideas and hear other's ideas, and some magic can happen. This is an organic way of digesting what you experience from reading this report, and who knows what beautiful things can come out of these kitchen table discussions. Some of the most powerful social movements were born in kitchens in this way!

HORIZON ANALYSIS

NAME:

Date:

1. Reading(s)(byAuthor):

2.(a) What is my strongest attraction or attractions to the reading/s. Why?

(b) What might be the source of my attractions(s) to the reading/s?

3. (a) What is my strongest resistance or resistances to the reading/s. Why?

(B) What might be the source of my resistance(s) to the reading/s?

4. How do these attractions and resistances challenge or affirm me as I engage in this reflection process? (Notice where the invitation to transformation is.)

Appendix 2: Example Horizon Analysis of Dzongsar Khentse Rinpoche's essay regarding Sogyal Rinpoche's community

NAME: Andrea M. Winn

Date: December 17, 2017

1. Reading(s) (by Author): Dzongsar Kyentse Rinpoche Issues Public Statement on Recent Criticism of Sogyal Rinpoche

2. (a) What is my strongest attraction or attractions to the reading/s. Why?

1. His strong request for patience and mindful/complete reading of his essay.
2. The strength and stability of his understanding of Vajrayana Buddhism.
3. His seeing this situation through an understanding of culture, part of the problem lies in how Tibetans are teaching.
4. His acknowledgement of the stability of Trungpa Rinpoche's approach.

(b) What might be the source of my attractions(s) to the reading/s?

I'm looking for coherence and stability in working with this situation. I want people to stay embodied and take one step after another, without skipping steps in addressing this situation. I deeply appreciate the way Trungpa Rinpoche created a path with a solid foundation, again because I am longing for stability for more deeply understanding dharma and experiences. The cultural understanding helps to understand the dynamic that has grown with Tibetan Buddhism being seeded in the west. Understanding this can help us to repair this situation and grow a stronger base for future practice of Buddhism in the West.

3. (a) What is my strongest resistance or resistances to the reading/s. Why?

His putting forward a picture that offers no path for redemption for either the 8 who wrote the letter or Sogyal Rinpoche. He wrote, "Sogyal Rinpoche's misbehaviour may be his ruin and, sadly, it may be the ruin of some of his students." In my tradition, this is called setting sun. Why not devote our energy to cleaning up this situation, instead of labelling it as hopeless, and leaving the students as outcasts and Sogyal Rinpoche to Vajra hell?

His lack of understanding and respect for the 8 students. His lack of respect for people of the West by referring to Western society as, "a world that's full to overflowing with smart-arses".

He wrote, "The students criticizing Sogyal Rinpoche seem to be highly intelligent. Why then, weren't they smart enough to examine and analyze this teacher before signing up?" Although he puts this forward as a question, he is actually making a statement of judgement, appearing to suggest the students are highly confused. It bothers me to hear him judge these students because the students appear to be sane, caring and proclaimed sanity within a very confused situation.

"I really don't understand why they waited ten or even thirty years before saying anything?" He is making a statement and putting a question mark after it. If he was truly curious, he would take time to learn about why people stay silent for so long. It is common in most abuse situations. Instead, he is simply putting the students down, and leaving the entire situation in a place of ambivalence – HIS ambivalence.

It always disturbs me to witness a religious leader lead people into a place of confusion and ambivalence.

His lack of coherence, (1) "a Vajrayana guru will use anything he can to challenge and go against each individual student's ego, pride, self-cherishing and dualistic mind." And (2) "the Vajrayana master must know his students' limits – what they can and can't take." On the one hand he seems to suggest the master should teach with a bazooka, and then in the next breath he suggests sensitivity to guiding the student according to their capacities.

His use of the word, "alleged" and suggesting the students are not true Vajrayana practitioners because they have spoken out about this situation. He writes, "students, who also consider themselves to be practitioners in the Vajrayana tradition." As a Buddhist leader he is acting as a judge, making judgements, using legal language, and proclaiming his judgments world wide. I'd prefer more sensitivity and respect – for him to take his seat as a leader and act with decency and decorum that supports a stronger and saner approach to sorting out this situation.

When he writes, "If an impure perception – such as criticism of one's guru – is made deliberately and consciously, and if it then goes on to become a well-organized, choreographed public discussion with no room for amendment or correction, it constitutes a total breakage of samaya." Here he is leading the reader to believe that this relates to the situation of the 8 students – the reader is very easily led to assume he is speaking of this situation. However in this situation these students took care of a degraded situation, and their letter clearly left room for explanation to be made, aka amendment. DKR is making a

very serious allegation regarding the students, which does not reflect the actual situation. This is harmful to everyone touched by this situation.

When he says, "It's a big mistake to speculate about the possibility of continuing to analyze and criticize the guru after having received a major initiation, actually it's totally wrong." He seems to be suggesting as Vajrayana practitioners we must step into blind faith and disengage from the genuine, uninhibited intelligence that resides within us.

When he says, "We can't change the Vajrayana view to invent some 'moderate' version of Vajrayana Buddhism just to suit the 21st century Western mind-set", it feels to me like he is bringing forward a heavy handed fist of Vajrayana Buddhism that will bulldoze through any situation, dismissing all context, and more importantly suggesting skilful means is not necessary in the relative world to reach people and lead them on the true path of dharma.

He talks in circles. On the one hand he calls the students, " so-called Vajrayana students... stepped onto the Vajrayana path voluntarily." And in a different section he clearly states that he believes the Rigpa students were not adequately prepared or warned of what they were getting into. This disconnected, circular approach is simply crazy-making, and it is adding to the confusion and upset caused by this situation.

I appreciate how he is drawing attention to larger problems in Buddhism, however I feel that he is drawing our attention away from healing this situation in doing so. He is training people to avert their eyes to another direction, which creates one more tragic disconnection from the true situation - it will not disappear by averting our eyes. The impacts of abuse within community are far-reaching, and I feel from this essay that DKR lacks an understanding of this.

(B) What might be the source of my resistance(s) to the reading/s?

A man in authority who lacks understanding of human situations and is imposing harsh views without any consideration for the context in which he is forcing his views. He seems to have no understanding of the harm he is creating through publishing this essay.

I have been silent for four decades about the abuse I suffered in the Shambhala community. Therefore I relate with the students. I feel the dismissal and accusations the 8 students have received in this essay – I feel this very personally. It is deeply upsetting and unacceptable to me.

I am no longer willing to stay silent about abuses in Buddhist communities. It does not serve us to take a simplistic view when someone is clearly being abusive and putting huge obstacles in the path of sincere practitioners. It is wrong, and it should be called out.

This is more about learning the dynamics of Tibetan Buddhism entering the West and how we can more skilfully create a good ground for westerners to receive this precious dharma. This should not be about scapegoating the 8 students and demonizing Sogyal Rinpoche. This **should** be about learning, maturing and growing more serious in our pursuit of embedding Tibetan Buddhism in the West.

4. How do these attractions and resistances challenge or affirm me as I engage in this theological reflection process?

The challenge is to my anger about the thoughtlessness of men in power, of their throwing their weight around and harming the vulnerable, naïve and good. I pray for my own transformation and growth, that I may become a more mature and loving woman with the skilful means to speak in response to these men.

I am affirmed in this reflection through realizing how important stability, care and coherence are to me in my approach to life, and my wish for this in Tibetan Buddhism in the west. I have a much clearer understanding of how important this is to me now.

Appendix 3: Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche's "Apology" Email June 25, 2018

To the Shambhala Community:

I write to you with great sadness, tenderness, and a mind of self-reflection.

It is my wish for you to know that in my past there have been times when I have engaged in relationships with women in the Shambhala community. I have recently learned that some of these women have shared experiences of feeling harmed as a result of these relationships. I am now making a public apology.

In addition, I would like you to know that over the years, I have apologized personally to people who have expressed feeling harmed by my conduct, including some of those who have recently shared their stories. I have also engaged in mediation and healing practices with those who have felt harmed. Thus I have been, and will continue to be, committed to healing these wounds.

As the lineage holder of Shambhala, I want to demonstrate how we can move toward a culture of kindness in line with our legacy of teachings. Kindness can sometimes begin with acknowledging the ways we have harmed others, even if we did not intend to do so. Thus, with the strong support of my wife, the Sakyong Wangmo, I am now entering a period of self-reflection and listening. I have worked with, and at times struggled with, how to be a teacher and a human being. I have found that there is no easy solution to navigating these responsibilities. Like all of you, I am human and on the path. It is important to me that you know I am here, continuing to do my best.

Above all, it is important to me that we continue to create a caring community where harm does not occur. It is my fervent wish that we be a community that relates to each other with compassion and kindness, so I have offered teachings and written practices to support such a culture. I want to encourage our community to completely immerse itself in caring and kindness. This is not easy work, and we cannot give up on each other. For me, it always comes back to feeling my own heart, my own humanity, and my own genuineness. It is with this feeling that I express to all of you my deep love and appreciation. I am committed to engaging in this process with you.

With love,

Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

Appendix 4: A Call To Women Who Feel They Have Been Abused By Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

**We believe in the power of safe sharing
to open a space for healing, connection, and community.**

This announcement is a compassionate call to women who feel they have experienced any form of sexualized violence or clergy sexual misconduct by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Clergy sexual misconduct is defined as sexual advances or propositions made by religious leaders to a person in the congregations they serve who is not their spouse or significant other.

The goal of this announcement is to begin to provide a safe resource for women who may have experienced abuse or misconduct by SMR. We intend to start a healing group this Fall (Fall 2018) to provide a space for women to be able to share their stories, to emerge from the silent shadow of shame and isolation, to consider questions, fears, and concerns about samaya, and to, if desired, rediscover the power of honest, compassionate and transparent community. If you would like to be on the contact list for the group beginning this Fall, please sign up at: <http://andreamwinn.com/offerings/smr-abuse-healing-group/>

(Note: this group is not being offered by Andrea Winn herself, but Andrea is providing an administrative startup for the group)

**Appendix 5: Memo of Findings of Buddhist Project Sunshine's
Preliminary Investigation Into the Clergy Sexual Misconduct of Sakyong
Mipham Rinpoche - Carol Merchasin, J.D**

MEMORANDUM

TO: ANDREA WINN/PROJECT SUNSHINE

FROM: CAROL MERCHASIN

SUBJECT: REPORT AND FINDINGS OF THE SHAMBHALA PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

DATE: JUNE 28, 2018

CC: RICHARD EDELMAN

Background of the Preliminary Investigation, April 2018

Buddhist Project Sunshine (hereafter “BPS”) is an initiative begun by Andrea Winn to shed light on the sexual harm that has been done in the Shambhala International (“SI”) community. The initial BPS Report (“the Report”) was published on February 15, 2018, and appeared in various media outlets, including Andrea’s own blog and Tricycle magazine.

I saw the report and several subsequent blog posts in early April 2018 and I reached out to Andrea. I had never met her, but I knew how lonely and isolating it can be to come forward and press these issues. As a retired employment lawyer, I had conducted countless investigations into sexual misconduct in the workplace, and I wanted to encourage her to turn her information over to SI so they could conduct a full, independent, and transparent investigation. However, by that time, all communication between Andrea and SI had stopped.

I offered to look over the allegations that had been raised during Phase I of BPS and assess whether there were any that could be investigated. For example, claims of sexual misconduct against Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche (“CTR”) would be impossible to investigate as too much time has passed and CTR is deceased. For this reason, I set a time limit of 25 years as the time frame for allegations I was willing to investigate. We also agreed that we would not pursue any allegations that had already been resolved by SI, even if those resolutions were not entirely satisfactory. Those would be a lower priority.

Most importantly, I informed Andrea that while I would do a preliminary investigation, I could not conduct a full investigation, for the following reasons:

1. No investigation is complete without interviewing the accused party so that he or she has an opportunity to tell their own version of events. However, I had no access to anyone within SI.
2. A full investigation seeks to corroborate claims through witnesses, contemporaneous conversations about the events, documents like email and/or texts that support (or do not support) the accuser’s statement. I would not have full access to such corroborating

people and documents. A full investigation therefore might be necessary to fully corroborate allegations.

I also informed Andrea that I would be independent of BPS and if I did not find that that an allegation was credible, I would be reporting that fact. I would not base findings on rumors. If I did not have enough information to make a finding, I would be reporting that.

Andrea asked me to proceed with a preliminary investigation. The goal was to decide what allegations could be investigated, conduct interviews, assess the credibility of the accusers, seek corroboration through any documents or witnesses and look for patterns of behavior. This information would then be turned over to SI to encourage them to retain a neutral professional to do a complete investigation in cooperation with BPS.

May 2018 – The Preliminary Investigation into the Sexual Misconduct Allegations Against Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

The initial BPS Report published in February 2018 did not include any allegations against the Sakyong. But by May 2018, women with new allegations came forward. They had seen the Report in the press, and they wanted their voices to be heard. Their claims were all within the established criteria – within 25 years and never resolved. They were all against the Sakyong.

These allegations took priority. In my experience, no organization can begin to address sexual abuse issues if the sexual harm is being perpetrated by the top leadership and especially if it also involves the complicity of other leaders. Indeed, even the mere perception of this type of sexual misconduct and complicity can create enormous and lasting damage.

The Allegations Investigated

I investigated the following allegations:

- 1) That the Sakyong sexually assaulted a number of women,
- 2) That he used kusung to procure women for his own sexual pleasure, not for any spiritual purpose,
- 3) That he and others retaliated against at least one woman who declined his advances,
- 4) That kusung, other leaders and the Kalapa Council (“KC”) knew about and were complicit in enabling these assaults, and
- 5) That when the Sakyong was accused of raping a woman while he was teaching in Chile, SI leaders conspired to keep this allegation secret as well as to get the Sakyong sober.

Credibility, Corroboration and Patterns of Behavior:

In the preliminary investigation, I interviewed the women accusing the Sakyong as well as some corroborating witnesses. I considered three things in those interviews, as I do in every investigation:

1. Credibility: When assessing credibility, I am alert to evasiveness, inconsistency, any evident bias, any motive to lie, vested interests, the inherent plausibility of the allegation and the level of detail of the allegation.
2. Corroboration: Corroboration is persuasive of truth. When there was someone or something else that could corroborate the allegations, and if I could get access to that person or documents, I investigated. I did the corroboration that was available to me but more could be done in a full investigation.
3. Establishing patterns of behavior: When the *accounts* told by unrelated accusers (as is the case here) establish a pattern of behavior, it is strong evidence that the allegations are true. Two or more independent reports of the same type of misconduct is a known indicator of a credible claim. In this preliminary investigation, a very strong pattern of misconduct emerged.

The Meeting with the Mediator

In May 2018, SI retained Kathleen Franco, a Boulder attorney/mediator to conduct what was termed a mediation between SI and BPS. Although it was not clear what could be mediated, BPS recognized this as an opportunity to re-establish a channel of communication with SI. And, what emerged was that BPS and SI shared a common goal: *that there be no perpetrators of sexual misconduct among the Shambhala leadership.*

Andrea Winn, Richard Edelman and I met with Ms. Franco on May 24, 2018 via videoconference. I reported the following:

1. As a retired employment lawyer, I was doing a preliminary investigation into allegations of sexual misconduct by the Sakyong;
2. The women I interviewed had made credible allegations of sexual assault and/or sexual abuse by the Sakyong;
3. I had been able to corroborate some of the claims, specifically 1) that of kusung involvement in procuring women for sex and 2) some corroboration of two of the sexual assault allegations;
4. The allegations pointed to a pattern of behavior: that the Sakyong sexually assaulted women when drunk and used kusung to procure women students for his own sexual gratification. And that SI was aware of these actions and did nothing.
5. There are also allegations that the Kalapa Council and other leaders ignored, suppressed, and covered up sexual assault and/or sexual misconduct claims.

Later I informed Ms. Franco of an additional allegation from a woman who had just come forward with a report of an alleged rape by the Sakyong of a woman in Chile. By agreement, we did not disclose this to SI. The allegation of a rape is just — an allegation that is second or third hand at best. I have no means of determining whether it is true or false or whether it can even be investigated. However, this credible, first-hand report of a conspiracy to cover-up should be part of a full investigation.

The Findings of the Preliminary Investigation (“The Findings”)

The Allegations That the Sakyong Sexually Assaulted Women

I did a preliminary investigation of allegations of sexual assault brought forward by several women.¹ Their own personal stories can be found in the BPS Report in the section entitled *Stories From Women Survivors of Sakyong Mipham’s Alleged Clergy Sexual Misconduct (Stories From Women Survivors)*. I note that not every woman who came forward submitted a statement to the *Stories*, preferring not to share details and to remain completely anonymous.

The phrase ‘sexual assault’ can mean many things. One common definition of sexual assault is “*any type of offensive sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient.*” In the allegations I heard, there was no consent of any kind. All three allegations meet this definition of sexual assault.

In the most recent situation, 2011, the Sakyong is alleged to have pulled up a women student’s dress, groped her breasts, kissed her, stuck his tongue into her mouth and made a lewd suggestion. He was drunk.² This was done without her consent and in full view of at least one other person in a shocking disregard of her physical and emotional well-being. She deflected his advances, but was left humiliated and confused. She had contemporaneous conversations about this incident with a number of KC leaders and other Shambhala members which should provide corroboration of her allegation in a full investigation. I also reviewed some text messages which appeared to indicate that at least one senior leader was aware of the assault sometime in 2011.

Another woman alleges that she was called by a kusung at 11 or 12 pm to come to the Sakyong’s suite after a program. When she got there, he was undressed except for a robe. “Then he led me into his room and began kissing me and removing my clothes. I said I could not have sex with him. He seemed stunned. He thought for a while and pushed my face down towards his penis and said, ‘Well you might as well finish this.’ I was so embarrassed and horrified I did it.” (*Stories of Women Survivors in the BPS Report*).

Eventually, this woman (and another women who has come forward) “consented” to have sex with him. But the meaning of consent in a situation involving a teacher and a student, who wishes to study and be “close” to the teacher, raises known ethical issues beyond the scope of this investigation but which calls into question whether there can actually be any “consent” in this situation.

¹ These women have requested anonymity. I will therefore not refer to them by name. Some may find it difficult to remain open to claims that are brought anonymously. In my experience, fears of retribution, shunning, and retaliation are overwhelming in these situations and have nothing to do with truthfulness. If people have questions of the truthfulness of these claims, it would be useful to support the conclusion that a full investigation needs to be done.

² Extreme drunkenness has been a consistent part of the pattern alleged here. But alcohol abuse is just another issue that must be dealt with; it is not and cannot be an excuse for the conduct that is alleged.

Another woman reported that over a period of time at a number of parties, the Sakyong pushed her against the wall, groping and kissing her, while repeatedly trying to persuade her to have sex with him, despite the fact that he was often there with another woman as a date or “consort.” When she finally complained to the Sakyong about his behavior, he refused to discuss it and marginalized her to the point that she felt she had no choice but to leave the community. (*Stories from Women Survivors in the BPS Report*)

This type of shunning treatment was a common thread in the allegations: “When I began complaining or speaking up to others that I felt deeply impacted by that experience, [of sexual assault] I was told to be quiet, not speak about it publicly, get over it, etc. Not just by leaders, but by friends in the community too. Eventually I left.” (*Email from an anonymous victim to Carol Merchasin*)

The Finding

I find the women who came forward to be entirely credible. Each individual story was detailed, consistent and I was able to establish some limited corroboration on the claims of sexual assault. Their individual stories established a strong pattern of similar behaviors. (See *Stories from Women Survivors in the BPS Report*)

For Full Investigation

If the Sakyong denies that these assaults happened, he should be interviewed to obtain his version of events. It is the case that he issued a Message on June 25th of this year to the community. In the Message, he admits that he had “relationships with women.” However, what is alleged here in this Memorandum is not about a “relationship” but about sexual assaults, which are crimes in every state in the US and in Canada. A full investigation must be done to give the Sakyong the opportunity to respond to these three specific allegations and any others that may arise.

There are at least three additional women who have been identified as having been the victim of sexual misconduct by the Sakyong. They should be contacted and interviewed.

There are additional people within the Shambhala mandala that have knowledge of these events, and others who have heard first hand, contemporaneous accounts of these events. All should be interviewed, if it is necessary to provide additional corroboration of the present allegations.

In addition, a specific kusung who was on duty during one of the incidents should be re-interviewed. He was not in the room at the time of one of the alleged assault and he could not corroborate any of the events. However, since that interview more information is available that might refresh his memory.

There is at least one senior leader that may have been aware of one of the incidents shortly after it occurred and who did nothing, and an allegation that another three leaders may have been aware of an incident at a later point in 2011. All should be interviewed for additional information on what, if anything, leaders were aware of and when.

The Allegations of the Use of Kusung to Procure Women for Sex

Among the women who came forward, several either witnessed the use of kusung to procure women for sex with the Sakyong or experienced it themselves. They observed the same pattern -- that the Sakyong would identify a woman during a teaching or other event and then use a kusung to call sometimes late in the evening and bring her to his lodgings for sex. (See the *Stories From Women Survivors in the BPS Report* for further details). There is another woman who confirmed that this was her experience also, but her statement is not in the Report.

The Findings:

The women who either experienced this or who observed it were credible witnesses with no discernible motive to lie. While I could not corroborate this directly with any kusung, I heard it from different women victims with no connection to one another and no knowledge of each other's statements to me. It does not plausible that this is untrue.

For Full Investigation:

In addition to questioning the Sakyong, there are kusung and other leaders who have been specifically named by women as allegedly participating in or condoning this conduct. KC members, current kusung and several kusung no longer in the community should be interviewed for their knowledge of this allegation. *If true, this points to a remarkably predatory, institutionalized abuse of women that should not be tolerated in any organization, no less one with spiritual goals.*

The Allegations of a Cover-up and Complicity Among Shambhala Leaders

The allegations of a cover-up fall into two categories:

1. Alleged Cover-up: A person came forward who alleged being present during a phone call between a member of the Kalapa Council and an unknown person. In this call, the KC member was informed that the Sakyong had been *accused* of raping a woman in Chile. After the phone call, the KC member said that a specific group of leaders would be put together to deal with the situation and that members of the KC would conspire to cover-up the allegation and to get the Sakyong sober (allegedly he was extremely drunk). Another Shambhala member confirmed hearing this account from a different person.

Complicity: The totality of the reports makes me reasonably certain that members of the KC and others who surround the Sakyong knew about these alleged assaults and sexual misconduct. I have seen corroborating text messages from a senior leader that appears to indicate that he was aware of the 2011 incident. One woman who was sexually assaulted alleged that she told four different senior leaders and to her knowledge, nothing was done. I have other corroborating witnesses. However, this part of the investigation can only be done by someone who is retained by SI and has the authority and the mandate to interview the KC leadership.

The Findings:

I have no way to assess the claim of an alleged rape in Chile. I do not even know if it is possible to investigate it. Many people I spoke to knew of a rumor of an "incident" in South America in which the Sakyong was "bad" but these are nothing but uncorroborated rumors.

However, the first-hand testimony from the person who heard the phone call and was told about a plan to cover it up is credible.

Further, there is a limited amount of corroboration that a variety of people had knowledge and did nothing. However, if SI feels that this issue of the complicity of other leaders is not true, they should conduct a full investigation into this and any other allegations.

For Full Investigation:

Leaders and members of KC need to be interviewed to determine the veracity of this claim by an investigator whose mandate is to determine the truth of who and what was known about the Sakyong's alleged sexual misconduct. In addition, the alleged coverup of the situation in Chile should be investigated fully through documentary evidence and interviews with leadership, including whether there were payments made to buy silence.

Conclusion

The goal of this preliminary investigation was to determine whether any of the allegations are credible and if so, to recommend that they be investigated by an independent neutral person that would have access to SI leaders and documents.

I find that all of the allegations I have listed above are credible. The women are from different cities, their experiences are from different time periods, and they have little or no connection to one another until now. The pattern of behavior that their stories establish is compelling.

I spent hours speaking to each of them. In my experience conducting investigations, the level of detail and their reflections on these events in their *Stories* are not those of people with a vendetta or who have something to gain by lying. In fact, I suspect that each of them would say that stepping forward and speaking out has been a most frightening and unsettling experience.

However, if the Sakyong and the various parties in the leadership of SI believe that these claims are untrue, then it would be in the best interest of the entire Shambhala community for them to commission a full investigation by an independent investigator. As I have outlined above, there are matters that I could not fully investigate. A full investigation commissioned by SI could likely issue findings with greater certainty on each allegation. SI, like any responsible organization faced with these kinds of credible claims, should welcome the opportunity to dig down deeper to determine the truth and then once the truth is established to outline a clear and specific path toward any necessary reconciliation.