



# Buddhist Project Sunshine Phase 3 Final Report

## *The nail: Bringing things to a clear point*

A 2-month Initiative To Bring Activating Healing Light  
To Sexualized Violence At The Core Of The Shambhala Buddhist Community

August 23, 2018

Respectfully offered by Andrea M. Winn, MEd, MCS

With A New Investigation Memo From Carol Merchasin, J.D.

Re: Alleged Sexual Assaults by Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo (aka Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche)

*This report is dedicated to inspiring  
a renewed Shambhala community  
that addresses harms and  
creates space for tenderness and goodness to flourish*

## Contents

<b>Welcome.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Is BPS a white woman initiative?.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>The Wickwire Holm Investigation .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>An Olive Branch Initiative.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Shambhala teaching on corrupt leadership.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Acharya/Shastri system: Can good fruit grow from a rotten seed? .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>What is a sexual predator? .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Who else is involved in these alleged crimes? .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>The leaders involved in Ann's story .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>The leader who allegedly raped Keith.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Other leaders.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>More women's stories of Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, aka Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Statement on Complicity .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Statement on early poor behavior of the Sakyong .....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>What can Shambhala communities do for survivors? .....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>A lama's advice for dealing with images and visualizing your guru when your guru has allegedly committed crimes .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>The Shambhala community must take responsibility for the future of the community .....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>The Buddhist Project Sunshine discussion group .....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Buddhist Project Sunshine needs your support.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Concluding Wishes .....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Acknowledgement And Gratitude To The Abuse Survivors .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendix 1: BPS 3-month organizational start up budget .....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Appendix 2: Memo of New Findings of Buddhist Project Sunshine's Preliminary Investigation Into the Clergy Sexual Misconduct of Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche - Carol Merchasin, J.D.....</b>	<b>31</b>

## Welcome

Buddhist Project Sunshine is a grass roots initiative to bring healing light to the sexualized violence embedded within our precious Shambhala community. It is through bringing light to the truth of what has happened that we are empowered to create positive and healthy changes. The sole purpose of this work is to create the possibility for protecting our sacred lineage and re-envisioning a community that will hold, guard and birth a pure Shambhala lineage for generations to come.

I, Andrea Winn, have been one woman as a driving force behind Buddhist Project Sunshine (BPS). However, the spirit of BPS has resonated increasingly with others, and there is now a core group of people working with me. In addition, a community has gathered in the BPS discussion group, and they are connecting, sharing their grief, sharing ideas, and envisioning good ways forward. Beyond BPS, like-minded people have been publishing blogs that are bringing further clear light to the corruption that has woven its way into the fabric of our community.

As in the previous reports, I will speak from my own point of view. However, there is a wider space opening now, and I hope that others will feel a warm invitation to become part of this movement, contributing their own inspiration and desire for a just and kind Buddhist community. I want to emphasize that many are calling for a community where there is a greater presence of true feminine wisdom. This is in contrast to recent contributions from some women Acharyas which seem to serve more to lull people back into the emotionally disconnected space from which the corruption arose and distract the community from the truths which must be faced for true healing to occur.

As in the Phase 2 report, my contribution is intended to be an introduction and helpful context for the findings of the ongoing investigation by Carol Merchasin. Carol is a competent and seasoned investigator doing her work in a professional and independent way to bring forward good information for the use of this community. I am serving as your Buddhist social activist/protector/healer; when I see an image of the Umbrella Mother, that is how I often feel in my role. Carol's and my roles are very different, and by bringing our work together, it has been igniting a natural evolution of positive social change. Carol and I are like a good Reese's peanut butter cup, bringing together two elements to create something far beyond the two elements.

I also see the image of a ring with a precious jewel in my mind. If Carol's information is the precious jewel, then I am attempting to fashion a good setting for that precious jewel, so it is a useful ring. I would like your reading this report to be more than an experience of "hard cold facts". I would like this to be about a heart transformation of a precious community. I am encouraging each of you to face the difficult information you will read in Carol's memo

with an open heart and take responsibility for creating a good future for yourself and the children of our community. The Shambhala teachings are so very important for the people of the contemporary world. The difficult work we are now engaging is part of a healing transformation for world communities beyond the Shambhala community, and communities well into the future.

To recap where we have come so far, in the February 15th Phase 1 report I brought to light embedded sexualized violence within the Shambhala community. In response, the Kalapa Council publicly announced 'ABHORRENT SEXUAL BEHAVIOR' by Shambhala teachers.

In the June 28th Phase 2 report a BPS collaborative team released results of a preliminary investigation into alleged sexual assaults by Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, hereafter referred to by his name, Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo. The report shared clear patterns occurring in his alleged assaults.

Following the release of the Phase 2 report, another woman who alleged she was sexually assaulted by Mr. Mukpo in Chile came forward. Carol Merchasin prepared a follow up memo detailing that alleged assault which BPS published July 10, 2018. Carol suggested a neutral third party investigation into the clergy sexual misconduct of Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo as an appropriate next step.

The Shambhala community responded bravely to the information shared in the Phase 2 report. Due to community pressure, the Kalapa Council resigned en masse and Mr. Mukpo stepped back from all duties while he would be investigated. These are remarkable and heartening results in a short time, and it is due to the powerful force of truth that is now resonating within the community.

More women came forward to me following the Phase 2 report alleging sexual assaults and pressure to give both money and property to Mr. Mukpo by Mr. Mukpo and his senior staff. I asked Carol Merchasin to continue her investigation.

**Be sure to read Carol Merchasin's *Memo Of Findings*, with important new allegations at the end of this report.**

There are important aspects to this situation that need to be looked at, and I will go through what I see as those aspects here in this report. Of particular note, when is enough enough? How do we know when a leadership system is too far gone, and when the right thing to do is to end it?

I propose that we have enough information at this point to make a decision. I place the information we have collected into the hands of the community, as ultimately it is you who will make this decision.

But first, I'd like for us to consider a question a few have had about the orientation of the leadership of Buddhist Project Sunshine.

## **Is BPS a white woman initiative?**

People have been asking, is BPS a white woman initiative? It is true that the BPS reports have been produced by Carol and myself, both white women. It is important to note that not all of the abuse survivors are white in skin color, so we are not exclusively a white woman initiative. In February 2018 I actively asked for women of color to join the leadership of BPS. That invitation is still there and will always remain because every community is stronger through inclusivity and embracing diversity.

Shambhala is a spiritual community, and I am going to assume that any spiritual person reading this report understands there are dimensions beyond this material world. We understand we have our relative reality, and there is also something beyond what we see with our physical eyes.

Last summer I attended a couple of programs with a Brazilian shaman,. During the second program the shaman suddenly remarked that she saw me as a red woman dancing in flames. Although she has no knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism, when the shaman said this I felt she was seeing the fruit of my years of Vajrayogini<sup>1</sup> practice.

As I have said in the past, this healing initiative is inspired by Yeshe Tsogyal, in the particular form of Yumka, who is also red in colour. It would perhaps be most accurate then to say that Buddhist Project Sunshine is a Red Woman<sup>2</sup> initiative, and there are men, women and gender-queer folks of all skin colors who resonate with the passion and Prajna of the red dakini and are part of this movement.

Patriarchy is a challenge across cultures, and we are coming up against it full force now in the Shambhala community. A big part of patriarchy's power is through its ability to divide people. The work I have done through Buddhist Project Sunshine has opened up greater space in Shambhala for all people to be treated better, whether they be People of Colour, people of various sexual orientations, people on the spectrum of gender identities, and all other forms of diversity. The more we can open our hearts to the diversity of human

---

<sup>1</sup> A red female Tibetan Buddhist deity who is dancing in flames.

<sup>2</sup> I would like to acknowledge with due respect Indigenous women who use the term "Red Woman" to identify their race. My use of this term is different.

experience, the stronger we will be as a community. I believe that, and I welcome collaborative relationship with people from a wealth of cultural diversity to join in with and contribute to BPS activities in ways that feel right for them.

I would like to call attention now to some specific ways that patriarchy affects women. It divides women through isolating them and making them think their experiences are theirs alone, and no one else would understand what they have gone through. It also punishes them for speaking their experiences of oppression publicly.

Patriarchy not only divides women from each other, it also divides women from themselves, teaching them to hate sacred female processes like menstruation and menopause. It burns my soul to see how women are turned from the sacredness of being a woman as manifested through our bodies in these sacred body processes.

Patriarchy has continued its assault, even on women in Tibetan Buddhism. I have had women come to me saying they are triggered by the term, "dakini". I have read stories about how men in the Shambhala community called girls and teenage girls "dakinis" in a sexualized way that is about male conquest of not only young female bodies but also the spirit of these girls. I am deeply saddened to hear this, and my heart goes out to everyone who has been traumatized either directly or vicariously<sup>3</sup> through this abusive male co-optation of the sacred dakini of Tibetan Buddhism.

In my view, the power of the dakini is the antidote to our current situation. She represents the essence of feminine wisdom. She is the ultimate mother figure. She is the source of wisdom and gives birth to awakening in the practitioner. She helps us re-member who we really are. She helps us re-connect with our inherent wisdom so we are enabled to speak truth to power. She helps us see our true allies in speaking truth, and... she helps us see those who are working to cloak the truth in murky darkness.

May Shambhala, and greater Tibetan Buddhism, be fiercely protected by the Great Mother Dakini, and may we see the power of her benevolence through the goodness now arising in our community. Having recollected the power of the dakini, let's explore facets of our current situation in Shambhala.

---

<sup>3</sup> Experiencing trauma through someone close that has been violated; for instance a father is vicariously traumatized when his daughter was raped by a community member.

## The Wickwire Holm Investigation

Buddhist Project Sunshine asked the Kalapa Council to initiate a neutral third-party investigation of Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo. Rather than initiate a neutral investigation, it appears they have hired a firm to collect information for them. There has been no guarantee that all findings will be shared with the community. People within Mr. Mukpo's leadership system will have control of the information and use it as they decide to use it.

Furthermore, we asked for an investigation into Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo. Instead, the Kalapa Council hired their firm to investigate all Shambhala leaders for sexual misconduct. It appears their objective is to discern whether there is a problem in the Shambhala community with sexual misconduct by leaders. We note that the Kalapa Council claimed in February of this year that there is a problem with Shambhala teachers committing 'ABHORRENT SEXUAL BEHAVIOR'. So I ask, why is the Council spending the community's money on this investigation?

Will the results of this investigation lead to advocacy and support being given to victims to press criminal charges against Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo and other Shambhala teachers?

The key element missing in this investigation is the investigating firm needs to be hired by someone with vested interest in hearing the truth – someone who wants to know what bad things are happening. To find someone like this, an organization has to go high enough up or go outside the organization.

A good example for us to look to is the Willow Creek Community Church near Chicago<sup>4</sup>. As reported in the New York Times, Willow Creek announced last August its plan to "launch a new independent investigation into allegations that the Rev. Bill Hybels, the church's influential founding pastor, sexually harassed female co-workers and a congregant over many years."<sup>5</sup> Bill Hybels is the spiritual leader of a mega church, and he has been accused of sexually assaulting several women. This church has done two failed investigations initiated by leaders within the church. The hierarchy of the church cannot do this. This is parallel to what is happening here in Shambhala with the Kalapa Council. In the new independent investigation, Willow Creek is pulling together people from outside the church who will manage the investigation.

---

<sup>4</sup> This is the same situation referred to in Carol's memo.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/06/us/willow-creek-bill-hybels-investigation.html>



When I have discussed this with people around me, they have asked, "Who could do that for Shambhala?" I suggested the Dalai Lama, but some people don't see him as a suitable candidate. The other idea I had was Buddhist Project Sunshine. We are dedicated to the truth coming out, and if funds were gathered for a proper investigation and our own organizational staffing needs to oversee such an investigation, this could be possible. Perhaps the Shambhala community will come up with other options for initiating an investigation that will provide the information the community needs to move forward from the abuses of Mr. Mukpo and his senior staff. Or perhaps the community will feel there is enough evidence already to have closure and move forward.

## **An Olive Branch Initiative**

At the same time that they announced the Wickwire Holm investigation, the Kalapa Council announced an initiative with An Olive Branch. The two key elements to this initiative that stand out to me are: (1) the Listening Post to listen to victims of abuse and (2) they will advise Shambhala institution leaders on policy changes. Like the Wickwire Holm investigation, I have questions about what the true, clear objective is for this initiative and who it ultimately serves: the welfare of the community or the continuation of the existing leadership system.

It is not clear to me exactly what the purpose of the Listening Post is. I believe victims need more than being listened to. They deserve to be heard and also supported in seeking reparation for the harms they have experienced by perpetrators and in some cases, Shambhala communities who have demonized the victims to protect the perpetrators. In contrast, the Olive Branch listening post seems to be more about soothing people so they are no longer upset. This reminds me of the "Fixer" role that senior Shambhala women leaders have played in quieting victims of Mr. Mukpo's alleged sexual assaults. Once a victim feels heard and is befriended, they quietly go away.

Why would An Olive Branch decide what is needed for our governance? I believe the Shambhala community is particularly skilled in designing policies. We are about creating enlightened society. If we fell off the mark under the leadership of the Mukpos, we nevertheless have substantial resources: solid teachings, practices, and students who are well-seasoned in these practices, have keen minds, and are deeply caring people.

I believe we are beyond the time of being told what to do and what we need. It is my firm conviction that the Shambhala community is growing up through this process and is taking responsibility for its own good future.

I believe that given time and given some space free of corrupt leadership, the great minds and hearts within Shambhala can and will explore models of governance that resonate with core Shambhala values. Within such a wisdom womb space, we can develop good ways to address sexual violence and all harms against our humanity so that we create a community that nurtures us all as dharma practitioners.

## **Shambhala teaching on corrupt leadership**

Two separate people recently sent me an excerpt from *The Court Vision & Practice*, by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Chapter 10 “Corruption”, pp 53 – 54. This book is CTR’s instruction manual on the roles and discipline of the leaders of the Shambhala Kingdom.

“Corruption arises from two problems: first, the warrior-statesman is neglecting his meditative practice; and second, he is becoming sloppy, forgetting the discipline and awareness that are necessary to keep him a true warrior-statesman. This corruption manifests itself in three main symptoms:

- the first is pleasure-seeking, love of luxury and sexual indulgence;
- the second is love of power and indulgence in the abuse of one’s subordinates;
- the third is infatuation with one’s charisma and intelligence. In all of these cases the perpetrator of corruption is actually damaging the Kingdom of Shambhala.

When an official is possessed by a corruption-causing neurosis he suddenly becomes powerful. Thus he recruits his own proteges and demands hospitality from the gullible who revere his power. Some people, observing this, are shocked but are fearful of expressing their opinions. Others just go along with it—because it is the art of corruption to be much easier to go along with than to oppose.

When an official has no understanding of enlightened dignity he loses his sense of genuineness. Such a person relates only with his own version of the world. Although he might have to work with his colleagues, his ultimate aim is purely to convince them to agree with him. Stupidity and lack of gentleness in this corrupt official perpetuate his abuse of his subordinates. Since he does not allow any genuine feedback from the world, if his subordinates express negativity they are charged with being traitors; whereas if they are sympathetic and supportive they are just being conned into his corruption.”

What is interesting is that this description of corruption is made in contrast to the goodness of the Sakyong. The Sakyong is the gold standard by which we measure other leaders. However, in our case it is Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo himself who through a growing number of allegations exhibits this corruption.

## **The Acharya/Shastri system: Can good fruit grow from a rotten seed?**

Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo formed an extensive system of authorized teachers: Acharyas and Shastris. In traditional cult literature, this is a technique used by cult leaders to gather in spiritually gifted people and make them subservient to the will of the cult leader. I wonder to what degree this has happened in Shambhala.

On July 20, 2018, former Shastri Ethan Nichtern published his statement, “Stepping Down As ‘Shastri,’ Staying For The Shambhala Community”. In it he writes, “the senior teacher titles (Shastri and Acharya) which are given solely at the discretion of the Sakyong, are another example of the non-transparency and monolithic power structure which must end.... merit and transparency are not the primary reasons we have our titles. We have our titles primarily because of the perception that we are loyal to Sakyong Mipham, specifically.” Mr. Nichtern writes of his experience of the culture around the giving of these titles:

*“I became a Shastri in 2010 when the title was first created, but I heard multiple rumors from different sources, starting in about 2006, that Sakyong Mipham was considering giving me a senior teacher title. He never spoke to me directly about this, I just heard it from various others. The clear story shared with me was that, before such a title was offered, there had to be some “energetic shift” into open-hearted loyalty which the Sakyong was looking for. Not the testimony of students, not the number of hours of teaching experience or practice experience, not the reviewed recommendation of peers or mentors or the man himself based on one’s conduct as both student and teacher, but an energetic read of some sort which only he could oversee, an invisible litmus test of devotion, a silent signaling of one’s loyalty to him and the lineage. I never really knew what this meant, but friends I trust reported deeply intuitive experiences with him on an almost psychic level, and I had many powerful experiences of connection with him on a pre-verbal level during my own practice. So for about a decade, I “trusted the process.”*

*Meanwhile, I kept doing the best I could working with students, with the organization, and with my own personal obstacles and shortcomings as I practiced these teachings on and off the cushion. Until just a year or two ago, I*

*so often felt the subtle need—which was undoubtedly based on my own misunderstanding of the teachings—to “perform” my loyalty whenever I was in the presence of the Sakyong. Nobody said I had to do this, but something was always assumed, something floating in the air around him, an atmospheric persuasion that I found myself prone to as well. He wanted to be talked to a certain way, and if you were going to be around him, you had to comply or else you just wouldn’t be around him. And if you couldn’t be around him, he wouldn’t empower you at a higher level. It was that simple, though usually unstated, and to be clear, I never experienced anything from him personally other than a quiet, opaque gentleness. But ours was also a relationship with almost no genuine feedback about the path forward for me as either student or teacher, and without any honest conversation about what either person felt.*

*I now realize that this performance of loyalty (mixed with true, genuine gratitude for him and his teachings) made me energetically complicit in all of the systemic problems that have caused harm. To be clear, I knew very little of the Sakyong’s personal life, and I knew nothing of the abuse or assault allegations against him until they were made public at the end of June and early July 2018. But, like so many others in our community, I did want Sakyong Mipham to see me, and I wanted him to like me, and I wanted him to agree to give me more power to help others along the path that he held. I could argue that the whole reason I wanted him to empower me further was that I wanted to help others more (via offering vows and so forth), but that’s far too easy and innocent to claim. I now realize that this toxic performance of loyalties, mixed with genuine respect and admiration for our lineage, created an inauthentic and codependent relationship between us as well, and I would like to take responsibility for my part in that shared performance. ”<sup>6</sup>*

I salute Ethan Nichtern for his transparency and the leadership he has shown through his stepping down as Shastri. I specifically respect him for:

1. Rejecting the prestige of status given within a system that sorely lacks integrity
2. Sharing with us a glimpse into the culture around these senior teacher titles
3. Sharing his personal experience around his decision to give up his title so we know exactly where he is coming from

---

<sup>6</sup> Read Ethan Nichtern's full statement at: <http://www.ethannichtern.com/stepping-down-as-shastri-staying-for-the-shambhala-community/>

I wonder what goodness could come from the dissolution of Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo's system, and instead developing a system based on the merits and teaching gifts of Shambhala teachers, as Mr. Nichtern suggests. In what ways might the gifts of senior teachers be released and uplifted through abandoning the former system and bringing them into a system based on their merits.

I also note that the Transition Task Force that has been appointed to oversee a transition in Shambhala leadership is filled with people authorized within the system Mr. Nichtern described - A leadership system that has been re-traumatizing abuse victims for decades. For instance, one woman shared the following statement about the first person named in the Transition Task Force, Ani Pema Chödrön, to be included in this report:

*"I was raped at the age of 21 by a Shambhala Center director. This led to a pregnancy and then a miscarriage. About a year later I approached Pema Chödrön to disclose what had happened. As a respected practitioner and also as a woman, it was my expectation that I would find an ally.*

*Instead, Ani Pema told me bluntly, "I don't believe you." I was shattered. After further discussion with her, Ani Pema then said, "Well, I wasn't there, but if it's true I suspect that you were into it."*

*To be not believed, and then to have it suggested to me that I was being untruthful about something so difficult, was retraumatizing to say the least. To this date, and despite having had opportunities, Pema Chödrön has never apologized to me for these comments.*

*What I would like to know is: what are Pema Chödrön's intentions in joining the Transition Team? If other survivors come forth with their stories, will she believe them? Will she discourage others from speaking out? Will she suggest to others that they secretly enjoyed it?*

*Through speaking out, it is my intention and wish that this may incite meaningful change and be of benefit to all beings."*

Are the acharyas on the Transition Team invested in maintaining Mr. Mukpo at the head of our community, and is that appropriate? Several acharyas are encouraging students to accept the possibility of him coming back to his former position and restoring the status quo. Acharya Suzann Duquette, who is also on the Task Force, appears to see no other alternative. In a letter she wrote to the staff and residents of Karme Chöling:

*"Human mistakes have to be included or there is no path... Acknowledging our mistakes is key to this. This is true for both teachers and ourselves... Shambhala doesn't exist without lineage. If we take away the Sakyong or the Sakyong and the Vidyadhara's photos, we are removing the Shambhala lineage... The Sakyong is taking time away from teaching and administration to do very challenging personal work. He has already started that work. At the same time, he is still the Sakyong, the Shambhala lineage holder... Shambhala doesn't exist without lineage."*

Are our acharyas and Dorje Kasung leadership caught in a black box, where there are no other acceptable options but to hang on to a leadership system that revolves around an alleged serial sexual predator?

## **What is a sexual predator?**

As I have heard the growing number of allegations about the behaviour of Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, I have wondered if these patterns fit what is known as a sexual predator.

LegalBeagle.com defines the term:

"In the broad sense of the word, sexual predators are people who commit sexual crimes. The term 'predator,' however, usually indicates a repeat offender who enjoys the feeling of 'hunting down' his prey. Many sexual predators attack only a particular type of victim, such as children of a certain age, sex or race. Sexual predators are usually friendly, self-assured individuals who target their victims carefully, rather than choosing at random."<sup>7</sup>

In an article in *Psychology Today* entitled, "The Thinking Processes of Sexual Predators", Dr. Samenow describes the mentality of a sexual predator:

"Sexual harassment, sexual assault, and rape obviously are sex offenses. But they have little to do with sex itself. The people who are making headlines for their exploitation of women employed by their company likely have had no shortage of opportunities for consensual sex. Sexual predators have plenty of sexual experience but it is shallow. Sex is a control operation for

---

<sup>7</sup> <https://legalbeagle.com/5048506-definition-sexual-predator.html>

them. They ordain the time and place of the encounter. Seeking a conquest is the overriding aspect. The perpetrator cares little what his 'partner' experiences. The idea is to conquer a body, not have a relationship. Achieving his objective provides him with a buildup. He has sex on his mind a great deal of the time, looking at females as potential targets.”<sup>8</sup>

I encourage you to read the full article, as it compellingly matches the patterns emerging from the BPS investigation into allegations of Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo’s sexual misconduct.

Can sexual predators change and become good men? *TIME* published an article in May 2018, “Can Bad Men Change? What It’s Like Inside Sex Offender Therapy”<sup>9</sup>. This article states, “therapy—when paired with tough parole restrictions—can significantly reduce the chance of re-offending, according to the American Psychological Association.” Lisa Anderson, a lawyer who represents survivors of rape, states, “It’s hard for me to believe that someone could violently ignore the will of another and then be taught not to cross that line,” says Anderson. “But if it’s possible to teach them empathy, then that should be mandatory.”

This article points towards the helpfulness of the real consequences of criminal prosecution in combination with competent sex offender therapy for offenders who are open to change. I believe the people of Shambhala will appreciate reading the stories of how a couple of therapists work with sex offenders in this article in ways that resonate with our values as Shambhalians. I encourage you to read the full article.

It is important to note that the depth of this therapeutic process realistically takes years. Such a substantive process cannot even begin until a man admits he has a problem and actively wants to change. It is also important to note that these therapists will not agree to work with every perpetrator, because they know some perpetrators are not open to engaging a process to change.

---

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.psychologytoday.com/intl/blog/inside-the-criminal-mind/201712/the-thinking-processes-sexual-predators>

<sup>9</sup> <http://time.com/5272337/sex-offenders-therapy-treatment/>

## **Who else is involved in these alleged crimes?**

Carol is a seasoned and professional Investigator, and she will not print the names of Shambhala leaders involved in these situations of misconduct without full corroboration from other witnesses. I respect her professional ethics.

I am a Buddhist social activist who has been working to provide leadership for the \*\*\* least painful path \*\*\* forward for our community's healing and getting to the other side of a complex and widespread situation of harm. I want the Shambhala community to make it through this and re-emerge as the sane, kind and beautiful Buddhist community that I know we all want.

Therefore, although Carol is not naming all those involved in her memo, I am going to be naming Shambhala leaders here. *I believe the victims.* In fact I have known one of the victims since I was 16 years old - that's 35 years. And I believe the community deserves, and in fact NEEDS to know the allegations about the people involved for us to get to the other side of an effective healing process.

I also want to make clear that Carol offers anonymity to people who make statements to her in her investigations. That anonymity is always honoured. None of the people named below were interviewed, and so there has been no breach of trust.

### **The leaders involved in Ann's story**

The leaders who are alleged to have been involved in group sexual assaults are:

- David Brown
- Josh Silberstein
- Adam Lobel
- Jesse Grimes

Ann also reported a senior Shambhala teacher who allegedly had full knowledge of Mr. Mukpo's alleged crimes, and not only knew of them, but even facilitated one of them. Ann sent me this description to include in this report:

*"Dan Hessey is the person I told about the condo and he was to handle the quit claim deed. He was also the person who warned me that the Sakyong chooses trauma survivors and to be careful."*



## **The leader who allegedly raped Keith**

John Weber is the leader who allegedly raped Keith. If there are other men or women who experienced unwanted sex with Mr. Weber, Buddhist Project Sunshine invites you get in touch with us at [buddhistprojectsunshine@gmail.com](mailto:buddhistprojectsunshine@gmail.com).

## **Other leaders**

The following people were allegedly present or attendants to Mr. Mukpo during the alleged sexual assault by Mr. Mukpo of one of his female students in 2011: Greg Wolk (Shambhala employee, Continuity Kusung), Jeff Rosen (Patron and current member of the Sakyong Potrang Canada), and Alan Goldstein (brother-in-law to the Sakyong Wangmo). Leaders who were allegedly part of the “damage control” and “placation” of the alleged assault survivor’s reaction to harm include Wendy Friedman (Sangyum and outgoing Kalapa Council member), Joshua Silberstein (former Chief of Staff and outgoing Kalapa Council member), and Mr. Mukpo (the Sakyong) himself.

Other leaders who allegedly procured women for Mr. Mukpo's sex include Michael Fraund and Adam Lobel.

## **More women's stories of Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, aka Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche**

### **Statement on Complicity**

This is a statement prepared by one of the women who came forward after the last report.

*After reading the painful and long-overdue reports of systemic abuse within Shambhala International, and particularly those reports concerning Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, I have chosen to come forward and share my own story, which has haunted me for many years and because of which I eventually left the sangha.*

*I have chosen to come forward, albeit anonymously, because I believe it is important for the Shambhala community to know exactly what has been happening within the Court in this*

*regard, as it reveals a long lineage of sexual misconduct, from VCTR to the Vajra Regent to SMR.*

*From 2003–2005, I had a consensual, non-monogamous sexual relationship with Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche. Since the “relationship”, for lack of a better term, was carried on publicly and was well-known then to many sangha members worldwide, any privacy which I might have wished for then and now has long since been yielded.*

*I would like to assert that during our relationship, I was never coerced into any sexual acts, nor was I physically or verbally assaulted by SMR. I would also like to assert that I stand behind those women who allege sexual assault and extreme misconduct on behalf of SMR and the Court, and I believe them. The stories of assault are nothing short of horrifying. Absolutely, utterly and completely horrifying. My heart breaks for these women.*

*I first met SMR when I was 23 years old, during my Vajrayana Seminary. I was a deeply devoted student, living in a practice center. I had a degree in Buddhist Studies and I had been training as a Tibetan language interpreter for several years. I had a great desire, like so many others, to make a profound and lasting spiritual connection with my teacher, and I was greatly honored when, during a private interview, SMR began speaking to me in Tibetan and inquiring about my studies. I felt a personal connection had been established, for which I had longed so fervently, regardless of the stories I had heard of his experience with other women in the sangha.*

*Shortly after this interview, I was approached by a Kusung, who told me that SMR would like to invite me to a group dinner that night at the Court, which I gladly accepted. That evening, after SMR had excused himself from the table, I was approached by the continuity Kusung, who subtly tapped me on my elbow and whispered in my ear that SMR would like to see me upstairs. I had heard enough of the sexual exploits of SMR that I knew what this invitation meant. But still, I felt very special that SMR wanted to spend time with me.*

*In the Tibetan tradition, one learns to choose one’s guru carefully, and once Samaya is made, to nurture and cherish that spiritual connection. Despite the fact that I was in a long-term relationship with the Rusung of my practice center, I felt that it was an honor and a pleasure to have a personal connection with and offer myself to the guru—whatever that meant. So I went upstairs, and we had small talk for a few minutes. Then SMR said to me, “well, I feel like we know each other well enough. Would you like to join me in bed?” And, although it was certainly an unusual situation, into bed I climbed. Naively, but willingly.*

*I want to be clear that this was not a desperate act for attention, or a childish whim, or a misguided hope that I might receive some secret teachings. I entered his bed as a woman and a scholar and a practitioner with devotion in my heart. I enjoy interpersonal and physical intimacy, and I was devoted to my guru. It seemed an obvious enough equation.*

*My presence was regularly requested throughout Seminary, the invitations always facilitated through Kusung or members of the Court. I remember these invitations with great embarrassment and distaste, as these men (almost always men—although I know firsthand that some women of the Court and many of the female Kusung also protected and slept with SMR) really functioned as vajra pimps, fetching the ladies for their teacher. I found out later that a dear friend from the practice center, who had had multiple sexual encounters with SMR, had attended a dinner the night before I was first invited—she had also been summoned upstairs, but turned down the invitation. Another woman was also requested later during seminary as well, but also chose not to spend the night with SMR.*

*There were many dinners and late nights throughout that Seminary, which turned into late mornings sleeping in at the Court. So many that my MI asked if it was possible for me to attend more morning sitting sessions. I felt very conflicted, because I was missing those sessions to have breakfast in bed with our teacher. She knew that. Everyone, it seemed, knew that.*

*It was a strange thing, sleeping with the guru while also still in a relationship with my then-partner, with both of them completely aware of the other. Looking back on it, it seems that this open secret was acceptable within the community only because this was a pattern that had been happening for so long, since the time of the Vidyadhara. But that doesn't make it less weird or ridiculous. Looking back on it now, it is completely fucked up.*

*I was then invited to spend a few weeks in Scotland with SMR after Seminary, while he was working on his latest book. This invitation I turned down, because I felt that the relationship with my partner would not withstand this separation. Within a few months, that relationship ended, and I then began spending time here and there with SMR—at Karne Choling, in New York, in Boulder. I also flew to Halifax several times at SMR's invitation. He would split the cost of the plane fare with me. During these visits we would socialize with other sangha members—nothing was carried on in secret, nor was there ever any privacy. Kusung were always around, always in and out of the bedroom, while I lay there under the covers.*

*This went on through 2005. SMR invited me up to Boston to watch him run the marathon, and for an afterparty that evening. Although we didn't spend the night together then, he told me he was about to leave for India for a few weeks, and that he wanted to see me in Rhode Island when he returned.*

*When I knew he had returned, I received a phone call from Josh Silberstein. I assumed he was calling to plan my visit, but instead he told me that SMR got engaged while in India, and that a community-wide announcement was going out shortly. He also said SMR wanted to talk to me, and would give me a call shortly.*

*The email announcement of the engagement went out within five minutes. It took six months for SMR to call me. When he did call, he didn't address the engagement or ask me how I was doing. He was mostly silent, and I was so embarrassed by this silence that all I could do was ask for advice on my upcoming monthlong retreat.*

*More than a year passed before I was granted an interview with him, by the same Kusung that used to arrange my plane tickets and bring me breakfast and who now wanted to know "what I wanted to discuss with SMR" before fitting me into his busy schedule. SMR was cold and remote when we met, and barely looked me in the eye.*

*Now, I had been under no such illusion that I was SMR's girlfriend, or that our relationship would ever be more than a series of weekends together here and there. I knew that he was sleeping with other women concurrently. I had other partners as well. I also knew that he had ghosted other "girlfriends". But I was under the illusion that we had a friendship, and that he had even a modicum of personal interest in me as his student and friend and former lover. We had spent a lot of time together, we had great fun, we were very affectionate, we enjoyed each other's company. What hurt me the most in the end was to be dropped and ghosted the way I was, without any thought to maintain even a hint of kindness.*

*Beyond this, because our "relationship" had been so public, sangha members around the world felt comfortable sharing their opinions with me about SMR's engagement and bride-to-be. Once the announcement went out, I was absolutely inundated with calls and emails from sangha members who felt that I was "the slighted girlfriend" and wanted to talk. It was all terribly embarrassing, and I had no idea how to respond.*

*My connection to the sangha, which had been my entire world, began to crumble. I felt that I couldn't talk to anyone about my experience, because I felt that sharing my intimate experience with others might pollute their relationship with their teacher, or sow discord in general. So I remained silent, and felt great shame in my inability to practice, in my anger at my teacher, for breaking my samaya. I was completing a Master's degree at Naropa by then, and I felt so incredibly isolated in my shame and heartbreak and complete inability to practice. Shambhala was all around me, and yet I wasn't a part of it.*

*During this time, I was a ngondro practitioner doing guru yoga practice. I found it more and more confusing during guru yoga to identify with and visualize SMR. Were all acts by the guru considered to be pure? What was I to make of our relationship? Of the way I was sent for around the world, and then casually dismissed and ignored, like a prostitute? I tortured myself, wondering if the confusion and pain I felt was self-induced, was a result of my own impure thinking, wondering how I could venerate someone that had hurt me so profoundly. And it lead me to wonder: what was the point of our sexual relationship, if it wasn't for heartfelt companionship or out of genuine affection? Was it just for sex only?*

*I realized that yes, yes, it was just for sex only.*

*And this realization, that I had been used for sex, and discarded when no longer useful, was terribly painful. I was unable to continue with guru yoga, it was too painful to see his face in my mind's eye, again and again, seated on a lotus throne. I blamed myself, I was disgusted with myself.*

*I began to withdraw from the sangha, slowly at first, and then completely. It has been many years since I last visited my local practice center. I was only alerted to Buddhist Project Sunshine through an old friend and an article in the New York Times. I had just given birth to my daughter, my first child, and my heart was so tender and open and vulnerable. It still is. Reading the stories put forward by such brave women broke my heart all over again, to see myself as part of a greater cycle of utter weirdness, of sexual coldness and spiritual cruelty.*

*What surprised me was how few women have come forward, especially since I know that many of their experiences were as weird as my own. I know firsthand of at least seven other women who have slept with SMR, all friends of mine from long ago—and none of these women have yet come forward. (Women, where are you?)*

*Of course I knew, and had always known, much of what had been going on with SMR—his womanizing, his sloppy handling of “relationships”, the string of hurt women in his wake, conveniently labeled after the fact as bitter or difficult.*

*We all knew. Jesus Christ, WE ALL DID. I am astonished by the quotes given by senior teachers and practitioners who claim that they had no idea what SMR was up to behind closed doors. Are you kidding?*

*WE ALL KNEW.*

*WE ALL KNEW.*

*WE ALL KNEW.*

*We were all complicit. Myself included.*

### **Statement on early poor behavior of the Sakyong**

This is the statement from another woman who came forward after the last report.

*Until now, I have disclosed to only a few close friends the reason why I left the Shambhala community in the mid-1990s. I am speaking up now in response to Sakyong's July 10 letter in which he states that his troubles began in 1995 with his enthronement that subsequently led*

*to his heavy drinking. However, I experienced similar behaviors of his that have been reported in Buddhist Project Sunshine much earlier than that. My first encounter was in the Fall of 1987 in Kathmandu, where several sangha members had gone to study after the Vidyadhara's passing.*

*At that time, the Sakyong was known as Sawang; therefore, I will refer to him as such in this statement. During our stay in Kathmandu, a close friend (a second-generation sangha woman) confided to me that she had spent an evening with Sawang rejecting his sexual advances. She said that Sawang hadn't seemed to care, but that he was much less friendly with her after that. She had hoped they could still be friends and there would be a way she could fit into the community, but it soon became clear to her there wasn't. This young woman eventually ended up leaving the community to study with another teacher.*

*In early 1988 I was invited to Rumtek, the seat of the Kagyu lineage, in Sikkim, India to celebrate Losar, the Tibetan New Year. A few days before leaving, I mentioned to Sawang that I was worried about traveling there alone—it was a two-day journey that involved plane changes, numerous taxis and rickshaw rides and a final descent into Sikkim via helicopter. To my great relief, Sawang was also going and invited me to travel with his entourage that included two attendants who I didn't know. I was very happy for the invitation and felt I'd be safe with them during the journey.*

*However, things became unpleasant for me right from the start of the trip. At the Kathmandu airport, Sawang told me to carry his bags and continued to do so at each point of travel. In addition to managing my own bags, I had to carry his bags too—no easy task in the days before wheeled-luggage, while he walked hands-free and his two male attendants only carried their own bags. It felt demeaning, but I wasn't sure how to say "no" to the new head of the Shambhala lineage. To make matters worse, after restaurant meals along the way, his attendants would hand me the bill for the entire table without offering any contribution. I began to feel resentful and exploited, but again didn't know how to refuse. Finally, after paying for our third meal, I found my voice and told the three of them I couldn't afford to pay their way—that from then on, I would be paying only for myself. I also made sure each time we went in/out airports or took taxis and rickshaws, that I stood as far away from Sawang's luggage as I could get—I was determined to not carry his bags again.*

*The journey from Kathmandu to Rumtek required an overnight stay in Calcutta and a connecting flight the next day. Upon arrival, we discovered the main hotels were completely booked except for one hotel that had two rooms available. We decided to share the two rooms—Sawang assigned me to stay with one of his attendants and he roomed with the other. After settling in for the night, my roommate pulled out a syringe and injected himself with a drug. I had never seen anyone shoot up and was really disturbed by it. I had no idea what kind*

*of behavior might follow and was concerned for my safety. Fortunately, he quickly passed out and stayed that way until morning.*

*At breakfast the next morning, I told Sawang and his other attendant about the drug use, but they just shrugged their shoulders. I was troubled that this behavior didn't alarm them too, especially on a trip to visit the spiritual head of our lineage. Later I learned it was well-known the man had a serious drug problem. Years later a sangha friend pointed out the real danger to me would have been if he had over-dosed—I could have ended up in a Calcutta jail. Reflecting back, I feel Sawang had callously put me at risk.*

*Once we reached Rumtek, Sawang and his attendants were given rooms in the monastery and I was housed with a Tibetan family that lived just outside the gates. Each day the four of us participated in monastery events and outings nearby. On several occasions the beautiful young daughter of the family I was staying with joined us. A light flirtation developed between Sawang and this young woman. At the time, it seemed rather sweet to me.*

*Towards the end of our week-long visit, Sawang instructed me to arrange for the daughter to come to Kathmandu so they could get to know each other better. He told me to tell her father that she would be my guest, that she would stay at my apartment and that I would chaperone her. I felt a bit uneasy about it, but also felt honored to be included in the “inner circle” by helping Sawang. With my assurances, the father agreed to let his daughter come to Kathmandu as my guest.*

*A few days after we got back to Kathmandu, Sawang informed me that the visit had to be canceled right away. One of his advisors had told him that he couldn't marry a Tibetan woman—he had to marry an American woman who would be accepted by the community. I was surprised that marriage was being discussed—I thought they just wanted to get to know each other better. I had to make up an excuse to cancel the visit and felt bad telling the father that his daughter's trip had to be postponed due to a timing conflict.*

*Not long after canceling the visit, I bumped into another of Sawang's attendants in downtown Kathmandu. He berated me in public right there on the street, firing questions at me such as: “Who do you think you are playing cupid for Sawang? How dare you get him in such a compromising position? Do you realize all the trouble you've caused him?” and so on. I tried to tell him that the visit wasn't my idea, but I could hardly get a word in edgewise. I was shaken to the core from the verbal assault and the realization that Sawang had blamed me for a situation of his own making that he had to extricate himself from.*

*A few hours later I told a sangha friend about the terrible encounter with Sawang's attendant. He was very disturbed and immediately took me to Sawang's house where trembling and struggling to hold back my tears, I asked him to acknowledge in front of his attendants that he alone was responsible for the situation with the woman. Sawang asked everyone to leave*

*the room so that he could speak to me privately. I thought it odd he wasn't willing to set the record straight in front of everyone, but a private apology would have been OK too. After everyone left, Sawang laughed and said, "This is really no big deal—just let it go." I was very hurt that he couldn't apologize to me even in private and that he had no empathy for the pain I was in. I lost respect for Sawang at that moment and walked out of his house.*

*Now, after reading recent statements from women who accuse Sawang of a pattern of procurement of women, I realize that even back then he had involved me in procuring a woman for himself, then blamed me when it became awkward for him.*

*A year or so later Sawang invited me to attend Kalapa Assembly, but I knew I couldn't give my allegiance to someone of his character. Later, I did receive an empowerment from him, but as a proxy for the Vidyadhara so that I could practice with the community. But, with time, it became clear to me that my presence at Shambhala programs was not fair to those who revered him when I felt just the opposite; therefore, I chose to leave the sangha which was then under his leadership.*

*It has been truly disheartening to me over the years to not be able to practice with the Vidyadhara's sangha, but I never left him as my teacher. The Vidyadhara is always in my mind and heart and I still practice his teachings faithfully.*

## **What can Shambhala communities do for survivors?**

From what I understand, communities with mass sexual harm first go through a period of "calling it out" and bringing the harm to light. Then the community needs to begin to look at "harm loss" and how to repair what has been lost through the harms.

Someone came to me and said that she sees Shambhala centers having big debates about whether to have shrine pictures up or down. Clearly that is an important conversation to have. This woman said, however, what about what the centers are doing for the survivors of Shamabhala harm? Why isn't that part of the dialog?

I think she is right, and I'm dedicating a section of this report to share what this woman had to say. She suggested centers do something symbolic for the survivors at their center. For instance, put a nice flower arrangement in the lobby or on your shrine, with a card to the survivors in your community. Another idea she had was to put a post up on a wall at your center saying, "We know survivors are among us, we stand in solidarity with you."

This thoughtful woman said that we have no place for a memorial, a place to lay flowers at the scene of a crime – like in other situations in the world. I encourage all of us to dig deep with creativity and compassion and find ways of starting to encircle our arms around those



who have been harmed by sexual violence in our community. I truly thank this woman for coming forward.

## **A lama's advice for dealing with images and visualizing your guru when your guru has allegedly committed crimes**

Trungpa Rinpoche is my guru. When I first learned last December of his cocaine addiction and his abuse of women and animals, my world was rocked! For decades I have placed my heart with complete faith into his hands through decades of formal Buddhist visualization practices and my post-meditation life. Learning of his abuses, I went into an emotional and spiritual crisis.

I asked to speak with a Tibetan Lama who I have been studying with to ask his advice. He recommended that for the time being I could just visualize Padmasambhava, the founder of Tibetan Buddhism and also the source of the Shambhala teachings, in place of Trungpa Rinpoche. This lama's advice has proven very helpful. I think I always had some ambivalence in the background of my mind about Trungpa Rinpoche, because I knew he contributed to creating an environment that had led to my own sexual abuse within the community. The lama's advice helped me ease out of a place of crisis, and in fact my practice feels much stronger visualizing Padmasambhava.

The lama also said it was fine to put away photographs of Trungpa Rinpoche while I worked through the issues coming up. For me the key has been holding space for my love, admiration and gratitude for Trungpa Rinpoche while deeply holding space for taking in the atrocities and betrayal. I say "deeply holding space" because trauma is a deep experience, and a special quality of holding needs to happen for the traumatized parts of ourselves to heal with integrity. We need to find ways to slow things down, and attend with more care as we disentangle the helpful from the harmful in such an emotionally deep connection as the guru-disciple relationship.

## **The Shambhala community must take responsibility for the future of the community**

I believe we must look at the reality of the picture painted from the allegations in Carol Merchasin's most recent report. We must look at the nature of the alleged crimes and measure this information against the mentality of a sexual predator. We must look carefully at the psychological and emotional challenges that Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo, as a man, is facing. We must look at any signs of his willingness to take responsibility for the harms he

has caused, both to the women survivors and to Shambhala students in general. We must look at what would need to happen to repair such alleged criminal actions for trust in the integrity of his leadership to ever be established. After looking carefully, the people must assess the capacity of Ösel Rangdröl Mukpo to ever lead this community again.

If the people find him unable to continue as leader, this then frees the community to envision a new form of governance that will ensure the care and vitality of the Shambhala teachings for generations to come.

## **The Buddhist Project Sunshine discussion group**

I have felt an imperative to support the community digesting the disturbing truths that are being brought to light. What I have seen is the community needs a safe zone. So I have drawn a circle and created an island where people know they will be treated with kindness and that no one will run rampant trampling people with their rage. The name of this island is the Buddhist Project Sunshine Discussion Group.

This online social media discussion group has been running since the beginning of June, and here is what some of the members said they have most enjoyed:

*"I was glad to see people working determined but gingerly through this difficult circumstance. Determined to do it; careful with each other."*

*"It felt like a huge relief to be able to connect with people who were having similar feelings and experiences."*

*"Being able to share my story as a survivor of abuse of power with others who get it. Having the opportunity to read and respond to others' stories. I appreciated the kind responses the facilitators gave to all participants (and the gentle and firm suggestions the facilitators sometimes gave). I also appreciated the quotes and inspirational readings that Kelly shared. I plan to listen to the Feeding the Demons audio when I have the chance. (I was preparing to travel when the session ran live.)"*

*"Interacting with others struggling with the same issues around the Shambhala leadership and community. Supporting survivors and others impacted by sexualized violence within Shambhala. Loving and compassionate online community of people who care."*

*"Kindness, healing resources and a fearlessness community"*

*"The warmth and gentleness...and validation ...validation helps me feel clearer and saner and I feel more clarity on what I need and what I understand. It has helped me to shed a lot of BS related to shambhala and retain the genuine human wisdom and practices that belong to all of us."*

The objective of the group in light of the Phase 3 report is to provide comfort and support as the community grieves and discerns positive steps forward. In September we anticipate turning our attention towards specific areas of discussion, such as exploring alternative governance structures and envisioning what Shambhala can become. If you are interested in learning more about our discussion group, you can go to:

[http://andreamwinn.com/offerings/project\\_sunshine\\_discussion\\_group/](http://andreamwinn.com/offerings/project_sunshine_discussion_group/)

## **Buddhist Project Sunshine needs your support**

At the end of Phase 2, I announced I was retiring because I have been over working to achieve what we've achieved with this project, and I have gone into significant personal financial debt. However, there has been a continued need for the key role I have been playing. As well, there has been an outpouring of donations to Buddhist Project Sunshine. Two hundred and twenty three people have donated \$16,564 since early April, which is astounding! I am so grateful! So I have surrendered to the flow of goodness and continued my work.

I have formed and run this organization through heroic exertion and passionate focus. At this point a shift must happen, however, both for my own health and the health of BPS. We are not able to work at a scale appropriate to the needs of Shambhala's healing process without paid staff.

A member of our core leadership group did research and determined an appropriate 3-person staff structure for BPS running as a non-profit organization, with an Executive Director (myself), an Associate Director, and a Development Officer. We need an Associate Director to interview, support and manage our growing number of volunteers and a Development Officer to focus on getting charitable status and ensure our financial health through continued donations.

Over the past eight months, Shambhala International has chosen not to support Buddhist Project Sunshine in our efforts to support community healing or our investigation. Instead they have chosen to retain a separate, non-transparent investigation through Wickwire

Holm and to hire An Olive Branch. It is clear that BPS will require community support outside of SI leadership to keep our work going.

I have prepared a 3-month budget with the intention of it giving us time to establish non-profit status. The budget includes mid-range salary amounts for the three needed staff positions. I am including this 3-month budget in Appendix 1 with the hope that this work is proving meaningful enough to be supported in a more secure way. Since we must raise \$47,000 in additional funds, this plan calls for seed money from major donors. We will gratefully receive emails to explore major donor relationships. I would like to speak with potential major donors personally. Please email: [buddhistprojectsunshine@gmail.com](mailto:buddhistprojectsunshine@gmail.com) .

Everyone can donate to Buddhist Project Sunshine at our on-going GoFundMe page: <https://www.gofundme.com/project-sunshine-phase-2>

I also feel it is important to share that by some cosmic karmic fluke, my core leadership group is unavailable for service as of this week (one is on family medical leave, another is on vacation, and another has taken a full time job). I will not have anyone answering Buddhist Project Sunshine email for the foreseeable future, so my ability to respond will undoubtedly be slow. Please be patient with our slow response for the next little while. I can assure you we will get to everyone's request as soon as possible.

## **Concluding Wishes**

I am always grateful to this Shambhala community. There is something that draws us forward – the light, the need for truth, the need for healing – goodness. It is my hope that we can see our mutual needs as we move forward together, as I believe we all have much more in common than in difference with each other.

May your receiving of this report be blessed by the full Shambhala lineage, including the mother lineage of Shambhala. May our healing go well. May we come back to a basis of fearlessly caring for one another. And may we take strong steady steps in resolving what has gone wrong, for the great benefit of ourselves and all beings.

## **Acknowledgement And Gratitude To The Abuse Survivors**

A heart full of thanks goes out to the brave women and man survivors who contributed to this report, and a special thanks to "Ann". All of the survivors who have contributed to our three reports have created a space for truth telling and through your sharing you have allowed the Shambhala community to grasp the depth of the situation. This community transformation and healing literally would not be happening if you had not decided to be so brave and compassionate in sharing your stories. May you be free from suffering and the causes of suffering. May new joy open within your hearts as you experience the freedom to create a life free from these heavy secrets.

## Appendix 1: BPS 3-month organizational start up budget

Month	Sep	Oct	Nov
Insert your monthly projected sales and cost of sales into the table. Use this as a monthly budget			
Sales	\$0	\$0	\$0
Cost of Sales	\$0	\$0	\$0

Cash Inflow			
Cashflow includes: cash from sales, cash from receivables, bank loans, loans from the owner, etc			
	Replace placeholder item descriptions with your real cashflow items		
↓			
Donations	\$3,139	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
Other	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Cash Inflow</b>	<b>\$3,139</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>

Cash Outflow			
Cash outflow includes: inventory purchases, monthly fixed expenses, purchase of equipment and other			
	Replace placeholder item descriptions with your real cash outflow		
↓			
Accounting and legal	\$0	\$0	\$0
Administrative software	\$57	\$57	\$57
Advertising and Promotion	\$0	\$100	\$100
Bank Service Charges	\$5	\$5	\$5
Computer and Internet Expenses	\$186	\$186	\$186
Meeting expense	\$0	\$0	\$0
Office Expenses	\$15	\$15	\$15
Post Office Box (6 mo rental)	\$140	\$0	\$0
Telephone Expense (+2 Zoom in Sep)	\$113	\$153	\$153
Travel Expense	\$0	\$0	\$0
Website	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>BPS PAID POSITIONS</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>	<b>\$0</b>
Executive Director (Full time)	\$7,083	\$7,083	\$7,083
Associate Director (.8 FTE)	\$5,447	\$5,447	\$5,447
Development Director (Full time)	\$0	\$0	\$6,808
Discussion Group Coordinator (\$30/hr)	\$500	\$1,000	\$0
Bookkeeper	\$0	\$0	\$500
	\$0	\$0	\$0
GoFundMe fees for raising \$45K	\$0	\$0	\$2,250
	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Total Cash Outflow</b>	<b>\$13,546</b>	<b>\$14,046</b>	<b>\$22,604</b>
<b>Cash Flow Surplus / Deficit</b>	<b>-\$10,408</b>	<b>-\$14,046</b>	<b>-\$22,604</b>
	↓ If this is an existing business insert the closing bank balance		
Opening Bank Balance	\$0	-\$10,408	-\$24,454
<b>Closing Bank Balance</b>	<b>-\$10,408</b>	<b>-\$24,454</b>	<b>-\$47,058</b>

You can donate to Buddhist Project Sunshine at our on-going GoFundMe page:  
<https://www.gofundme.com/project-sunshine-phase-2>

**Appendix 2: Memo of New 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

**FROM:** CAROL MERCHASIN

**SUBJECT:** UPDATE ON THE ALLGATIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OF THE SAKYONG

**DATE:** AUGUST 23, 2018

---

I begin this report by answering publicly two questions that have been raised within the community: one of which is my relationship to Buddhist Project Sunshine; the other is why I am issuing yet another investigative report. Other questions are in the form of an FAQ section at the end of this report.

**My Relationship to Buddhist Project Sunshine**

My investigative work and the reports I have issued are completely independent of BPS. I have interviewed the people coming forward, made decisions on credibility and patterns of behavior and written the investigative reports. They are then published by Andrea Winn, founder of BPS.

I can tell you that Andrea has had no input into the conclusions I come to or what I have written in my reports. In fact, Andrea has never even tried to interfere with my independent judgment. (She did once change my use of the words *Project Sunshine* to *Buddhist Project Sunshine*). In return, I do not interfere with Andrea's independent judgment. We have maintained that division of work throughout. In fact, I have not even read Andrea's reports after the first one, because I do not want to be influenced by her point of view.

Many people support Andrea and her work. Others are disturbed by things she has said or done. What I will say without question is that none of these issues would ever have seen the light of day without Andrea. So, if you want a community that deals properly with sexual violence against women and men, that doesn't cultivate hypocrisy or keep dark secrets, Buddhist Project Sunshine has been more helpful to you than the Kalapa Council.

I encourage people to separate themselves from any of the personalities, either mine or



Andrea's, and focus on the credibility of the allegations, the well-being of victims and where to go from here.

### **Why Another Report?**

I have written this third investigative report because 1) there are allegations of a new level of harm that needs to be understood by the community and 2) the people who feel they have been harmed do not have anywhere else to go. There is a general mistrust of the Wickwire Holms investigation (the "Wickwire Investigation") and so people continue coming to me. People who have gathered the courage to come forward, people who have been systematically ignored, or silenced deserve to have their voices heard. At this moment, Buddhist Project Sunshine has provided the only forum to bring these stories forward.

I worry that people have reached overload on the allegations of the sexual misconduct of the Sakyong, but when I weigh that against the silencing of people whose stories deserve to be told, I have come down on the side of the stories and the need for the community to hear them.

### **INVESTIGATIVE REPORT: "ANN," "KEITH," AND "LAURA"**

On July 8, 2018, Buddhist Project Sunshine published my 2<sup>nd</sup> investigative memo on the Sakyong's alleged sexual assault on a woman in Chile. As has happened in the past, several new men and women have come forward to tell their stories. Some did not want their stories to be made public and I have honored that request. Other allegations could not be investigated for a variety of reasons.

One woman came forward precisely to tell her story because she wanted the community to know of her long, traumatic relationship with the Sakyong -- others wanted their stories told because his leadership led to their silencing and re-traumatization.

I state again that these are allegations. I have not been able to corroborate everything in the stories that follow. Where I haven't corroborated something, it is either because there was no corroboration possible or because, despite my efforts to reach out to numerous witnesses with offers of confidentiality and anonymity, few have come forward.

"Ann" (a pseudonym) came forward after the July investigative memo. She had left the sangha long ago, and telling her story was painful, but she was heartened by the other women who had spoken up and she wanted to include her voice. She did not wish to write an impact statement so I am telling Ann's story here, pieced together from hours of taped interviews and

reviewed by her to ensure accuracy. Ann's story (even though written by me) contains details that have not yet been corroborated, largely as you will see, because the only people who could confirm her story are people who have refused to speak about it.

### Ann's Story

Ann is a survivor of extraordinary childhood sexual abuse which is hard to read about and even harder to imagine. Her father operated a child prostitution ring disguised as a day care center. She was a child prostitute. When her father was arrested on federal charges of violating the Mann Act, Ann was prepped by the FBI to testify against him. In the end, she was not able to do it; she was only four years old. She is speaking out now about the trauma and exploitation that she experienced in Shambhala so that she can help stop the abuse of other women and girls and heal her four-year-old self that couldn't speak out then.

In 2001, Ann decided that she needed to find a dharma home. Her grandmother had been a Buddhist and an important person in her life. Ann called Gampo Abbey because she had read Pema Chodron's books and they had helped her to come to terms with her trauma. She asked the people at Gampo Abbey to ask Pema where she could go that would be a safe place to study the dharma.

The message came back that Ann should go to her local Shambhala Center. She did that and she immediately connected to the teachings. But Ann wanted even more — she wanted a teacher, a community, the family she had never really had. What she got was something different.

As Ann began to get deeper into the teachings, she went to Karma Choling for a retreat. She spoke openly about her childhood and the trauma she had experienced. At Karma Choling, she was quickly brought to the Sakyong by a kusung to provide healing services to him. (Ann was a healing services provider).

The first time that the Sakyong initiated a sexual advance toward Ann was in 2002 or 2003. Ann was in a padmasambhava feast and a kusung came to get her to take her to the Sakyong to give him a healing treatment. He began making sexual advances and it was a struggle for her to keep him away and to provide the treatment. The Sakyong indicated that he was in the form of guru Rinpoche and that having sex with him was part of the practice; that it was an honor for her because he was her vajra guru. But Ann did not give in to him. She completed the hearing practice and left.

Ann resisted the pressure for sex, but eventually the Sakyong became angry if Ann did not do what he wanted. He became cold and hard if Ann refused him. She was confused, afraid of

his anger and then his coldness, and she fell into the same patterns of silence, loyalty and fear that she had experienced as a child. But even from the beginning, it did not seem right to her. There was no relationship, there was only a sense of being used by the Sakyong for sex.

During the summers of 2004-2005, Ann worked in the Sakyong's household at SMC. Where she was working, Ann had a clear view of the people who came to wait for their appointments with the Sakyong. Ann saw lots of people come, but she began to notice that there were parents bringing young teenage girls. The girls seemed nervous. The parents occasionally said something like, "This is such an honor for you to have this experience." Then a kusung would come for the girl and the parents would leave. Ann worked directly below the Sakyong's bedroom and since there was no air conditioning, in the summer the windows were open. Ann could hear what sounded distinctly like sexual encounters.

Ann worried about this. She asked several kusung, "What's going on with these young girls?" They always said the same thing. "There is nothing for you to worry about." But she did worry because she knew what it was like to be a child used for sex. She knew what she saw and what she heard through those windows.

Over time, Ann began to feel like the Sakyong believed that she was "his possession" and that he "owned" her. This was familiar to her from her childhood and it was deeply disturbing. Ann knew it was not a good situation, but she did not want to leave the sangha and the teachings.<sup>1</sup>

Ann became increasingly uncomfortable with her feeling that the Sakyong was using her for sex as she had been used as a prostitute. But he was her guru. Ann discussed her concerns with female Acharyas and other senior Shambhala women leaders. She specifically asked them whether the statement in one of the restricted Sadhana practices that reads, "whatever the guru commands I will follow" meant that she had to have sex with him "on demand" in the middle of the night, give money that she didn't have, and be controlled by him. But they either didn't seem to care, or they essentially said that it was "not a big deal" or that she should be happy about the situation, because it was "an honor" and it proved that she was "special."

As Ann continued to question what was happening, she asked a male Shambhala leader: "Why did he choose me? Why is he doing this to me?" Ann asked this because she felt that the Sakyong actually did not like her but that he only wanted to control her. The Acharya told her to be careful. He said, "The Sakyong does this — he looks for trauma survivors. He takes vulnerable women and makes them his possession." Some years later, in 2006 or 2007 on a

---

<sup>1</sup> Research indicates that victims of childhood sexual abuse are especially vulnerable to abusive adult relationships.

retreat in France, she asked the same questions of another Acharya who told her, “You do not have to do this.” It was the first time anyone had said this and it marked the beginning of her ability to break away.

In 2005, when the Sakyong came to Boston to run the Boston Marathon, Ann was invited to come as well. A day or two before the marathon she was brought by a kusung into the bedroom where the Sakyong was staying in a private home.

He was lying on the bed in his underwear and 4-5 men from his “inner circle” (i.e. Kalapa Council members, leaders, kusung) were present.<sup>2</sup> The Sakyong called Ann over and motioned for her to sit down on the edge of the bed. She became nervous. As a child prostitute she had been subjected to horrible situations, including gang rape. This looked the same.

The Sakyong began to initiate sex with her. He took her hand in his hand and began stroking his penis with it while the men looked on from the other side of the bed. He said, “Can you take care of me?” and then he said to her, “What can you do for them?”<sup>3</sup>

Ann began to panic and told him repeatedly, “No, I am not comfortable doing this.” She remembers that one of the men then moved to stand in front of the door and another took off his jacket. She began to shake with fear and to dissociate from her body. The Sakyong then sexually assaulted her, putting his hand on the back of her neck and trying to force her mouth down on his penis. Finally, Ann twisted away, stood up and fled the room. She left the house and stayed elsewhere.<sup>4</sup>

This was not the first time that she had been brought by kusung to perform oral sex on the Sakyong in front of other men. Ann alleges that at SMC, in 2003 or 2004, a kusung brought her to the Sakyong’s room where there were a number of men present – again, the Sakyong’s “inner circle.” She was told to kneel in front of him while the men stood around. He opened his robe to reveal that he was naked. She realized that she was expected to perform oral sex on the

---

<sup>2</sup> The Sakyong was not drinking during the incidents that Ann relates here.

<sup>3</sup> As has been my practice, I will not reveal these names here because I do not have corroboration. Indeed, these men are the *only* corroboration. However, I will turn their names over to the Wickwire Investigation.

<sup>4</sup> After I had sent this memo to Buddhist Project Sunshine, a man who had been in the household on that day in Boston, came forward to respond to my request to talk. Ann reported that she thought this man had seen her upset and that they had talked, although she said she did not tell him what happened. However, although this man was in a position to see things going on in the household, he had no knowledge of any incident nor any memory of seeing Ann upset or conversing with Ann at that time. He stated that he absolutely never saw any improprieties on the part of the Sakyong during the time period from 2005-2006.

Sakyong in front of these men. Ann says that she “freaked out” and dissociated. She began to cry, scream and hyperventilate. She remembers only that someone, perhaps the Sakyong, finally said, “Let her go.” She left SMC early and flew home.

In 2005, the Sakyong and Ann decided she should go to go to a monastery in India to practice. She was told she would go with another teacher close to the Sakyong. After she had made all of the preparations for the trip, a male Shambhala leader called her and asked her to make a \$6,000 donation, which was actually the Sakyong’s own yearly obligation to a particular feast at one of the monasteries. Ann didn’t have any money, but she used a credit card and went into debt. It was not the last time she was pressured to give money she didn’t have.

Money was not the only thing that the Sakyong used his power to get from Ann. After he became engaged and it was clear that he was going to maintain a house in Boulder, he instructed her to buy a condominium there. She assumed that this would be where she would live so that she could continue to be part of his household. Ann didn’t have any money so she mortgaged her own home in another city and bought a condo in November 2006.

After Ann had furnished the home, the Sakyong came to look at it. He said, “You need to sign this condo over to me — I have had a quitclaim deed prepared and I want you to sign it. I want it for Tseyang (his wife) and her sisters.”

Ann said, “But what about me, what am I going to do?”

He said, “Buy another condo.” She couldn’t do that – she had no money – so she sold it in early 2007.

A year or two later, Ann found the courage to leave the Sakyong and the sangha. After she did, several high-level leaders called her repeatedly over a period of 18 months. She would not speak to them so they left messages. They said, “You can’t leave because you’re breaking your samaya vows.” They said, “You have to remain silent about anything that happened to you.” They said, “If you leave you will live in the Hell Realms.” Despite their insistence, Ann refused to meet with them.

It was extremely hard for Ann to leave Shambhala. She said she did it because she felt that the Sakyong was using the dharma for his own purposes, that he used women to have power and control over them, and, in the process, he destroyed the teachings for many people. As a result of the Sakyong’s actions, Ann herself began to have serious doubts about the dharma. It took her four years of solitary practice, but she stayed with it and she found a teacher who cared about her spiritual path; she is now active in a dharma community in her hometown.

## **CREDIBILITY, CORROBORATION AND PATTERNS OF BEHAVIOR**

I found Ann to be extremely credible. She has dates and details, some of which have been corroborated. I have reached out to the people who might be able to corroborate various facts but only one person responded.<sup>5</sup>

From Ann's story, I have listed 5 allegations:

### Allegation #1: The Sakyong targeted Ann and exploited her for sex.

From a childhood of exploitation where loyalty and silence were enforced, Ann came to Shambhala, where she alleges that she was exploited sexually by the Sakyong, who knew her entire history of trauma and vulnerability.

I attempted to corroborate this claim. I reached out to the Shambhala leader whom Ann says told her that the Sakyong targeted vulnerable women, but he did not respond to me. I was able to corroborate that Ann spoke to a woman leader about her concerns about her relationship with the Sakyong. That woman's recollection is that Ann spoke about being "unhappy, troubled" with her relationship with the Sakyong. But this woman did not have a clear recollection of the source of that unhappiness.

The allegation that the Sakyong targeted vulnerable women is part of a pattern, but not one that Ann could have known about. Another woman came forward with a similar experience – she felt that she was targeted and abused by the Sakyong because she was vulnerable but, at her request, her story was not printed. In addition, the coldness, the lack of empathy, the anger, the lack of relationship, the abuse, these have all been a part of almost every person's story.

### Allegation #2: Ann alleges first-hand knowledge of underage girls being brought to the Sakyong for sex at SMC

The allegation that underage girls were brought for sexual encounters with the Sakyong, if true, is a criminal offense with no statute of limitations in Colorado. I cannot investigate this allegation. The information that Ann has would have to go to the District Attorney in Larimer County, Colorado.

### Allegation #3: The Sakyong sexually assaulted Ann twice in the presence of other male leaders and on one occasion, tried to force her to have sex with them.

---

<sup>5</sup> I did not reach out to anyone in the Sakyong's "inner circle" as I had been instructed by an intermediary not to do so. However, I would expect that they will participate in the Wickwire Investigation.

Ann alleges that on two occasions, the Sakyong tried to force her to perform oral sex in the presence of a group of Shambhala leaders. The first time, she was “let go” after she began crying and screaming. Later, there was a second incident where she was asked to also have sex with a number of male Shambhala leaders. This can only be confirmed by the Sakyong or the people in the room, none of whom are available to me.

The practice of forcing a woman to perform oral sex echoes an allegation in the BPS Phase II investigative Report, in which a woman said that the Sakyong pushed her head to his penis and forced her to perform oral sex after she told him that she didn’t want to have sex.

Sexual assault is a crime. If the statute of limitations has not expired, co-conspirators who were present could also be implicated.

#### Allegation #4: Coercion for Money and Real Estate

Ann alleges that the Sakyong pressured her into making a \$6,000 donation that was his own obligation. He also drew up a quit claim deed and tried to get her to sign her condominium in Boulder over to him, knowing that it would be a financial burden to her. She paid the \$6,000 and other amounts as she was asked to do. But she would not sign over the condominium. Instead, she sold it.

I have confirmed that Ann bought the condominium and that she sold it a short time later. I have reached out to two people to corroborate why Ann sold the condo; one did not have any knowledge and the other did not respond to me.

#### Allegation #5: Using Fear to Silence

This is a recurrent theme – Shambhala has used several different types of silencing when people have raised their voices about sexual misconduct.

1. Silencing by shunning. Many survivors were ignored or ostracized until they felt forced to leave the community.
2. Silencing by offering friendship instead of accountability. In the last two reports, there was one corroborated allegation (and others uncorroborated) of a woman who felt that leaders were trying to placate her so that she would not go public with her story.
3. Silencing by the use of internal “mediation” for criminal acts like sexual assault and rape.
4. In Ann’s case, silencing by threats, instilling the fear that if she ever came forward, something bad would happen to her.

## CONCLUSION

I have corroborated Ann's story of her childhood, the purchase and the quick sale of the condominium in Boulder that the Sakyong told her to deed over to him. The people who can corroborate the remainder of Ann's story, kungsi, acharyas and others -- men who were present in Massachusetts and Colorado when Ann was sexually assaulted -- have either not responded to me or are not available to me.

### **THE HARM OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMPLICITY**

The allegations of the complicity of Shambhala leaders in Ann's story is shocking, but there are also other forms of complicity that create harm, as it has with two other former community members who came forward in the last month.

#### KEITH - RAPED AT AGE 15; LAURA - SEXUALLY ASSAULTED AT AGE 18

"Keith" (a pseudonym) was 15 years old in 1983 and when he was raped by an older man, a man he trusted, a member of the community at Karme Choling, the night before he went into retreat.<sup>6</sup> Laura (a pseudonym) was sexually assaulted by an older man, a staff member at Encampment in 1998.

I have corroborated Keith's allegations by talking and corresponding with people to whom he made contemporaneous statements, including a person that he spoke to shortly after the rape. He was, she told me, visibly shaken; the story that he told her is exactly the same as the one he told me. Since rape does not often happen in the presence of others, contemporaneous statements may be the only corroboration. Laura's assault is also well corroborated, her attacker having actually later pled guilty to similar offenses.

What happened to Keith and Laura, both young, trusting practitioners, is heartbreaking. Not only the initial incidents, which also happen in our society at large, but also how it was dealt with within Shambhala years later. What happened to Keith and Laura, specifically what happened after their assaults, says a lot about what happens in organizations where sexual misconduct is perpetrated and tolerated at the top of the organization.

Shambhala's process of dealing with sexual violence created almost as much trauma as the

---

<sup>6</sup> There is no statute of limitation on rape of a minor in Vermont. Keith has indicated that he will be turning his information over to the appropriate authorities there.



initial incidents. The men who did these crimes were not reported to the police, they were not removed from positions of trust within the Shambhala community, and the survivors were offered internal Shambhala “mediation” as a remedy.

In Keith’s case, he had put the rape behind him and left the community in 1987. Later however, he had a chance encounter with his rapist who was a kusung at the Sakyong’s side as preparations were underway for the Sakyong’s enthronement in 1995. This man, while escorting the Sakyong away, looked back and said to Keith, “You are WEAK, you always were, you always will be.”

This comment sparked Keith to finally come forward in 2003 and report to Shambhala International what had happened to him. Instead of investigating (it was still possible to do that in 2003, I did it in 2018), they offered Keith the opportunity to have a “mediation” with his rapist. Fortunately for him, Keith declined but his 2003 encounter with Shambhala remains a traumatizing incident. There was no concern for the safety of others, as this man has continued to be active in public roles within the Shambhala community.

A few years after Laura was assaulted, she came forward to Shambhala to tell her story. She too was offered “mediation” and she accepted. She sat in a room with the older man who had sexually assaulted her while he denied it, where she was made to feel like a liar, made to feel that she had to defend herself when she had done nothing wrong. Again, there appears to be little concern for the well-being of Laura or others, as the man who assaulted her remained in a position of power within the community.

Mediation is not, and never has been an appropriate response to crimes or allegations of sexual assault. Mediation is a tool for disputes; a sexual assault is **not** a dispute, it is a crime. Mediation puts enormous pressure on the survivor to “forgive” on someone else’s time frame. It strives for compromise, where compromise is not appropriate. And whether this was the intention or not, having to face the person who violated you discourages reporting.

Please read this below, from a former member of the community who was sexually harassed at a land centre and who has some strong truths about what happens when leaders are not able to lead the organization on the issue of sexual misconduct. This appeared on Facebook after the Sakyong made his first statement about his “relationships” with women in the sangha. I use it with permission:

I believe it is crucial to see the link between the covering up of the occurrences of misconduct by acharyas, land centre staff, other teachers, and other members of the community, and the statement of the Sakyong that has recently been released. If the care and conduct committees, etc, had acknowledged the sexual misconduct of

“lesser” figures, it would have been a slippery slope for them to have to recognize the misconduct of the person in the highest position of leadership. *It seems clear that the systemic silencing about and minimizing of all forms of misconduct serves a purpose...*” (Emphasis added).

...I have been told by some members that they still find benefit in the teachings and community, and that they pray that I and other “victims” will one day be able to come back to experience the benefits that they do. They seem not to be able to recognize that they find benefit in the teachings, practices, and community precisely because they are not likely targets of sexual predation. *Just because some people find benefit in a system does not mean that the system is working. It only means it is working in their favour.* [Emphasis added]. I have been told by a senior teacher that it is my karma that prevents me from benefiting from the Shambhala teachings, and my suffering of sexual misconduct within the community points to the fact that I am not meant for Shambhala. At the time it felt like some kind of terrible rejection, and victim-blaming, and ostracizing. Now, however, at some level, I will have to agree. To use people’s spiritual seeking against them in this kind of blackmail – no, I am not meant to participate in such a thing.

### **WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

Since the July memo, a number of women have come forward with additional allegations against the Sakyong. Several of their statements are included in the BPS Report. As importantly, some individuals with first-hand knowledge provided corroboration for prior allegations.

Here are what I now know to be “key facts,” meaning **allegations that are credible, have credible corroboration and are relevant to the allegations.**

1. In 2002, the Sakyong sexually assaulted a woman in Chile and this assault was known to David Brown, Jesse Grimes, and Mitchell Levy. These two facts have been corroborated by several different, unrelated people. To my knowledge, the Sakyong has never denied this.

2. In 2011, the Sakyong sexually assaulted a woman in the kitchen of his house in Halifax after the birthday party of his daughter. Members of Kalapa Council were aware of it. The Sakyong has never denied this. Indeed, he appeared to have “apologized,” calling it a “personal relationship,” which it was not.

3. Over the years, the Sakyong sexually assaulted several women, including between 2002

and 2011, both before he married and after, not just while drunk but also while sober. There are simply too many reports following the same pattern to believe that this number of unrelated women are all lying. Could there be differences in exactly what happened in these situations? Of course. People remember different things, people see things a particular way, memories fade. But in my experience, these differences do not change the obvious conclusion — that unwanted, nonconsensual sexual groping, fondling, kissing, forced oral sex and other sexual assaults, happened.

### **RECAP AND TIMELINE**

Several people have requested that there be dates associated with the allegations. In a prior report, the women involved did not want dates to be revealed, fearing that they could be identified. But now that there are many more allegations, dates are useful and non-identifying.

#### Year   Allegation

1987—Sexual misconduct

1994 —Sexual assault

1996 --Sexual assault – leaders aware

1997 —Group sex encounter

1999 —Sakyong targets a vulnerable woman for his own sexual gratification

2001 —Sexual assault

2001 —Sakyong targets a vulnerable woman for his own sexual gratification

2002 —Sexual assault/Chile -- leaders were aware

2003 —Sexual encounters for his own sexual gratification with Naropa students

2003-2004 — Sexual encounters with underage girls

2004 – Sexual assault in the presence of male leaders

2005 --Sexual assault in the presence of male leaders

2006—2007 — Coercion for money and real property

2011 – Sexual assault; leaders aware.

### **WHAT'S NEXT**

When I wrote my first report on June 28, 2018, I asked for a full investigation. Now, many women later, the Wickwire Holms law firm has been retained to conduct this investigation.

I do not have any issue with the lawyers or the law firm selected, but I believe that there is a problem with the structure of the investigation itself.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE WICKWIRE INVESTIGATION

On Wednesday, Ms. Bath at Wickwire Holms responded to an email I sent last week asking for information on who had retained Wickwire and who they were reporting to. She wrote, “We have been retained by Shambhala USA (formerly Shambhala International) through its general counsel Alexander Halpern LLC to conduct the investigation. I am not in touch with Shambhala except through counsel. As the organization has its own counsel for advice and representation, our role is solely that of investigator. Our office has complete control of the investigation process and analysis of the stories and accounts received. We'll provide the report to Shambhala through counsel.”

Wickwire will hand over its investigative report to Shambhala USA or its legal representative. Whether this guarantees the integrity and transparency that the allegations require is a decision for the sangha. A more transparent solution would be for an independent monitor or board to release the report in its entirety as it is written by Wickwire.

See this article below for an example of what is often done when an organization has conflicts of interest, both real and perceived and when transparency has been compromised:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/06/us/willow-creek-bill-hybels-investigation.html>

### FAQ'S

Here are the most frequent or interesting questions and my answers.

1. Why should we believe you?

There is a considerable evidence that the Sakyong has committed a number of sexual assaults. But you do not have to believe me; I have said from the beginning that this investigation is preliminary and an outside law firm should do a full investigation. However, there are certain problems in the structure of the outside investigation (see above) which I am hoping will be remedied.

2. Isn't it true that all of this is about women who threw themselves at the Sakyong?

It may be true that there were women who threw themselves at the Sakyong — but those are not the women who came forward in this investigation. So far, the women I have spoken to allege that they were “ghosted,”<sup>7</sup> groped without permission, locked in a bathroom and assaulted, forced to have oral sex after telling him “no,” targeted because they were vulnerable, asked to give cash and real estate to him, humiliated by an unprovoked assault in full view of others, and traumatized by the demand for oral sex in front of other men while being asked to have sex with them too.

3. Do you think that the Wickwire Holms Investigation is independent?

I have no reason to believe that the lawyers who will lead the investigation are anything but professional and neutral. However, they are working within a structure that I think legitimately gives rise to a lot of suspicion. I have asked for an independent outside monitor because it is the best thing for the entire community and the Sakyong. It ensures that the results would be perceived as neutral no matter what the results are.

4. Aren't there other facts you have left out that would provide more context to some of these events and help us to understand them better?

Probably. There are always more facts than time or resources. I have tried to focus on what I would call “key facts” – those facts that bear on the ultimate question being asked. For example, if the ultimate question is: ‘did the Sakyong sexually assault a woman in Chile?’ then for me whether the dinner guests left before or after the assault may not be relevant, although those details could certainly provide context.

5. Aren't you just in the pocket of either Shambhala International or Buddhist Project Sunshine and being paid by one or the other?

If I am doing this because I am being paid by one or the other, then let me mention that I could have made more money working at McDonalds, since I am not being paid by anybody. I am not “against” the Sakyong, I am not “for” anyone, I am interested as I have been from the beginning in allowing people whose voices have been silenced to be heard and then investigated. Understanding that “the truth” is elusive, I am interested in getting as close to “the truth” as possible.

6. At this point, aren't you doing more harm than good?

---

<sup>7</sup> From the Urban Dictionary: [Ghosting] is done in hopes that the [ghostee](#) will just "get the hint" and leave the subject alone, as opposed to the subject simply telling them he/she is no longer interested. **Ghosting**...is closely related to the subject's maturity and [communication skills](#).

I don't think so but I suppose it depends on how you define harm and good. Let's just acknowledge that the responsibility for the harm doesn't lie with the men and women who are coming forward --they committed no crimes. These are serious allegations and ignoring and silencing people is never the answer. It seems to me that dealing with the *actual* problem is the answer -- in which case, you need to know what the problem is; in which case, you need to hear what people have to say.

As the community member I quoted above said: *Just because some people find benefit in a system does not mean that the system is working. It only means it is working in their favour.*

So lucky you, if the balance of harms is in your favor; but it certainly isn't for everyone.

7. Do we even need an investigation?

Maybe not. It depends on whether you, and the majority of the community is satisfied with the conclusion that the Sakyong has engaged in sexual misconduct and an abuse of power over the last 30 years – conduct that occurred while he was single, after he was married, while he was drunk and while he was sober. If you are not satisfied with that conclusion, then you need a full investigation.

8. I have a question. How can I ask you?

You can email it to me at [cmerchasin@aol.com](mailto:cmerchasin@aol.com). I will do my best to answer.