

June 27, 2018

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THE KALAPA COUNCIL OF SHAMBHALA

To the Shambhala Community,

Many of us are shaken after hearing accounts of harm within our community. We are grappling with long-held damaging patterns that exist in society and our sangha, and we are longing to transform. It has been a painful time of self-reflection, learning and holding our teachings and community close.

At this moment, care for survivors of harm in its many forms feels most urgent. We acknowledge the voices of all who have been harmed. We are sorry. Our hearts go out to women who have experienced abuse or have been made to feel undignified in any way. It is devastating to face the bias, racism, patriarchy, heteronormativity, classism, and ableism in our community. We recognize the pain of those who have been silenced, marginalized, or unseen in our culture. We feel frustrated by patterns that have blocked people from speaking up if they have been mistreated, and have hindered the ability of those in leadership to hear them and respond fully. It is humbling to see the limits of our ability to live up to our profound teachings and vision.

In our conversations with survivors, we are learning that there is much we can improve. For example, we can now see that confidentiality in our procedures may not have protected people in the best ways possible. We are actively working with An Olive Branch as a third party to help us improve our policies and culture around sexual misconduct.

We want to share clearly that, despite some claims on social media, this leadership body has never threatened legal action against any survivor, ally, or mediator. No one on the Kalapa Council has ever asked a victim to remain silent. However, we acknowledge the power systems that create the pressure to remain silent.

It is necessary for stories of harm to emerge. We understand that there are further experiences to be shared and we remain confident that our community can become much more honest, healthy and just through this journey. As much as we long to dispel harm and intolerance in Shambhala, this learning will be ongoing. We will never achieve a pristine human community; we can only engage a continual process to weave our teachings, education, vigilance about harm, and ongoing transformation into our culture.

There is a need for clarity and information as well. We will share a letter with all of you by the end of next week that will offer more definitive information addressing the rumours currently swirling on social media. The Kalapa Council will meet with leaders via video conference on Monday.

Our lineage is led by human Sakyongs. They have offered us profound teachings, and as humans they can cause harm. We are all experiencing a wide range of emotions, and we know that some people are angry and hurt. This anger and hurt is included in our space together. As members of the Kalapa Council, we are also struggling. This does not erase our appreciation, commitment and love. This is a messy, human relationship.

We are trying to find our genuineness within this complexity. We are heartened that the Sakyong has taken a first step in engaging his community around these issues. As well caring for the victims, our hearts are also with the Sakyong, Sakyong Wangmo and their family as we navigate this challenging time. We stand with our lineage through the pain of our heartbreak.

As Shambhalians, many have heard of our complex history spanning several decades and some are hearing about this for the first time. This history has

been shared through personal experiences, and sometimes through rumours and gossip - or avoided because of uncertainty about what is real and what is lore. It seems that part of our pain now is that some wounds were not tended to, and people were left scarred. We do not want to hide or cover any part of our shared history. We wish to bring everything into the light, and look with sanity, tenderness and clarity at what we can learn from our past. In the coming year, we are planning events that that will openly share Shambhala history.

Facing painful parts of our past and present is difficult work, and we are committed to seeing it through. We are united in our heartbroken concern for everyone in this community. However, we cannot do this work alone and we recognize that the Kalapa Council needs tremendous help. As Kalapa Councillors we were appointed by the Sakyong. We were not selected to be representative of the community, but for our connection to him and the roles that we hold. This group is predominantly white, male, and North American. We feel this limitation needs to be addressed, whether within this body or in another new leadership structure. Together we need to include and empower other voices. As one way to acknowledge the changes that need to occur, the Council will begin training next month to help us further understand power dynamics, marginalized voices, race, gender, and class, as they influence our organization and culture.

The Kalapa Council is grateful for the letters and feedback we have received from many of you, and invite you to stay in touch. You can reach us at Kalapacouncil@shambhala.org Thank you for your patience with our responses as we focus our attention on the most urgent needs. This work takes steadiness and time.

Ultimately, it seems that our path is to live in the contrast between fear and confidence in our own humanity. We are being challenged to discover gentleness and fearlessness in the midst of tremendous uncertainty, both within our community and in our world at large. For now, our way forward is to remain in this groundlessness together.

Yours in the tender heart of warriorship,

The Kalapa Council*

Josh Silberstein, Chair
Jane Arthur
David Brown
Wendy Friedman
Jesse Grimes
Adam Lobel
Robert Reichner
Christoph Schönherr

**In a message dated 2/16/18 Mitchell Levy recused himself from participating in all conversations and decision-making with regard to sexual harm policy within the Shambhala Mandala until implementation is complete. For this reason Mitchell Levy has not signed this letter. To read his statement, [click here](#).*



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