



July 10, 2019

Dear Friends,

An article in the Denver Post and Boulder Daily Camera published on Sunday, July 7th provided examples of misconduct and mishandling of reports of abuse at Shambhala Mountain Center between the late 1990s and 2008. The article is linked here:

<https://www.denverpost.com/2019/07/07/shambhala-sexual-abuse/>

SMC's Governing Council and I want to acknowledge and apologize for the reported incidents and the pain caused by the failure to address them appropriately. In one, a former SMC staff member recalled being treated as the problem when she alerted SMC leaders in the late 1990s to what she and others believed to be a sexual relationship between a middle-aged staff member and an underage girl. In the other, a former staff member reported that in 2008 SMC leadership failed to intervene and instead blamed her when she sought help freeing herself from an abusive relationship with another SMC community member.

That these incidents occurred in past decades does not absolve current SMC leadership of our moral responsibility. We commit to learning from our past shortcomings and improving our ability to create a safe place for all of our guests and staff.

Following last June's revelations of sexual and other abuse in Shambhala, our staff and leadership made the following [commitments](#):

1. To not minimize or rationalize the harmful behaviors of the Sakyong or any other teacher or leader of Shambhala.
2. To stand with the women who had come forward.
3. To do what is right, even if it jeopardizes SMC's existing power structures or financial position.
4. To offering transparency then and in the future.

Today we are emphasizing our commitments not to minimize or rationalize any harmful behavior that occurred at SMC at any time and to creating a culture that does not tolerate such behavior. We also pledge to have policies and procedures in place to ensure that reports of harm are appropriately addressed, and that those who have experienced or reported harm are not blamed, diminished, or left unheard.



These commitments have led us to develop a revised Code of Ethics and grievance procedure applicable to all of our staff, teachers, and guests as well as to provide regular training for all of our staff to ensure that each of us is committed and has the capacity to recognize and respond properly to allegations of harm. These efforts include ongoing training sessions led by the Sexual Assault Victim Advocacy (“SAVA”) Center in Fort Collins.

We are also supporting the Larimer County Sheriff’s Office investigation into alleged incidents in SMC’s past. With the full support of the Governing Council, I initiated contact with investigators and have met with them to answer any questions they had. I’ve again been in contact with an investigator to make sure they are aware of the reported incident in the 1990s that came forward in the recent Denver Post article. I encourage anyone with information about illegal activity at SMC to contact the Sheriff’s Office at (970) 498-5100.

Much has happened over the past year as SMC and Shambhala communities worldwide have grappled with the impact and implications of abuse. SMC is committed to acknowledging and taking responsibility for past mistakes, responding to any allegations of harm in a timely and effective manner, and creating a safe and wholesome environment that promotes respect and care for all.

Sincerely,

Michael Gayner, Executive Director
Connie Rogers, Chair of Governing Council
Amelie Bracher
Alex Halpern
Daniel Hessey
Ming Linsley
Clifford Neuman
David Schreier
Karen Wilding