



LIFE AT SMC, UNCATEGORIZED

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SMC's Statement Regarding Allegations of Sexual Misconduct by the Spiritual Leader of Shambhala, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche

written by **smcblog**

Over the past few weeks our community here in the Colorado mountains has been deeply shaken, as we've recently learned that the spiritual leader of Shambhala, Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche, has engaged in clergy sexual misconduct.

What we know about these transgressions comes from the accounts of three women, which were made public on June 28th in the Project Sunshine Phase II report. You can read them [here](#). You can also read the initial June 25th statement from the Sakyong [here](#), and a follow up statement from July 10th [here](#). As far as we know, no one presently living in the SMC community was a victim of sexual misconduct committed by the Sakyong or any other teacher or leader of Shambhala.

As the news has spread, and allegations of sexual assault have become public, each of us has had to re-examine our own relationship to the Sakyong and to Shambhala, as an international organization under his leadership.

Doubt and uncertainty about our path forward abound, but the staff and leadership at Shambhala Mountain Center make the following commitments:

1. We will not minimize or rationalize the harmful behaviors of the Sakyong or any other teacher or leader of Shambhala. We stand with those women who have come forward.
2. We will do what is right, even if it jeopardizes our existing power structures or financial position.
3. We are committed to transparency now and in the future.

In response to these heartbreaking revelations, we have been gathering as a community to share our grief and pain, and to hear one another. The women of our community council have stepped forward as leaders to facilitate our formal discussions, while informal discussions are taking place in every corner of the land.

We are devastated to hear what the women in these accounts have been through, yet are grateful that they brought this dark reality into the light. It has opened a door for us to collectively grieve a trauma that plagues the wider world. Many in our own little community have been affected by the widespread cultural legacy of sexual abuse, which causes such unimaginable pain. Together, we've witnessed many moments of bravery as survivors shared stories from their own lives, and we've wept for the burden of the women, men, and non-gender-conforming people whose bodies and safety have been transgressed.

As we sit with these truths, we also hear many in our community describe the support and understanding that they have found on this land as they have nowhere else. The process of engaging in these conversations and feeling into the depth and

complexity of this problem has reaffirmed the transformative potential of our community.

Amidst so much uncertainty, we know we cannot and will not walk away from one another, or from the practitioners and guests who come to this land. We feel strongly that what we're creating here is precious and worth protecting. We are more committed than ever to doing what we can to create a safe refuge and to share the love and trust we have for one another with everyone who comes here.

While we wish to be refuge for the Shambhala community amidst this storm, there is much beyond our control. We're watching closely and with hope for the Sakyong to engage in a genuine process of accountability, purification, and reformative action.

We'll be in touch again as we develop ways to make SMC more available to you as a place for conversation, critical thinking, and healing. In addition, we recognize the importance and timeliness of improving our existing policies and procedures around sexual misconduct and gender equity for teachers, participants, and staff. We know all of this is happening within a wider context of systemic oppression and power dynamics that must also be addressed. These updated policies will be implemented with the same care we take in creating them.

Although there is still so much to feel and understand, we aspire to turn this pain into healing and clarity. We know that this process will be deeply transformative, and we invite you to be part of the open evolution as SMC grows into a new shape. We feel in our hearts that the love, tenderness, and respect we have found in one another will help us grow ever closer to the enlightened society that Shambhala has always aspired to be.

We welcome your questions and concerns. If you have anything you'd like to share with us, please email us at communications@shambhalamountain.org.

With love,

Michael Gayner, Kristin Eden, Dan Hessey, Marsha Simpson, Ryan Stagg, Cristin Miller, Colin Stubbert, Melissa Perez, Gabe Cwern, Tricia Cominsky, Chris Gibbs, Keigan Hadley, Jamie Gominger, Andrew Rodgers, Halka Brunerova, Dave Stalls, Jeana Mustain, Clifton Carmody, Laura Martin, Lyle Larson, Marissa Cantrell, Gregory Houston, Sarah DeGroote, Angus Moore, Bruno Limenes, Jennifer Ridley,

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(This statement was originally emailed to Shambhala program participants on July 10, 2018.)

ADDENDUM

Shambhala's Response to the Allegations

In response to the report, Shambhala International has contracted a third-party investigator to look into the sexual misconduct allegations. Sakyong Mipham has decided to step away from all administrative and teaching responsibilities for the time being, while the investigation is underway. The Sakyong is not scheduled to be at SMC in the near future. He has cancelled his appearance at the only remaining program he was scheduled to attend this year.

SMC's Relationship to the Larger Shambhala Organization

Shambhala Mountain Center is unique among the Shambhala land centers in that it is a separate non-profit organization established for educational purposes, rather than a church. This separation occurred in the early 2000s. SMC has a separate board of directors; and the board and staff manage SMC without direct oversight from the Sakyong or the Kalapa Council (Shambhala International's governing body).

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2 Comments



kurubarahalli Saroja

July 27, 2018

It is just very sad and disappointing. It shook me up well. Then I started to contemplating on the

whole situation. Certain revelations occurred. Did I give too much credit to SMR as a spiritual teacher? It is expected that a spiritual teacher practices what he teaches and so he is held high up on a pedestal. May be that is a mistake and is an illusion. SMR is just like any of us having his own issues, to resolve. It appears that he has a lot of work to do on himself for sure. I decided just to take the teachings of Buddha and walk on my own path and not to judge others of their moral conduct. There is a lot of healing to take place for SMR, the victims and the Shambhala community. I feel for all of them. One more layer of ignorance and naivety is removed for me.

Log in to Reply



Bob McCandlish

July 21, 2018

My love and support go to all SMC people during this time of introspection and transition. I am with you in your choices to serve the Love and Life you feel. I was with you for ten wondrous days in a self-directed retreat and felt the Land and your clear, honorable energies.

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