

Open Space Discussion on How a Sangha Can Respond to the #Zentoo Phenomenon  
SZBA MEETING 2018 ---- Jan Chozen Bays

**The #metoo Movement – One Sangha’s Experience**

The #metoo movement has sparked a cultural revolution, most prominently in the US, but also overseas. One of the ways that sexual harassment has continued unchecked is called the “conspiracy of silence.” Women (and male) survivors are often reluctant to speak frankly to each other about what has happened to them, or only give vague warnings such as, “Be careful about being alone with X. “

After an incident in which we discovered that a man had been inappropriate with several women residents at the monastery, despite close supervision, we decided to hold meetings just for women.

Four women leaders in our sangha met and decided to offer a series of five meetings, held once a month, in which women could share their experiences of sexual harassment and sexual abuse. This was a delicate undertaking, and the initiating group met frequently to monitor each meeting and plan for the next. The group was confidential and closed to additional members after the first meeting. Three women therapists participated in the group, as we expected that counseling help might be needed. There were 12 participants whose ages ranged from 22 to 86.

We began the first session with explicit instructions to speak about “the ten pound weight, not the 500 pound weight,” to speak about everyday instances of inappropriate sexual comments, cat calling and touching. “Me too” became a common phenomenon at each meeting, as one woman’s story opened up forgotten memories in other women. “Offered a ride home but not driven home,” was one example.

All the women were happy to have participated in the group and relieved to have been able to share their stories. Although we proceeded cautiously, there were incidents of “triggering.”

In the future we would like to have:

- 1) A second group
- 2) A one-day open meeting for women to share and role play strategies for extracting yourself from sticky situations, and perhaps to learn self-defense strategies.
- 3) A meeting in which men volunteer to witness --- to simply listen to stories to help educate them about what a woman’s daily life is like.

**VIDEOS RELEVANT to #METOO**

I've found that videos are an excellent teaching tool, and can be the start of helpful and interesting discussions.

- 1) NY Times annotates one of several short films about sexual harassment. Here is one of the full films.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/01/26/upshot/sexual-harassment-script-react.html?action=click&contentCollection=Politics&module=Trending&version=Full&region=Marginalia&pgtype=article>

The rest of the short films are on Youtube under Thatsharassment. They depict incidents involving a boss, doctor, actor, photographer, etc.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MV7a-oetsB0>

- 2) How we can end sexual harassment at work. An excellent TED talk by Gretchen Carlson, whose revelations of sexual abuse by CEO of Fox News Roger Ailes helped spark the #metoo movement. She points out that this is about power, not sex. Three things we can do to create safety for women. 14 minutes long.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWNae7vYK6s>

- 3) Because a bit of humor always helps there's this skit from Saturday Night Live: Claire from Human Resources Gives a Sexual Harassment Training to Colin Jost

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZqdeeKVoBc>

- 4) Sons react to their mothers being cat-called.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNfE\\_Det2Fo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KNfE_Det2Fo)

- 5) Boyfriends react to their girlfriends being cat-called

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BmtQZsoyNj>

- 6) Men unknowingly cat-call their mothers --- who are in disguise.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oec92ndCJ08>

- 7) TED talk by a woman who runs a workshop in which women become men -- for at least a day --and vice versa. What do they discover?

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paBsyBY\\_-dA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paBsyBY_-dA)

- 8) I've lived as a man and I've lived as a woman -- here's what I've learned. A trans woman's TED talk.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrYx7HaUIMY>