



December 10, 2017

To: Whom it may concern

From: Katheryn Wiedman, Ph.D.

Project Director

The Rigpa US board has asked *An Olive Branch* to provide this introduction and overview of our proposed project with your sangha -- the need for which has resulted from allegations of abuse and misconduct on the part of Sogyal Rinpoche.

*An Olive Branch* was formed in 2011 as a project of the Zen Center of Pittsburgh. Growing out of the need for greater understanding and reduction of ethical misconduct on the part of religious leaders, we provide services to organizations in conflict. We promote understanding and healing and work to strengthen organizations' boards and policies to reduce the likelihood of future misconduct. We have expertise, knowledge of best practices, and standards of excellence for our services. Our consultants have varied skills related to training, facilitation, governance, and intervention.

On October 18, 2017 Richard Snow, Treasurer of the Rigpa US Board of Directors, contacted *An Olive Branch* on behalf of the board. He inquired about our services and asked how we could help with a situation precipitated by the July 14, 2017 letter from eight former and current Rigpa members alleging misconduct on the part of Rigpa's founder and spiritual leader, Sogyal Rinpoche.

In Ventura, CA on November 29, 2017 the Rigpa US Board of Directors met with Co-directors of *An Olive Branch*: Rev. Kyoki Roberts, Dr. Katheryn Wiedman, and Leslie Hospodar. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold: 1) for the Rigpa US board to describe their needs and to ask questions about our services and 2) for *An Olive Branch* to learn about the situation in Rigpa and to determine the elements of a project proposal. Subsequently, on December 6 *An Olive Branch* submitted a draft proposal which is currently under review by the Rigpa US Board of Directors.

We recognize the chaos that ensues when a trusted spiritual leader is accused of ethical misconduct. We have developed a process that includes listening, reconciliation, and healing along with strengthening the organization's board governance. The elements of our proposal are described briefly below.

### **Communication with the Sangha**

We propose to collaborate with the board on communications to the sangha. Two letters are envisioned at this point: 1) announcing the project, introducing *An Olive Branch*, and inviting recipients to contact us if they have experienced abuse, feel harmed, or have information related to misconduct and 2) inviting sangha members to attend the Community Reconciliation and Healing meeting.

### **Code of Conduct and Grievance Procedure**

*An Olive Branch* will review and provide advice on the development of Rigpa US's ethics statement and grievance procedure.

### **Listening Post**

The Listening Post is a way for individuals who have been harmed to tell their story to a neutral third party and to be heard in a safe, confidential manner. Information collected via the Listening Post will be summarized and reported to the board and later to the sangha during the Community Reconciliation and Healing meeting. Participants' names and identifying details will be carefully omitted, unless otherwise requested.

### **Community Reconciliation and Healing**

Rigpa US board and *An Olive Branch* will collaborate on the design of a two-day, face-to-face Community Reconciliation and Healing meeting. Members of the US sangha and leaders of Rigpa sanghas in other nations will be invited. We currently envision the following components:

Led by *An Olive Branch*, there will be opportunities at the meeting for attendees to:

- Hear the summarized information gathered in the Listening Post
- Process the events (raise additional concerns, share residual feelings, etc.)
- Learn about the new Code of Conduct and Grievance Procedure
- Receive training on sexualized spiritual relationships and misuse of power.

Led by Rigpa, there will be essential components such as:

- Spiritually-based opening and closing ceremonies
- Traditional ceremonies of reconciliation, forgiveness, and peace-making.

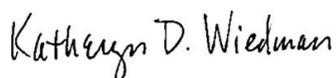
### **Board Development**

The Rigpa US Board of Directors recognizes the need for strengthening their organizational structure and governance. Such work often includes a review of the bylaws, policies, self-assessment, and strategic planning.

### **Project Management**

*An Olive Branch* will serve as an overall adviser on the project elements. In our experience, an undertaking of this scale requires an organized and coordinated approach. Project Management consists of monitoring and coordinating the work, communicating with the Rigpa US board, facilitating and documenting meetings, and providing reports.

Underlying our proposal is the intent to help return the Rigpa US sangha to health and balance. Our wish also is to "...see Buddhism flourish in the West."



Katheryn D. Wiedman, Ph.D.