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United States

September 1, 2022

RE: Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center (TNMC)

This letter is intended as a confidential summary of the events in question and does not set forth all of the facts or circumstances surrounding the events in question.

TNMC (Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center) is a Buddhist church directed by Tarthang Tulku at 2425 Hillside Ave in Berkeley, California USA.

In 2018, Tarthang Tulku failed to provide the minimum wage required to Kirk Grissom ("Kirk"). After Kirk opposed sexual harassment at the Center, Tarthang Tulku retaliated against Kirk by evicting him. Tarthang Tulku took advantage of Kirk and mistreated him at TNMC.

Between the ages of 12-14 Kirk was a victim of sexual abuse by a man who was a director of a children's theater arts program in Phoenix, Arizona. Kirk has attempted to put it behind him. Kirk left Camelback High School in 1975 at the end of his junior year to pursue a career as a sound engineer. Kirk later returned to earn his GED. Afterwards, he attended Arizona State University for humanities for two years before he left to pursue a Buddhist education.

Kirk began a work study Buddhist monk education directed by Tarthang Tulku at the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center in Berkeley, California. After Kirk entered the monastic life, he struggled to understand what happened to him as a boy. It was at the Center Kirk found meaning and the first steps at understanding the abuse. Like theater before, Kirk's entire life revolved around the Center and Buddhism. One of the core values of the Center is preservation of important texts. As such, in the work portion of Kirk's work study program, Kirk operated the printing press. The Center was a complete community that, at the time, provided Kirk with the support he needed to understand.

Contemporary newspaper articles describe TNMC as the preservation of the Tibetan Buddhist lineage of enlightened knowledge and the transmission of these Buddhist teachings to the West. Tarthang Tulku invited Kirk to join the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center before Kirk was even officially involved at the Center. At the age of 22, a friend of Kirk's family introduced him to a senior student at TNMC residing in Arizona. Kirk worked for this student full time and by the next year Kirk was sent to work for Tarthang Tulku at TNMC.

Tarthang Tulku introduced himself to the then 23-year-old Kirk during a community meeting at TNMC's country center in Cazadero. Tarthang Tulku immediately began giving Kirk responsibility and attention and instructed Kirk to help with printing books. Tarthang Tulku made Kirk feel that he was special, and that only Tarthang Tulku fully appreciated him. Over the next 30 years, Kirk attended TNMC related classes, living at the Center and participating in work supporting the Center.

But as time went on Kirk felt that something was wrong. Tarthang Tulku did not try to hide that he was only interested in Kirk because he was printing his books. Tarthang Tulku never wanted to personally meet with Kirk or discuss his education and training. He was infrequent in his contact with Kirk through others and

excluded him from many Community meetings and events. Tarthang Tulku and the Center first learned of Kirk's childhood sexual abuse in 1985. He knew he was vulnerable, and he took advantage of him.

Kirk's memories of TNMC are forever mixed with the memories of discrimination, psychological assault and neglect. Tarthang Tulku's behavior destroyed Kirk's sense of sacred trust in a religious leader. Kirk feels betrayed by Tarthang Tulku. Sexual and psychological harm on any level of reality is against every ethical teaching of the Buddha, and every vow any high lama or teacher takes.

In 2009, Kirk temporarily left the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center. At the same time, he began treatment with Scott Layton in Oakland, CA and Diane Clark in Albany, CA to unblock and process deeply disturbing experiences of his traumatic departure from TNMC and his childhood sexual abuse. From May 2012 to September 2012, Kirk sought treatment with Kent Andrews, PhD in Muir Beach focusing on returning to work at TNMC. The impact of Kirk's lack of protection he felt at the Center continued after Kirk began seeking treatment.

In 2018, Kirk was employed by Tarthang Tulku to work on the Prayer Wheel Project while living at the Center.

- Tarthang Tulku recruited and hired Kirk for the Prayer Wheel Project as a gluer (gluing sheets of paper together) for 1 year and was paid by him to work 8 hours per day, 6 days a week as a W2 employee. Kirk did not teach for the Center or provide any religious instruction.
- Tarthang Tulku refused to pay Kirk minimum wage and overtime after Kirk complained. Kirk had to get an outside job on his off day just to survive.

In many ways, Tarthang Tulku fits the common metaphor of a "missing stair" used to refer to abusive sexual predators and their enablers. The originator of the metaphor described it thus: Have you ever been in a house that had something just so egregiously wrong with it? Something massively unsafe and uncomfortable and against code, but everyone in the house had been there a long time and was used to it? "Oh yeah, I almost forgot to tell you, there's a missing step on the unlit staircase with no railings. But it's okay because we all just remember to jump over it." Tarthang Tulku repeatedly, and obviously, made things uncomfortable and unsafe for Kirk:

- Tarthang Tulku was covering up sexual harassment and abusive conduct complaints of his senior teacher and business director, Arnaud Maitland, for decades. When Kirk learned of more recent complaints he spoke to TNMC staff. They acknowledged that Arnaud Maitland sexually harassed students.
- Tarthang Tulku rejected Kirk's opposition to sexual harassment after he submitted a report detailing the abuse and neglect he suffered. Kirk was ordered not to tell anyone about Arnaud Maitland's sexual harassment by the Center's general counsel, Jack Petranker. TNMC directors stalked and harassed Kirk with fraudulent claims of sexual harassment.
- Tarthang Tulku brazenly retaliated against Kirk's opposition to sexual abuse by evicting him. He alleged that Kirk was imbalanced. It would have been impossible to ignore the extreme discomfort they created for him.

This was not the first time Kirk has opposed abuse at TNMC. In 1993 Kirk complained about Arnaud Maitland's psychological assaults at the Center's printing company where he worked. He fired Kirk for speaking out. Even though the abuse ended for a period of time, Kirk still felt obligated to support Tarthang Tulku. Kirk continued to work at TNMC's publishing company. As Kirk aged and suffered from chronic work injuries, Kirk was no longer providing Tarthang Tulku with the productivity he needed. Tarthang Tulku became resentful and rejected – firing Kirk from his printing job and telling him to leave after 30 years of devoted service.

In the past 15 years, a number of Tibetan Buddhist leaders were the subject of mass allegations of sexual abuse. Kirk spoke out about it in his own community, the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center, and he was evicted as a result. The Center was an important part in Kirk's journey toward understanding his teenage years and it was taken away because he spoke out. After leaving the Center, Kirk sought treatment with Lisa Slater, a therapist located in Concord, CA. Kirk attended therapy with Lisa Slater from November 2018 to February 2020. Kirk sought help to process the effects of his abuse at the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center.

From October 2020 to November 2020, Kirk sought care with Michael Macioci, MFT in Pleasant Hill, California to help process the effects of his abuse at TNMC. From August 2021 to January 2022, Kirk sought treatment with Alison Smith, a therapist located in Lafayette, CA to process the effects of his abuse at the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center. Kirk has been diagnosed with PTSD. Even as recent as September 2022 Kirk was still contending with the loss of his previous safety net, the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center – doubly impactful as it was related to sexual abuse.

Kirk has spent the past 45 years trying to come to terms with what happened to him as a young boy and at TNMC. Due to the abuse he survived, Kirk strongly believes those who do not come forward to speak out against sexual assault are just as responsible. What Tarthang Tulku did to Kirk at the Tibetan Nyingma Meditation Center left Kirk permanently scarred with physical, emotional and psychological damage. Kirk was abandoned by everyone who was supposed to protect him.

Tarthang Tulku's behavior pushed Kirk down into a deep feeling of worthlessness. When Kirk feels confused by a situation, this worthlessness expresses itself as an exaggerated need for security. At the same time, Kirk is unable to express why he needs this security – it comes out instead as fear and anger. At various points, coping with those feelings had led to drug and alcohol abuse.

Kirk particularly struggles with boundaries and disengaging in stressful situations. Kirk's childhood boundaries were destroyed and he was revictimized in his adulthood by Tarthang Tulku. Kirk views his entire life through the lens of an abuse survivor.

Sincerely,

Kirk Grissom 
Kirk Grissom
Kirk@kgrissom.com 9/1/2022

SEE ATTACHED NOTARY

Acknowledgment

A notary public or other officer completing this certificate verifies only the identity of the individual who signed the document to which this certificate is attached, and not the truthfulness, accuracy, or validity of that document.

State of California

County of Contra Costa

On Spetember 1st 2022 before me, Raj Sohal, Notary Public, personally appeared Kirk Allan Grissom proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence to be the person(s) whose name(s) is/are subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she/they executed the same in his/her/their authorized capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their signature(s) on the instrument the person(s), or the entity upon behalf of which the person(s) acted, executed the instrument.

(Seal)

Signature

