

Conversation started Sunday

02/03/2014 08:37 **Yoga Sandhan**

Dear Alecia,

My name is Yogasandhan I'm contacting you from my personal account as it is not possible to initiate messages from the Mangrove page. I have been a resident at Mangrove Yoga Ashram for the past 10 years. Along with other newer residents I have recently taken on the responsibility of ashram management. Whilst we have known Mangrove's history, it has admittedly been in the context of 'the past'. Your comments and posts have made it human, real and present and we appreciate the courage it has taken to make these posts in such a public forum. To respect this and in response to a request, we want to keep our communication with you real.

The Royal Commission was the initial catalyst for change in the ashram's response to the past and got the 'difficult conversations' happening in the ashram again. Last year the decision was made to focus the 40th anniversary on connecting with all residents from the past, knowing that this would in one way or other bring the past to the fore. The culture of the ashram today is very different to what it was when you lived here. We are looking at ways to communicate our current processes to the public, such as how people can air their grievances, a real commitment to child protection processes and measures such as the management structure that prevent one or two people at the top from abusing a position of power. This was to be put in place before putting up the Mangrove history timeline with a public acknowledgement and apology. The timing has now changed a little to meet the needs of the conversations on the Mangrove facebook page but the whole plan is still in progress.

You raised concern that we have been deleting comments. In regards to this the only comments that have been deleted were at the time Tim made the original post. An outside administrator of the Mangrove page saw the posts early one morning and unable to reach us deleted what she believed were libellous comments and I believe also reported Tim's review to Facebook. Tim was also blocked at this time from making further comments on the page, simply because we weren't sure what to do and wanted to know

more about who he was. Admittedly this could have been handled better and Tim has since been unblocked. It is true we cannot delete comments from the review section - apparently we are able to shut the whole section down and possibly open it again with a fresh start but this idea does not fit with the over aim of transparency so it was left to take its own course. Facebook does have its own system for deleting posts although how this works we don't know. We only know there has been no effort made by us to protect either [SHISHY] 's or Akhandananda's names, although we will get legal advice on defamation and will keep you informed if there is any legal requirement for us to take the posts down.

For your knowledge, [SHISHY] is blacklisted from the ashram, as is her brother. Akhandananda's partner at the time of his death and their children are welcome in the ashram. This family has had to deal with its own tragedies and we hope the ashram can be a place of healing for them as well.

In regards to our guest teachers who have been invited to speak at the anniversary, they all lived in the Munger ashram in India during this period and have only been connected with Mangrove since the Academy was established in 1997 and have inspired many students on the teacher-training program in the last 14 years.

As the anniversary invite is open for all past residents to attend we cannot say who of those coming had knowledge of the abuse at the time it was happening. Anyone from that time who still lives here or who comes to teach on behalf of the ashram was unaware of what was going on. There are many conflicting perceptions and it remains a painful subject for everyone involved; this is undoubtedly one of the reasons this has not been dealt with in the past. People have been asked directly if they knew what was happening at the time and their word is taken on face value and it is recognised that in a time of great adversity these people kept the ashram alive allowing it to evolve into the open and very different place it is today.

We wish to honour and celebrate all the goodness that has come out of Mangrove over the last 40 years and realise that first there needs to be an open acknowledgement of the past. One part of this will be a program on the Thursday before Mangrove's 40th that will be dedicated to healing the events of the past. Past residents

and initiates will be invited to attend either to help come to terms with their own experiences and involvement or to offer their support and recognition to the process. The practice of Mahamrityunjaya healing mantra with fire ceremony will be conducted in the afternoon and a memorial will be dedicated to the children and adults who suffered through the abuse of power. The ashram and all present will be asked to commit themselves to preventing this type of thing in any form from happening again, here or anywhere any of us may be. People will be welcome to come for the day, stay overnight or stay for the whole weekend as suits each person best. The offer to stay for free of course extends over this period and you can use the voucher code 40th-0001 when booking online. Camping is an option but not an expectation. The weather has been beautiful over Easter for the last two years, but of course with camping there are no guarantees. So that is where things are at right now. There is genuine intent to let this process be whatever it needs to be for those most affected. This comes from a desire to do what is right for all those affected and to do what is healthy for the ashram culture itself and also from a love of this place and all it has to offer. It is time to meet this challenge and we hope that even if you are not able to be here on Easter Thursday that you are able to accept this offering and the warmth, respect and goodwill that comes with it.

You are in our thoughts and we wish you well. If you would like to talk to someone here please call the ashram and ask to speak with myself, Gurubhakta, or Suryamitra.

Warm regards,

Yogasandhan

On behalf of Mangrove Yoga Ashram

Today



23:27 **Alecia Buchanan** Wow. I am in tears of gratitude....
me and my family from the NT will be there. Thank you, so much. Will
be in touch. Alecia