

From: "ABuchanan"
Date: Wednesday, 9 April 2014 10:55:45 PM Australian Eastern Standard Time
To: "Working Together"
Cc:
Subject: RE: Easter Sunday at Mangrove Ashram

Dear Ahimsa. You have made a huge effort and I thank you. Keep going. It's important that Satyananda ashrams leave no stone unturned. The Royal Commission will do this anyway, but from the ashram's perspective it needs to happen or there will always be a certain 'wrongness' about the ashram and everything it stands for.

And with this in mind I ask you to ask yourself

- Why does the taskforce accept one of Akhandananda's most avid supporters of the time into its team?
- Why does the taskforce accept a senior swami on its team who has in the past worked actively to suppress the stories victims were telling. Who used terms along the lines of 'it was a small hiccup in the past' when questioners sought help or clarity on the issue. Who indicated that the young girls in question were provocative and caused their own sexual abuse
- Why has there been no discussion about the role of Satyananda himself in addressing (or dismissing as the ashram's archival documents will show) what was going on in Australia
- Why has there been no active attempt to uncover the basis for the persistent reports that Satyananda also sexually abused young girls under his yogic guidance and instruction

Some of these actions in particular have caused more hurt, a thing which I am sure you yourself Ahimsa never intended. I ask you to keep going.

Regards, Alecia

From: Working Together [mailto:workingtogethertf@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, 9 April 2014 9:04 PM
To: Alecia Buchanan
Subject: Easter Sunday at Mangrove Ashram

Dear Alecia,

Thank you once again for writing. I hear your concerns and they do help me understand more fully. I realize that this understanding will only ever be partial, as anyone's understanding of another's experience must be.

The Working Together task force is a group that has offered to support the work Mangrove ashram is doing in relation to the history of abuse. It was not formed due to any instruction, it was formed due to the goodwill of those who are on it. It is by no means attempting to provide counseling, nor is it intended to have experts in the field. Rather, it has and will continue to consult with experts. I'm a yoga teacher and all the work I do with people, including with war veterans, is as a yoga teacher.

The task force is working to help Mangrove liaise with those who have been talking about the hurts they still live with and find a direction that is inclusive, compassionate and appropriate. We will never have all the answers and cannot change the past. We recognise that what is happening is a journey that is evolving and will continue to evolve.

Mangrove and the task force have been exploring ways of moving forward with these issues, including communication where possible with those who have been profoundly hurt, consultation with the Royal Commission, working with an HR consultant and most recently talks with an organization called Real Justice. Following all of these communications, we have a clearer sense of direction, and have adjusted the program at Easter time to begin that way forward. I won't go into those details here as they are in the other correspondence that is attached and included here. Below is the email that is being sent to survivors of abuse who have been in touch with us, and attached is the text of the email being sent to visitors registered for the Easter weekend, and to Satyananda Yoga teachers.

Your letters have helped us in these decisions, as have talks and communications with other survivors. We are asking all who are affected to tell us what they think needs to happen to bring healing. Our invitation to work collaboratively will always be open.

Kind regards,
Ahimsadhara

Email being sent to survivors of abuse who have been in touch with us:

Hari Om,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Working Together Task Force, formed to support Mangrove ashram find ways to acknowledge and support those affected by the abuses carried out under Swami Akhandananda's leadership.

We are beginning to realise the significant impact of the abuse and the many layers of hurt and loss of trust that have resulted. Our strong commitment is to be always open, honest and transparent in all our dealings. We have cast the net far and wide to ensure that we 'get it right'. We have sought guidance from the Royal Commission [Institutional Sexual Abuse], from an HR consultant and just last week we had meetings at Mangrove with an organization called Real Justice (www.realjustice.org).

However our greatest challenge has been communicating with the survivors of abuse and at times we really haven't known how to respond, what to say or how to reach out in a compassionate and supportive way. What we have learned however is that for those whose lives have been impacted by the abuse, it has been a very personal and at times, isolating experience. In answering the question, 'what might meaningful support look like?', we strongly believe that we must 'journey' with those who are struggling to deal with the impact of the abuse in order to help them make sense and meaning of what has happened, and to assist them to go to a more hopeful and peaceful place.

Originally, during the Easter program, we were going to acknowledge the hurt experienced and apologise to those who have been harmed. We now realize that an apology is not appropriate at this point and that our focus will be on extending an invitation to others to 'journey' with all those who need our understanding, love and support. The Easter Sunday session will begin with an acknowledgement followed by an exploration of stories then ideas on what everyone feels will make the journey an opportunity for learning and growth. This is to be an inclusive process that evolves into a future in which we can say that we are proud of how we responded to this awful chapter of abuse in our organisation's history.

The attached letter is being sent to Mangrove's Easter visitors and to teachers. It provides details about what will now take place. We feel it is important to let you know how we intend engaging with our whole community.

We realise that for some of you being part of the Easter gathering will not be possible, and for lots of reasons. However, we want to extend an invitation to anyone who feels they need to be there for their own personal reasons, or because they just want to be part of the journey.

Be assured that Easter Sunday is an important beginning point and that as things unfold our hope is that

you will at some point feel okay about inviting our community to be part of your own journey. We will keep in touch. You can contact me on this email address or phone Rocklyn Ashram on 03 5345 7434 if you would like to talk.

With kind regards,

Ahimsadhara for
Working Together Task Force