

# OKCINFO

Brussels, March 17 2017

Dear RR:

I am writing you as a former member of OKC, an ostensibly Buddhist organization that is still today under the control of Mr. Spatz. I was born into this sect in 1981, forcibly separated from my parents at age 4, and sexually abused by Spatz from age 13 to 18. I finally left the sect in 2009 and I am currently struggling to rebuild myself and regain a sense of dignity and peace of mind.

I will be very direct: I am formally requesting that you cease to endorse OKC, whether through appearances at OKC centers or otherwise. By doing so, you are lending an image of legitimacy to this organization which is misleading to the public and insulting to those of us who have suffered lifetimes of abuse and hardship at the hands of the sect. I would also invite you to make a formal statement of your position regarding the criminal suit against Mr. Spatz. If you will not willingly cancel the lectures you have scheduled at OKC, I will have no choice but to come protest your actions in person.

I was shocked to learn that you were scheduled to lecture at OKC, despite the recent criminal trial that brought the horrendous misconduct of Spatz and OKC into the open. I find myself increasingly questioning the goodwill of the Tibetan community in general and your entourage in particular. Frankly, I am finding it hard to understand your complete indifference towards our case. We prepared a long presentation of these facts and shared it with several leaders within the Tibetan community, but drew no reaction. I recently learned that you yourself have not yet received this presentation and I have requested that it be shared with you so that you can have a better understanding of our situation.

I should explain in more detail the reasons why I'm personally opposed to your visit and your support of Mr. Spatz and his work. In the name of the Dharma and under the pretext of Buddhist teachings, this man tricked and misled me spiritually as well as abusing me both physically and sexually, to the point of torture. I am still suffering from the ill effects of this mistreatment and sadly, I am far from being the only one... I am not looking for pity; I am saying this because I want you to be fully aware of the wrongs that you are implicated in by association with this sect.

Not only was I forced into sexual activities that were presented as "initiations," but I was told that failing to maintain the secrecy of these events would be an irrevocable breach of the Samaya bond and a loss of any possibility of reaching enlightenment. I was struggling in my daily practice and found myself wondering why Buddha's teachings, which were supposedly adaptable to the needs of each person, were so incomprehensible to me. Due to the secrecy that was imposed on me, I could not discuss my discomfort about Spatz' practices with anyone. In my moments of deepest doubt, I found myself relying on the endorsements of the Tibetan masters who frequented Spatz as proof that he was a real lama and that OKC was a legitimate Buddhist center. As a result, rather than seeing clearly that I was a victim of abuse, I continued to believe that my discomfort stemmed from my own failings as a disciple and I kept the silence for 15 years...

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In 1997, you wrote a letter endorsing Spatz when he had been arrested for statutory rape on a preteen girl. Do you understand the import of this letter? Perhaps at the time you didn't realize to what extent your recognition of Spatz would assist him in maintaining a false image, influencing his disciples to continue following him rather than stopping to question his behavior. However, the harm you did in writing this letter should be clear to you now, and I urge you to take this opportunity to retract your position.

You and other Tibetan leaders have allowed Spatz to claim membership in your lineage. He used your names at trial to legitimize his actions. Your photos, which continue to be posted on the OKC website today, are an insult to your lineage and to those of us who were born and raised in this sect and who are doing our best, with inadequate means, to expose the truth.

I don't expect you to understand the societal complexities that allowed Spatz to take advantage of so many people, nor do I expect you to fully grasp the pain that I lived through. But perhaps this letter will, at the very least, help you understand why I will stop at nothing to expose this man and to dispel the illusion that he is a true guide to the unfortunate people who follow him under the belief that he is teaching them the Dharma. If I can only accomplish this by showing that the Tibetan community is knowingly supporting a convicted pedophile, so be it. My goal is not to make an attack on Tibetan Buddhism, but some collateral damage may be inevitable.

The purpose of this letter is to ensure that you have heard both sides of the story, and to make you aware of these circumstances so that you are not taken by surprise in the event that your visit to OKC in Europe is poorly received.

If you have any questions for me or would like more information, please feel free to contact me and I will assist you to the full extent of my ability.

Sincerely,

Redacted for privacy reasons

March 31, 2017

Dear Shechen Rabjam Rinpoche:

I am writing to ask you to withdraw your support of Robert Spatz (who you call Lama Kunzang) and his organization OKC.

In July of 1997, I pressed charges against Spatz for forcing me into a sexual relationship with him when I was fourteen years old. I did this in the hope that people would see him for who he really is and that they would protect themselves and their children from any further harm. Three other women brought similar charges against him around that time. One month later, you wrote a letter supporting Spatz, in which you stated that he has practiced the Dharma for 25 years under the inspiration of great Tibetan masters, that he has manifested “great generosity” in supporting projects for preserving the Tibetan heritage, and is well considered by the Buddhist community. To this day, the letter is available on OKC’s website.

Just months ago, the criminal lawsuit that began in 1997 finally went to trial and Spatz and OKC were convicted of terrible crimes committed against members of the community, including not only the sexual abuse of minor girls but also physical and emotional abuse of children (some of whom were separated from their parents as early as age two or three) and fraud and financial wrongs perpetrated at the expense of the disciples. Yet you have scheduled lectures at OKC centers in both France and Belgium this coming May. Please don’t go through with this.

My story is not unique and sadly, it is far from being the worst among to stories of people on whom Spatz has inflicted irreparable harm. But I will share some details in the hope of helping you see more clearly what darkness lurks behind the false image that Spatz and OKC project to the world. I was seven years old when my family moved to live in Spatz’ community in France (“Nyima-Dzong”). As I was growing up, Spatz forbid me from having any relationships with boys and checked in with me more than once to verify my obedience. After I turned fourteen, he forced me to break off my relationship with my father, who lived outside the community. He also forced me to drop out of school and dedicate myself to cooking and cleaning for him, among other things. Then he sent my brother away to work in Belgium. Once he had isolated me from any source of support, he visited me in the middle of the night, ordered me to undress, and proceeded to violate me for the first of many times.

There was nothing consensual about this relationship. The first time this happened, I was too confused and intimidated to put up any meaningful resistance. After that, I protested and attempted to refuse him. He responded with ridiculous spiritual excuses at first, and then with pressure and finally outright threats, saying, among other things, that he would lock me up or impose hardships on my mother if I didn’t comply. He had complete control over my life and I could see no way to escape this trap. I thought of running away but I had no money, no education, and no-one to turn to. So I was forced to submit to him again and again, over the course of nearly three years and I sank into a deep despair.

I finally escaped this situation at age seventeen, with the assistance of my brother. I did my best to forget what had happened to me, but after living in this darkness for three years I was no longer the same person. Also, my heart was heavy with concern for the younger children I had left behind. I had no doubt that after I left Spatz would find new outlets for his sexual perversities among these children and this is what finally led me to speak out in 1997, years after my departure.

Spatz and members of OKC responded with efforts to deny or discredit my testimony. They put pressure on my family to stop me from proceeding against Spatz. They spread lies about me, telling the police I was homeless, a

drug addict and/or insane, none of which had the slightest basis in truth. After leaving the community I completed my education and by 1997 I had settled into a very stable job and home. They also made efforts to cast doubt on my credibility (and that of the other women) by bolstering Spatz reputation as a well-respected religious leader.

I am certain that your letter, which spoke so highly of Spatz (and arrived at such a convenient time) was very useful to them in this enterprise. It has been my observation that the members of the community have a high level of respect for you and other Tibetan religious leaders. My mother, for instance, believed that Tibetan religious leaders wouldn't frequent Spatz and recognize him as a lama unless they were certain of his goodwill and spiritual depth. For her, the visits that Tibetan religious leaders made to OKC were confirmation of Spatz' authenticity and greatness as a teacher, and this led her to place far too much trust in him. Even after she discovered what had happened to me, she struggled to see him for what he really was and she initially opposed my testimony because she could not bring herself to believe that he would willingly hurt any other children (he told her that what he did to me was a "mistake" and she unfortunately believed this). Other members in the community were similarly so misled by Spatz' image that they continued to turn their heads when he took teenage girls into his entourage, *even after knowing of my testimony*.

This brings me back to where I started. Spatz is able to commit harm because of his perceived authenticity. Your letter bolstered his authenticity, as did letters and visits by other Tibetan leaders over the years. This enabled him to commit more harm and it is also making the healing process more difficult for the latest generation of victims because it fosters denial and a loss of emotional support from family and friends who are torn between their loyalty to their children and to their religion. You may not have intended or foreseen any of this harm. But I hope that after reading this letter and becoming more aware of the consequences of supporting Spatz, you will choose to change your course of action. What would happen if, instead of supporting Spatz, you chose to acknowledge the harm that he has done and send a message of support to the victims and their families? I know that many among the younger generation (who know of this letter) are hoping that this will be your response, as such a gesture would be deeply meaningful to them.

Sincerely,

**Redacted for privacy reasons**