

Subject: Troubling Experience at Green Gulch
Thursday August 2, 2018

Dear Green Gulch staff,

I wanted to write and let you know that I had a troubling experience at Green Gulch this past Saturday, which was also my first time there, during a day-long program with Ed Brown.

Ed started the day by explaining where bathrooms were located, dismissing transgender people's needs by saying "I don't know about that stuff" and then telling a story about a Zen teacher who "thought a transvestite has peed all over the seat," only to discover that the toilet was spraying water when it flushed. I understand that this story was meant to be a joke, and many people in the room laughed.

Later in the day, Ed told a story about needing to use a meditation pillow to cover his erection when he saw a scantily-clad woman bending over in the Zendo. Again, there was laughter in the group.

As a queer woman and a survivor of sexual violence, these moments made it hard for me to take in Ed's teachings throughout the day. It also made it hard to feel safe at Green Gulch and like there was respect for the experiences of diverse attendees who inevitably bring their lives and identities into meditation practice.

I appreciate that there are multiple generations represented in both staff and students at Green Gulch, as well as the fact that humor and joy are so important. Another student had even told me as we were walking into the Zendo at the beginning of the day that she appreciates Ed's ability to weave laughter into his teaching. I also appreciated this in other moments, but not when jokes were objectifying or at the expense of people who hold

marginalized identities.

I'm not saying this to police someone's words—rather, to encourage Green Gulch to be proactively engaging staff in education about social issues so that they know more about the kind of care and language that people need to feel safe enough to practice. For me, meditation is inextricably about personal and collective liberation. I wanted to write because I care about making a beautiful place like Green Gulch spiritually and emotionally accessible to people who are healing. Please let me know if you have any questions or would like to discuss this, please feel free to reach out.

Best,