



"Hey! Throw It Away"
Calligraphy by Roshi Keido Fukushima

Hey! Throw It Away

In my office, behind the door, there is a long scroll with Keido Fukushima's calligraphy. It reads (in Chinese characters), "Hey! Throw it away." It is there as a constant reminder of my "attachments."

When I asked Keido why he had chosen this theme as a topic of his calligraphy, he said that in this particular teaching, he was inspired by the famous Zen master, Joshu (Chao-chou 778-897 C.E.). I knew that the Roshi had studied Joshu at Otani University and in his talks he was fond of quoting from Joshu. When I probed further, he narrated a famous incident that involved Joshu and one of his disciples. Evidently, in a conversation with Joshu, the disciple said that he had taken off all of his illusions, and now what should he do? Joshu responded, "Throw it away." At once the student retorted, "I already told you that I have no illusions." At this Joshu, in his Zen mind, responded, "Okay, keep it." Upon hearing Joshu's response, the disciple was enlightened. In this story, Joshu, as a Zen master, realized that his disciple was attached to unconscious illusions of which he was not aware. So, Joshu asked him to throw them away. When the disciple persisted that he had no illusions, Joshu asked him to carry on. Luckily, Joshu's disciple had the insight to recognize that his master was not attached to his own answer, as he asked the disciple to "carry on." Realizing this Zen mind, the disciple was enlightened.

Roshi Fukushima explains that Zen focuses on two types of attachments—conscious and unconscious. It is easy to recognize conscious attachments but very difficult to be cognizant of the unconscious ones. Consequently, people may think that they