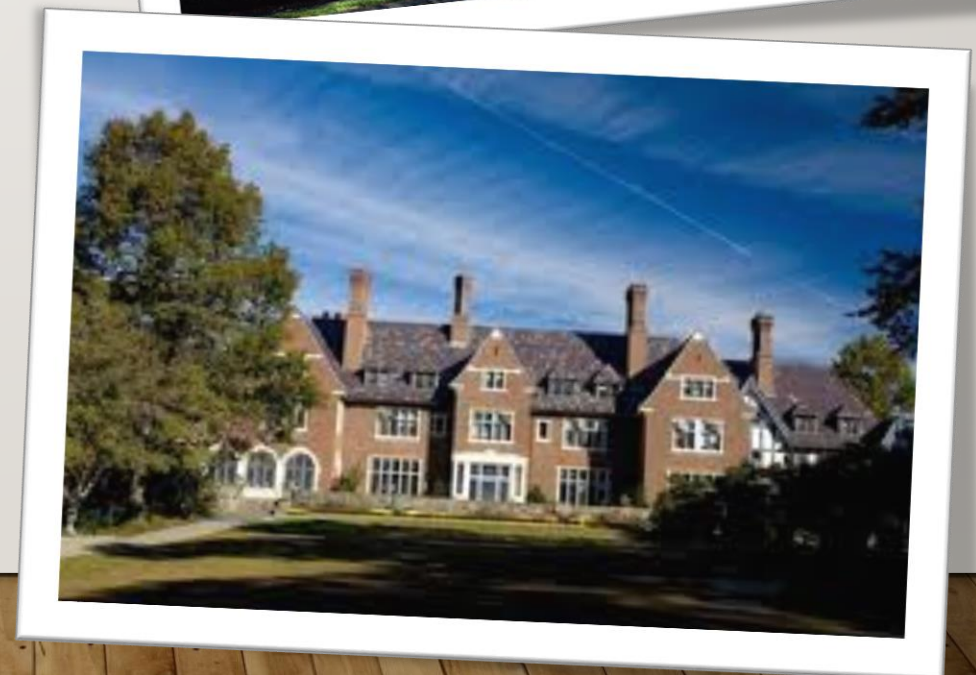


PEMA CHÖDRÖN

FEARLESSNESS IN DIFFICULT TIMES



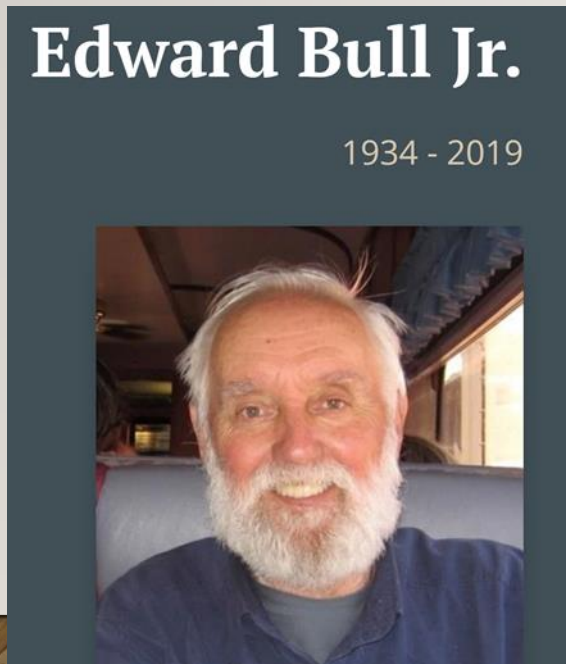
- Born Deirdre Blomfield-Brown on July 14, 1936 in NYC
- Grew up on a farm in NJ with older brother and sister
- Graduated from Miss Porter's Boarding School (pictured right, top) in 1955
- Attended Sara Lawrence College for two years (pictured right, bottom)



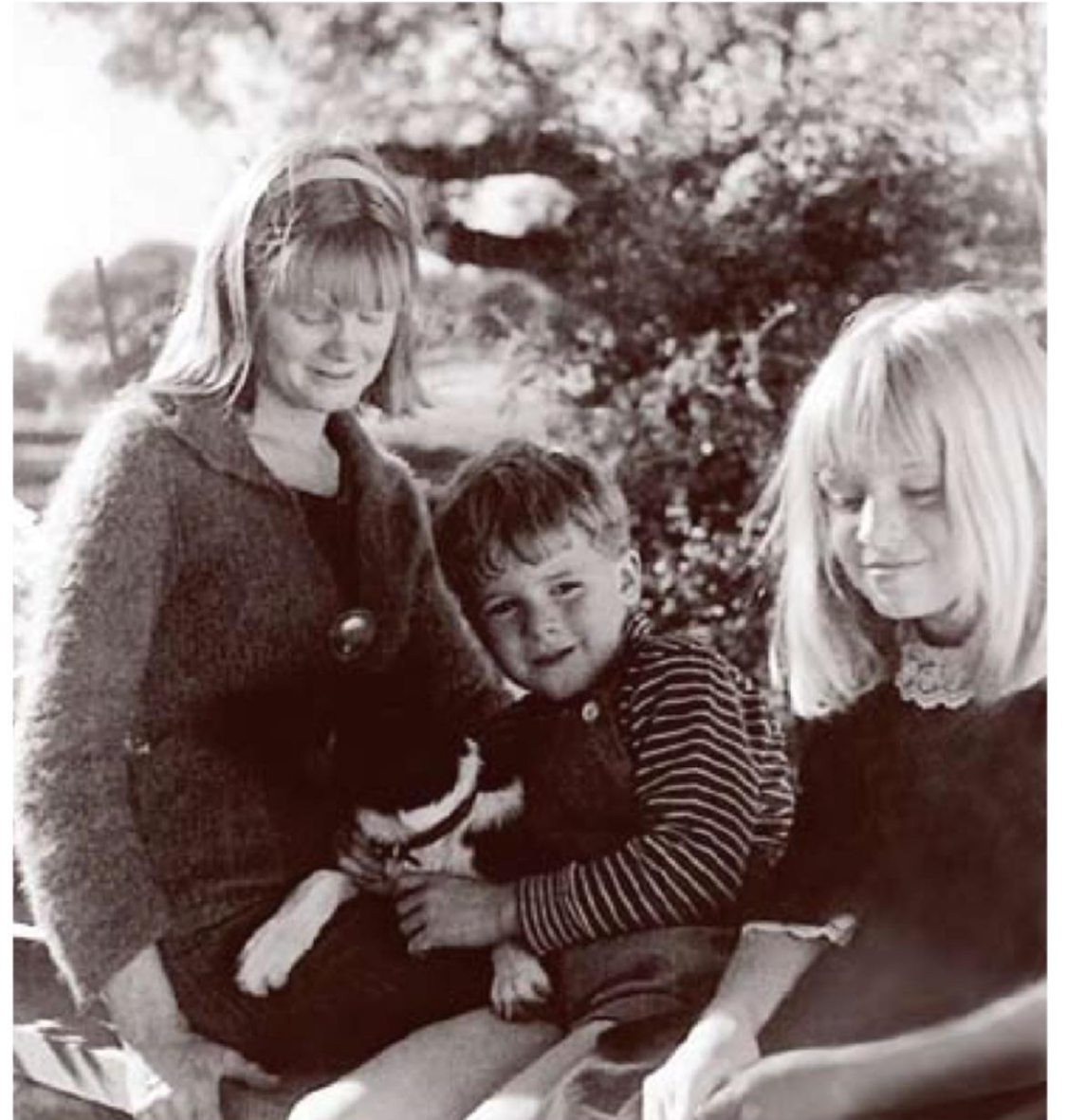
- Moved to California and attended UCAL – Berkeley



- Married lawyer Edward Bull at 20 yrs old
- Received a BA in English Literature and an MA in Elementary Education



- Had two children, a daughter, Arlyn, and a son, Edward
- Divorced from first husband after 7 years
- Has two grandchildren who live in the SF Bay area



With her children, Edward and Arlyn Bull, in Sonoma, California 1967.

- Married poet and writer Jim Levy, but they divorced after 8 years.
- When her world fell apart, she began exploring different therapies and spiritual traditions.
- She was moved by an article she read by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche, though she didn't know anything about Buddhism at the time, or that the author was a Buddhist.



Why did Pema Chödrön become a Buddhist?

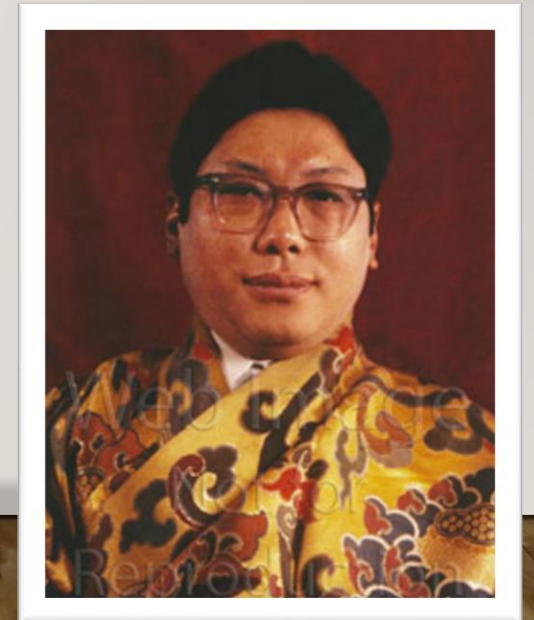
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A4slnjvGjP4>



- In her mid-thirties, Pema traveled to the French Alps and met Lama Chime Rinpoche.
- She studied with Lama Chime Rinpoche in London for several years, but divided her time between England and the US.
- In 1974, she became a novice nun while studying with Lama Chime in London. His Holiness the Sixteenth Karmapa came to Scotland at that time, and Pema received her ordination from him.



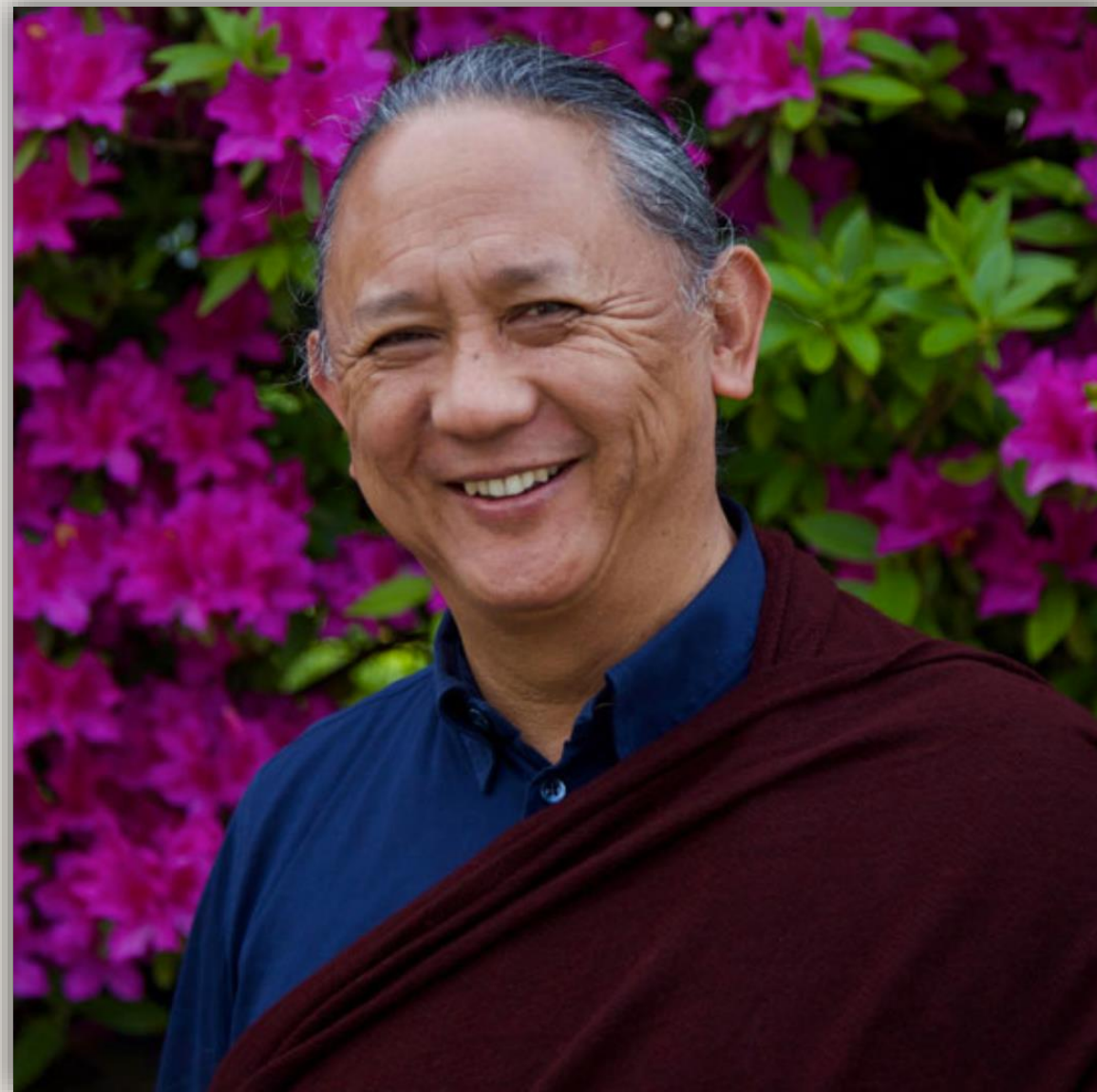
- When in the US, she lived and studied at Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche's center in San Francisco. He became her main teacher and she studied with him from 1974 until his death in 1987. She states that they had a profound connection.
- At the request of the Sixteenth Karmapa, she received the full monastic ordination in the Chinese lineage of Buddhism in 1981 in Hong Kong.
- Pema served as the director of Karma Dzong in Boulder, Colorado, until moving in 1984 to rural Cape Breton, Nova Scotia.
- In 1985, she and Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche founded Gampo Abbey in Nova Scotia. She became the director.





- In the 1990's, her popularity exploded, with the publication of several books, such as...
 - 1991 – The Wisdom of No Escape
 - 1994 – Start Where You Are
 - 1997 – When Things Fall Apart
- Her retreats were overflowing, she was in high demand for talks and media events.
- In 1993, she was given the title of acharya (a person that the Sakyong Mipham Rinpoche has empowered to represent him).

- In 1994, Pema took Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche as her teacher.



- Pema Chödrön is the author of almost 50 books and audio books.



- In January 2020, she retired from her acharya role with Shambala International, because she did not approve of the way the organization handled the sexual misconduct allegations against Sakyon Mipham Rinpoche and others.



Pema Chödrön's Retirement Letter

January 14, 2020

Dear Acharyas and Shambhala Board Members:

I send New Year's greetings and my love to you all.

I'm writing to let you know that I have decided to step down as an acharya. As you know, I haven't actually served as an acharya for a long time, and I have been considering retiring for a few years. And now, the time has come.

When I read the recent letter from the Sakyong saying that he wished to start teaching again and would do so for all who requested, I was disheartened. I experienced this news as such a disconnect from all that's occurred in the last year and half. It feels unkind, unskillful and unwise for the Sakyong to just go forward as if nothing had happened without relating compassionately to all of those who have been hurt and without doing some deep inner work on himself.

Then came the letter from the Board informing the Shambhala community that they have invited the Sakyong to give the Rigden Abhisheka in June, and I was dumbfounded. The seemingly very clear message that we are returning to business as usual distresses me deeply. How can we return to business as usual when there is no path forward for the vast majority of the community who are devoted to the vision of Shambhala and are yearning for accountability, a fresh start, and some guidance on how to proceed? I find it discouraging that the bravery of those who had the courage to speak out does not seem to be effecting more significant change in the path forward.

I understand that the Board's decision to invite the Sakyong was based on the compassionate intention to benefit the 125 people who wish to take the abhisheka in order to continue on their path. But for me, personally, to have the very first indication of how we are going to manifest be that we are returning to business as usual is shocking and also heartbreaking. I feel that as a community committed to creating an enlightened society, we deserve something better than business as usual.

Hopefully, it's not too late to reverse this trend. For instance, the Board could be proactive and invite a few small groups of people with differing views to propose ideas for how we can go forward – ways that include everyone in the community and that provide accountability for all that has happened. If the Board could then make it their priority for 2020 to start to implement some of these plans ... that, in my opinion, would be very wise.

I will close by just saying thank you very much to the acharyas for continuing to teach and help the community and to the Board for the admirable work they have done to stabilize the community's finances and to establish a new and more efficient code of conduct. Nevertheless, I do not feel that I can continue any longer as a representative and senior teacher of Shambhala given the unwise direction in which I feel we are going.

Yours in the vision of the Great Eastern Sun,
Ani Pema aka Pema Chödrön



Pema taught for decades in the United States and Canada and currently plans for an increased amount of time in solitary retreat under the guidance of Venerable Dzigar Kongtrul Rinpoche.

Her nonprofit, the Pema Chödrön Foundation, was set up to assist in helping establish Tibetan Buddhist monasticism in the West, and to continue her work with Western Buddhists of all traditions, sharing ideas and teachings.



Resources Consulted

<https://www.shambhala.com/authors/a-f/pema-Chödrön-36.html>

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<https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2020/01/17/famed-buddhist-nun-pema-Chödrön-retires-cites-handling-sexual-misconduct-charges-against-group-leader/>

<https://www.lionsroar.com/pema-Chödrön-and-dzigar-kongtrul-lets-be-honest/>

<https://tricycle.org/magazine/no-place-hide/>



Pema Chödrön on Fear and Fearlessness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CVRT-y2wTBY>

