

ZENO

*Zeno Dickson and the Erasure of Human Design's
Teachers*

A Documentary History

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Chapter Zero

The Voice on Ibiza, January 1987

Before Zeno Dickson and Chaitanyo Taschler ever met Ra Uru Hu, before the November 1993 flight to Albuquerque and the six weeks in their Taos house and the contract Ra drafted in their kitchen and signed in his own hand, there had been a man named Alan Robert Krakower who had spent eight days and eight nights inside an experience he would, for the rest of his life, struggle to describe.

He was thirty-eight. Canadian by birth, born in Montreal on April 9, 1948, with a bachelor's degree behind him and a career in advertising, magazine publishing, and media production. He composed and performed music. He had worked in film. In 1983, at thirty-five, he left Canada and made his way to the small Mediterranean island of Ibiza, where he took work as a schoolteacher. By his own later description he was a science-trained skeptic who held no mystical beliefs. Pressed, he could not name his own astrological sign.

On the evening of January 3, 1987, by his own subsequent account shortly after dark, something began that would not finish until the morning of January 11. The published accounts of those eight days vary in tone. Their structural elements do not. Across the sources the same core holds: a sustained encounter with what he would later call, simply, the Voice, and the reception of an enormous, structured body of information about the design of the human form. It set out the mechanics by which the planets and the I Ching were said to correspond to a graphical representation of that design: types and centers and gates and channels and lines, authorities and strategies, the framework that would, across the next twenty-four years and in his hands, be called the Human Design System.

He did not eat. He did not drink. He did not sleep. He took notes. By his own later description, two days of the eight were devoted specifically to the architecture of what became Human Design. The remaining six days carried what he would call, with characteristic flatness, cosmic fairy tales, the larger cosmological context inside which the bodygraph mechanic was situated. He came out the other side of those eight days with a name he had been given inside the experience, Ra Uru Hu, and

with the obligation, as he understood it, to spend the rest of his life translating what he had received into a teachable form.

He did not, by his own later admission, want this obligation. He had not asked for it. He resented the intrusion. He frequently described himself in the years that followed as a person who had been ambushed by something he had not believed in and could not refuse. The integrity of his subsequent teaching, in his own account and in the account of those who studied with him in the earliest period, came partly from this resistance. He did not present what he had received as something he had earned or developed. He presented it as something that had happened to him.

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In March 1987, two months after the encounter, Ra received his first invitation to do a Human Design reading. Tullia Duymaer-Van Twist, a resident of Ibiza, asked him to read her chart and that of her daughter Tonka. He did. In 1988 he drew his first Human Design bodygraphs by hand. In 1989, in a small apartment outside Frankfurt, Germany, he began writing what would become the Rave I'Ching, the textual foundation of the system, alongside the materials that would later be gathered as the Black Book.

In 1991 he met Jürgen Saupe, the German translator and publisher, and hired him to translate the Black Book into German. The original publishing deal fell through. Saupe offered to help propagate the work, and Ra accepted. Through the 1990s, Saupe's firm, New Sun Services International, produced the first printed bodygraphs, maintained the European archive, and translated every German course Ra would later teach. The summer of 1991 carried the first Design Analyst training, with three students. The Black Book was published that year. By February 1992, in Sant Miquel, Ibiza, Ra delivered his first public lecture. Later that year, the Rave I'Ching was published, in English and in Jürgen Saupe's German translation, and a small Design Network newsletter began circulating to subscribers in Germany and Austria.

In the autumn of 1992, at a Zürich lecture organized through informal channels, Ra spoke to a small group. Among them was a Swiss man named Peter Wolf, who carried the day's materials back to two American friends he knew were the sort of people who would understand them. (The couple's own archive would later place Wolf's encounter with Ra a few months before August 1993, at what it calls his first introduction lecture in Zurich; the two datings sit close together, and both are recorded here.) Zeno Dickson and Chaitanyo Taschler had recognized themselves in Ra's

descriptions before they had ever met him. Within a year, they would be paying his airfare to America.

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This chapter offers no opinion about what happened to Alan Robert Krakower on January 3 through 11, 1987. The book treats the encounter as Ra subsequently described it, not as a claim it is the book's job to verify, but as a foundational subjective experience that produced the body of teaching the rest of the book is about. Whether the Voice was a mystical encounter, a sustained psychological event, a creative breakthrough of unusual intensity, or something the categories of contemporary description do not capture cleanly, the book does not say. It is not equipped to answer that question, and would not try if it were.

What the book does say, and what every page that follows from this one assumes, is that something happened. A man went into eight days of solitary contact with something he experienced as larger than himself, and a body of structured knowledge came out the other side. That body of knowledge subsequently passed through hundreds of teachers in dozens of countries across the next four decades and helped millions of people come to a more articulate understanding of how their own systems were built. The institutional question of who owns the resulting body of knowledge, who is permitted to teach it, who is permitted to develop it, and what happens to those who develop it outside the institutional framework, those are the questions this book is about. But this chapter belongs to what came before any of that.

It belongs to a thirty-eight-year-old advertising executive on a Mediterranean island in January 1987, who came out of eight days he had not asked for with the rough architecture of a system that, by the time he died on March 12, 2011, would carry his name and the names of his collaborators across a worldwide community of practitioners. The book begins, properly, in the kitchen in Taos in November 1993, when the first American contract was drafted. But it begins, before that, in a small apartment on Ibiza across eight days in January 1987, with a man who would later say that he had not been the same person on the eleventh as he had been on the third, and who would spend the next twenty-four years trying to make the difference legible to anyone who would listen.

That is where Human Design begins.

The rest of this book is what happened next.

ZENO

Zeno Dickson and the Erasure of Human Design's Teachers

*For Chaitanyo,
the partner in the work and the keeper of the original flame.*

*And for the Friends and Colleagues
who chose awareness over hierarchical labels.*

*“Belief is the avoidance of the pain of not knowing.”
~ Zeno*

Prologue

On May 17, 1997, in a small classroom in Taos, New Mexico, a teacher named Ra Uru Hu stood at the front of a room and began to explain that there were four kinds of human beings.

The system he was teaching was called Human Design. It was four years old in the United States. Ra had received it, he said, during an eight-day mystical encounter on the island of Ibiza in January 1987, in which a Voice had transmitted to him a complete description of the human energetic anatomy. He had spent the years since 1991 trying to teach others to explain what he had been given.

Ra was forty-nine years old. In four years of American teaching he had never introduced the Four Types as a formal framework.

He was now doing so.

Across the room sat a forty-five-year-old woman named Zeno. She had organized the class. She and her partner, Chaitanyo, had brought Ra to the United States four years earlier and paid for his ticket. They had hosted his first six weeks of American teaching. Chaitanyo collected him from the airport in Albuquerque and recorded every lecture. Zeno organized every visit and class since, and certified the first generation of American Human Design teachers. She was Ra's senior American teacher.

She was also, as Ra spoke, sitting next to Chaitanyo, looking at him.

Zeno turned to Chaitanyo, and he to her. Without a word, both understood what they were watching, because both had seen it before.

Zeno had been here twelve years earlier, at Rajneeshpuram, a 64,000-acre ranch in the high desert of Oregon. There she had watched a different charismatic teacher convert genuine insight into a system of behavioral prescription. She had watched the

apparatus around him become a control mechanism. And she had watched the whole thing collapse under the weight of what it had become.

She had left Rajneeshpuram by December 1984, a year before the commune collapsed.

She had not left it to walk into the same room with different furniture.

* * *

This is a book about what she did next.

It is not a book about whether Human Design is a cult.

The cult question (*Is Human Design a cult?*) is among the most frequently asked questions about the system, by people inside it and outside it. The standard cult-screening criteria (charismatic authoritarian leader, isolation from outside influences, us-versus-them mentality, thought and behavior control, financial exploitation) map onto the documented institutional pattern with varying degrees of precision. Other authors, writers, and vloggers have made that argument. This book does not.

This book is a documentary biography of one woman. She built the American school of a global movement, then recognized the moment its founder began to change what he had transmitted. She refused to participate, and lost most of her students and allies to the institution she had helped create. For the next two decades (in a wheelchair, in Taos, in declining health) she taught what the system had originally been to anyone who came to her.

The documentary record is at the back of this book: contracts, letters, archived correspondence, public statements, archived classes, institutional self-descriptions placed beside what actually happened. The reader is not asked to conclude anything. The reader is invited to simply read.

* * *

Osho had named her Zeno. She was born Karen Cox on 12 April 1952, in Oakland, California. She received the name during her years with Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, the teacher later known as Osho, drawn from Zen, the practice of direct unmediated awareness. The Rajneesh lineage did not survive her. The name did.

She died on March 25, 2020, in Taos, in the care facility where she had been living since 2017. She was sixty-seven. For most of the last three years of her life she had been unable to care for herself or to speak intelligibly. The work, by then, was in other hands: the archive, the software, the recorded classes. And the book she and Chaitanyo had built and rebuilt over twenty years, until every trace of Ra's interpretive overlay was gone and only the mechanics remained.

Most people working in Human Design today have never heard of her.

This is the story of what they were not told.

Chapter One

The Observer's Apprenticeship (Oakland, CA, Switzerland, Rajneeshpuram, Oregon, 1952–1993)

She was seventeen during the Summer of Love.

The East Bay in 1967 was not a location so much as a field, charged, disruptive, full of people who had decided that the inherited version of reality was insufficient and were willing to make themselves uncomfortable to find out what was true. Zeno grew up breathing that air. She described it later as “enormously imprinting, changing my perception as to what was important, what life means, what consumerism and war have to do with each other.”

She was a fifth-generation Californian, the third of four children. She picked up trash off the beach before recycling was a word anyone used. She loved the redwoods. She studied philosophy at Humboldt State University, drawn to Socrates and what she called the wisdom traditions: yoga, Tai Chi, the I Ching, the Tarot, the stars. These were not hobbies for her. They were methodologies. Ways of looking that preceded conclusions.

This is the first thing to understand about Zeno: she was, before anything else, a practitioner of observation. Not mysticism in the sense of belief, not spirituality in the sense of surrender to an idea, but the disciplined practice of watching what actually happens and staying honest about what you see. She would spend the rest of her life trying to teach this distinction (between seeing and interpreting, between the mechanic and the slogan) and she would find it the hardest thing in the world to communicate. Most people did not want to be taught to see; they wanted to be told what they were. A label can be handed over in a single sentence and repeated forever; the discipline of looking has to be practiced, and it offers no shortcut and no final answer. The distance

between what people wanted and what she was offering would shape the rest of her working life.

* * *

In 1980, she woke from a dream that told her to go to Poona.

She was twenty-eight years old. She had a daughter, Divo, who was three. The money appeared, she would say later, “through incredible divine synchronicity.” Eight days after the dream, she was sitting at the feet of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, who would later rename himself Osho, at the ashram in India. She had not intended to be initiated. She only wanted to see if she would feel anything.

She felt something. He gave her sannyas, the initiation that made her his disciple, and the name Ma Vedant Zeno, the Zeno drawn from Zen, from the practice of direct, unmediated awareness. It would be the name she kept for the rest of her life, worn down eventually to its last syllable, the one that mattered.

* * *

The commune years were formative in ways she would later understand more precisely than she could during them. She lived in Berkeley, in Zurich, and at Rajneeshpuram in Oregon, the Ranch, on 64,000 acres of high desert in Wasco County, where the global Rajneesh movement had relocated in 1981 after pressure on its Indian ashram became unmanageable.

It had Sheela, the master’s personal secretary. Her increasingly authoritarian administration of the commune would become, by 1985, a textbook case of how the apparatus around a charismatic teacher metastasizes into something its original devotees no longer recognize as what they came for.

What Zeno saw at the Ranch, over the years she was there, was the slow conversion of a body of teaching that had genuine value into a system of behavioral and

social control. She saw the followers become unable to distinguish between what Bhagwan had said and what Sheela was now requiring them to do in his name. She saw the language of liberation deployed in service of obedience. She saw an entire community of intelligent, sincere people unable to see what was happening to them because what was happening was happening through them.

She left before the end. In her own published account, the commune spent the fall of 1984 “organizing shelter and transportation for busloads of homeless people to become residents that would affect the elections”, and it “became increasingly clear that it was time for me to leave. By December 1984, I made my way to San Francisco.”¹ The 1984 salad-bar poisoning of seven hundred and fifty Wasco County residents (organized by Sheela’s inner circle to influence that same local election, widely documented as the largest bioterrorism attack on U.S. soil) would surface in court records the following year. Sheela would be indicted. Bhagwan would be deported. The Ranch would empty. Zeno watched the collapse from San Francisco, having read the signs a year early.

Zeno took the name with her. The lineage she did not.

What she had learned, she would later say was a method of seeing. She had watched, in real time, the conversion of insight into prescription. She had watched the apparatus replace the teaching. She had watched followers’ field-conditioning override their direct perception, so completely that by the end they were defending acts they would once have refused.

She had spent five years inside the experiment. She had a body of method she would never lose.

She saw it happen once. She would watch it happen again.

* * *

¹Ra Uru Hu, email to professionals and teachers, May 2008, scanned and preserved at ra.uru.hu/scan_20190227/. The email was circulated in the Human Design Austria documentary archive in February 2019 as supporting evidence for Ilse Sendler’s correction of Lynda Bunnell’s 2017 anniversary claim that “Ra established the International Human Design School (IHDS) in 1992.”

She returned to Zurich in January 1986, after a year in San Francisco. By the end of the decade she had been doing awareness work for most of her adult life. Her daughter was receiving “a poshy, wonderful education.” She had built a life in the European alternative community, moving through Zurich’s spiritual network with the ease of someone practiced enough to be both serious and unsolemn about it.

That is where she met Chaitanyo, in January 1990, at the celebration marking Osho’s death. He was at the time, in her later account, “the Swiss sannyas node”. Twenty-one years afterward she called the day the hinge of her life: “It was a huge moment for me that transformed my life in unexpected ways. It was the beginning of my relationship with Chaitanyo.”²

He was Swiss-born, a graphic designer and recording artist, a meditator of nearly fifty years by his own accounting. He had a Christian name he did not use. His meditation teacher had given him the name Chaitanyo, consciousness, and that is what he went by. They fell in love. She and Divo moved into his house.

Two years later, in the first days of January 1992, the house burned down.

A photograph preserved in the archive, dated January 6, 1992, shows the two of them standing with the ruin.³

* * *

With the insurance money, they decided to start over somewhere else. They looked at California, but a 7.2 earthquake shook them out of Zeno’s home state, the 1992 Petrolia quake, which she would later describe as a fairly clear signal. They traveled until they found Taos, New Mexico: a small town with a big sky, two health food stores, and,

²This account of the pre-2000 European organizing network is drawn from Ilse Sendler’s audio testimony “*Meine persönliche HD Story #1*,” preserved at ra.uru.hu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/hd-story-1.mp3, and corroborated in writing by Martin Grassinger’s coalition statement (see footnote 59).

³Ilse Sendler, “*Abschließende Erklärung, Klarstellung der rechtlichen Situation*,” published at ra.uru.hu/hd-background/, paragraph 1.

as Chaitanyo noted dryly, “lousy graphic designers.” The former met one of Zeno’s conditions; the latter met one of his. They stayed.

They were running an alternative monthly magazine called *Taos Time* (a pun on the local attitude toward time, its first cover a Swiss watch without hands) when their friend from Switzerland came to visit.

* * *

It was an afternoon in the summer of 1993, in the kitchen of Chaitanyo’s and Zeno’s house in Taos. Their friend from Switzerland was sitting at the table with two pieces of paper in front of him.

The papers had been hand-drawn. They were diagrams of human figures with nine geometric centers arrayed up the spine and across the head, connected by lines that looked like circuitry, with numbered points scattered around the periphery in a configuration that resembled a zodiac wheel. One was labeled with Zeno’s birth date. The other with Chaitanyo’s.

Their friend had met a teacher in Europe a few months earlier. The teacher’s name was Ra Uru Hu. The teacher had shown him a body of work he called the Human Design System and had run their charts based on their birth data. The friend had carried the charts across the Atlantic in his suitcase.

He turned them around on the kitchen table and slid them across.

Zeno looked at hers first. Chaitanyo looked at his.

Neither of them said anything for some time.

* * *

What they were looking at was unlike anything either of them had seen. It was not astrology, though there was astrology in it. It was not the I Ching, though there were

hexagrams. It was not the Kabbalah, though there were sephirot. It synthesized those traditions, and several others, into a diagram that claimed to describe (graphically, computationally, with the specificity of a circuit schematic) the energetic anatomy of an individual human being.

Their friend explained what he could. The system was new. The teacher who had transmitted it lived in Ibiza, had received the original transmission in 1987 in a mystical encounter that lasted eight days. He had been teaching it for six years, mostly in Europe. He had no presence in America.

He had asked their friend, when he saw the charts, what kind of people these were.

* * *

Their friend went back to Switzerland and told Ra about them. Ra wrote.

The first letter from Ra was an introduction. The second was a request. Could he come visit?

Zeno and Chaitanyo wrote back. They paid for his ticket.

He arrived in Albuquerque on the first of November, 1993.