

In Tibet, AS ELSEWHERE, Open Dialogue is Critical in “Educating the Heart”

The text below originally appeared as an Op-Ed piece in the April 9, 2008 on-line edition of the *Globe and Mail*.

There are times when it is appropriate to turn the other cheek in the pursuit of peace, but it is never a good option to turn a blind eye - to stand mute in the face of injustice or ignore an act of aggression against the innocent. And so we, the trustees of the Dalai Lama Centre for Peace and Education, feel compelled to speak up about what is happening in Tibet.

We have hesitated to do so precisely because some people will find it predictable. Some may even accuse us of being part of what certain Chinese politicians are cynically deriding as the “Dalai clique.” But it would be wrong to assume that we care about Tibet only because of the Dalai Lama’s link to that region. In establishing the Vancouver-based DLC, we have been careful to create an organization that is apolitical and secular.

The intent is not to laud one political position over another. It is to honour the Dalai Lama’s universal teachings - in particular, his insistence on nonviolence. We are speaking out against the use of force and urging the parties to this and other conflicts to choose dialogue as the first step toward resolution.

Our objection to what’s happening in Tibet is no different than our dismay at events in Darfur, Afghanistan or Iraq - in each case, we have lost the peace. We have lost the values that are most fundamental to the Dalai Lama’s teaching: kindness, compassion, patience, tolerance, nonviolence, dialogue, mutual understanding.

We established the DLC because we were inspired by those values and by the example set by the man himself. Regardless of how others might characterize his actions, he has been unfailingly patient and perfectly consistent. He has offered dialogue and urged peace.

That, in this new century, is a commodity that still evades our grasp. The world is well-armed for war, but poorly prepared for peace. There are war col-

The realization that we are all basically the same human beings who seek happiness and try to avoid suffering is very helpful in developing a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood; a warm feeling of love and compassion for others. - Dalai Lama

leges in virtually every major capital - centres for tactics and strategy, think tanks dedicated to pressing an advantage. But there are too few institutions dedicated to studying and resolving human conflict.

The DLC is dedicated to righting that balance in a unique way, concentrating on what the Dalai Lama calls “educating the heart.” He teaches that if you hope to be a force for peace, you must begin by searching for peace in your own heart. It is from that peace that we later find kindness, compassion, patience, even forgiveness.

The current conflict in Tibet presents a challenge and an opportunity, a chance to reward those who have chosen non-violence and to engage those who are still inclined to fight.

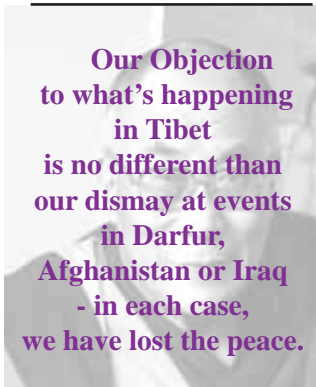
The first step must be dialogue, open and unconditional, and the chance for this may never have been better. After recent talks between British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, it appears that the groundwork has been laid. Now would be an opportune time for other world leaders to join Mr. Brown in urging this peaceful course - a moment for U.S. President George

W. Bush, French President Nicholas Sarkozy and Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper to press strongly for dialogue and for peace.

It is a testament to the Dalai Lama’s lifelong teachings that much of the world is united behind his quest for peace and his hope for his people. Against overwhelming physical superiority, it is only the force of world opinion that offers a chance for peaceful resolution.

This is no time for brinksmanship. It is seldom the right moment for punishments or threats. It is, rather, a time to say to those perpetuating this conflict that dialogue is the answer. It is also time to make it clear that we are watching - that we may forgive, but we will not look away.

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