

MEET HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA
The exiled leader of the Tibetan People

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NOBEL ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

In 1991 in New York City you heard the gentle voice of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. He inspired you to go to India to meet his people, the Tibetans, in exile. They were so very poor, yet at the same time so generous that you again listened to your inner voice urging you to start the Tibetan Relief Project to help them preserve their culture and to distribute funding for food, clothing, education and medical needs. Congratulations, you have been very successful.

You also photographed their weary faces etched in sorrow and, in your words, "bent over with the weight of tears yet full of joy given the least little opportunity." You love them and they love you.

Blessings,
Eve Nussbaum Soumerai

PREFACE

AN OPEN LETTER TO PROFESSOR NAOGAN MA
Principal Lecturer in Chinese at Trinity College
Hartford, Connecticut,
who inspired me to write this tribute

Dear Naogan,

I had never met you! But then you called me on a wintry night and asked "Is it all right to call you? I happened to read the script of A Tribute to Mark Twain & Frederick Douglass - in joint appearance and loved it, particularly the scene Good People Come in All Colors."

That was a year ago and since then you added a First Year Seminar course Experiences and Expectations in order to give Freshmen credit for mentoring tributes in the Trinity Boys & Girls Club. On November 11, the mentors and their charges performed a bilingual Tribute to Roberto Clemente. They also sang and danced while their student mentors declared in the Trinity Tripod how important it was for the kids not only learn to about ethics but to experience them ..."

Now we are readying this TRIBUTE TO H.H.THE XIV DALAI LAMA to co-incide with the visit of Tibetan nuns invited by Trinity's Theater Department. The Boys & Girls Club Dancers will start their dancing with a meditative yoga overture and we will also feature an accompanying visual rendition of the process.

I grew up in Nazi Germany and lost my entire family and you had to play a significant role parenting your siblings during the Chinese Cultural Revolution in Mongolia. This is my 28th tribute and you were right, I had never honored an Asian. It's difficult to convey how much it meant to me to "meet" you and as a result research H.H. the Dalai Lama whose religion, summed up in two words, is compassion and kindness, something I have been searching for all my life.

I would like to end with one of his many quotes:

"You can develop the right attitude toward others on the basis of kindness... Then with a pure heart you can carry on any work -farming, engineering working as a doctor, as a lawyer, as a teacher... and truly help the human community."

Could we ask for more in an educationl setting?

Thank you,
Eve Nussbaum Soumerai, 12/5/2004.

INTRODUCTION -about Tibet

Tibet, surrounded by towering snowcapped peaks of the tallest mountains on earth, has often been called Land of Snow. Situated between China and India, Tibet was an independent state for almost two thousand years. However, in 1949, communist China invaded and began to systematically destroy Tibet's culture as well as to imprison, torture and starve more than a million of Tibet's citizens.

Tibet's spiritual and political leader, the Dalai Lama, was forced to flee ten years later and to seek asylum in neighboring India. Since 1949, China has been destroying not only Tibet's culture and religion but also Tibet's environment, wildlife, forests, crops and water resources. As Tibet is the source of all the major rivers in Asia, even China has suffered losses from the damage done to Tibet's rivers.

Half a million Chinese troops, secret radar stations and missile bases are a few of the military measures which now spoil Tibet's landscape. China also conveniently dumps its own nuclear and toxic wastes in Tibet as well as the waste of other countries for which China receives huge sums of money -how convenient.

Over 120,000 Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama to India. The Tibetan government in exile was set up headed by the His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, who is assisted by a democratically elected assembly. All hope to return, one day, to their native Tibet. Much international support rallies in support.

SCENE #1 WHAT'S A BUDDHIST?

(His Holiness the Dalai Lama (HHDL), voices 1-4, Chorus)

Voice #1: You, the Dalai Lama, are always smiling.

Chorus: Explain.

HHDL: I smile and am rewarded by a return smile and am animated.

Voice #2: What's animated mean?

HHDL:: Feeling energy and gaining understanding. Happiness follows.

Chorus: What's a Buddhist?

HHDL: Buddhists follow the teachings, called Dharma, of the Buddha. But whether you are Christian, Jewish, Muslim or Hindu, it does not matter. We do not acknowledge differences. We are all part of the human family.

Chorus: We all eat, dream and want to be happy, right?

HHDL: And search for happiness.

Chorus: How do Buddhists search for happiness?

HHDL: The Buddha teaches us to practice truth, compassion, caring.

Voice #1: What's compassion?

HHDL: Feeling for and with others.

Chorus: That's compassion?

HHDL: Take eating an apple. Somebody planted a seed, grew the tree, watered the tree, picked the apple, took it to the store. A lot of people enabled you to eat the apple. Try eating apples together. In between the bites, you'll smile and feel for and with the other apple eaters.

Voice #2: Do Buddhists have their own private God?

HHDL: No deity. Meet the Buddha who was very much a fellow human being.

Chorus: You're sure.

HHDL: I am sure. Meet the Buddha. His name was Siddhartha Gautama. He lived 2,500 years ago and was the son of a wealthy Indian nobleman. He was bored and restless.

SCENE #2: THE MAKING OF THE BUDDHA

(HHDL, Siddartha/Buddha, Father, Yashadora (wife of Siddartha) Charioteer, Chorus)

HHDL: You have heard of wise men, soothsayers, prophets, haven't you. Well, when Siddartha was born, one of those wise men, told his rich father that his son would become a great ruler or a holy man.

Siddartha: That's me, Siddartha. I live in a palace filled with gold. (yawns) What's the point of living?

Father: I want my son to rule after me, take care of my gold and jewels. (laughs) Maybe even add to them, but no way is my son going to leave and discover another world.

Chorus: No way said the soothsayer!

Father: I insisted Siddartha marry his beautiful cousin, the princess Yashodora.

Yashadora: We have a beautiful son Rahula. (yawns) but we can never leave the palace.

Chorus: A golden prison.

Siddartha: One day I sneaked away in the chariot to find out about life outside the palace walls and I saw life that I had never seen or imagined: a very old man unable to move; another one crying out in great pain; then, would you believe, I actually saw a dead body lying in a ditch. I could not believe my eyes, so I asked the charioteer driver to explain.

Charioteer: My Prince, old age, sickness and death come to everybody. It's called suffering. But look there's a holy man dressed in simple robes. He is smiling. He is happy.

Siddartha: And at that moment I decided that I wanted to search for an answer to unhappiness and become enlightened. Maybe there was a way. If, en route, I had to suffer, so be it.

Chorus: Your Holiness, explain enlightenment.

HHDL: Imagine waking from a dream and seeing the truth behind everything.

Chorus: What happened next?

HHDL: One dark night Siddartha kissed his sleeping wife and son goodbye to become a monk in the forest for six long years. He stopped eating & looked like a skeleton.

Chorus: Look like a skeleton?

HHDL: And then one day when he happened to be resting under the big, beautiful branches of a Bhodi tree, he made a vow.

Siddhartha: "Even if my body dries up and my skin, bones and flesh fall away, I shall not move until I have reached enlightenment." He closed his eyes and started to search for that enlightened peace within.

HHDL: He entered into deep meditation. Negative forces in the forest: thunder, lightening, fire, flood and darkness tried to stop him. Siddhartha persevered. And then, one morning as the last star was fading, he suddenly understood.

SIDDARTHA: I became enlightened, the Buddha understood that life is suffering. For the next 45 years I traveled around India with a band of followers, teaching and talking to people.

Chorus: What did Buddha teach?

Buddha: The truth is that there is a cycle in everyone's life of everyone, death and the rebirth . Karma is the result of deeds, good or bad, in this life and/or past lives. Good deeds bring people closer to nirvana, pure bliss and inner peace.

Chorus: How do you, avoid suffering and attain nirvana?

Buddha: By following the Eightfold Path.

CHORUS: Repeat each one after me:

1. Do good deeds
2. Be loving and unselfish
3. Do not lie
4. Be thoughtful of others
5. Earn an honest living
6. Think good thoughts
7. Keep the idea of heaven in your heart
8. Focus on peace

Chorus: And animals began to dance, birds began to sing
and all the flowers bloomed.

SCENE #3 THE VERY YOUNG DALAI LAMA

(Voices 1-3, HHDL, Mother, Father,

Voice #1: Were you ever a baby?

HHDL: A baby? Of course! My mother loves to tell that story. In fact she wrote a book called "H.H. The 14th Dalai Lama, My Son."

Mother: My son, Lhama Dhondrup, the 14th Dalai Lama to-be, was born on July 6, 1935 just before sunrise.

Father: What was amazing was that I had been very ill and that morning, just before sunrise, my illness disappeared.

Mother: The 13th Dalai Lama had died two months earlier and there was a search for the reincarnated 14th.

Chorus: Good things were happening, the rains came and prosperity returned.

Mother: My son was very different from the other children.

Voice #2: He was a somber child, yet playful.

Voice #3: Liked to stay by himself

Father: He could hardly talk but one day he said loud and clear: I came from heaven.

HHDL: Then when I was two years old, the search party for 14th Dalai Lama came to our house for the first time.

Chorus: During the next three years they returned three times?

HHDL: The third time, I was five by then, one of the searchers tapped me lightly with a staff, a rod. "That's mine," I cried. "Ah," they said and showed me a number of other objects, some of which had belonged to the last Dalai Lama.

Chorus: And you identified every single one.

HHDL: "That's mine, I said." I knew this was it. A great honor was being bestowed on me but it was difficult to leave home and be raised in a monastery at such a young age.

Chorus: You longed for your family.

HHDL: They would visit. My older brother stayed with me but I so missed the simple things such as collecting eggs in the hen house and watching my mother cook.

Chorus: You believe harvesting food, sharing food is basic to all relationships.

HHDL: My mother cooked thukpa pulled noodles. She would mash potatoes with eggs and flour and make bands of dough which we would pull and pull and laugh. Yes, I missed that.

Chorus: And she would feed any- and everyone.

HHDL: That's right, including strangers. When she died, I was not sad because she led such a very good life, that I am sure she is with us again after a good rebirth giving comfort to everybody.

SCENE #4 LEARNING ABOUT LIFE

(Voices 1-4, HHDL, Chorus)

Voice #1: What was it like growing up in the monastery?

HHDL: You had to get used to the daily routine.

Wake-up time 6 a.m. followed by prayers and meditation.

Then at 10 a.m. there was breakfast consisting of tea, honey, toast followed by a little stroll for exercise.

Voice #2: Then what?

HHDL: Then came reading and writing the texts.

Voice #3: No stories?

HHDL: Also stories. I will tell you my favorite later.

Chorus: What about playing? You were very young.

HHDL: We had a long lunch and that was play time. Some foreign dignitaries brought me toys. My favorite ones were leggos. I made trains and cranes and pushed them around.

Voice #4: What did you like best about learning?

HHDL: When I got a little older, I started to love debating the real, often hidden, meaning of the texts I had learned by heart. One of the older monks became my partner. With every point I made, I would slap my right hand with prayer beads wrapped around my wrist and my partner would tap his foot on the floor with his counterpoint.

Chorus: Sounds like fun and noisy.

HHDL: That it was. What I liked best you'll never guess.

Chorus: What?

HHDL: Sliding on the polished floors and yelling Yuppee, in Tibetan, of course.

Voice #1: What about dinner?

HHDL: At 6:30, followed by a walk. I had a telescope and looked at the snowy mountain peaks and the stars.

Chorus: What about bed time?

HHDL: After more prayers, I would snuggle into my bed, a large wooden box filled with cushions, and listen to the mice scamper all around.

Chorus: Mice? You must be joking.

HHDL: No, mice were all around. They also loved the warmth of the cushions. They were my friends. I really liked them.

Chorus: You do like all living things.

HHDL: Also the stars and snowy mountain peaks and even my enemies.

Chorus: Your enemies?

HHDL: Yes, from them you learn the importance of tolerance and most important to practice kindness every day.

Chorus: Practice kindness every day.

SCENE #5 THE CHINESE INVADE TIBET

(Voices 1-4, HHDL, Chorus)

Voice #1: You were 15 years old when the Chinese invaded?

Voice #2: And in the midst of all this turmoil you were officially annointed the 14th Dalai Lama and handed the Golden Wheel -the symbol of temporal, means nothing lasts, power.

Chorus: And you became the undisputed leader of six million people facing full scale war.

Voice #3: What was it like, did the invaders treat you well?

HHDL: Well at first they did. I tried to be helpful, thinking it would slow down their "peaceful liberation".

But when 80,000 soldiers crossed the border, we all knew the axe had fallen.

Voice #4: And then they said religion was poison.

Voice #1: And destroyed the monasteries.

Chorus: They called it the Cultural Revolution?

Did you have an army to defend yourself?

HHDL: We had an army without modern weapons and almost no training.

Chorus: No training, why not?

HHDL: This may sound strange but, basically, we, Tibetans, love peace and to be a soldier is considered the lowest form of life, like being a butcher. Buddha forbids killing except under very unusual circumstances so obviously we were no match.

Voice #2: Some of the invaders died of altitude sickness combined with the lack of the right foods, you say.

Chorus: In Eastern Tibet there was resistance.

HHDL: Then I heard on my little battery operated radio from Radio Peking that we, Tibetans, who lived in enslavement would be incorporated into the Chinese motherland

Voice #3: And experience those joys of the Cultural Revolution.

Chorus: And those joys were rape, murder and destruction of Tibetan culture.

HHDL: I tried talking to their leaders Zou Enlai & Mao.

Chorus: They made promises which were full of lies and deceit.

VOICE #4: The day came, you were twenty-one years old and had to flee to India to help save Tibet.

HHDL: All our preparations were made in secret. I was disguised and wept when I said goodbye. I mounted a yak to ride into freedom.

SCENE: #6: ARRIVAL IN INDIA

(Voices 1-2, HHDL, Maurice, Uma, Pala, correspondent, Chorus).

Voice #1: Around 4 pm. on March 31, 1959, you dismounted the yak on the Indian side of the border and were given a khata.

Voice #2: The traditional white scarf.

Chorus: The symbol of respect and welcome.

HHDL: Which, once again, gave rise to my hope and belief in universal responsibility.

Chorus: What do you mean by that?

HHDL: That, ultimately, we all are brothers and sisters and that we must help one another. Help, almost immediately, came from one, Maurice Friedman, a Jew from Poland, and his friend Uma Devi, an artist. Pala (Papa in Tibetan), a member of the Swiss Red Cross among many others, also volunteered. Listen to their conversation.

Maurice: My friend, the painter Uma welcomed His Holiness the Dalai Lama and his party. In spite of my advanced years, I was more than willing to help.

Uma: You could hardly walk but those piercing blue eyes of yours, Maurice, noticed and felt The Dalai Lama's spirituality.

Maurice: What amazed me was the way he turned anger into love. Why, that very first time we met, he talked about Chairman Mao.

Uma: And explained how Mao was full of promises and at the same time also full of deceit.

HHDL: Mao becomes our mentor. His deceit guides us toward tolerance, honesty and kindness.

Maurice: We understood and agreed to help for the sake of all our children who need a future free of hate and violence. Uma and I were happy to contribute toward that goal and worked together on the design and building of a home for the Tibetan refugee children.

Pala: And I, as representative of the Red Cross, was able to find shelter for the first wave of refugees.

HHDL: Universal responsibility is brought about by example. One person suggests and others follow.

All become close friends.

Chorus: Your smile, your outstretched hand provided the energy.

Correspondent: I am A.M. Rosenthal, a correspondent from the New York Times and am covering your arrival. I fully expected a holy man enunciating religious principals, but, instead, was overwhelmed by your gentleness and obvious kindness.

Chorus: So is everyone who meets you.

Scene #7: EXILE
(Dalai, Voices 1-4)

HHDL: Here, in our new home, Dharamsala, India, we practice kindness and carry on the traditions of our beloved Tibet.

Voice #1: You now have a library of forty thousand original Tibetan works and archives including 200 in English.

Voice #2: A few years after your arrival, an entire village of a thousand children was in operation.

HHDL: And don't forget our garden in which we planted many varieties of fruit trees and flowers. I happen to love gardening. Many birds and animals visit.

Chorus: Birds and animals, really.

HHDL: Yes, a little cuckoo fell out of his nest early in the morning the other day. I rushed out before my meditation and prayers to nurse him.

Voice #3: And in the afternoon you addressed 1000 people.

Voice #4: You also travel and preach around the world. Didn't you receive the Nobel Peace Prize on December 10, 1989 in Oslo?

HHDL: True. I accepted the prize for all those oppressed around the world. Speak "my" words at the ceremony with me.

HHDL & Chorus (alternate lines)

I accept the price,
With profound gratitude
For oppressed people
Everywhere
And for all those who
Struggle for freedom
And for world peace.

Voice #1: Some suggest that the Fourteenth Dalai Lama will be the last one?

HHDL: It's quite possible that I will be the last. There are always changes. Remember, we Buddhists, believe everything is impermanent -does not last. It's a question of the usefulness of the institution.

Voice #2: But aren't you still very important?

HHDL: I believe I am to Tibet. But I am simply one individual.

Voice #3: Maybe you will be reborn as another Dalai Lama.

HHDL: (with big smile) As long as there is suffering in the world I shall return. Whether or not I return as the Dalai Lama is unimportant.

Voice #4: Do you have a favorite short prayer you would like to share with us.

HHDL: Yes. I will say the first line and, together we will say the next line:

For as long as space endures
And for as long as living beings remain,
Until then, may I, too, abide
To help dispel the misery of the world.

Voice #1: You promised us your favorite story.

HHDL: That's right. You are such good helpers.
So help me tell the story and parable of The Blind Men and the Elephant. Each of you (points to voices) say one sentence.

Voices 1-4: (take turns)

Seven blind men were presented with an elephant.

Each man felt a different part of an elephant's body

One felt the head, another the trunk.

And the others felt an ear, a tusk, a foot, the back and the tail.

What's an elephant, they were asked.

The one feeling the head said: IT IS JUST LIKE A POT

The one feeling the ear disagreed: NO, IT'S NOT. IT'S A BASKET

The one at the tusk said: YOU ARE WRONG! I AM SURE IT IS A PLOWSHARE

The one at the trunk said: NO, I SAY A PLOW

The one who knew only the foot said: YOU'RE WRONG A PILLAR.

The man on the back: (yells) A BARREL

And the man at the tail: I SAY A BROOM

ALL: What can we learn from that:

Chorus: THOSE WHO DISAGREE ABOUT THE NATURE OF LIFE & DEATH ARE LIKE THESE BLIND MEN : EACH KNOWING ONLY A SMALL PART OF THE TRUTH AND NOT THE WHOLE.

Suggested Activities

1. Introduction: Take turns reading the text. Have the "boys & girls" study the map of Tibet and locate India and China. Explore the content discuss the possible reasons for China invading Tibet.

Why does one nation invade another and cause untold misery?

2. Scene #1: Allocate parts: What's a Buddhist?

Discuss: a) the importance of being happy
b) give an example of compassion
c) why is being together so important

3. Scene #2: In addition to the read-through.

Explore:

Who was the Buddha and what did he teach?

4. Scene #3: After reading The Very Young Dalai Lama,

Have children write on the board their own few words describing what they have in common with the young Dalai Lama.

5. Scene #4: In Learning about Life, Explore the Dalai Lama's daily activities. Would you have enjoyed any of them?

6. Scene #5: The Chinese Invade Tibet.

Name three things that happened as a result.

7. Scene #6: Arrival in India. Was there anything good about it? Discuss the meaning of universal responsibility.

Is it important. Why?

8. Scene #7; Exile. Explain what being "in exile" means.

Make your own drawing of the elephant and the "blind men." What is a parable? What is the point of the story? Explain.

Student Mentors: It is well known that we all learn in "layers." Something of interest will lead to a question and more learning. Therefore it is important that just like H.H. the Dalai Lama, you, the mentors, also, smile a lot and applaud the children's efforts.

Get poster board and magic markers and have everyone draw one thing they learned and give a follow-up question, then decorate the results in community. Six working on one poster board works well.

Also, as you read through the scenes, give every participant a pencil to underline each word he/she cannot understand, then explain and discuss it.

Be creative. Use drums, instruments, choreograph a dance.

SOURCES

FREEDOM IN EXILE, The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama

DALAI LAMA, A Mother's Story, by Diki Tsering

THE ART OF HAPPINESS, A Handbook for Living
by the Dalai Lama and Howard C. Cutler, M.D.

THE LAST DALAI LAMA, A Biography, by Michael Harris Goodman

BUDDHA, By Demi, a book for children

OCEAN OF WISDOM, By the Dalai Lama &
Foreword by Richard Gere

THE WORLD OF THE DALAI LAMA, An Inside Look at his Life
His People and His Vision

THE CONCEPT & ORIGIN

TRIBUTE CELEBRATIONS, read-through plays, interspersed with songs, dance and art activities honor inspirational individuals. They provide a most effective way to learn by adding depth to young students' knowledge of geography and history, through together with mentors, walking the walk of the Nelson Mandelas of this world. Questions for discussion and reflection focusing on courage, resilience and dignity enable participants to begin to relate these qualities to their own lives.

STUDENT MENTORS add their creative energy to the process. They help young students read, think, sing, draw and relate the events to their lives.

PROCESS: 1. Start each celebration with ice breaking activities .
2. Divide student mentors, boys and girls into small groups and assign parts of each scene. At the end of thirty minutes each group presents their scene as well as reaction to some of the questions. All participate in the chorus.
3. Each student choses a quote which he/she decorates on a community poster, one per group, and presents it, with reasons of his/her choice) to the entire group.
4. Mentors add appropriate singing and/or dancing.
5. Finally the celebration is ready to be performed.

HISTORY: Many years ago there was a lonely, frightened refugee child, Eve Nussbaum Soumerai, who lost her entire family in the Holocaust. She kept looking at the moon and the stars in the night sky for comfort because they reminded her of the last family picnic spent under the stars because it was dangerous to go out during the day.