

**ROBERT F.
KENNEDY
HUMAN
RIGHTS**

SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER

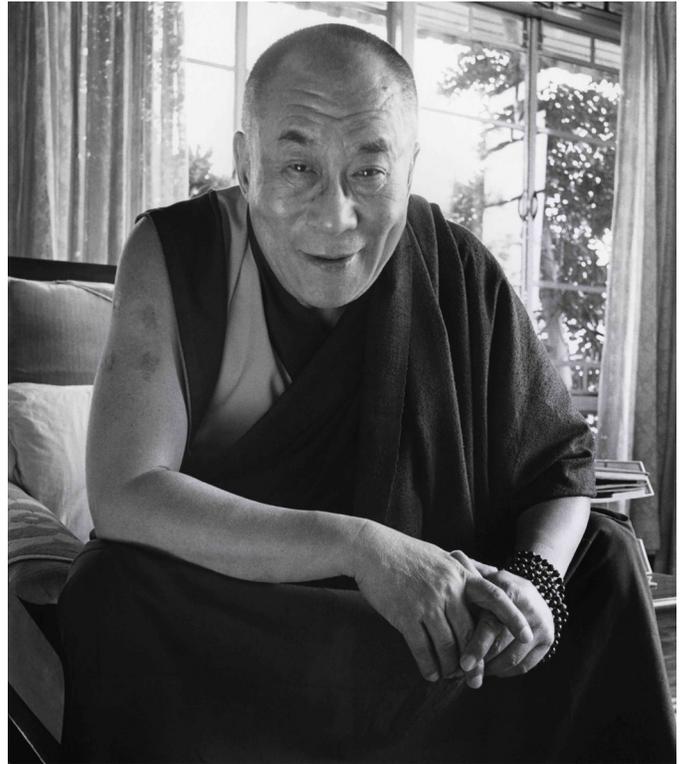
**HUMAN RIGHTS
DEFENDERS WHO
ARE CHANGING
OUR WORLD**

**THE DALAI LAMA: CHINA, TIBET, AND A MESSAGE
OF NON-VIOLENCE**

THE DALAI LAMA

(HE/HIM/HIS)

“UNLESS THE WORLD COMMUNITY TACKLES THE TIBETAN ISSUE, THE HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS WILL CONTINUE.”



The 14th Dalai Lama was born in 1935 in Tibet and, at the age of 2, was recognized as the reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lama. At 6, he began his education as a monk, and when he was 23, he was awarded the equivalent of the highest doctorate in Buddhist philosophy.

In 1950, when China invaded Tibet and claimed the land as its own, the Dalai Lama was called upon to assume power as Tibet’s political leader. In 1954, he went to Beijing and met with Chinese leaders to advocate for his homeland and his people. These efforts were unsuccessful, and he was forced into exile in Dharamsala, India. Tens of thousands of Tibetans followed him as he established his government-in- exile in 1960. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, he traveled internationally to build awareness of the plight of Tibet and push for establishing it as an autonomous region of China. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989.

In 2011, the Dalai Lama stepped down as head of the Tibetan government-in-exile, though he remains highly respected for his commitment to unity and nonviolence and his efforts to gain freedom for Tibet.

INTERVIEW WITH THE DALAI LAMA

INTERVIEW FROM KERRY KENNEDY'S BOOK *SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER*, 2000.

ON COMPASSION

When I visited the Nazi death camps of Auschwitz, I found myself completely unprepared for the deep revulsion I experienced at the sight of the ovens where hundreds of thousands of human beings were burned. The sheer calculation and detachment to which they bore horrifying witness overcame me. This is what happens, I thought, when societies lose touch with feeling. And while it is necessary to have legislation and international conventions in place to prevent such disasters, these atrocities happen in spite of them. What of Stalin and his pogroms? What of Pol Pot, architect of the Killing Fields? And what of Mao, a man I knew and once admired, and the barbarous insanity of the Cultural Revolution? All three had a vision, a goal, with some social agenda, but nothing could justify the human suffering engendered. So, you see, it all starts with the individual, with asking what the consequences are of your actions. An ethical act is a nonharming act. And if we could enhance our sensitivity to others' suffering, the less we would tolerate seeing others' pain, and the more we would do to ensure that no action of ours ever causes harm. In Tibetan we call this *nyingje*, translated generally as compassion.

ON SUFFERING

All human beings desire happiness, and genuine happiness is characterized by peace. A sentient being experiences suffering as well. It is that experience that connects us to others and is the basis of our capacity for empathy. Many in Tibet have experienced the suffering of having what we want taken away from us. As refugees, we have lost our country and have been forcibly separated from our loved ones. When I hear bad news from Tibet my natural reaction is one of great sadness. By the late 1970s and early 1980s there was an influx of large numbers of Tibetans who came to see me in India and spoke about how their fathers or their parents or their brothers or sisters were killed and how they themselves had been tortured or suffered. I often wept. Now, after hearing so many cases, my eyes

have become dry. It's like the soldier who is scared when he hears the first shot, but after many shots becomes familiar with the sound.

And when the Chinese lost their temper with me, and they took it out on the Panchen Lama, that was very sad, and I accept some responsibility for what happened. Yet, what could I do? When these things occur, there is no point in being discouraged and sad. Feelings of helpless anger do nothing but poison the mind, embitter the heart, and enfeeble the will. I take comfort in the words of the ancient Indian master Shantideva's advice, "If there is a way to overcome the suffering, then there is no need to worry. If there is no way to overcome the suffering, then there is no use in worrying." We must place this in context and remind ourselves that the basic human disposition toward freedom, truth, and justice will eventually prevail. It is also worth remembering that the time of greatest difficulty is the time of greatest gain in wisdom and strength. A great Tibetan scholar who spent more than 20 years in prison enduring terrible treatment, including torture, wrote letters during his confinement and smuggled them out—and they were acclaimed by many as containing the most profound teachings on love and compassion ever heard.

ON ETHICS AND ENVIRONMENT

It is no exaggeration to say that the Tibet I grew up in was a wildlife paradise. Animals were rarely hunted. Immense herds of *kyang* (wild asses) and *drong* (wild yak) roamed the plains along with shimmering *gowa* (gazelles), *wa* (fox), and *tsoe* (antelope). The noble eagles soared high over the monasteries and at night the call of the *wookpa* (long-eared owl) could be heard. Now, because of loss of habitat and hunting, the wildlife of my country is gone. In addition, Tibet's forests have been clear-cut by the Chinese, and Beijing admits that this is at least partly to blame for the catastrophic flooding in western China. Sensitivity to the environment must be part of realizing the universal dimensions of our actions, and restraint in this, as in all, is important.

ON NONVIOLENCE

Chairman Mao once said political power comes from the barrel of a gun. But I believe that while violence may achieve short-term objectives, it cannot obtain long-lasting ends. I am a firm believer that violence begets violence. Some may say that my devotion to nonviolence is praiseworthy, but not really practical. I am convinced people say that because engaging in it seems daunting and it is easy to become discouraged. But where once one only spoke of peace in one's land, now world peace is at stake—the fact of human interdependence is so explicit now. And we must recognize that nonviolence was the principal characteristic of the political revolutions that swept the world during the 1980s. I have advanced the idea that Tibet, among other places, become a Zone of Peace, where countries like India and China, which have been at war for a long time, would benefit enormously from the establishment of a demilitarized area, saving a considerable portion of their income, which is presently wasted in maintaining border troops.

On a personal level, violence can undermine greater motivations. For example, I feel that hunger strikes as a vehicle of protest are problematic. The first time I visited the Tibetan hunger strikers (on April 2, 1988, in New Delhi), they had been without food for two weeks, so their physical condition was not yet too bad. Right from the beginning they asked me not to stop them. Since they undertook the hunger strike for the Tibetan issue, which is also my responsibility, in order to stop them I had to show them an alternative. But sadly, there was no alternative. At last, Indian police intervened and took the strikers to the hospital, and I was immensely relieved. Yet the strikers acted with courage and determination, which is remarkable, and fortunately they did not have to die, not because they changed their minds, but because they were forced to live by the Indian government. The strikers did not consider self-sacrifice to be a form of violence, but I did. Although they realized that our cause was a just one, they should not have felt that death at the hands of the perceived enemy was a reasonable consequence for their actions. This is a distinction, and an important one.

ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights violations are symptoms of the larger issue of Tibet, and unless the world community tackles the Tibet issue, the human rights violations will continue. Meanwhile, the Tibetans suffer, the Chinese are embarrassed, and general resentment increases. The Chinese authorities are concerned about unity and stability, but their method of dealing with Tibet creates instability and disunity. It's a contradiction and does not work.

ON THE VALUE OF LIFE

I realize that being the Dalai Lama serves a purpose. If one's life becomes useful and beneficial for others, then its purpose is fulfilled. I have an immense responsibility and an impossible task. But as long as I carry on with sincere motivation, I become almost immune to these immense difficulties. Whatever I can do, I do, even if it is beyond my ability. Of course, I feel I would be more useful being outside government administration. Younger, trained people should do this, while my remaining time and energy should concentrate on the promotion of human value. Ultimately, that is the most important thing. When human value is not respected by those who administer governments or work on economic endeavors, then all sorts of problems, like crime and corruption, increase. The Communist ideology completely fails to promote human value, and corruption is consequently great. The Buddhist culture can help to increase self discipline, and that will automatically reduce corruption. As soon as we can return to Tibet with a certain degree of freedom, I will hand over all my temporal authority. Then, for the rest of my life, I will focus on the promotion of human values and the promotion of harmony among the different religious traditions. I will continue teaching Buddhism to the Buddhist world.

ON GOALS AND IMPERMANENCE

There are no inherent contradictions between being a political leader and a moral leader, as long as you carry on political activities or goals with sincere motivation and proper goals. Proper goals means not working for your own name, or for your own fame, or for your own power, but for the benefit of others.

Within another 50 years I, Tenzin Gyatso, will be no more than a memory. Time passes unhindered. The Chinese authorities and the Tibetan people very much want me to continue my work, but I am now over 64 years old. That means, in another 10 years I will be 74, in another 20 years I will be 84. So, there is little time left for active work. My physicians say that my life span, as revealed by my pulse, is 103 years. In this time, until my last day, I want to, for the benefit of all, maintain close relationships with those who became Tibet's friends during our darkest period. They did it not for money, certainly not for power (because by being our friends they may have had more inconvenience dealing with China),

but out of human feeling, out of human concern. I consider these friendships very precious. Here is a short prayer that gave me great inspiration in my quest to benefit others:

*May I become at all times both now and forever
A protector for those without protection
A guide for those who have lost their way
A ship for those with oceans to cross
A bridge for those with rivers to cross
A sanctuary for those in danger
A lamp for those without light
A place of rugs for those who lack shelter
And a servant to all in need.*

CHINA, TIBET, AND A MESSAGE OF NON-VIOLENCE

LESSON GRADE LEVELS 9 TO 12

FREE EXPRESSION, RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

- **ARTICLE 18:** Freedom of belief and religion.

TIME REQUIREMENT

Minimum 40 minutes, maximum 120 minutes

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- What happens when you are not able to practice your religion?

OBJECTIVES

By the end of the lesson, students will:

- Understand the conflict between China and Tibet.
- Understand the concept of free expression/religious freedom and Article 18 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- Explain the Dalai Lama's message of nonviolence and explore their own beliefs on nonviolence as a solution to conflict.

COMMON CORE LEARNING STANDARDS

- CCSS.ELA- LITERACY.RH.9-10.1
- CCSS.ELA- LITERACY.RH.9-10.5
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.9-10.9
- CCSS.ELA- LITERACY.RH.11-12.1
- CCSS.ELA- LITERACY.RH.11-12.7
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.7
- CCSS.ELA- LITERACY.WHST.11-12.9

VOCABULARY

- Religious freedom
- Tibet
- China
- Nonviolence
- Buddhism
- Compassion
- Intolerance

TECHNOLOGY REQUIRED

- Internet access and computers for student research.
- Interactive whiteboard if available (for presentations and viewing video) or LCD projector, computer, and screen.

MATERIALS

- Video clip of the Dalai Lama talking about the situation in Tibet and his message of nonviolence: <https://www.nytimes.com/video/world/1194840559273/an-interview-with-the-dalai-lama.html>
- Article 18 from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights: <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights#:~:text=Article%2018,%2C%20practice%2C%20worship%20and%20observance.>

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

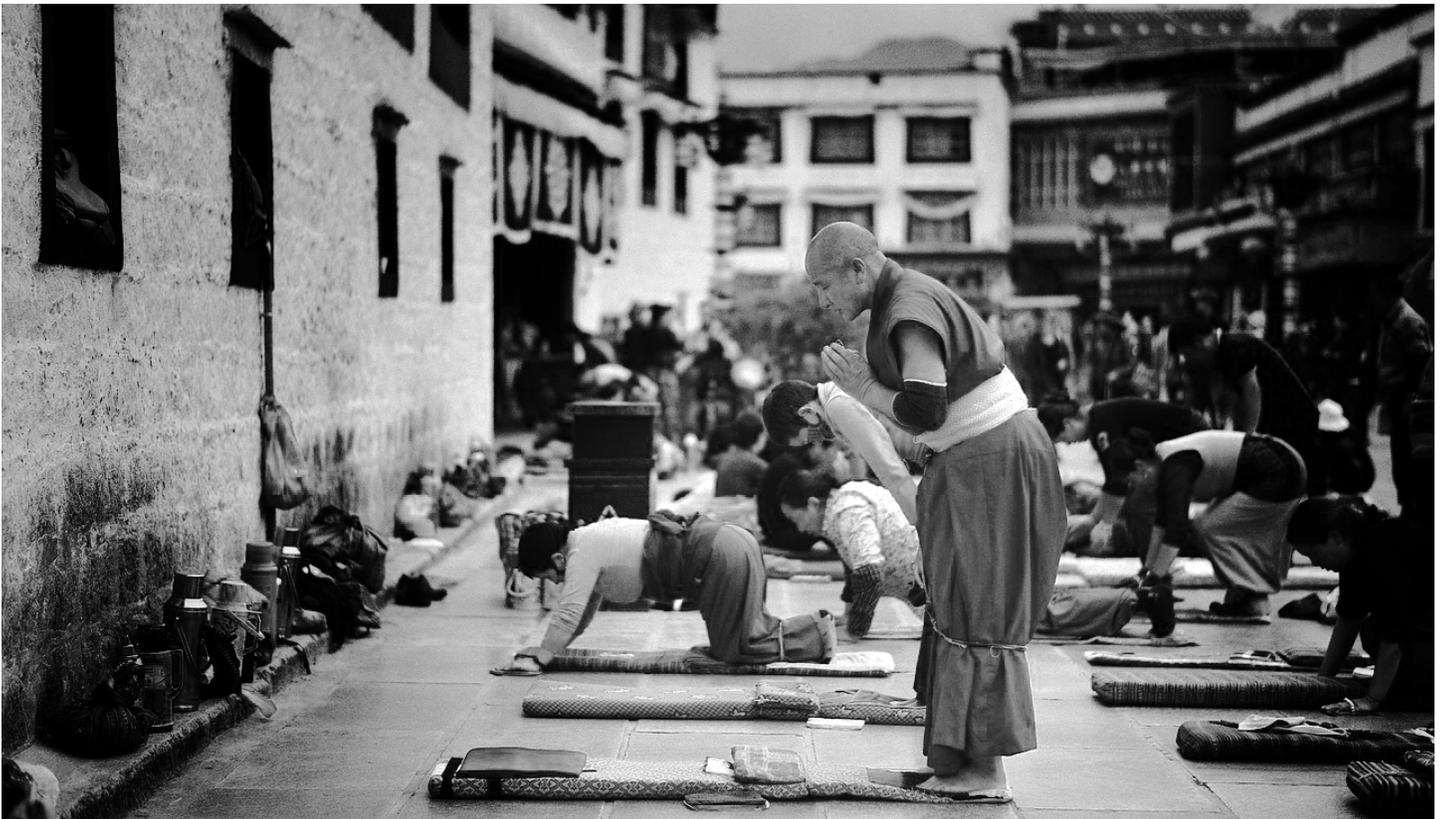
ANTICIPATORY SET

- Teacher will ask students to read the PBS online passage on religious freedom and how it relates to Tibet. Students will gain the background knowledge necessary to understand the conflict in Tibet and also create a personal response on the theme of nonviolence: http://www.pbs.org/speaktruthtopower/issue_religious.html

ACTIVITY 1

- Divide the students into small groups.
- Pass out the interview with the Dalai Lama.
- Assign students the reading on the Dalai Lama.
- Show students the video on the Dalai Lama.
- Ask students to respond to the interview and video in the form of a group presentation that addresses the following guiding questions:

- What is the main conflict between China and Tibet, and how did it begin?
- Who is the Dalai Lama?
- Explain his message on nonviolence as a response to the conflict in Tibet.
- Include supporting details from at least one source (other than the materials in class) to support your responses.
- Provide students a rubric to explain how you will evaluate the presentation.
- After they complete their research, have students prepare a presentation to convey their responses to the guiding questions in a multimedia presentation, (Power Point, video, website, etc.) or group oral presentation. Students must cite each source that they use. After each group presents, it will field questions from the class and provide a form for other students to evaluate its presentation.



BECOMING A DEFENDER

The Dalai Lama often speaks about compassion for others and using nonviolence as a way to respond to conflict. After reading about the events in Tibet and learning about other regions in conflict across the globe, do you think nonviolence can produce a positive outcome?

- On a personal level, think about times you have been tempted to resolve a personal conflict by using some sort of violence and how that conflict could have been addressed in a nonviolent manner. Also, think about how you can personally intervene in an escalating conflict between others using nonviolent techniques.
- Pay attention to news stories in which nonviolent methods have been used to resolve conflicts. The students' responses can be in a format that the student decides is best to convey his or her response. For example, it could be a poem, short essay, art project, or video that is disseminated among classmates, the school and beyond.
- On the local level, are the government, community groups, or nongovernmental organizations carrying out any efforts to resolve conflicts in your neighborhood or community? Interview people on all sides of the story; find out their thoughts about the conflict and possible repercussions if it is not resolved.
- On the national level and global level, ask yourself if your government is doing its best to help resolve violent or potentially violent conflicts around the world. Find out what independent agencies and advocacy groups are doing to help prevent or resolve conflicts. What is the media doing in your country to investigate and report areas of pending or ongoing conflict? If you believe not enough is being done in your own country, contact the government entities responsible, advocacy groups, or your government representative to find out what is being done to resolve the pending or ongoing conflict peacefully. Contact them and either help to promote their work or criticize their work by writing to a newspaper. Discuss with your classmates some of the hotspots of conflict in the world and how these conflicts could be resolved by nonviolent means.

INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

Since the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) by the United Nations (UN) in 1948, many other international documents—also called treaties, covenants, resolutions, or conventions—have been drafted to develop these rights further. Countries commit to protect the rights recognized in these treaties by ratifying them, and sometimes a specific institution is created within the UN to monitor their compliance.

Here are examples of relevant international documents:

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS (ICCPR)

- **ARTICLE 18:** Right to freedom of religion.
- **ARTICLE 24:** Protection of children without discrimination based on Religion.
- **ARTICLE 26:** Prohibition of religion-based discrimination.
- **ARTICLE 27:** Right of minority communities to practice their own religion.

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (CERD)

INTERNATIONAL COVENANT ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (ICESCR)

DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF INTOLERANCE AND OF DISCRIMINATION BASED ON RELIGION OR BELIEF (1981)

DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL OR ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES (1992)

For more information and resources, visit the website of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on religious rights: <http://www.unesco.org/most/rr1.htm>.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

DALAI LAMA WEBSITE

<http://www.dalailama.com/>

The Dalai Lama's personal site, with numerous links to his teachings, messages, and a wealth of video and audio.

CENTRAL TIBETAN ADMINISTRATION

<http://www.tibet.net/en/index.php>

The official website of the current government of Tibet. It features information about current issues in Tibet and serves as a portal for news from other sources.

INTERNATIONAL CENTER ON NONVIOLENT CONFLICT

<http://www.nonviolent-conflict.org/>

Extensive and frequently updated source for news about current and ongoing nonviolent conflict and explanations of the concept of nonviolence.

NONVIOLENCE INTERNATIONAL

<http://nonviolenceinternational.net/>

An NGO that focuses on promoting nonviolence, with a great introduction to the principles of nonviolence.

UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE

<http://www.usip.org>

A U.S. government-funded institution with excellent resources for teaching peacemakers how to address conflict areas around the world.