Dalai Lama: Keynote Speaker on Compassion
Calling for a More Compassionate World in Wake of the Olympics
By Adrienne Papp

There was nothing better to be than Aspen, CO when the Aspen Institute and the Center for Tibetan Art and Culture sponsored the Dalai Lama during a Keynote Symposium held from July 24-29. The Dalai Lama spoke about the relationship between Tibet and China, meditations effects on the brain, science and faith, the legacy of the institution of the Dalai Lama, and what Tibetan Buddhism can both offer and learn from the world in a keynote conversation as part of a symposium on Tibetan art and culture. The symposium was hosted by the Aspen Institute and co-chaired by Margaret Pettibon and Richard Brown, in collaboration with the Center for Tibetan Art and Culture.

THOUGHTS ON WORLD LEADERS
In a candid conversation with journalist and author Pico Iyer and Institute President and CEO Walter Isaacson, the Dalai Lama also commented on American society, and how the American people should look for in their next leader. "The next American President should have compassion, modesty, think of others rather than self-centered, gratitude, must have a vision, should be honest, truthful, open-minded, of course, easy to say," he joked.

The Dalai Lama also addressed China in the conversation. At present, you know, we are not seeking separation," he said. "We want more modernization [in Tibet]. So Tibet will play within people's Republic." Iyer pointed to China's best interest, providing we can retain our culture, our heritage, our religion. But heavily-handed suppression, use of force, is destroying Tibetan trust in China. People of China, in order to become a superpower, need moral authority. But with use of force, that's impossible.

The U.S. expressed in many ways its strong opposition to China human rights policy.

SCIENCE AND COMPASSION
Prior to his appearance at the Aspen Institute the Dalai Lama attended a brain science conference in Washington. Advocating the importance of merging scientific data and compassion in order to better understand the human behavior, he is preparing for us the next step into our modern world, the 21st century.

According to the Dalai Lama, compassion exists on both emotional and physical levels.

"Science now tells us that practicing compassion makes the body better and the immune system stronger," he said. "So many people spend their money on medicine and sleeping pills. People that have compassion don't need those.

Buddhist tradition is based on the belief that it is possible for a human being to come to a sense of compassion, the noblest of the noble values of the world," said Robert Thurman, Jane Tachhapo Professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies, Department of Religion at Columbia University.

A CELEBRATION OF TIBETAN CULTURE
In another keynote conversation, the Dalai Lama spoke with symposium co-chairs and Institute leaders Margaret Pettibon, whose collection of prized Tibetan artworks comprises one of the foremost collections of South Asian art. A panel featuring columnist Isabel, Senator Michael Zhao, and anthropologist Orff Schack also discussed the Tibetans' Polemikus fragile environment and the effects of climate change on it. Afterward, an appearance by the monks of the Denver Looping Looped Monastery performed a collection of ancient Tibetan dances, chants, and an ice cream offense, demonstrating the mystical arts of Tibet for an enthusiastic audience of 2,200.

The three-day program featuring His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the keynote speaker brought together an extraordinary number of eminent scholars, teachers, practitioners, and ordained Tibetan Buddhist monks and tradition-bearers from around the globe to shed light on the rich historical and philosophical significance of Tibet and its impact on global issues today, with programs on Tibetan and Hawaiian art, culture, science, medicine, spiritual practice, and history.

The Aspen Institute has a board of trustees comprised of many of the world's most influential business people and leaders, including former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Eleanor Mccarthy (publisher, Washington Magazine), former Oracle CEO EO Ruane, former New York Times managing editor, former Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and others. The Aspen Institute, which by all means is a landmark building in Aspen, many of the members of the audience made it their home for its unparalleled hospitality, which was a pleasant addition to its classic elegance, and it is the perfect place to socialize after a day of spiritual rejuvenation.

The impact of His Holiness among the listeners was long lasting and life changing. "The Dalai Lama is my spiritual leader," he said, "but he is also the spiritual leader of the world in opposition to religious leadership, which causes divisions, war, hatred and terrorism," said Dr. Eric Foley, who practices dentistry in Beverly Hills and has read all of the Dalai Lama's books. "Through him I have become a better person, and a better dentist. I became more compassionate towards my patients, my staff, friends and enemies. I also understood why you have to be so compassionate towards the people who try to hurt you, they are ignorant, and you have to forgive them and try to help them understand better."