

Dalai Lama: Keynote Speaker on Compassion

Calling for a More Compassionate World in Wake of the Olympics

By Adrienne Papp

There was no better place to be than Aspen, CO when the Aspen Institute and the Conservancy for Tibetan Art and Culture hosted His Holiness the Dalai Lama during a Keynotes Symposium held from July 24-26. 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 a part of a symposium on Tibetan art and culture. The symposium was hosted by the Aspen Institute and co-chaired by Margot Pritzker and Richard Blum, in collaboration with the Conservancy 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 what the American people should look for in their next leader. "[The next American President] should have compassion, motivation, think of others rather than self-centered, gratitude, must have a vision, should be honest, truthful, transparent, 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 stay within Peoples Republic of China. It is in our best interest, provided we can retain our culture, our heritage, our religion. But heavy-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 is impossible."

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

SCIENCE AND COMPASSION

Prior to his appearance at the Aspen Institute the Dalai Lama had attended a brain science conference in Washington. Advocating the importance of merging scientific data and metaphysics in order to better understand human behavior, he is preparing us for 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 these."

"Buddhist tradition is based on the belief that it is possible for a human being to come to a complete understanding of the nature of the world." said Robert Thurman, Jey Tsong Khapa 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-chair and Institute trustee Margot Pritzker, whose collection of prized Tibetan artworks constitutes one of the world's foremost collections of South Asian art. A panel featuring columnist Isabel Hilton, conservationist Michael Zhao, and sinologist Orville Schell also discussed the Tibetan Plateaus fragile environment and the effects of climate change on it. Afterward, an appearance by the monks of the Drepung Loseling Monastery performed a collection of ancient Tibetan dances, chants, and an incense offering, demonstrating the mystical arts of Tibet for an enthusiastic audience of 2,200.

The three-day program featuring His Holiness the Dalai Lama as 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 programming on Tibetan and Himalayan art, culture, science, medicine, spiritual practice, and history.

The Aspen Institute has a board of trustees comprised of many of the worlds most influential business people and leaders, including former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, Eleanor Merrill (publisher, Washingtonian magazine), Former Disney CEO Michael Eisner, David Gergen of U.S. News and World Report, former cabinet members Henry Kissinger and Robert McNamara and humanitarian Her Majesty Queen Noor. More than 4,000 people attended this most memorable event, including Republican Presidential candidate John McCain.

THE IMPACT OF THE EVENT

Aspen itself offers many unique resources in a beautiful setting, with a host of world-class accommodations including the St. Regis, 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 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, but he also is the spiritual leader of the world in opposition to religious leadership, which causes division, war, hatred and terrorism," said Dr. Eric Fugier 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 toward my patients, my staff, friends and enemies. I also understood why you have to be compassionate towards the people who try to hurt you: they are ignorant, and you have to be sorry for them and try to help them understand better."

*"True compassion is not just an emotional response
but a firm commitment founded on reason."*

- His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama -