

## Tibet: The Silent Cry

I had never gone to a demonstration or peace rally of any kind. I had never been attached to any cause enough to make myself heard. I was one of those people who consider themselves “aware”, just not aware enough to do anything about it. Knowing about it was always enough, as I would tell myself that knowledge is power. This allowed me to be slightly above the status quo which I convinced myself was somehow good enough. The truth is, I never felt the need to go beyond my after dinner discussion about the plight of the world or to recognize the growing void as something waiting for me to respond to or to try to comprehend it...Until now.

Suddenly, in the month of February, my life took a drastic turn for the better. My friend David, (you know the guy whose website this is), told me about the Tibetan monks coming to Hamilton, and in typical David style, told me we had to go see them. What an understatement! My friend David is always informing me of such possible “enlightening” events, and without him I would be wandering around in the dark, and have been, until quite recently, for most of my life...

Anyway, that’s another story. I knew a little about Tibet, their situation and at least who the monks were, and was very intrigued to see them. What I didn’t realize is that one brief moment would allow me to start to make sense of everything I’ve been feeling for so long. Depression, anger, unfulfillment, you name it, I’ve been through it...

I listened in awe at the beauty of their chants and the calm with which they destroyed the mandala that they had toiled over for the previous five days. Note to self: attachment to possessions is way overrated!!!

Once they were finished I ventured the courage to go and shake the oldest monk’s hand, something I would normally not have been able to do. He bore a remarkable resemblance to the Dalai Lama, and I found out later that he had been at the monastery with the Dalai Lama before the invasion. As I approached him, my awkwardness immediately dissipated, and as I shook his hand, for a brief moment I felt and saw the embodiment of peace, contentment, happiness and love. He looked into my eyes and I felt that he could see me not as I once saw myself, but rather as a pure and good being. There was no judgment, only pure intention and thought for me. The feeling of that moment has allowed me to begin to make the necessary changes in my own life and to begin to view every sentient being in the same way, myself included. Those of you who are on this path know what a challenge this is.

My path has led me to the Tibetan people and the more I learn of them, their beliefs and practices, the more connected I feel to them. David and I went to see the movie “Cry of the White Lion” which accounts the atrocities suffered by the Tibetan people. Once there we found out about a march happening the following day, which I felt an overwhelming need to attend. These events have led me to this point. This is a cause no greater than any other, but it is the cause I must join, as it is just what I must do.

The plight of the Tibetan people has been and continues to be a painful journey filled with much suffering, loss of identity and complete devastation. But their spirit and mind remain focused on their true path, the path to enlightenment. It is the will to find compassion, peace and love for every living being, even those who could be viewed as their enemy, which forces them to continue even in the midst of such despair.

I am impassioned by the determination of the Tibetan people to remain peaceful amidst China's relentless attempts to completely annihilate their culture, erase them and drive them from their rightful homeland. They have become displaced in their own home. What was once a land of peace and beauty has become an area laden with brothels and disguised tourist sights. The temples have almost all been destroyed and those restored by the Chinese government are a mere façade. The Tibetan language and Buddhist religion is forbidden, and you can be killed for carrying a picture of his holiness the Dalai Lama, the rightful leader of Tibet who had to flee his country in 1959 and has been living in exile in India ever since.

Still, they continue to believe in their practice, which is everything to them, and they maintain a peaceful compassion toward their captor. Why not retaliate you may ask? Because it is not Buddha's way. The path to enlightenment for Buddhists follows only one direction, that of compassion. It is by showing compassion to all sentient beings that allows one to find the ultimate happiness they seek in their own lives. It is within all of us to show this compassion toward every living creature, no matter how small or how deluded they may be. Buddhists also believe that any semblance of evil doing is simply a manifestation of that person's delusions that has been carried with them from their past lives, a result of their karma, as it were. The beauty of this completely selfless mode of existence is what allows one to lead a completely fulfilled and peaceful existence. By showing fear, anger and hatred, one only harms oneself. It is the sheer kindness and compassion that we show to others which brings the ultimate peace to ourselves and ends our own suffering. The monks of Tibet have revealed this to me and I have seen and felt the peace which emanates from them.

Please join me, David and everyone else who has embarked on this difficult journey to free the people of Tibet and return their land back to them. In restoring this rightful balance I feel that the state of the world as we know it will begin to heal and regenerate.

Sincerely,  
With eyes wide open,  
Leah C.