



International Tibet Independence Movement

Official Newsletter of ITIM Vol. V, No. 1

Summer/2009

## The Story of Taktser Rinpoche

Elliot Sperling, Bloomington, Indiana  
Larry Gerstein, Fishers, Indiana

Taktser Rinpoche, Thubten Jigme Norbu, passed away at the age of 86 on Friday, September 5, 2008. His life was one of devotion to the cause of Tibet. With His unwavering belief that the Tibetan majority was right, He lived to see Tibetans demonstrate once more, in the spring of 2008, that their struggle for a free and independent Tibet would not succumb to China's oppression. Until the day He passed away, Rinpoche's fondness for and faith in His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His younger brother, remained as strong as His stand for Tibet's independence.

Taktser Rinpoche was born in Amdo, Tibet, in 1922 and, while still a child, recognized by The 13th Dalai Lama as the 23rd incarnation of the previous Taktser Trulku. At the age of eight, He was taken to the famous monastery of Kumbum and educated there as one of its most important Lamas. Kumbum monastery is the birthplace of Lama Tsongkapa who is the founder of the Gelugpa sect of Tibetan Buddhism.

When Rinpoche's younger brother was recognized as The Dalai Lama He traveled to Lhasa, in Central Tibet, and continued His studies at the renowned monastery of Drepung. He returned to Amdo and was serving as the Abbot of Kumbum when the Chinese People's Liberation Army arrived in 1949 and put the monastery under its control. Under the most severe of circumstances, He tried to shield hHis

region from the inevitable oppression that was being implemented by the new Communist regime. For over a year, He was in the hands of the Chinese government and only broke free when He agreed to travel to Lhasa under their instructions, to urge His Holiness to accept Tibet's annexation by China. Taktser Rinpoche was told that should His Holiness refuse China's designs, He should be removed, even if it meant murder; and if that were to happen, Rinpoche was further told that He would then be made Tibet's ruler.



Taktser Rinpoche.

However, as soon as He crossed into the areas still under the control of Tibet's legitimate government, Rinpoche escaped from His Chinese escorts and immediately reported to the then fifteen year old Dalai Lama all that had happened in Chinese-ruled Amdo, including China's attempt to incite His death.

Taktser Rinpoche told His Holiness that there was no way for Tibet to

survive under Chinese rule and urged Him not to yield to Chinese force. Soon thereafter, Rinpoche left Tibet and traveled to India, where He worked to secure American support for Tibetan resistance. When His Holiness opted to accept Tibet's incorporation into the People's Republic of China, Rinpoche decided to remain outside Tibet and continue His work. However, His task was no longer keeping China out of Tibet: it was now freeing Tibet from China.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Rinpoche worked tirelessly for Tibet. When efforts to placate China throughout the 1950s failed and the Tibetan people rose to demand their rightful independence, Rinpoche was already poised to help. He played a pivotal role in coordinating aid for the refugees pouring into India and then in organizing and supplying Tibetan resistance fighters who continued to defy China after the Chinese army brought in massive force to crush the armed Tibetan resistance. Rinpoche also served as His Holiness The Dalai Lama's Representative and a Tibetan Government In-Exile Representative to Japan and North America.

In 1965, Taktser Rinpoche gave up His position at the American Museum of Natural History, where He had been working for several years, to join the faculty of Indiana University's Department of Uralic and Altaic Studies (now the Department of Central Eurasian Studies). His presence on the university's Bloomington campus was electric: He proved to be a dynamic teacher and He imbued the department's Tibetan Studies program with vigor and

*(Continued on page four)*



Rangzen Voice

ITIM is a grassroots, volunteer, not for profit (501c3), educational organization co-founded on March 17, 1995 by Thubten Jigme Norbu and Larry Gerstein to achieve Tibet's independence through nonviolence.

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**No Sleep 'til RANGZEN!**

Mary-Kate Oreovicz, Assistant Editor, Rangzen Voice



MK Oreovicz

Welcome to the 2009 issue of Rangzen Voice. So much has happened since we last reached out to our supporters. First and foremost, I must report the passing of our co-founder, Taktser Rinpoche (Thubten Jigme Norbu), in September 2008. Rinpoche was the oldest brother of His Holiness The Dalai Lama. His continuing efforts towards acquiring rangzen for Tibet have inspired countless Tibetans and Tibet supporters around the globe. He and Larry Gerstein began ITIM and the rangzen walks in 1995. His legacy lives on through the rangzen advocates of today through protests, marches, actions, and more. He is dearly missed. Over the past two years, our rangzen walkers have carried on His legacy, covering even more miles in the name of Tibet's independence, marching from New York, New York to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (June 27 to July 4, 2007) and from Madison, Wisconsin to Chicago, Illinois (July 25 to August 8, 2008).

The "March for Tibet's Independence" in 2008 held special significance, as it culminated on 08-08-08, the opening day of the Beijing Olympics, as the walkers arrived in front of China's Consulate in Chicago. Spring and summer of 2008 were the most intense, newsworthy months in Tibet advocacy and action that we have witnessed in many years. Since March 2008, more than 125 mainly peaceful protests occurred in what China calls the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and other areas of what historically and currently is considered Tibet by Tibetans themselves. One or more protests occurred in each of at least 52 county-level locations in ethnically Tibetan regions illegally occupied by China. China's Communist Party responded brutally to the mainly peaceful protests, exposing their continuing paranoia and political extremism; a contrast to the image of a peacefully united Motherland they wanted the world to witness.

Although the Beijing government made

assurances for more openness and journalistic freedoms, their heavy-handed actions proved quite the opposite. Actions truly speak louder than words. China's methods for dealing with the Tibetan protesters included:

- Severe restriction of religious expression and practice as seen in the lockdown of many Monasteries, the expelling of Monks and Lamas, and surrounding many Monastic learning centers with military troops, restricting not only religious practice, but supplies of food and water to those locked inside.
- Deaths of unarmed protesters at the hands of heavily armed police and military personnel, including the presence of military armored tanks in Tibet's capital, Lhasa.
- The disappearance of hundreds of Tibetans, including Monks, Nuns, students, children, and older adults, many of whom were tortured in detention. Even as of today, most Tibetan families of the detained have no information concerning the whereabouts of their loved ones, or whether they are alive or dead.

These protests, unlike those of 1987 and 1989, involved a larger, more varied swath of the Tibetan population. In the 1980s, it was Monks and Nuns who took to the streets shouting independence slogans in Lhasa. In 2008, not only in Lhasa, but in areas spread across Central Tibet, Amdo, and Kham, Nuns, Monks, nomads, farmers, laborers, schoolchildren, college students, and scholars remained unified in their messages: Tibet belongs to Tibetans and Return His Holiness The Dalai Lama to Tibet. China's reaction to this widespread outcry stemmed from fear. For instance, they deployed thousands of armed troops throughout Tibetan areas and they intensified their Anti-Dalai Lama Campaign, not only in the Monasteries, but also in the world media.

Although the initial driving force of the protests was the 49th anniversary of His Holiness The Dalai Lama fleeing Tibet

*(Continued on page seven)*

## Taktser Rinpoche: A Visionary, Inspiration, and Rangzen Leader

Larry Gerstein, President, ITIM

Hello and Tashi Delek! It has been quite some time since we published Rangzen Voice. Actually, the last issue appeared in the Spring of 2007! We had all intentions of publishing an issue in 2008, but it did not happen for many reasons not the least of which was that we were so busy demonstrating and organizing events connected to the August 2008 Beijing Olympics. Regardless, we are sorry for missing an issue in 2008, especially since a number of Tibetans joked with us about how long we would be distributing hard copies of a 2007 newsletter!



Larry Gerstein

Lots has happened in the Tibet world and ITIM since the Spring of 2007. Mary-Kate Oreovicz already outlined some of these developments in her editorial on page 2 of this issue. Perhaps the most significant event for ITIM was the passing of our co-founder and visionary, Taktser Rinpoche. Rinpoche and I co-founded ITIM in March 1995. Many of the current ITIM leaders and devoted supporters have been part of ITIM since that time. Rinpoche warmly embraced all of us, inspired our involvement, motivated us when we were discouraged, offered us direction and strategy, provided us with a living example of a compassionate and just Buddha, and He shared with us a glimpse into the intricacies and mysteries of the Tibetan culture and religion; I say glimpse because He would often state that even if He were to reveal all the secrets of Tibetan Buddhism and His knowledge, we would fail to grasp or comprehend what He was saying!

Rinpoche radiated a warmth, wisdom, and light that permeated everyone in His presence. His sense of humor and ability to view even the most overwhelming of obstacles as an opportunity and blessing was legendary. His deep voice and hearty laugh echoed and bellowed throughout the environ-



Taktser Rinpoche and others starting 1995 March for Tibet's Independence from Bloomington to Indianapolis, Indiana.

ment He was in. It also comforted those in His presence. Spending any amount of time with Rinpoche in any context was a lesson in how to live life as a Buddhist though He rarely spoke about this subject!

While Rinpoche refused to give formal Buddhist teachings since He arrived in the U.S. in the early 1960s, His life was a rich mosaic of the essence of the Dharma and the wisdom of Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan culture. I, like others, was so fortunate to be with such a teacher, and receive the gift of His actions, His praise, and also His pranks and humorous criticism!

Those of us affiliated with ITIM who were close to Rinpoche will never forget the lessons He taught us, the challenges He endured, the simplicity yet richness of His wisdom and behavior, the immense joy He brought us on the road and at home in Indiana, and the tenacious vision He maintained to restore Tibet's independence.

Often Rinpoche would thank us, particularly the Westerners, for working to secure Rangzen for Tibet. We were always quite shy, however, to accept



Taktser Rinpoche at 2002 Students for a Free Tibet Camp, Needmore, Indiana

His appreciation knowing that we were the grateful ones to live in the midst of such an incredible living, loving, engaged Buddha who honored us with His presence in the heartland of America, Indiana. How great was our karma to be embraced and valued by such an individual!

Needless to say, our commitment to Rinpoche and His mission to regain Tibet for Tibetans has not changed. ITIM will continue to actively pursue this mission and the worldwide Tibet movement will eventually see the day when the next Taktser Rinpoche can live freely in all of Tibet and also return to His throne at Kumbum Monastery in Amdo, Tibet.

## The Story of Taktser Rinpoche

*(Continued from page one)*



**Taktser Rinpoche with Tibetan Freedom Torch, June 4, 2008.**

energy, helping to train several important specialists in the field. Studying with Rinpoche was a unique experience; He was a font of information and learning for His students, and was consistently generous with His knowledge and His time.

Throughout this period, and following His retirement from Indiana University in 1987, Rinpoche was a tireless fighter for the cause of Tibet. He established the Tibetan Cultural Center in Bloomington, Indiana in 1979, as a center for all things Tibetan. Its function was partly educational and Rinpoche hoped to be able to make Tibet's situation and the nature of China's rule over Tibet better understood. He had little time for the arguments of those who felt that Tibet would do well as an "autonomous" entity in China. He knew full well that cultural freedom and political freedom were inseparable; that political freedom meant that Tibetans must be fully free to decide their country's fate; and that the vast majority of Tibetans wanted Tibet to be an independent country, an equal partner to other countries and a full member of the United Nations. His view of those who wanted to keep Tibet in China was well known. Thus, following His retirement he became a co-founder, in 1995, of the International Tibet Independence Movement and participated in many of its activities. For instance, in 1996,

Rinpoche along with the Venerable Palden Gyatso led a 300-mile, 45-day March for Tibet's Independence from China's Embassy in Washington, D.C. to the United Nations in New York City. Further, in 1997, Rinpoche led a three-month 600+ mile March for Tibet's Independence from China's Embassy in Toronto to China's Consulate in New York City. In the late 1990's, Rinpoche also help found the Rangzen Alliance; another organization devoted to securing Tibet's independence.

In 2004, the Tibetan Youth Congress awarded Rinpoche with its highest honor when they bestowed on Him the Rangzen Award.

Rinpoche's last official political act on behalf of Tibet occurred on June 4, 2008. At this time, He received the Tibetan Freedom Torch from his sons, Lhundrup, Kunga, and Jigme who had carried the torch by either bicycle or foot from Indianapolis to Bloomington, Indiana as part of the worldwide Tibet movement effort connected to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.



**Taktser Rinpoche with his sons (L-R) Kunga, Lhundup and Jigme on June 4, 2008.**

Taktser Rinpoche was a teacher, a scholar, a fighter and an activist. He was a friend to many, an implacable enemy of oppression, and a forceful yet compassionate proponent of justice. Through His books and actions He influenced innumerable people, providing them with a glimpse of Tibet's rich civilization and Tibet's resilient spirit. His passing has been mourned by His family, His friends, students, colleagues, and by all friends of Tibet.

*(Photos continued on page five)*



**Taktser Rinpoche (L) 1995 March for Tibet; (R) August 2006.**

# Taktser Rinpoche Marching for Tibet's Independence



1996: Washington, D.C. to New York.



1997: Toronto to New York.



1997: Toronto to New York.



2007: New York to Philadelphia.



2007: New York to Philadelphia.



1997: Toronto to New York.



2007: New York to Philadelphia.



2007: New York to Philadelphia.



2007: New York to Philadelphia.



2007: New York to Philadelphia.

## ITIM Board Member's First Person Account of Protesting at 2008 Olympics

Douglas Herman

**M**y involvement in the Tibetan struggle for independence is directly informed by experiencing and witnessing the level of control China's government has on the people



Douglas Herman

inside Tibet. I had certainly seen signs and loosely considered the immediacy of their presence, but did not truly process the grander impact of their grip until their control thwarted my own mobility. Up to the point of being denied access to certain regions of Tibet, I felt myself growing as an artist and person as a result of my interaction with the people I encountered in Tibet in 2002. Although I had been open to such interactions in neighboring countries, the genuine warmth of the Tibetans was overwhelming. Perhaps I started to process the long-term effect of China's occupation when I felt the absence of such warmth in certain areas of the country, but to be totally honest it did not hit me until my own rights were called into question.

I never thought that I would be emotionally, spiritually, or physically prepared to be in Tibet, but in spite of how overwhelming the physical and spiritual qualities of life in Tibet were, I knew I was not really experiencing what I was supposed to. I knew that the serious presence of armed guards of foreign origin, and the palpable and justified fear that permeated villages and cities stunted my ability to genuinely interact with a people who were screaming their stories without uttering a word. I never thought I would be prepared to be in Tibet, but there I was voluntarily leaving months before I was legally required to do so. I needed to meet Tibetans who lived outside the grip of occupation, but more importantly I knew I needed to figure out a way to help give volume to those silent screams.

It has been six years since I was in Tibet. The people I have encountered as a result of my travels and interactions within the exiled Tibetan communities have impacted me in ways words cannot support. There have been times when I questioned my motivations and willingness to continue supporting a people without access to their homeland, but at the center of every moment of doubt there are these images and moments that remind me of who I have met, the promises I have made, and the responsibility I accepted as a person of conscience.

There was no doubt in my heart that I would be in Beijing during the Olympics in support of Tibet's independence. The simple fact that I could go speaks volumes with regard to the opportunities I have been afforded in this life - opportunities that have simply not existed for nearly four generations of Tibetans. I have become highly political and engaged as an American as a direct result of my interactions with Tibetans struggling inside an occupied state, and those who have either fled persecution or have been born detached from their homeland. Their plight and struggle has amplified the value of what I have been given simply by being born a free American. My reply, when asked by journalists during the 2008 Beijing Olympics why I was in China reporting on the protests and actions China's government was taking to suppress such activities was, "As a student and teacher of history, how could I not?"

With each passing moment counting down to the Opening Ceremonies in Beijing I dealt with opposition and confusion from those I felt closest to. My relationships with those that I loved and cherished were being tested, strained, and some were even broken. Some simply could not understand what the Olympics had to do with Tibet or why in the world I would risk arrest in a foreign land in support of

someone else's cause. Considering I have personally spoken to hundreds of people about the Sino-Tibetan divide throughout America, it was painful to say the least, to struggle and fail to convince those closest to me that what I felt in my heart far outweighed any consequence of participation.

There are things in this world that simply cannot be justified, cannot be explained, cannot be accepted, and cannot be ignored. And yet for the most part, we as people are not mobilized into action unless someone of our own nationality is affected. This by-product of patriotism and nationalism damages us individually and collectively. Put simply, I would feel as if I were a hypocrite as a free American if I had not gone to Beijing to bear witness and give voice to those who have consistently been silenced.

My three weeks in China were the loneliest I have ever experienced. I had no direct contact with anyone on the ground, needed to sever all contact with friends and family, and was essentially required to lead a double life in order to bear witness and report what the Chinese media was deliberately trying to cover up. All paranoia aside, I was repeatedly followed, needed to dump my cell phone cards more than once, and always felt as if I was moments away from arrest. I surprised myself with how calm and controlled I was able to be in situations that normally might have made me panic. Perhaps it was the notion that what I was doing was right, that I was there for so many others who would have gladly been if only they could, but there seemed to be some strange sense of security in these moments of total uncertainty.

I left China the day before the government rounded up all the other civilian journalists, and so I slipped

*(Continued on page eleven)*

## Rangzen, where are you? Jampa Choephel, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Fifty years in a human life is indeed something to be valued and weighted, in certain cases to be published in books under various titles and genres. In fifty years time human black hair turns to grey and smooth skin shapes into ripples. But could it (the gradual change) hold the same leverage in humanity history? I doubted so! I feel that the later gradual change is just a small part of a chapter within the historical records that still has capability to expand until the end of human race. As the modern and the contemporary historical character is always filled with imminent surprises and strange turns, 50 years of a "nation's" history is a small span of events amongst the events covering thousands of year's back-ward and forward. Changing cultural aspects and blending culture in a natural phenomenon is a naturally acceptable process of time and space on which no one has control, but forceful designing of culture into certain direction (to fulfill a lifetime goal) always back fires and tends to remind locally or globally Rang btsan (Rangzen) enlightened humans who are being forced to feel something to be preserved and feel precious at. That's why I still feel Rangzen in me, is still Alive N Kickin in the blood stream, the kick might be same (at various levels) to all Tibetans inside and outside Tibet in various forms and appearance.

As a refugee child, groomed and fermented under a democratic Arya community, I have always felt that, for me, Rangzen is complimentary with China (included within the package). Because as Rangzen is already there in Arya community (then and now), thus, to know Rangzen in my mind. I have to create what Rangzen looks and feels like when there is no Rangzen. And how does it feel when someone is denying you Rangzen. As a child (even after becoming a full-fledged man) one

could never pin point the first day and date on which one could recall remembering his mothers face clearly. Likewise, I still do not remember when and where I first got introduced to Rangzen. The rang (Rang) is me, myself and I bet the btsan (zen) has been haunting me ever since I became acquainted with it as a subjective or objective influence that is still steel welded in my mind. The obsession, the addiction and dream of Rangzen is still present in me in waves of youthful torrent, many times echoing like a thousands of fired bullets tattering my ear drum with a slapping touch of a beautiful spring butterfly. For me Rang btsan is not 'China out of Tibet,' it is neither participating on a March 10 exile ritual, it is not about informing other people about plights of Tibetans in Tibet, never about protesting and hating the powerful earthly governments and knowingly ignoring my peoples plight and helplessness against the Chinese Communist Community and its side dogs who always awaits a new lump of leg pieces from its master, the dogs that neither let my people live nor escape within their domain. As for them, also, the Tibetan Rang btsan obsession is their obsession/disease in a form of a trump card against/for their master for future lumps (inside or outside UNO).

For me, Rang btsan has been an ongoing psychological warfare since my childhood that I still fight with myself in my mind with my btsan (Lord of the War). For me, it is the essence of my centrifugal energy that drives me in feeling proud to be a Tibetan, for me it is a rigorous mental and intellectual mock intern with a continuous visualization of information upgrade on a duality basis in getting ready for the day when I meet btsan in person.

**One World  
One Dream  
Free Tibet**

## No Sleep 'til RANGZEN!

*(Continued from page two)*

from China's illegal invasion and the bloody crackdown on the failed uprising of Tibetans in Lhasa in 1959, Tibetans inside Tibet and in exile understood the international platform that the 2008 Beijing Olympics provided, and the world began to take notice as news reports, images, and blogs became almost daily occurrences worldwide. People who had never before discussed anything Tibet-related with me began engaging me on a daily basis about headlines in the New York Times, BBC, CNN, NBC, Yahoo news, and more. I urged them to transform their shock, anger, frustration and sadness into positive action for the cause of Tibet.

One way I took action was joining ITIM's walk from Madison to Chicago. During this walk, we received immense support from Tibetans and Tibet supporters, even strangers in small towns and on hot and dusty rural highways. We arrived in downtown Chicago, greeted by more than 500 Tibetans and supporters, and we held our heads high as we marched down the Magnificent Mile to China's Consulate. We stood in solidarity with every Tibetan inside of Tibet who risked their lives and the lives of their families as they shouted for rangzen (independence); for the return of their one and only leader; and we proudly raised the banned Tibetan national flag. Our hearts and minds were heavy with the untold sufferings of so many whose lives hang in uncertainty for the cause of rangzen.

Not only did ITIM have a strong presence in Chicago in August 2008, but we also were present in Beijing during the Olympics (see Doug Herman's story). Today, we continue our non-violent struggle for rangzen, in honor of Taktser Rinpoche, whose vision of an independent Tibet shines brightly within each of us. We will persist until this goal is achieved. Tibet was and will always be His country and the nation belonging to all His Tibetan Brothers and Sisters.

## Walking and Working for Tibet

Wangchuk Dorjee, Former Member of Tibetan Parliament in Exile,  
Washougal, Washington

We mourn the loss of Taktser Rinpoche, a lifelong freedom fighter. His legacy will continue to be an inspiration in the Tibetan community. As Tibetans, we are fortunate to have many great support organizations including the International Tibet Independence Movement (ITIM). In the past, I have had several opportunities to participate in Bhod Rangzen walks with ITIM, and finally last year, I completed the entire walk from Madison to Chicago led by Larry Gerstein's well-organized team.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the ITIM members for their

work for Tibet. I was especially encouraged walking with young Tibetan freedom fighters and supporters. It gives me hope for the future of Tibet. As my blisters grew my motivation to walk grew, soon I forgot the pain and walked with even more resolve thinking of the situation in my homeland. All along the walk, I thought and prayed for Tibetans in Tibet, living in a repressive state without freedom of thought and speech, thinking since I live in a free country it's my responsibility to be a voice that stands up with them. What a sense of accomplishment raising awareness about the Tibetan freedom struggle. I encourage everyone to join or support

future walks in any way possible.

As a Tibetan in the west it is not only important to be a voice for Tibet, it is imperative to improve life in Tibet. In rural Tibet they lack basic health services and education. In response to this need, my family started a project and we built a clinic in a rural Tibetan village that has been serving local Tibetans for the last 3 years. We are also working on a greenhouse project and sponsoring the education of several children in this rural area of Tibet. It is projects like this and protests for the Tibetan cause that not only helps others, but also gives a great sense of happiness. Bhod Gyalo!

## Slaying Illusions: Reflecting on China's Brutality and the Impossible Nature of Compromise

Brent Werner  
Fredericksburg, Virginia

The illusory nature of self and phenomena is a recurrent theme in Buddha's teaching. Realizing that illusory nature leads to spiritual liberation. The political world should also cause us to reflect on illusions, like that of a Middle Way! Peace and justice within the Communist state of China is a mere illusion - the most dangerous oxymoron. Chinese officials, police and soldiers have proven this truth time and time again. They have proven it with their lies, with their guns, and with their cattle prods. Let the Chinese live with their atrocities and lies. Rangzen will become our truth!

I've had enough of dreams, you see. When I dream, I see the Chinese raping young nuns with cattle prods. When I close my eyes, I see Ama Adhe telling how the Chinese threw their stool and urine on the Rinpoche. If I sleep, I see Chinese guns firing indiscriminately on a people whose "crime" is the mere assertion of their national identity. If I rest, I rest with the ghosts of children

gunned down everywhere from Nangpa la to Lhasa.

When Padmasambhava brought Buddhism to Tibet, his activities were so prolific that people say not a clod of earth went untouched by his holy feet. Unfortunately, the same can be said for the brutal Chinese colonialists. Peace and justice within the Communist state of China is a mere illusion. Rangzen must become our truth!

Over a decade ago, I was honored to polish Taktser Rinpoche's simple shoes on a "March for Independence." With His departure, Rinpoche leaves immense footsteps to fill. But Rinpoche leaves more than that. He leaves footprints pointing towards justice, truth and hope. These are the footsteps of freedom in which you and I must tread. Leave the illusions for China - the illusion that Tibetan people can be tortured into submission. The illusion that Tibetan women can be raped into surrender. The illusion that Tibet "has always

been a part of China."

I do not believe in illusions. I do believe in dreams - and not just the kind that haunt me. In my good dreams, Taktser Rinpoche is beaming, but not with some otherworldly light. He is beaming and prostrating towards the Potala, as snow lion flags flutter over Chenrezig's throne. This dream is no illusion. His Holiness will return to a Free Tibet. Rangzen will become our truth!

བོད་རང་བཙན་  
Free Tibet!

འཇམ་མཉམས་ལོ་ལོ་སྤྱོད་ལྷོ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་  
ལྷོ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་ལྷོ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་  
Thanks for  
your support!

Free Tenzin Delek Rinpoche

བསྐྱེད་འཇམ་མཉམས་ལོ་ལོ་སྤྱོད་ལྷོ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་

## Hosting Gomang Monks, The Dharma, and Activism

Gerald Baker, Vice President, ITIM

During the last week of April, ITIM had the privilege and pleasure of hosting a group of monks from the Drepung Gomang Monastery in India. Over the course of nine days, we hosted events including the construction of a Medicine Buddha Mandala, cultural pageants, public and private dinners, a house blessing, and a youth group visit. The monks were able to raise a significant amount of money for their Monastery during their stay with us. Equally important is that they seemed to enjoy a comparatively relaxed week. Especially significant for ITIM were the opportunities during the cultural pageants to hear the visitors speak of the political conditions underlying their exile from Tibet.

ITIM takes the opportunity to host visiting Tibetan monks whenever they are on tour. We have hosted visits from the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery as well as monks from the Gomang Monastery over the years. We are often faced with a situation of having to downplay political concerns in order to satisfy sponsors more concerned with the dharma aspects of Tibetan Buddhism. We have even had our flyers edited by hosting groups to remove any reference to the International Tibet Independence Movement, it being felt that 'independence' is too political. During this tour, however, it was heartening to hear the monks speak through the passionate voice of their translator of the linkage between politics and culture. Listening to Namgyal Tsondu, the tour translator, speaking of the current conditions in Tibet, the reasons for these conditions, and actions needed to assist in the struggle was truly inspirational.

I have always struggled to understand why for some, spiritual aspiration and



Opening ceremony.

social activism are felt to be incompatible urges. Often the demands of social activism are seen as a distraction from the spiritual life and something to be avoided in order to maintain an inner focus. For those such as Gandhi, Desmond Tutu, and The Dalai Lama this has not been the case.



Sketch of Medicine Buddha Mandala.



Monks begin working.

Working for social change becomes the dharma field in which they labor. Those of us who identify with the aspirations of the Tibetan people recognize that it's only through confronting the materialism espoused

by the current rulers of Tibet can the spiritual foundations of the Tibetan people be preserved. Action dedicated to resisting the erosion of this spiritual foundation is by its nature political. It is in the political arena that the aspirations of a people are realized. Politics has a consequence on people's lives and silence speaks just as loudly as words.

When Tibetan monks tour the west and perform their sacred rituals they do so for the survival of their religion and their culture. Politics has driven them to this. Tibetans never sought political limelight but were thrust into it by events of 1949 that has resulted in thousands of Tibetans being forced into exile in order to be able to practice their religion. Sacred rituals, once guarded secrets only available to a select few, today, because of the political realities in Tibet, are now available to anyone in the free world. For us in the West this is a blessing but it behooves us to understand the real world implications involved. These monks that bless us with their presence are refugees, living in India through the compassionate tolerance of that government. Where once they were supported through the enlightened practice of their government and its leaders, The Dalai Lamas, now they must travel the world and perform their sacred rituals in order to support themselves and preserve their culture. It's only in the western context that the dharma and politics have become disassociated. Prior to the Chinese communist invasion of 1949, these two aspects of Tibetan Buddhism were intertwined. It's only through the activities of supporters in the free world, spiritual and political, that Tibetan culture has been able to remain viable.

*(Continued on page eleven)*



## 2007 March for Tibet's Independence: Photos



### Hosting Gomang Monks

*(Continued from page nine)*

ITIM was established to support Tibetans in all aspects of their culture and all monies raised goes to that end. We are chartered as a 501c3 not for profit organization as an educational institution. ITIM's mission statement calls for an independent Tibet as the only sustainable and long-term means of preserving the unique Tibetan culture. We make no apologies for our stance and our activities. To accept certain aspects of Tibetan Buddhism while ignoring other factors that contributes to the conditions these monks find themselves in strikes us as disingenuous.

The question of dharma versus politics arises frequently when we organize

events. For us, this is a false dichotomy. The challenge we often face when dealing with the concerns of dharma or spiritual groups who wish to have programs with the monks is how to present this linkage of Tibetan Buddhism with the realities of the political situation in Tibet today. It's difficult enough to educate the general public about the plight of Tibetans, but often it's those with whom we have spiritual connections who offer the most resistance to the practical concerns of the monks. Hearing the monks address their concerns for Tibet while showcasing aspects of their spiritual traditions is a very powerful endorsement of ITIM's mission. It encourages us to stay the course in our advocacy for a free Tibet as the best hope for the survival of Tibetan Buddhism and the culture that it created.

### Jigme Norbu and Wangchuk Dorje walk for Tibet

This past winter, Jigme Norbu and Wangchuk Dorje completed a two-month walk for Tibet's independence from Indianapolis to New York City. Jigme is the youngest son of Taktser Rinpoche and a frequent participant in

ITIM's "March for Tibet's Independence." For reports and images on Jigme and Wangchuk's walk, visit: <http://ambassadorsforworldpeace.org/wordpress>.

### ITIM Board Member's...

*(Continued from page six)*

between the cracks. My passport does not have a deportation stamp, and although I feel a certain sense of guilt as a result, I know that I accomplished what I set out to do, can live to fight another day, and one day soon I will go back to Tibet.

My experiences during the Olympics will forever inform my life, and my opinion on the world. I was never naïve enough to think that China would release its choking grip on Tibet simply because a bunch of western supporters staged several direct non-violent actions. Some will say that these actions have had no impact on the occupation, that they did not benefit Tibetans in the least, and could potentially make things worse for those on the ground inside Tibet. They can say that from afar because they have not seen how bad it truly is on the ground inside Tibet. Regardless, I will always remember the crowd of Tibetan strangers who greeted me at LaGuardia International Airport in New York upon my return. I will never forget the older Tibetan woman who passionately hugged me and said, "Thank you for being one of our Olympic heroes." I did not deserve that level of praise, but I felt every word.

Visit [www.rangzen.org](http://www.rangzen.org) for photos, videos, press releases, and links to Douglas Herman's 2008 Olympic Journal.

# Gomang Monks in Indianapolis, April 2009



Opening Mandala Ceremony.



Medicine Buddha Mandala.



Closing ceremony. Geshe-la pours sand in creek.



Monks working on Mandala.



Medicine Buddha Mandala.



Closing ceremony.



Geshe Lobzang-la offering khatas to Pastor Kent Millard, Dr. Bill Jackson and Betty Brandt.



Cultural performance.



Cultural performance.



Monks with (back row, L-R) Pastor Millard, Lynn Jackson, Dr. Jackson and Ms. Brandt.

## Keeping Hope Alive for Tibet's Panchen Lama

Mary-Kate Oreovicz, Assistant Editor, Rangzen Voice

April 25, 2009 marked the 20th Birthday of His Holiness The 11th Panchen Lama, Gendun Choekyi Nyima. In 1995, at age six, His Holiness The Dalai Lama recognized His incarnation and soon after Gendun Choekyi Nyima, kidnapped by China's Government, became the world's youngest political prisoner. The world has not seen His face nor heard His voice since the Communist government of China abducted Him and His family. We have, however, seen the face and heard the voice of Gyaltzen Norbu, the young Tibetan man chosen by China's Communist Party to lead as the 11th Panchen Lama. From the time of Gendun Choekyi Nyima's disappearance, exile Tibetans and those inside Tibet, as well as Tibet supporters worldwide have struggled with the issue of China's appointed Panchen Lama and The Dalai Lama's choice. While we write letters, sign petitions, and hold movie screenings advocating for the release of Gendun Choekyi Nyima, we also pray for Gyaltzen Norbu, whose future is also uncertain if left in the hands of the Communist Party.



Photo by Gail Henrie. Maitreya (Jampa) Buddha (Top) with 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lamas, and China's Panchen Lama (L to R).

Recently, I was speaking to a Tibetan Geshe who is also a Tibetan Monk. We were looking at a photo of the tomb of the 10th Panchen Lama. In the foreground, three photos are displayed: on the left, the 9th Panchen Lama Thubten Choekyi Nyima, in the center, the 10th Panchen Lama Lobsang Trinley Lhundrub Choekyi Gyaltzen, and on the right, the 11th

Panchen Lama Gyaltzen Norbu as recognized and enthroned by China's Government. Immediately, Geshe-la gestured to the boy on the right and said, "Who's that?" These simple words spoke volumes to me. I thought to myself, "Exactly." Tibetans in exile will openly distinguish between the so-called "Real" and "Fake" Panchen Lamas. Inside Tibet, however, honor and respect must be paid to Gyaltzen Norbu, also referred to as "China's Panchen Lama."

What will become of these young men? 14 years have passed since the disappearance of Gendun Choekyi Nyima. Where is He? How is His health? What is He studying? Does He speak Tibetan? Is His family with Him? Will human rights groups ever gain access to Him? If and when we do hear from Him, will a fountain of Communist propaganda pour from His lips? These questions filled my heart and mind as I prayed for Him on April 25. We must not lose hope, and we cannot forget Tibet's "Stolen Child."

## Rangzen Walk

Tenzin Wangjor, Madison, Wisconsin

I clearly remember the night when the flood of news regarding violent protests streamed through the television and swamped Internet blogs. I was so happy to see fellow Tibetans inside Tibet unite to fight against the unjust rulings of the China - even if they were met by death. I sat at the dining table feeling useless, yet awestruck by the magnitude of the situation. Little did I realize the dire consequences of my fellow Tibetans who are still being reprimanded for their actions through imprisonment and their death.

I did not find out about the "March for Tibet's Independence" until the night

before it began when my brother asked me to walk with him for one day. That night, I packed for the march and joined the advocates for Tibet in the morning. They had been walking for two days and were taking a break by a grocery store. We introduced ourselves and I began the long walk to Chicago from Madison.

The march was one of the most difficult and rewarding experiences I have had. Walking under an excruciating sun for days took a toll on my body, but my spirit remained high. Although, there was a range of differences in age and backgrounds, I

felt a great sense of unity and togetherness from the start.

I was so fortunate to walk alongside a former political prisoner, Kusho Palden Gyatso. The stories of his imprisonment personify the human will and determination for survival. I vividly remember the night when he spoke about his time at Drapchi Prison. His words still resonate in my ears and crush my heart. His life and his ruthless dedication to expose the inhumane treatments of the Tibetans inside Tibet by a totalitarian Chinese government should serve as inspiration to all Tibetans to unite, educate, and to fight for a free Tibet!

## Select Activities of ITIM 2007 to 2009

### *Team Tibet Launched in Baseball Stadiums 2007*

<http://rangzen.org/archive/team%20tibet%202007/ChicagoTeamTibetRelease.pdf>

<http://rangzen.org/archive/team%20tibet%202007/team%20tibet%202007.htm>

### *Independence Walk New York to Philadelphia 2007*

<http://rangzen.org/archive/nyc-philli-2007/html/reports/day-8-nyc-philli/cheers.jpg>

### *Protesting in Chicago March 2008*

<http://rangzen.org/march%2010%202008/march%2010%202008.htm>

### *Protesting in New York March 2008*

[http://rangzen.org/march%2016%202008/DSC\\_0172--sm.jpg](http://rangzen.org/march%2016%202008/DSC_0172--sm.jpg)

<http://rangzen.org/march%2016%202008/march%2016%202008--nyc.htm>

### *Tibetan Freedom Torch in San Francisco April 2008*

<http://rangzen.org/San%20Fran08%20Site/san%20francisco%20April%2008,%202008.htm>

### *Tibetan Freedom Torch in Colorado May 2008*

<http://rangzen.org/Torch%20Colorado/Day%202%20May%2027%20Pics/Olympic%20Sign%20.jpg>

### *Tibetan Freedom Torch in Indiana June 2008*

[http://rangzen.org/Torch%20Indiana/torch\\_indiana\\_2008.htm](http://rangzen.org/Torch%20Indiana/torch_indiana_2008.htm)

<http://rangzen.org/Bloomington%20Press%204-2008/bloomington%20press%204-2008.htm>

### *Protesting China's Official in Indianapolis 2008*

<http://rangzen.org/Indy%20Demo%20PRC%20Amb%202-2008/Indy%20Demo%20PRC%20Amb%202-2008.htm>

<http://rangzen.org/Indy%20Demo%20PRC%20Amb%202-2008/Tibetan%20Activists-sm.jpg>

### *Independence Walk Madison to Chicago 2008*

<http://rangzen.org/Walk%202008/html/Day%2015%20report%20pics/pics%20day%2015/5%20consulate/tibet%20flag.JPG>

[http://rangzen.org/Walk%202008/html/madison\\_chicago\\_reports\\_2008.htm](http://rangzen.org/Walk%202008/html/madison_chicago_reports_2008.htm)

### *ITIM in Beijing August 2008*

[http://rangzen.org/beijing2008/beijing\\_2008.htm](http://rangzen.org/beijing2008/beijing_2008.htm)

<http://journals.worldnomads.com/dherman>

<http://rangzen.org/beijing2008/Tiananmen%20Release.pdf>

<http://rangzen.org/beijing2008/Ethnic%20Park%20ITIM%20Release.pdf>

<http://rangzen.org/beijing2008/Tibetan%20Flags%20ITIM%20Release.pdf>

### *ITIM in Washington, DC March 2009*

[http://rangzen.org/March\\_10\\_2009/march\\_10\\_2009\\_DC.htm](http://rangzen.org/March_10_2009/march_10_2009_DC.htm)

### *Protesting in Chicago March 2009*

[http://rangzen.org/March\\_10\\_2009/march\\_10\\_2009\\_chicago.htm](http://rangzen.org/March_10_2009/march_10_2009_chicago.htm)

### *Video History of Walks and Bike Rides*

[http://rangzen.org/WalkRideVideo/ITIM\\_Walks\\_Rides.mp4](http://rangzen.org/WalkRideVideo/ITIM_Walks_Rides.mp4)

**I Am Tibetan**  
**Tsoltim N. Shakabpa\***  
 Chino Hills, California

Whether rich or poor  
 I am Tibetan  
 Whether free or not  
 I am Tibetan  
 Whether dead or alive  
 I am Tibetan

I am Tibetan  
 No matter what the Chinese say  
 I am bright and beautiful  
 I have my wants and desires  
 I want my country back  
 I desire my freedom

I am Tibetan  
 No matter what the Chinese say  
 I will celebrate King Songtsen Gampo's  
 reign  
 I will salute King Trisong Detsen's con-  
 quests  
 I will honor the 13th Dalai Lama's  
 Declaration of Tibet's Independence  
 I will treasure the 14th Dalai Lama's  
 compassion

I am Tibetan  
 No matter what the Chinese say  
 I will speak in Tibetan and not in Chinese  
 I will read and write in Tibetan and not in  
 Chinese  
 I will protect my culture and not yield to  
 the Chinese  
 I will practice my religion and not surren-  
 der to the Chinese

I am Tibetan  
 No matter what the Chinese say  
 I will revere The Dalai Lama  
 I will raise the Tibetan National Flag  
 I will sing the Tibetan National Anthem  
 I will commemorate the Tibetan National  
 Uprising Day

I am Tibetan  
 No matter what the Chinese say  
 I will encourage boycott of Chinese mer-  
 chandise  
 I will incite revolution in Tibet against  
 the Chinese  
 I will seek international support for  
 Tibet's freedom  
 I will use the power of my pen against the  
 guns of China

I am Tibetan  
 No matter what the Chinese say  
 I will fight to my dying day  
 I will practice non-violence  
 And exercise violence, if necessary  
 To win freedom and justice for Tibet

## ITIM Earns Award

Each year, ITIM participates in the International Festival held in Indianapolis. This past November (2008), ITIM received first place for the International Festival Educational Value Award. The criterion for this award was to “provide relevant information to visitors about the culture.” The Board of the Indianapolis Nationalities Council recognized ITIM with this award. ITIM wants to thank everyone who helped us earn this honor! The Tibetans present at the Festival accepted the award on the main stage at the beginning of the annual nationalities parade.



Tibetans and supporters at the 2008 Indianapolis International Festival. The blue award ribbon appears in the top center of the picture.

I am Tibetan  
 No matter what the Chinese say  
 I will be Tibetan  
 I will be a Tibetan in China-occupied  
 Tibet  
 I will be a Tibetan in India or America  
 I will be a Tibetan anywhere  
 And never ever will I forget  
 To be a Tibetan in a free Tibet  
 Copyright: Tsoltim N. Shakabpa - 2009  
 \*Tsoltim N. Shakabpa, popularly known as “T.N.,” is the son of Tsepon Wangchuk Deden Shakabpa, the highly regarded Tibetan historian, freedom fighter and former Finance Minister of independent Tibet. “T.N.” is a former senior international banker turned recognized poet, as well as a passionately political activist for a free Tibet.

བློ་གཤམ་པོ་ཚོ།  
 ལྷ་མིའི་ཅ་ལག་མ་ཉེ་དང་།  
**Buy Tibetan!**  
**Boycott China's**  
**Goods!**

བོད་ རང་ བཅོན།  
**Independence for Tibet!**



**Help Release**  
**The Panchen Lama**  
[www.rangzen.org](http://www.rangzen.org)

**Missing 14 years: Free**  
**The Panchen Lama Now!**

## ITIM on Facebook

ITIM is excited to announce that we have joined the world of online social media! All Facebook users are welcome to join our group! If you are on Facebook and are interested in Tibet, our group is right for you! It's easy to find us: once you are logged into your Facebook account, go to the 'search' box and enter "International Tibet Independence Movement," our official group page will appear, and click "join group." That's it! Our group is open to anyone who is interested. Over 420 persons are already part of our group. Our goals are to network, share information about Tibet, educate individuals about Tibet-related current events, and to keep group members up to date about our activities. If you are on Facebook, look us up and join us in the realm of social networking! See you there!

## Indianapolis Buddhist Meetup Group

This group meets at 7pm the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Friday of each month at Saint Luke's United Methodist Church (100 West 86<sup>th</sup> Street, Indianapolis). The

group is free and open to anyone interested in Buddhism. For details, visit <http://buddhism.meetup.com/84>.

### Support Tibetan Owned Indiana Restaurants

**Anyetsang's Little Tibet**  
415 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Bloomington  
**Café Django**  
116 North Grant Street, Bloomington  
**Snow Lion Restaurant**  
113 South Grant, Bloomington

### Indiana Tibetan Centers Tibetan Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Center

3655 Snoddy Road, Bloomington  
[www.tibetancc.com](http://www.tibetancc.com)

**Indiana Buddhist Center**  
9260 East 10th Street, Indianapolis  
[www.IndianaBuddhist.org](http://www.IndianaBuddhist.org)

## Support ITIM

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
email \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I want to support ITIM! I have enclosed a check of:

- \$10
- \$20
- \$50
- \$100
- Other

Please make checks payable to **ITIM** and mail to:

**ITIM**  
**P.O. Box 592**  
**Fishers, Indiana 46037-0592 USA**

ITIM is a 501c3 not for profit organization and donations are tax deductible to the extent permitted by U.S. law.

## Around ITIM

Since the last publication of Rangzen Voice, Ashley Saylor and Tenzin Namgyal (aka Tenam) have joined our Board. Taktser Rinpoche's wish and that of the current Board is to have more Tibetans serve on the Board and for a Tibetan to serve as ITIM's President. We welcome Tibetans who are interested in these possibilities. Last year, ITIM also hired Mary-Kate Oreovicz to pursue a number of projects on a part time basis. Though belated, we welcome Ashley, Tenam, and Mary-Kate to our team.

Our founding editor of Rangzen Voice, Gedun Rabsal, stepped down as editor because of his academic and family responsibilities. We are so grateful to Rabsal for his leadership connected to our newsletter and his other contributions to ITIM and his effort to preserve and promote Tibetan culture and scholarship.

## A Promise to Fight Anonymous

I flirted with the middle way, til I realized it was dead,  
a fantasy of diplomats who'd fly a flag of red!  
Taking time, I did reflect on more than a million killed  
and asked myself if joining China was the people's will.

I danced a tune, for a time, and joined hand in hand  
with this sad state of compromise that gives up Tibetan land.  
But then I thought again. Again my eyes did see  
a red flag flying high above the home of Lord Chenrezig.

I could not bear that vision dark, could suffer it no more,  
I realized that the middle way's a festering, deadly sore.  
The infection of red China and the endless suffering!  
The Middle Way trades dignity -- it is surrendering.

I boldly stopped the flirting. I broke hands midway through the song,  
and let loose a cry of bold Rangzen, that I held back too long.  
I may be criticized -- my devotion questioned too,  
but I'll uphold Rangzen's sweet Truth, my flag yellow and blue!

My Kundun does not belong inside a Chinese state!  
The Lord of Lamas, he deserves a much, much nobler fate.  
Buddha in flesh, he shall return, beneath snow lion flags.  
May I die with this resolve! May Rangzen swiftly pass!

Feel free to criticize me -- call my dream a far off hope  
I understand the ways that men, so often hopeless, cope.  
But I will say the middle way has not a snowball's chance in hell.  
A partnership with butchers? Friend, I just can't stand the smell.

Have you forgotten how they raped and murdered for more than fifty years?  
6,000 temples brought to ruins; intense and crushing fear?  
How can we compromise with "brothers" such as these?  
Rise up, resist, and don't bow down, until Tibet is free!