

March for Tibet's Independence Speech
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China's Consulate, New York City
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Tashi Delek! Your Honorable Taktser Rinpoche, my dear friend Mrs. Kunyang Norbu, my energizing fellow independence fighter Jigme Norbu, my brave and courageous Tibetan brothers and sisters, and my talented activist colleagues who support Tibet, I feel immensely privileged and humbled to speak to you today. I am not sure why or how I wound up in this situation where I am about to confront the people inside of this Consulate and their superiors back in Beijing.

I am privileged because I grew up in a middle class neighborhood in Brooklyn never expecting to associate with such distinguished individuals as His Holiness The Dalai Lama, Taktser Rinpoche, and Zatul Rinpoche who come from a far away place utterly different from New York City. I am extremely humbled that Taktser Rinpoche has entrusted in me the leadership of the International Tibet Independence Movement. This is quite a different role than the one I dreamed about as a young teenager. I thought I would become a corporate tax attorney! Perhaps, I could have done more for Tibet if I had pursued that path.

Some have said my involvement in Tibet and my rather chance meeting of Taktser Rinpoche was my "leh," or karma. Who knows! It is clear though it was not an accident and that I have received many blessings, and of course challenges, being involved with this movement. It has been a great pleasure, and more often than not, a lot of fun to be close to Rinpoche. His sense of humor and playfulness is contagious! It also has been an honor to be a part of this effort to return Tibet to its rightful rulers, that is, the Tibetans.

We are about to embark on our 13th major walk for Tibet's Independence here in North America, so I think as a Professor I best get on to the main part of my talk today. Before I do, I want to thank some organizations and mention a few more experiences that Rinpoche and I have shared.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the International Tibet Independence Movement, I want to deeply thank all the leaders and members of the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress of New York and New Jersey for everything they have done to support this walk and to make the necessary arrangements to hold this demonstration today. We have asked a lot of these independence fighters, and in each instance, they have met or exceeded our expectations. Our Board also wants to thank the leaders and members of the Tibetan Community of New York and New Jersey, the Tibetan Women's Association of New York and New Jersey, and the U.S. Tibet Committee for all their help and support with this walk.

Thanks to everyone else who took time to participate in this event displaying your support for Tibet's independence. There are many other individuals and organizations around the world who have supported this walk and we are grateful. Lastly, we want to thank the various Taiwanese independence organizations that have supported us since the early days of our existence in 1995. In particular, we want to thank the World United Formosans for Independence, the Taiwanese American Association, and the Formosan Association for Public Affairs. Dr. Michael Yuen from the World United Formosans for Independence is here with us today and he will walk with us once again. Thank you Michael.

Rinpoche, like each person in the audience today, I am thrilled you are here and I am glad we are once again together, in person, expressing our unwavering determination to secure Tibet's independence and our steadfast belief in truth and justice.

The last time you and I stood here in front of China's Consulate was on June 14, 1997 at the very conclusion of our three-month, 600-mile "March for Tibet's Independence" that began in Toronto during the height of the winter. We stood here with your fellow freedom fighters from East Turkistan, Southern Mongolia, and Manchuria. The five of us were attempting to deliver a modified version of China's flag to the Consulate General. As you recall, before we arrived at this Consulate, you and your colleagues while standing in front of the United Nations had cut out the four smaller stars from China's

flag that symbolize China's claim to Tibet, East Turkistan, Southern Mongolia, and Manchuria. When we reached the front door of this Consulate, the building seemed deserted. No one would answer the doorbell. So, as you recall, we left the flag with its four holes on the doorstep. I am sure you also remember that we drove around the block of the Consulate, and when we returned to the front door, the "true" flag of China with only its one star representing the Han people was gone!

Rinpoche, today, I am certain the officials inside the Consulate will hide their faces again in shame unwilling to admit a truth that privately they recognize, but publicly they are unable to express. That is, that Tibet belongs to Tibetans and that their government has no legal or other right to continue its brutal occupation of Tibet.

Rinpoche, it has been 9 years since you last walked with us in person. However, your compassionate spirit and your wrathful commitment to justice have inspired every single step we have walked for Rangzen since 1998. Every single day during our nine walks and bicycle rides since then, someone invoked your passion and vision to achieve Tibet's independence. In that sense, therefore, you have always been with us Rinpoche, each step of our journey to peacefully regain full control of Tibet.

Given your age Rinpoche, some people were quite surprised to learn you would be here today and that you would be present at the conclusion of our walk to Philadelphia. On the other hand, other people who know you quite well stated, "Of course Taktser Rinpoche would take part in a 'March for Tibet's Independence.' He is Taktser Rinpoche! What else needs to be said?"

I am sorry to remind you Rinpoche that our mission has yet to be achieved. China continues to wreak havoc in Tibet. It continues to brutally restrict the freedom of Tibetans in Tibet. And, it continues to maintain its absurd position that Tibet has always been a part of China. I also want you to know Rinpoche that our organization will never rest until independence is achieved and that many more organizations and people including Tibetans around the world now speak out for Rangzen. Our movement is much stronger and on the verge of becoming much more widespread and accepted.

The people inside that Consulate understand this, as do the leaders in Beijing. They know their time in Tibet is coming to an end. They know the Tibetans inside of Tibet cannot be transformed into Chinese thinking and acting individuals. They also know the time is soon approaching that the Chinese people will rise up in mass demanding their legitimate rights, demanding their desire to live in a free country, and expressing their indigenous Buddhist beliefs. In this regard, they fully understand that His Holiness The Dalai Lama has inspired and comforted many Chinese individuals, and that His Holiness has the potential to help the Chinese recapture their ancient, sacred, and unique religious beliefs, practices, and customs.

Throughout China's history, there are numerous examples of a dynamic, charismatic, and round, symmetrical, and pure faced individual rising to the top leadership position. China knows His Holiness fits this archetype. They refuse, however, to acknowledge that His Holiness does not want to dominate the Chinese or control China. He simply wants to help the Chinese people to emerge from their years of religious persecution and spiritual repression so that they can fully embrace and celebrate their inner lives once again.

I want the staff in the Consulate and the officials in Beijing to understand that the Tibetans inside of Tibet are anxious to live, once again, in this type of society, and they are relentless in their dedication to experience firsthand the presence of their true leader, His Holiness The Dalai Lama, in an independent Tibet. I also want the people in the Consulate and the leaders in Beijing to recognize that these Tibetans, for the most part, have no ill will toward the Chinese people. They only want their country back so they can live peacefully, express their religion and other human rights openly, take care of their own land and environment, and maintain friendly relations with their neighbors in India, Bhutan, and China.

I have some other very specific remarks I want to share with the people in the Consulate and their superiors in Beijing that I will mention in just a few minutes. Before I do, I want to say something about this particular walk and the persons who are participating.

We decided to end this walk on July 4th at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. For those of you who are not familiar with the history of this location, this Hall is considered the birthplace of the United States. The U.S. Declaration of Independence was adopted in this Hall, as was the U.S. Constitution. The Liberty Bell is housed in this Hall. This Bell was rung to announce the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence, a document declaring the United States' succession from England.

Since its installation, the Liberty Bell has symbolized the human desire for freedom and independence. Inscribed on the Bell are the words, "Proclaim Liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof." As a testimony to the significance of this Bell, oppressed individuals and groups from all over the world visit the Liberty Bell to express their desire for independence and proclaim their wish for liberty.

Our twenty-four participants in this year's walk will also express their desire for Tibet's independence when they arrive at the Liberty Bell on July 4th. This will be the second time that an ITIM walk converges on the Liberty Bell. In 1996, Taktser Rinpoche and the Venerable Palden Gyatso led a "March for Tibet's Independence" from Washington, D.C. to New York City that stopped at the Liberty Bell to proclaim independence for Tibet.

Like my ITIM Board Members, I am extremely grateful to the twenty-three Tibetans from New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, California, Chicago, Indiana, Philadelphia, Vermont, Maryland, Virginia, and India who will walk the entire time to Philadelphia. A number of you have walked with us before and we are very pleased you are here once again. You know about the challenges and the positive effect of such a walk. Many of you new walkers have left your jobs and families and have even sacrificed your income to take part in this walk. We cannot thank you enough.

We are also very appreciative of the individuals associated with the Tibetan Association of Philadelphia. You have worked hard to make all the necessary arrangements upon our arrival and you have shown an unselfish willingness to support us.

Now, I would like to read a portion of a letter we intend to give to the Consulate.

"Dear Consul General Liu Biwei,

..... I am writing on behalf of the International Tibet Independence Movement and the twenty-five Tibetans who are participating in the 2007 "March for Tibet's Independence" that begins today from outside of your Consulate.....I am writing to respectfully request your assistance. Please ask your superiors in Beijing to do the following:

1. End China's illegal occupation of Tibet.
2. During the transition period of returning Tibet to the Tibetans, ensure that all Tibetans in U-Tsang, Amdo, and Kham are guaranteed every right and privilege outlined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
3. Free The Panchen Lama, Gendhun Choeyki Nyima, and all other persons connected with His disappearance.
4. Free Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.
5. Remove all military personnel and weapons from Tibet thereby establishing Tibet as a zone of peace.
6. Stop the transfer of Chinese citizens to Tibet.
7. Respect and protect the environment of the entire Tibetan plateau.
8. Permit a Tibetan Team to freely participate in the 2008 Summer Olympics.
9. End China's illegal occupation of Eastern Turkistan and Southern Mongolia.
10. Recognize Taiwan as an independent Nation.

We look forward to receiving your response to this letter and also hearing that your superiors have agreed to take positive action to address our requests mentioned above."

I want to thank each of you once again for participating in this launch of our "March for Tibet's Independence." I especially want to thank again Taktser Rinpoche and Mrs. Kunyang Norbu for being

here. We will see you again in Philadelphia in just eight days. Lastly, I want to thank Jigme Norbu, Rinpoche and Mrs. Norbu's youngest son for continuing His father's legacy of advocating and walking for Tibet's Independence. This will be the sixth time that Jigme has participated in one of our walks since 2003. I'm sure that he will, once again, set the pace and inspire his fellow walkers along the way.

Finally, I want to say that I welcome the day when I can walk behind Taktser Rinpoche on His pilgrimage from an independent Kumbum Monastery in Amdo to an independent Lhasa in U-Tsang to offer a khata to His brother, His Holiness The Dalai. We will do this someday Rinpoche, and rest assured, many of us will be with you on your "Tibet Independence Celebration Walk."

Long Live His Holiness The Dalai Lama!

Long Live His Holiness The Panchen Lama!

Long Live Taktser Rinpoche!

Bhod Rangzen!