



# Bay Area Friends of Tibet

## N E W S L E T T E R

Fall 1998 • Volume 9, Number 2

### East Bay Tibet Day

### Saturday, November 21st at We the People

Come celebrate, enjoy and take home a part of Tibetan culture before the holidays! Bay Area Friends of Tibet presents East Bay Tibet Day on Saturday, November 21st from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. This year Tibet Day will take place at We the People Auditorium, 2nd and Harrison Streets, Oakland, California.

Over the last ten years the Tibetan community in the East Bay has grown and developed into a local microcosm of Tibetan culture and society. As with most refugee communities, it has developed its own special ways of preserving its culture. At East Bay Tibet Day, Tibetans young and old will present aspects of their beautiful and intriguing culture. Beautiful handicrafts, including jewelry, clothing, rugs, and ritual objects will be available. Enjoy song,



and dance, delicious food and friendship. Information will be available that will let you make a meaningful contribution toward the preservation of Tibetan culture and freedom of Tibet. Experience a unique and relaxing Sunday before the holiday rush.

BAFOT and the Tibetan community would like to thank Mayor-Elect Jerry Brown and We the People for graciously allowing us to share their space.

East Bay Tibet Day- Saturday, November 21st at We the People Auditorium, 2nd and Harrison Streets. (Near Beautiful Jack London Square), Oakland, California. 10a.m. to 5p.m. Admission: \$5.00 Adults, Children under 12 years and Seniors \$3.00, children under 5 years old free. For Information: 510-235-5984



### Ignite the Flame of Truth



### That Will Burn Brightly for This Boy

Trying to write about the fate of the Panchen Lama, Gedun Choeki Nyima, is difficult to do, because since his kidnapping in 1995 by the Chinese government no one has seen or heard from him.

There have been reports by the Chinese that he is in "protective custody," but no independent source has ever confirmed this. What could it mean when, in the face of world criticism, a great emerging power like China does not allow even a neutral party to confirm the well being of a nine-year old boy? It can only mean one thing; that the Panchen Lama and his parents were murdered. They can't have

visitors, because they are dead. It is as simple and tragic as that.

The murders probably occurred during the period shortly after the Dalai Lama announced his recognition of Gedun Choeki Nyima as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama. China claimed at first that it did not know the whereabouts of Gedun Choeki Nyima and his parents. It was only after a period of about two months that the Chinese began claiming that he and his parents were being held in "protective custody." The murder of Gedun Choeki Nyima also meant that it was impossible for his name to be included in the Golden Urn drawing, China's attempt at controlling Tibetan Buddhism. This explains why the Chinese government was so adamantly opposed to his name being included.

Taking into account China's long history of cynical manipulation and oppression of religion in Tibet, the pieces all seem to fit together

and present us with an unparalleled picture of shame and hubris. Dead boys do not sit on thrones. It is a pure case of might makes right. Unfortunately, current US foreign policy seems to support this viewpoint, as we saw when Clinton recently went to China, slapped Jiang Zimen on the back, and told the world that Tibet is a part of China. When I heard him say this, my first thoughts were: "What a lie! What a capitulation!" As one who has long studied Chinese and Tibetan history as well as a number of documents presented by international jurists confirming the independent sovereignty of Tibet and its unlawful occupation by China, I was mortified to hear the President of the United States tell the Chinese people and the rest of the world this lie.

Members of Congress, especially Rep. Nancy Pelosi, have courageously expressed the growing concern of the American people with the inhumane, unlawful, and dangerous actions

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# President's Message

## Occupied Tibet

In April of this year, I went to Tibet for the first time. It is one thing to read about a place, to hear stories about a place, and another thing entirely to see it with one's own eyes. I was told before I went, by His Holiness, to get out in the country as much as possible, to stay away from the urban areas, to see the real Tibet where the spirit of the people is still intact. But I wasn't able to do that because the Chinese won't let you. You have to be very crafty and/or very wealthy to spend more than a week or ten days in Tibet. The Chinese have made it prohibitively expensive. You must go in with a tour group, on a group visa, stay with your group, go through numerous checkpoints. I was only in Tibet for eight days — Lhasa, Gyantse, Shigatse, and overland out to Kathmandu. But I saw plenty in eight days to convince me that time is running out for Tibet.

Lhasa is an ugly Chinese city. I saw prostitutes practically everywhere. I saw many dispossessed, disenfranchised young Tibetans hanging out on street corners, playing pool, drinking beer, nowhere to go, nothing to do.

Both evenings we were in Lhasa, I went to the Barkhor to walk around the Jokhang, by myself, away from my tour group. In Dharamsala, I had been given blessing cords,

protection cords blessed by His Holiness, to give to people and I wanted to give as many of them as possible to the elderly and to nuns and monks, to try to tell people they were in the thoughts and prayers of many people. I didn't have enough to give to everyone and it was heartbreaking to have to explain to people that I only had enough for the "ama-las, pa-las, ani-las" and monks. As I was prostrating in front of the Jokhang, an elderly woman and her son came up to me. She took my hand and indicated she wanted to do a kora (walk around) with me. Her son was very shy and said very little. She and I made small talk, very small talk, with sign language and my limited Tibetan. We just held hands and walked, saying our mantras and smiling at each other. When we came to a safe and quiet place, I gave her a blessing cord and said to her in Tibetan that it was from His Holiness. She started to weep and asked me if he was alright and when he would come back to his people. I had no answer for her. I gave her another blessing cord to give to her son. She tied it around his neck and told him who it was from. Only then did I discover that he was mentally retarded. His face lit up like I had given him the keys to the kingdom of heaven. A piece of string with a knot in it.

The Chinese cannot destroy what the Tibetan people feel for His Holiness. But through their population transfer of ethnic Han Chinese they

have made the Tibetans a minority in their own country, second class citizens in their own country. The Chinese have gone into the monasteries and forced monks and nuns to either denounce the Dalai Lama or be forced to leave the monastery. These monks and nuns are fleeing as we speak in untold numbers and when they arrive in exile in India, the Tibetans already in exile are having a hard time providing for them. The Chinese are forcibly sterilizing Tibetan women. The Chinese are forcibly aborting unborn Tibetan children. There is no work for young people, their spirits are being broken in the cities by imported liquor and drugs, made available cheap by the Chinese to destroy them. The slowest, most cruel form of genocide.

I was swarmed upon by a group of beggar children in the Barkhor and was so horrified when I looked into their faces and saw the despair there that I broke into tears and couldn't stop crying. A middle-aged Tibetan woman asked me if I was okay, thinking perhaps I had been robbed or assaulted and I replied, "no, I'm not okay — look what the Chinese occupation has done to the people of Tibet, look at these children." Immediately a crowd began to gather and the next thing I knew I was yelling at the secret policeman who had been following me through the Barkhor that he was "going to rot in hell for betraying his people." Two teenage girls came up to me and motioned for me to follow them. I looked them in the eyes and the fear I saw told me to shut up and walk. They led me out. I went back to my hotel and cried myself to sleep, as I did every night I was in Tibet.

I could not photograph the people I met or attempt to carry on a conversation. To do so could have put them in jeopardy. I walked

### Bay Area Friends of Tibet NEWSLETTER

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#### Editorial Collective

Ventul Rinpoche  
Max Butler  
Ralph Davies  
Jamie Delman  
Diane Hume  
Bonnie McCalla  
Jigme Yugay

*The Editorial Collective seeks more volunteers. The Newsletter accepts, at its discretion, Tibet-related advertisements that do not necessarily represent the views of BAFoT. Please contact BAFoT for information.*

PRINTED ON RECYCLED PAPER



*The photographs on this and the following pages were shot in India, mostly by Diane Hume. From left to right: the first two images are of Sonam Dickey, who was living on the streets of New Delhi protesting the abduction and imprisonment of her son by the Chinese.*



round and round the Jokhang, winding blessing cords in my palm, one by one, holding people's hands and slipping the cords into their palms when I felt it was safe. I did this everywhere I went in Tibet.

There was a little Tibetan boy with leprosy in a tiny village on the road out to Kathmandu, a village where there is a cave where Milarepa stopped and meditated for six years. His leprosy is so bad you can't make out the features on his face, all you can see are his eyes. Again, when I gave him his blessing cord, you would have thought I had given him the keys to the kingdom.

The Potala and Drepung felt like desiccated museums. Desiccated museums with the most beautiful buddhas and bodhisattvas I had ever seen — everywhere looking down bestowing blessings. I know this sounds like a contradiction, but that was how every place felt to me. All I could think was that we, the Tibetans and their supporters, have to restore the life, the light, to Tibet. Tibet must be restored to her people. The Dalai Lama must be returned to his country and his people. But it has to be soon.

Please help us help our Tibetan friends before it's too late.

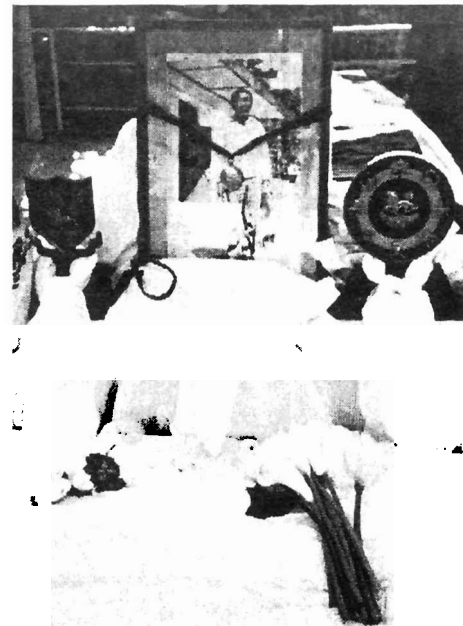
I would like to propose that we here in the Bay Area attempt to do something on a regular, highly visible basis to show our solidarity



with the people of Tibet. Perhaps we could meet every Sunday evening in front of the Chinese consulate and have a prayer vigil. Perhaps we could start to practice civil disobedience. We live in a country where they won't bash in our heads or torture us to death if we speak out. We need to be speaking out. Because our president is not, our government is not, nor the other governments around the world. What is it going to take for us to really get involved in this struggle? To really speak out? I invite the thoughts and suggestions of the membership of Bay Area Friends of Tibet. I am a person who has come back from my trip to Tibet with my heart broken. I no longer know what I am doing as president of this organization and I am asking you as members to help me reassess who we are, why we exist, what we are doing, where we are going. Bay Area Friends of Tibet needs input from its membership to go forward. Please help us.

*Bonnie K. McCalla*

*The two images on the right side of this page are of the funeral of Thupten Ngodup in Dharamsala. He had immolated himself to bring attention to the cause of Tibetan freedom during the recent hunger strike. His action came about after Indian police removed hunger strike protesters from their encampment in Delhi to avoid publicity during a visit by Chinese dignitaries.*



## Are You a BAFoT Member?

BAFoT operates through the generous contributions of its members. If you are not a member, please join today. Send to: Bay Area Friends of Tibet, 2288 Fulton St., #312, Berkeley, CA 94704 / (510) 548-5879 / fax (510) 548-3785 / E-mail BAFOT@IGC.APC.ORG



- Annual Membership \$25
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BAFoT is a nonsectarian, nonprofit 501(c) (3) organization. All donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

# Local Spotlight

## The History of BAFoT

by Jigme Yugay

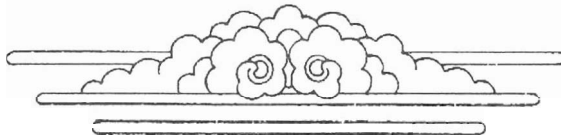
Let people forget, BAFoT was the first Tibet Support Group on the West Coast. It was founded 1983 by a group of 29 individuals including 11 Tibetans. Since then, it has arranged high-teas with Dorris Shelton, Doboomb Tulku, others visiting scholars and religious figures; participated in the receptions of HH the Dalai Lama to the Bay Area on many occasions; showed films on and about Tibet and Tibetans; organized demonstrations and peace marches. Our membership has grown since then to 700 plus now. Among our proudest accomplishments are 3 successful conferences, namely the 5 Point Peace Conference 1988, Endangered Tibet 1990, and Tibet—the Road to Independence in 1992 (We owe special thanks to Ed Lazar and Phurba Ladenla for their efforts). These actions by BAFoT helped to give birth to other TSGs, such as International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet (ICLT) and Committee of 100 for Tibet.

BAFoT and ICLT established the office on Dolores Street in San Francisco. UNPO and Milarepa joined as joint tenants. The Resettlement of Tibetans in the Bay Area was another important project of BAFoT. Thanks to the hard work of Julia Shepardson, the Coordinator and all her volunteers, the project worked out well beyond everyone's expectations. Because of this success, the Tibetan community in the Bay Area has increased from 18 or so members to now over 300. BAFoT facilitated the formation of Tibetan Association of Northern California (TANC) and is happy to see other TSGs form, thrive and do good work for Tibet.

The founders of BAFoT, envisioned this organization as a vehicle for Tibetans and non-Tibetan supporters to interact and learn from each other. The group would educate and bring consciousness of Tibet's plight to the West. Its primary function is in grassroots actions. The group has gone through ups and downs but the need and importance of this organization is growing due to the worsening situation in Tibet. At times, BAFoT is just a beacon of hope but many times it has been in the forefront of far-reaching actions.



Above: statue in Bodhgaya. Below: Sonam Lhamo and her daughters in Bir.



## Tibet Calendar

### East Bay Tibet Day

Saturday, November 21, 1998, 10AM-5:00 PM. At We the People Auditorium, 2nd and Harrison Streets. For info call BAFoT, (510) 235-5984.

### Multimedia Presentation by Milarepa Fund, "Tibet and Nonviolence"

November 24, 12-1PM, Mills College, Student Union. Contact Yuri at (510) 569-2270 or yuri@mills.edu.

### Desperately seeking Shangri-La: Images of occupied Tibet from Mt. Kailash to the Great Tsangpo Gorge.

December 8, 7:00PM, Mills College. A slide presentation documenting Tibet's most pris-

tine pilgrimage sites and the anguish of four decades of Chinese rule. Contact Yuri at (510) 569-2270 or yuri@mills.edu.

### International Human Rights Day

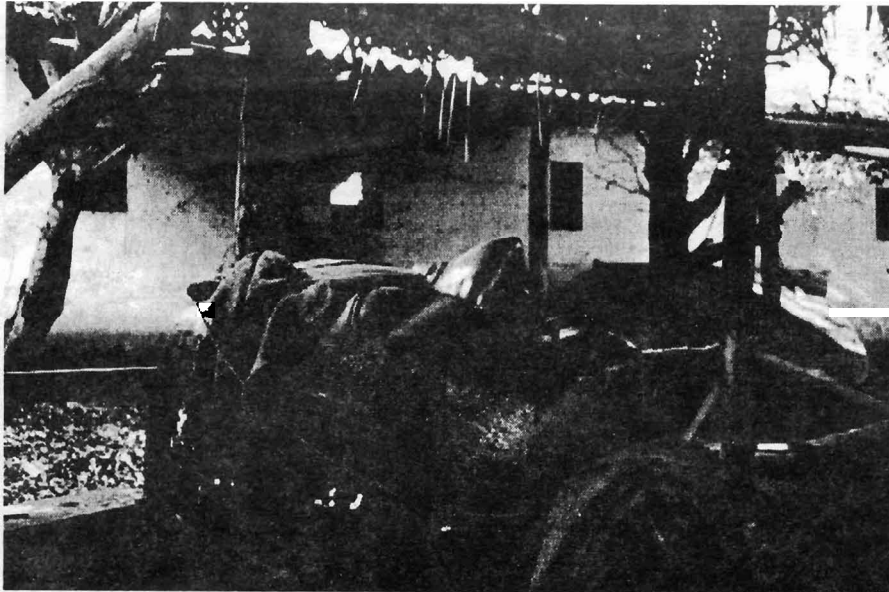
December 10, 7-9PM, candle light vigil in front of Chinese Consulate, corner of Geary and Laguna Streets. For further information, please contact BAFoT at (510) 548-1271.

### New Year's Eve Party

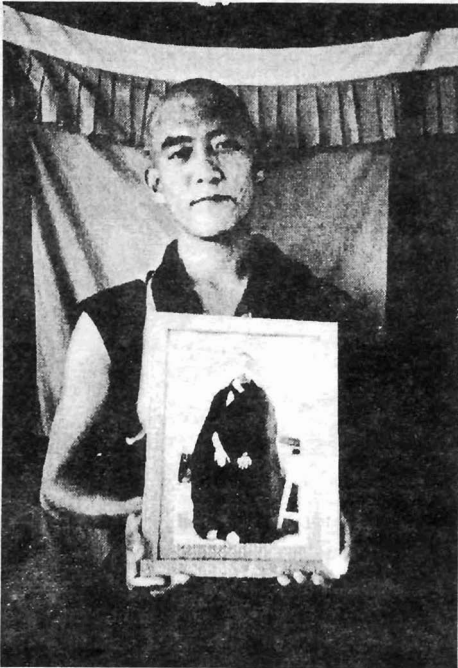
December 31, Tibetan Association of Northern California at the First Unitarian Church, Kensington. For information, please call Kalsang Namgyal (925) 672-8439.

**Volunteers are needed for all BAFoT sponsored events. Join the fun!**

# Faces of Tibet and Buddhism in India



Above: Statue under construction at Penor Rinpoche's monastery in Bylakuppe.



Center image: this young man is the reincarnation of the last Panchen Lama's teacher, murdered in jail by the Chinese for asserting that Tibet is a separate country. He holds a picture of himself in his past life. If the current Panchen Lama was freed, he could resume his teaching duties.



Right: Tenpa in Bikaner.

Below: Tenzin on the train to south India with Yangchen's dolly.



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## THIRD EYE TRAVEL

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*More Than Meets The Eye*

(continued from page 1)

of the Chinese government. The American people believe in and support human rights. Environmentalists and trade unionists are concerned with the virtually unrestrained exploitation of the land and peoples of Asia by a ruthless oligarchy. With all this well-founded and bipartisan opposition, to have the President of the United States say the "big lie" for the Chinese government is just amazing. Perhaps the Chinese have some information about US campaign financing that Bill Clinton would not like them to reveal?

When all of these events are thought about and one reconsiders the tragic fate of the Panchen Lama, one comes to the conclusion that all there is left is the truth. This is why it is so important to press hard upon the Chinese government to make it reveal the truth about what happened to Gedun Choeki Nyima. This shameful deed has gone on too long without an answer. Ignite the flame of truth that will burn brightly for this boy.

*(this piece may be freely circulated)*

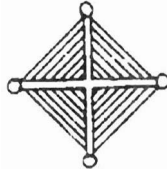
Max Butler, member Board of Directors Bay Area Friends of Tibet yakdotkham@aol.com 8/5/98

## Tutoring and Job Service Update

Over this past year, BAFoT has been able to continue offering tutoring and job referral services to local Tibetans, due to active participation by our volunteers. Overdue and greatly deserved "thank yous" go to Christine Schunn, David Coates, Jean Gonzalez, and Mitchell Bonner who have and/or are still tutoring Dechen Wangmo, Karma Tsewang, Tsokney, Tenzin Dolma, Tenzin Norzom, Tenzin Palden, Tenzin Lhundup, Tsering Yangzom, Lobsang Choephel, and Sonam Choezom.

Many Tibetans have been able to find jobs through our service.

This kind of volunteer work can be one of the most rewarding things you will ever experience. We invite you to join us.



## Seeking Jobs and Tutors For Tibetans

With the success of the family reunification project, many hard-working Tibetans are now seeking employment. The newly-arrived Tibetans have a wide variety of skills and backgrounds.

BAFoT is serving as a clearinghouse. At present, more ESL tutors and job offers (housecleaning, babysitting, painting, clerical, gardening, etc.) are needed. If you can contribute, even an hour a week, to help someone with reading, etc., or if you have a job or job referral to offer, please call BAFoT at (510) 548-1271 or Sonam Gonsar at (510) 658-1266.

Thank you!



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