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## HIS HOLINESS, THE 14<sup>TH</sup> DALAI LAMA: 2010 RECIPIENT

*Sherry Porter*<sup>†</sup>

On October 20, 2010, the Freedom Center honored His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, as recipient of the International Freedom Conductor Award (“IFCA”). His Holiness was awarded the IFCA in recognition of his lifelong commitment to promote peace, non-violence, basic human rights, human happiness, and inter-religious harmony. His three main commitments are the promotion of human values, the promotion of religious harmony, and a commitment to preserve Tibetan Buddhist culture.<sup>1</sup> The Dalai Lama advocates for these commitments and spends his time attending public talks and conferences, conducting international visits, and writing publications. He is a teacher and activist, possessing by his actions and personal examples, the exact characteristics the Freedom Center searches for when bestowing the IFCA to outstanding individuals.

The Dalai Lamas are believed to be manifestations of the Bodhisattva of Compassion and are considered the patron saint of Tibet. “Bodhisattvas are believed to be enlightened beings who have postponed their own nirvana and chosen to take rebirth in order to serve humanity.”<sup>2</sup> On July 6, 1935, His Holiness was born to a farming family in Tibet who grew buckwheat, barley, and potatoes. His Holiness was two years old when he was acknowledged as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama and he began his monastic education at the age of six. At only fifteen years of age, he was ordained leader of Tibet and faced the threat of a full-fledged war due to China’s invasion. At age twenty-three, he passed his final examination with honors and was awarded the highest level degree in Tibet, a doctorate of Buddhist philosophy.. His Holiness would spend years working to liberate Tibet from Chinese rule. In 1959, the Dalai Lama was forced to seek exile in India and continues to call India his home today.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama of Tibet, available at <http://www.dalailama.com/> (last visited Oct. 11, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

The years the Dalai Lama spent in his non-violent struggle to liberate Tibet were internationally recognized when he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. He has received over 150 awards and honors from over a dozen different countries. He has authored over 110 books and has given various teachings throughout the world.<sup>4</sup> An ordinary day in the life of His Holiness consists of prayers, meditation, exercise, healthy meals, listening to the world news, studying Buddhist texts, and drinking tea. His Holiness maintains a strict schedule while at home, but travels often with his teachings.

His Holiness believes that the purpose of life is happiness and love. He believes that one of the most important things we as humans can develop is compassion.<sup>5</sup>

“I believe that at every level of society – familial, tribal, national, and international – the key to a happier and more successful world is the growth of compassion. We do not need to become religious, nor do we need to believe in an ideology. All that is necessary is for each of us to develop our good human qualities. I try to treat whoever I meet as an old friend. This gives me a genuine feeling of happiness. It is the practice of compassion.”<sup>6</sup>

The Dalai Lama also believes in the importance of bringing people to Buddhism and using aspects of Buddhism to help others.<sup>7</sup> In the 1980s he started to work with modern scientists, bridging the relationship between world-renowned scientists and Buddhist monks. “After all, if practices from my own [Buddhist] tradition can be brought together with scientific methods, then we may be able to take another small step toward alleviating human suffering.”<sup>8</sup> He feels that the collaboration will create a “deeper understanding of the challenges we face together in our interconnected world.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> Tenzin Gyatso, 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, *Our Faith in Science*, N.Y. Times, Nov. 12, 2005, [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/12/opinion/our-faith-in-science.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/11/12/opinion/our-faith-in-science.html?_r=0).

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

Whatever the future holds for The Dalai Lamas, His Holiness will leave a legacy of greatness. His Holiness believes that the people should determine whether or not the reincarnation system of the Dalai Lama should continue into the future and in 2001 he initiated the process of setting up clear guidelines as to how it will work.<sup>10</sup> If the people decide that the reincarnation system will continue and that a 15th Dalai Lama is needed, then the guidelines have been established to reduce the risk of a political agenda exploiting or manipulating the system for its own gain.<sup>11</sup> His Holiness remains the longest living Dalai Lama.

Those who attend a public teaching in India given by His Holiness, would be advised to bring along nothing more than a cushion, a cup, and a sunhat.<sup>12</sup> At the Dalai Lama's teachings, people meet a man who describes himself as a simple Buddhist monk and spiritual advisor. His life and accomplishments, however, can only be described as much more than simple.

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<sup>10</sup> *Supra* note 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

