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Hour 5

Tibetan Human Rights

Tibet is a very old country with a very rich culture. Tibetan people have their own religion, language, and culture separate from Chinese culture. Since 1959 Tibetan people have been unable to practice their religion or culture freely. Because of this inability to practice this culture Tibetan language, religion and, culture are slowly dying out.

In 1949 the Chinese army invaded Tibet. By 1959 Chinese had complete occupation of Tibet. Many lives were lost during this invasion on both sides of the battle. After complete Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1959 many Tibetans fled Tibet to be able to practice their culture. These Tibetans left their homeland and forced themselves into exile. Most of these Tibetans fled to India. When I was speaking to Kelsang Phunstock, a man who with other Tibetan leaders brought the Tibetan Culture Center to Minnesota, he said that his parents fled Tibet in 1959 to follow the Dalai Lama who is the leader of their religion. Many other Tibetans also did this.

When Tibetan people in Tibet speak out against the Chinese government they are thrown in jail. In most of these prisons the Tibetans held there are tortured. Some of the forms of torture the Chinese government uses are hanging people with their hands behind their back, electric shock and forcing people to stand in extreme heat or cold for long periods of time. Almost all of the people held prisoner in these jails are people who spoke out against the Chinese government.

One specific example of the Chinese government treatment of the Tibetan people and their culture is the Panchen Lama. The Panchen Lama was only six years of age when the Chinese government captured him and his family and put them into prison.

This was just days after the Dalai Lama identified him as the next Dalai Lama reincarnation. This was in 1995. To this day no verifications have been made about the well being of the Panchen Lama.

The Chinese treatment of the Tibetan people violates many of the articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Some of these violations are “Article 5: No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel or unusual punishment.” Tibetan political prisoners are being subjected to torture in the prisons where they are being held. “Article 18: Everyone has the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in private or public, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.” The Tibetan people are being denied this right because the Chinese government is not letting them practice their religion publicly without being put in jail. These are just some of the many human rights violations China is committing against the Tibetan people.

Even with how bad the Tibet situation is there is still hope. Many organizations and people are raising awareness and money to help the situation in Tibet. One of these organizations is Save Tibet. This organization raises awareness through a website and raises money through selling merchandise and taking donations. Another organization is one that Kalsang Phunstock, told me about during his interview. It is an organization he works with and is called the Tibetan Youth Commerce. This organization raises awareness about Chinese occupation of Tibet and the Chinese government’s treatment of the Tibetan people. The biggest thing a person can do to help support these organizations

and the cause of the Tibetan people is to get informed about the issue and to inform other people about it.

There are also many things that I can do even as a minor to help the situation in Tibet. One thing I have already done is I attended a fundraiser for the Tibetan Culture Center. At this fundraiser there was Tibetan style singing, dancing, and musical instruments. Overall this fundraiser showed what the Tibetan culture is like. Another thing I can do is keep learning more about Chinese occupation of Tibet and to inform my peers about this issue. The Chinese treatment of Tibetan people and its occupation of Tibet are obvious to me to be a human rights violation but with the support of people in the United States and round the world we can change the situation in Tibet for the better.

Bibliography

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