

Dear President Hockfield,

In recent weeks, we became aware of the soon-to-be-opened "Dalai Lama Center for Ethics and Transformative Values at MIT" through its web site and MIT press releases. According to our understanding of its broad missions, this center will be an important part of MIT's student life, and will also participate in, direct, influence, or perhaps even fund some of the future academic pursuits at MIT.

As students and scholars at MIT, we acknowledge MIT's effort in the direction of holistic education and interdisciplinary studies, and appreciate the meaningful programs that this effort will bring to campus. However, we must express our grave concerns regarding this center.

Foremost among our concerns is the naming of the center. Dalai Lama is a religious title, and a title of one particular sect at that. It is much like the Pope of Roman Catholicism, the Grand Ayatollah of Islam, or some similar titles. We find it hard to imagine that MIT would name one of its centers a "Papal Center" or a "Grand Ayatollah Center" in deference to a particular religion. Therefore, it is shocking that MIT has chosen this unprecedented way of naming one of its centerpiece think tanks. The separation of religious affairs from academic pursuits, and the non-affirmation and non-imposition by the Institute of any particular religion are values that we cherish. Even if this center sponsored non-academic programs, it remains unwarranted for one religious sect -- Yellow Hat Tibetan Buddhism in this case -- to usurp the right of conversation regarding universal human values such as ethics. We find the name inappropriate on at least these grounds.

Our second concern is the disconnection between the pursuits chartered by this center and the nature of its executive direction. While we are satisfied that the center's Steering Committee and most members of the Advisory Board have disclosed their qualifications -- academic or otherwise -- relating to the center's missions, the Board of Directors is another matter. In it, we find several figures with purely political qualifications, including a former external minister of a foreign government as well as the sitting "prime minister" of the Tibetan government-in-exile. Their presence calls into question the executive direction that this center will take, and the ability to be truly nonpartisan in light of potential conflicts of interest in its programming.

Our third concern is the permanent, intimate association of this center with Mr. Tenzin Gyatso, the fourteenth Dalai Lama. Having an MIT center so closely associated with one person always risks association with all aspects of that individual, and this is especially true when it comes to Mr. Tenzin Gyatso and his cause against China. We stress that this close association unnecessarily puts MIT's name in jeopardy for his particular views (some quite contrary to his teachings*), as well as lends MIT's reputation as credence to his political agenda. We do not believe that is MIT's intention nor do we think such embroilment is a winning deal for MIT. Not only does it offend us and many prospective applicants in China, it will also damage MIT's image among them. Current students who do not agree with Mr. Tenzin Gyatso's politics would find themselves in the uncomfortable bind of being associated with or supported through initiatives of this center. Such a development would significantly strain MIT's pursuit to deepen the academic cooperation and exchange with China.

The combination of the center's name, a few of its current Board of Directors, and its close association with Mr. Tenzin Gyatso are causes for our concerns. These may easily inflame strong passions, a fact that we bring to your attention because it often escapes notice. We hope to open a dialogue very soon with the administration and discuss concrete ways to remedy our concerns, including:

- Reconsidering the naming of the center, so that it does not become a base "owned" by one belief or one person;
- Clarifying the selection process and role of the Board of Directors;
- Granting tangible assurances that this center will neither be associated with nor endorse Mr. Tenzin Gyatso's political and religious views.

Sincerely,

Lu Gao & Xiaoting Jia
Co-Presidents of MIT CSSA (Chinese Students and Scholars Association) **

** CSSA is the central student organization for MIT mainland Chinese students and their families. Currently, CSSA has a membership base of ~1000 people comprising primarily of graduate students. Founded in 1990, we are funded by ASA and GSC. Some of our major efforts last year include relief efforts for the Sichuan Earthquake and celebration events for the Beijing Olympics.

* Mr. Tenzin Gyatso presents himself an inseparable trinity of god, king, and philosopher. Besides his role as a philosopher, for which we presume he is being honored by MIT, he is even more a controversial figure in political and religious affairs, particularly outside the view of the West. In the past, he has overseen CIA-led violence against China and continues to exploit anti-Chinese violence as leverage; he advocates ethnic apartheid in so-called Greater Tibet that covers four other provinces of China; and using his personality cult and theocratic authority as a living god, he has single-handedly banned freedom of worship of the Shugden deity among Tibetans and threatened those believers with expulsion from the community and even death. These betray the values for which he preaches.

“The Dalai Lama's administration acknowledged today that it received \$1.7 million a year in the 1960's from the Central Intelligence Agency ... The money allocated for the resistance movement was spent on training volunteers and paying for guerrilla operations against the Chinese ... It added that the subsidy earmarked for the Dalai Lama was spent on setting up offices in Geneva and New York and on international lobbying.”

New York Times, October 2, 1998

“An alternative strategic option would be escalation --- encouraging (or organizing) violent opposition in Tibet as a means of exerting new leverage for concessions from China ... Tibetans would disrupt life in Tibet and other parts of China ... there are Tibetans inside and outside of Tibet who are intoxicated with the idea of beginning such a campaign of focused violence --- a Tibetan-style intifada.”

M. C. Goldstein, *The Snow Lion and the Dragon*, 1999

“Tibet's spiritual leader Thursday said he was powerless to stop anti-Chinese violence as authorities in Beijing acknowledged for the first time that unrest had spread into neighboring Chinese provinces. ... ‘I have no authority. I have no power to tell the movement to shut up,’ the Dalai Lama said during an hour-and-40 minute briefing at his headquarters in Dharamsala.”

CNN, March 21, 2008

“It is interesting to observe that when the Dalai Lama talks about the domination of the Han Chinese in Tibet, he refers to the Chinese population not only in today's Tibet Autonomous Region, but also in the eastern parts of Qinghai and the western parts of Sichuan ... The Dalai Lama's proposal for autonomy sets up some preconditions for any negotiations ... for the Tibetans to survive as a people, it is imperative that Chinese immigration to Tibet should stop and Chinese settlers be repatriated.”

B. Sautman, J. T. Dreyer, *Contemporary Tibet*, 2005

“In the interest of Buddhism and the Tibetan national cause, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has openly advised against the propitiation of Shugden. On behalf of the Tibetan people, both in and outside Tibet, the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies would like to express our thanks and gratitude to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and make a pledge that we will abide by his every advice. ... In sum, the departments, their branches and subsidiaries, monasteries and their branches that are functioning under the administrative control of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile should be strictly instructed, in accordance with the rules and regulations, not to indulge in the propitiation of Shugden. We would like to clarify that if individual citizens propitiate Shugden, it will harm the common interest of Tibet, the life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and strengthen the spirits that are against the religion.”

A resolution of the Tibetan government-in-exile, June, 1996

“Buddhists picketed the Dalai Lama's recent visit to the United States and Europe. They protested against the ban on the worship of the 350-year-old deity, Dorje Shugden, whom they say is one of the most revered in the Buddhist

religion. In 1996 the Dalai Lama announced that worship of Dorje Shugden was banned and explained that his oracle, Nechung, had advised him that the deity was a threat to his personal safety and the future of Tibet.

The Tibetan Government-in-exile said its employees must stop worshipping the deity or be sacked. The office of the Dalai Lama told the superiors of the Sermey Monastic College in Bylakuppe, India: 'If there is anyone who continues to worship Dorje (Shugden), make a list of their names, birthplace and class ... Keep the original and send us a copy of the list.'

According to PK Dey, a human-rights lawyer from Delhi: 'Those worshipping Shugden are experiencing tremendous harassment. It is not in a particular part of the country, but everywhere there are Tibetans. Dalai Lama supporters are going from house to house searching.' For example, in Clementown, India, the house of a family of Shugden worshippers was stoned and then firebombed. Wanted posters describe people believed to be Shugden leaders as the top ten enemies of the state. The posters have been put up in monasteries, settlements and in Dharamsala by the Government-in-exile's Department of Security."

New Internationalist, August 1998