

FOR PEACE+EDUCATION

VANCOUVER PEACE SUMMIT 2009

Sunday, September 27, 2009 – Chan Centre for the Performing Arts, Vancouver, B.C.

World Peace Through Personal Peace

Panel: His Holiness The Dalai Lama, Reverend Mpho Tutu, Eckhart Tolle, Matthieu Ricard, Pierre Omidyar, Tom Beech. Moderator: Sir Ken Robinson.

Dialogue Contributors: His Holiness The Dalai Lama exchanged views with a panel of “respected leaders from across the globe who have inspired change through their personal endeavours.” They included: **Reverend Mpho Tutu**, Episcopal priest and Chairperson Emeritus of the Board of the Global AIDS Alliance; **Eckhart Tolle**, spiritual teacher and author of *The Power of Now*; **Matthieu Ricard**, Buddhist monk and author of *The Art of Meditation*; **Pierre Omidyar**, entrepreneur founder of eBay and philanthropist; and the panel’s moderator, **Sir Ken Robinson**, scholar and author of *Out of Our Minds* and other works on creativity, innovation, and human resources.

Her Excellency Michaëlle Jean, Governor-General of Canada, was unable to attend the gathering and so shared her thoughts in a video in which she reminded those assembled “that we must inoculate ourselves with the resolve to resist the ‘everyone for themselves and their clan’ mentality.”

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 “The world is reaching out for holiness.” – **Archbishop Desmond Tutu**

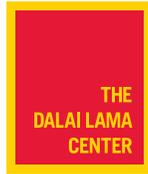
“The time for solitude has passed. Now is the time to rediscover the values and aspirations we share.”

Michaëlle Jean

Governor-General of
Canada

Tom Beech, President of the Fetzer Institute, an organization whose sole mission is to promote loving kindness and forgiveness, set the tone for the morning by awarding His Holiness The Dalai Lama and Archbishop Desmond Tutu with the 2009 Fetzer Prize for Love and Forgiveness. Mpho Tutu accepted the prize on behalf of her father, who was unable to attend because of a back injury. However, via video, the Archbishop conveyed his key message: “War, poverty, and violence are not the whole story about us. In fact they are aberrations. It is goodness, it is love, it is compassion, it is caring – it is these wonderful things that each one of us knows in the depth of our hearts for which we are made.”

His Holiness expressed his regret at not being with “my spiritual brother,” Archbishop Tutu, and affirmed the importance of those values for all six billion human beings for whom national boundaries have become meaningless. “We need to consider the whole world to be a part of me.” To support and reinforce this view of humanity, in 2012, with the support of the Fetzer Institute, the Dalai Lama and Archbishop Tutu will be co-chairing a global gathering of leaders from education, government, media, arts, sports, business,



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"We wanted this prize to recognize people who live with the reality of fear and violence and yet are inspiring examples of both the promise and the power of love, forgiveness and compassion."

Tom Beech

President of The Fetzer Institute

etc. to, in the words of Tom Beech, "share the many efforts that are underway in so many parts of the world to bring compassion and love and forgiveness to the center of life."

"We are faced with revolutionary circumstances." – Sir Ken Robinson

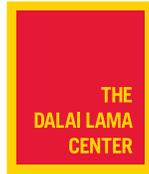


Vancouver Peace Summit 2009: World Peace Through Personal Peace.

Sarah Murray photo

In setting the context for the forum, Sir Ken Robinson affirmed the Archbishop's contention that people are fundamentally good, but said that very few of us understand the depth of our possibilities, which is why a conversation about the relationship between world peace and personal peace is necessary. He also added that while the issues related to world peace and human values such as love and compassion are as old as humanity itself, we are facing challenges that surpass any that we have faced before – diminishing natural resources, an exploding population approaching seven billion, extraordinary technological opportunity and risk, and a world that sits on either side of a generational divide.

Sir Ken Robinson put forth three broad questions as a focus for the panel's deliberations: What do we mean by world peace? What constitutes personal peace and how does that relate to global peace? What actions can we take to move the agenda of world peace forward?



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“What happens in a time of revolution is that things we take for granted turn out not to be true.”

Sir Ken Robinson

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“Peace gives inner joyfulness.” – His Holiness The Dalai Lama

His Holiness began the discussion by offering his views on peace. Foundational to his outlook is every living being’s right to exist and to grow. Peace is the opposite of destruction, but beyond being essential for survival, it is a source of comfort and joy in the human mind. Peace is not merely the absence of violence or destructiveness, but the capacity to address our inevitable conflicts through practices such as dialogue, reconciliation, and forgiveness. Peace cannot be achieved through wishful thinking, prayer, or even meditation. Willpower and determination coupled with compassion, and a sense of caring and concern for others’ well-being are essential. Awareness – i.e., being mindful of the unpredictable consequences that follow an act of aggression – is a vitally important factor in reducing violence. World peace begins with inner peace, which extends to the family, and then to the community. Children raised in such a society will be more compassionate and balanced people. His Holiness is wary of technology and its impact on young people, because he believes that it can support a clever brain but not a compassionate heart.

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“There is an overlay of madness in the human mind.” – Eckhart Tolle

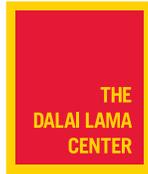
“Underestimating our potential for compassion is possibly our biggest drawback in bringing about change.”

Matthieu Ricard

Offering his vision of world peace, Eckhart Tolle acknowledged the essential goodness and sanity in every person, “no matter how insane their outward behaviour may be,” but also noted that in the 20th century alone, close to 200 million human beings were killed by other human beings. He attributes this to a dysfunction in the human mind that prevents us from perceiving other human beings and Nature as part of who we are. With “a voice in the head” that is continuously judging, criticizing, and conceptualizing, we are unable to see that every life form is as alive and sacred as we are, and “it is that illusion that creates this world of nonpeace.”

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“Peace is the opportunity for all to flourish.” – Mpho Tutu

Mpho Tutu defined peace as the opportunity not just to live in the absence of conflict, but “even in the presence of conflict to accord respect and dignity to those whom we regard as ‘other’...and whom we are stretched to love, stretched to feel compassion for.” Responding to Sir Ken Robinson’s question about her views on the conflict in South Africa, she said that it is a new democracy and is still experiencing turmoil and growing pains. Reverend Tutu also pointed out that women’s overarching concern for safety and bodily integrity means that the quest for peace has a different emphasis for women than it does for men.



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"I have a certain amount of affection and compassion towards others. The seed of that did not come from Buddhism, it did not come from religion, it came from my mother."

His Holiness
The Dalai Lama

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"Peace starts with a few people who say, 'That's enough.'" – Matthieu Richard

Matthieu Ricard attributes the absence of peace in our world to a prevailing lack of confidence among human beings in our capacity for compassion. He believes that compassion – or care, benevolence, altruistic love, and concern for others – begins with the individual. Using the metaphor of the garden, he said that we cannot expect to have a beautiful garden with flowers that are withered and dry. In a world of war and turmoil, inner peace is not a luxury as many might say, nor is it a sweet, weak or passive idea. Giving the example of the Burmese monk who stands in front of the Burmese army, he pointed out that nonviolence takes more courage than planting a car bomb.

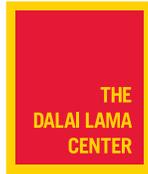
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"Diversity is a way to reach peace." – Pierre Omidyar

In response to Sir Ken Robinson's question about how technology can be a powerful force for transformation, Pierre Omidyar spoke about creating eBay 15 years ago with the premise that people are basically good. He wanted to use technology to create a place where people could meet others with common interests and do business with them. As an example of how technology can erase outward differences, he gave the example of a macho truck driver connecting with a New York attorney over a shared passion for Barbie dolls. Pierre Omidyar feels that the Internet has enabled humanity to discover that we share more commonalities than differences and to embrace diversity.

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"Can I use my mind or is my mind using me?" – Eckhart Tolle

Sir Ken Robinson asked Eckhart Tolle and His Holiness to comment on the role of the mind in the quest for peace. Eckhart Tolle put forth the insight offered by The Buddha 2600 years ago, which is that our incessant automatic thinking processes give rise to a false self that is an illusion. We need to realize that there is a dimension within the self where we are not thinking but simply present. When we are in that place of emptiness, we are no longer at the mercy of the mind and can use thinking constructively.

While the Dalai Lama sees the value of investigative thinking, he feels that combining it with the mental element associated with warm-heartedness is essential. Intelligence carried by negative motivations or destructive emotions such as anger, hatred, or jealousy is always destructive. He went on to speak of the levels at which we perceive ourselves and others. At the fundamental level, human being to human being, there are no differences between us and no reasons to fight. At the secondary level at which we observe different nationalities, colours, races, religions, and other dissimilarities, there are more barriers between people. By overemphasizing the differences at the secondary



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“Without peace and compassion education, intelligence can grow and grow and grow, and that leads to catastrophe.”

Matthieu Ricard

level, “we forget the basic oneness of the human being.” Having the capacity to equate our own happy future with the well-being of the rest of the world requires that we use our capacities for investigation as well as compassion. Another factor is the bond between mother and child, which is our source of affection toward others, and defines the basic nature of all human beings, even mass murderers.

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“Our children have a lot to teach us.” – Mpho Tutu

Asked to offer her views on personal peace, Reverend Tutu pointed out that observing children and discovering what brings them ease and joy, and what focuses their attention can be a real lesson to us, because “this is a gift that we often lose as we get older.” Relating this to the preceding conversation about the nature of thought, she said that when we are completely engrossed in something, thought ceases to be chatter and becomes an embodied experience. She also stated that technology is neutral and can either be used as a force for drawing us closer together as a community or as a means of creating distance between us.

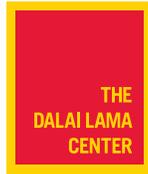
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“Where would we begin to move this forward?” – Sir Ken Robinson

Setting the stage for the final round of dialogue, Sir Ken Robinson observed a common thread in participants’ contributions: “Life is not linear. It’s organic and everything connects. There isn’t a single starting point for change but you have to begin somewhere.” He then asked them to offer their priorities for change.

Matthieu Ricard’s priority would be finding ways to apply both heart and mind in peace and compassion education: “Wisdom and compassion are two wings of the same bird.” He emphasized that compassion is not a sentimental or a utopian idea, nor is it a bonus for those who behave well, but is at the core of every human being.

Pierre Omidyar highlighted tools such as micro-financing that lift people out of poverty and give them a sense of dignity. For example, when a woman in a village in India touches money for the first time after receiving a micro-loan to buy some vegetable seeds with which she can plant a garden and sell her produce at the market, she feels empowered and her family and her village also benefit. His vision of peace arises from individual transformation, one person at a time.

Eckhart Tolle’s priority would be to introduce Awareness as the primary subject in our public schools, so that children learn to become aware of their emotions and thoughts as opposed to being overtaken by them. They would also learn awareness of other human beings’ thoughts and emotions so that they neither equate another’s emotions, nor their judgments about him or her, with who he or she is.



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Reverend Tutu loved the idea of teaching Awareness and invited the panelists and participants to consider the following questions: Now that we are self-aware, what do we want to achieve from that? What is it that we would wish for ourselves and for others as a result of that awareness?

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“We need to make more effort to promote basic human values.” – *Sir Ken Robinson*
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Sir Ken Robinson concluded the conversation by suggesting that human beings are on the brink of an evolutionary change. Moving from the industrial age that still defines us and the global peace that we seek requires not just reform but transformation. His Holiness confirmed that viewpoint in saying that neither modern education nor money nor technology have succeeded in bringing inner peace. In calling for greater effort on our part to promote basic human values such as compassion and affection, he highlighted the important role of women in this regard because of their greater sensitivity toward others' pain and suffering.

“To be born a human being is a rare event. We should use the opportunity as beneficially as possible.”

– His Holiness The Dalai Lama
