

Introduction of Vaclav Havel  
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Obviously for the Tibetans and friends of Tibet one of the main reasons why they feel a sense of gratitude to President Havel is because he was the first world leader to invite His Holiness the Dalai Lama to his nation and receive him as a visiting Head of Nation.

And for this single act alone, for treating our leader as he deserves to be treated, he deserves to be honored.

And it is not just the people of Tibet that have President Havel's support. Just yesterday he lent his powerful voice once again for Aung San Suu Kyi and the Burmese people in an editorial published in the Washington Post. President Havel and His Holiness the Dalai Lama have repeatedly joined together with other world leaders in support of Aung San Suu Kyi. They do this because they believe that those who have freedom must stand up on behalf of those that do not.

Since I knew that I will have the honor of introducing such a great man, I pulled out from my bookshelf a copy of his selected writings which I read many years ago to ask him to autograph it for me.

An unexpected delay of three hours at the Washington DC airport on my way here gave me the opportunity to thumb through some of his writings again. It became very clear to me that not only do we need to honor President Havel for what he stood for on behalf of his people as well as for Tibetans and others; but more importantly we must honor him for the moral and political leadership that he continues to provide. Vaclav Havel is now a former President of the Czech Republic, but he continues to be a world leader of great import.

In particular we Tibetans have so much that we must learn from him.

For example his letter to Alexander Dubcek can also be read as advice for the Tibetan leadership in its dealings with the Chinese authorities, and some of the warnings Havel offers to Dubcheck we too must take to heart. As someone who has the difficult task of leading His Holiness' current team, I have found Havel's letter to Dubcheck incredibly thought provoking.

Havel's 1978 essay "The Power of the Powerless" in my view is a must read for all of us, particularly Tibetans. More importantly I would like to ask the International Campaign for Tibet if they could have this brilliant essay translated into Chinese, if President Havel does not mind, because I truly believe that is equally important to them as it is to us. This has no splitist or anti Chinese motive, rather the opposite is true. Even though this essay was written at a particular period in history and under particular circumstances, the fundamental message within it is, in my view, timeless.

Since we also have among us the first popularly elected Prime Minister of the Tibetan Government, I urge him as well that it be widely disseminated among the Tibetan people.

I could also not help but find many parallels between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and President Havel both in their thinking and in their approach to issues. There are some phrases which could very well come from either of them.

For example, in a section of his interviews when President Havel was asked if he ever felt hatred towards his jailers, he responded: *No, I don't know how to hate, and that pleases me. If for no other reason, than because hatred clouds the vision and makes it difficult to seek the truth.*

Another example where again it becomes difficult to know who is speaking the Dalai Lama or President Havel, *"I'm not on the side of any establishment, nor am I a professional campaigner against any establishment – I merely take the side of truth against lies, the side of sense against nonsense, the side of justice against injustice"*

President Havel and His Holiness both have an obsession with the truth. Just as Mahatma Ghandi did.

They also seem to share some fascination towards socialism. Again in an interview Havel has this to say in response to a particular question: *"I consider myself a socialist. I even think that I have taken something from Marxism."* But then he goes on to say, that he has never *"accepted communist ideology, not even the reform ideology, and this is probably because the world appears to me a thousand times more complex and mysterious than it does to the communists."*

I could go on and on, but then I know you would not be able to hear from these two incredible people.

I would like to conclude this introduction again by quoting the person that we are here to honor.

*I am unwilling to believe that this whole civilization is no more than a blind alley of history and a fatal error of the human spirit. More probably it represents a necessary phase that man and humanity must go through, one that man – if he survives – will ultimately, and on some higher level transcend.*

Mr. President you have transcended.

It is my pleasure and honor to introduce to you Vaclav Havel and present him with the International Campaign for Tibet's Light of Truth Award