Tendell Sangmo
Narrator

Tenzin Yangdon and Charles Lenz
Minnesota Historical Society
Interviewers

Interviewed for the
Minnesota Tibetan Oral History Project

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Tendell Sangmo Residence
Minneapolis, Minnesota

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Tenzin Yangdon **- TY**
Tendell Sangmo **- TS**
Charles Lenz **- CL**

TY: Today is July 27, 2005 and we're at Tendall Sangmo's residence. Present are: Tendell Sangmo, Tenzin Yangdon, primary interviewer, and Charles Lenz, secondary interviewer.

Tendell Sangmo, can you please introduce yourself to me?

TS: Okay, I'm Tendell. My last name is Sangmo and I live in Minnesota since 2000 so here I work in Abbott Hospital as a nursing assistant. So I like the Minnesota here.

TY: Can you please spell your name out?

TS: T-e-n-d-e-l-l S-a-n-g-m-o.

TY: And what is your age?

TS: I'm fifty.

TY: First I would like to get some background information, so can you talk a little bit about where and when you were born and where you were raised?

TS: Yes. I was born in Tibet and when I left Tibet in 1959 maybe I was six or seven years old and I remember my house and my playmates, all this, but I don't remember what the situation of Tibet. Then in 1959 we got uprising in Lhasa and then the bad news comes to all over Tibet and then my parents left everything in Tibet and then came to India as a refugee in 1960.

TY: And in India, which school did you go to?

TS: I went to Dalhousie. That is only for center school for Tibetans. Then they taught us English medium in all subjects: English and mathematics, general science, social studies. All this. Then we taught Tibetan, too. Then they taught Hindi, also. So I stayed ten years in Dalhousie. It is in Himachal Pradesh.

TY: When was that school started?

TS: Me?

TY: The school.

TS: Oh, I don't remember. I was school in 1968. Admitted in 1968. I just learn A-B. I was fifteen years old.

TY: So you just began school when you were fifteen?

TS: Yes. But I know in Tibetan how to read. My dad taught me everything in the morning, in the evening. But I don't know English.

TY: And what was your level of education?

TS: At that time I like Tibetan language and I was always with the Tibetan book. And I never liked Hindi Indian language and I don't like English because I have no knowledge. We are in the remote country, so I never thought that the English and the Hindi will be useful in my life but when I am reaching USA, then I regret. Oh, I did miss that. But I don't regret that I learned Tibetan. I like Tibetan. It has me allowed to read Buddhism scriptures and I also wrote one book in Tibetan, *Love Song,* so I did part one and two.

TY: So has the book been published?

TS: Yes. I published.

TY: Can you name what the book is?

TS: This is . . . is in Tibetan.

TY: It's a Tibetan book.

TS: Yes. In English would translate as *Love Song.*

TY: *Love Song.* It's called *Love Song,* the book?

TS: Yes.

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TY: Nice. Also, did you graduate from the Dalhousie Central Tibetan School?

TS: No. After tenth, then this was ran by the center administration under the Indian government. And then they says, okay, this year in 1972 they reunite with the center school for Tibetans in Mussoorie. So I stayed two years in Mussoorie for class eleven and twelve. So there I did my graduate in second division. Yes.

TY: So you graduated from Central Tibetan School, but in Mussoorie because you—?

TS: In 1975 I graduate.

TY: And how was that? How was the transition like for you at that time?

TS: That time I was really excited because I was in this school like out of my home for twelve years and my parents came see me every other two years. One year they don't get me home and one year I can . . . they can get me home. So I feel like I was out of catch. Like I'm flying now in the world. [Chuckles] So all my friends they say, "Oh, now you're out free," because in our school there are lots of discipline. Even we can't talk to the boys. Even we can't write love letters. Even we have to coming time, going time and the teacher gives us lots of homework. It will be in time. If not done, teacher will be punish with the stick and lots of punishment. Sometimes standing on the bench in tears. So because of that, we got lots of freedom. Just we are—at that time we had children so we came in that. But now I miss school. [Chuckles] It's really a learning temple, a learning center.

TY: So after you graduated from Central Tibetan School in Mussoorie did you go on to college?

TS: Oh, yes. I was . . . the Tibetan government[1] they have interviewed before we get here. When I was eleven class they said, "Okay, what is your ambition? What do you want to do? Where you want to go if you pass your twelfth class?" I said, "Okay, my aim is to be a teacher if I get a scholarship. Otherwise I—I have no money. I can't do anything." The Tibetan representatives said, "Oh, yes. If you did good job, you done your—you got a good grade, then you can go either in the college or in the diploma course, some secretarial, teacher course." I say, "Okay, I'll go in teacher training." Then before the result comes, they send me home.

So there my parents live in Mundgod, a Tibetan settlement. It's in South India. Then there at that time they are forming, they are starting . . . put corn in the field. Then I was really . . . feels that, "Oh, my dad and mom they are doing hard job," and I got to feeling that they are hard working and then I start helping to my dad and mom. I went in the field and worked half day. Otherwise I can't. It's too hot. The sun is maybe hundred degrees and then I can work a half-day. Morning we start at nine and I came back at twelve and my dad and mom again get lunch and they go out until midnight, I mean dark.

[1] Central Tibetan Administration (CTA). The Tibetan Government in Exile.

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Like seven o'clock, eight o'clock. When they come, I cook all the dinners for them. So I forgot all my ambition, what I am doing or where I'm going. So I forgot everything.

Then one day I got a result from the Center School for Mussoorie and I was lots of worry about my result. I am not sure whether I did—I did but I'm not sure what marks I got. I got second division or first division. Then I got second division. They sent me the result in—they cut newspaper. They send newspaper in the envelope and then send letter. Okay, you pass in second division. You can contact to the Tibetan government so they will send you somewhere. I was so happy and then I announced to my dad and mom. Oh, you are the first in our generation or in our—because Tibet my dad and mom, they are uneducated. They are very good in spiritual like Tibetan Buddhism, all this, and they are good in Tibetan, too, but they don't know English or nothing. Then they say, "You are the first one who comes in the newspaper there. You passing." And they say, "Okay, we have a party today." So they arrange a big party. Invited all the relatives and family friends and they enjoyed . . . I was so excited.

Then I—at that time we can use telephone nothing so I write, the next day I write to the Tibetan Education Department for Tibetan education. I said, "Okay, I pass and you might have received my result. So as part of my ambition before I send me to you, I am going to teacher training. If I can go, I can go to college, otherwise I'll go to teacher training." Then after one month, this is very remote in South India, after one month they says, "Okay, you can go college. You didn't get first division but you can go to the college." Then they say, "Okay, you can go in the college in Bangalore." It's near to the further.

At that time I'm really innocent. And my friends, three friends in my settlement, they all going to secretarial course in Delhi. I said, "Oh, my goodness. I want to secretary course with them. I should go in my self only in the Bangalore." So I requested to the government. Now I change my ambition, [chuckles] easily. I say, "I'm going to take a secretarial course in Delhi not in Bangalore for teacher training." And they accepted and then we went to Delhi.

I got . . . my dad give me hundred dollars[2] for the bus and all this and then I got a small box and my dad put me one underwear, one socks and he said, "Okay, don't buy anything from this money. You just . . . you need in Delhi." I said okay. I didn't buy anything. I got some [unclear]. They give me two dollar . . . two rupees, five rupees. Say okay, take tea on the way and then I used these things.

When I reach Delhi and then Tibetan representative, bureau of representative Delhi, they had one section who send students in the school and they says, "Oh, you are from Mundgod. You three are from Mundgod," my two friends also with us. And yes, we said yes. They said, "Oh, you guys didn't get admission. [Chuckles] So you have to wait for one month."

[2] Rupees.

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And they hired a house that is a real nice house. At that time is only six hundred rupees it cost. Then we are six students, for we go in Saturday and we come back in that room, and we cook ourself, and in daytime we go in the school and at this time we are coming home and doing our studies, homework. Then we have to cook, clean the house. So we really enjoyed and we did two and a half years secretary course. We learned typing and salesmanship, bookkeeping, accounting. Just no detail but we can do in the office like, just office secretary means that the boss says, "Okay, you do this . . ." Small things. So we did all this and I got a second division from the secretary course. And then Tibetan government says, "Okay, you done your course very good and you can go to Mundgod to start in Tibetan government." Is time to serve Tibetan government.

I was so excited because my dad and mom is in Mundgod and there the representative, they need lots of young people to serve for Tibetan community. And they pay me a hundred eighty dollars.[3] I still remember. And I was so happy and I got—up from one month I got a hundred eighty rupees and then I keep twenty rupees for my pocket and give all to my dad. He was so happy. He say, "Oh, my goodness, after one year. In one year I won't get that much money. We got lots of money now. Tendell is earning lots of money." And he was so happy.

So I served since 1978 to 1999. So all my—the best life in my life . . . the smart life is I only—all served for my country so that I'm feeling . . . I appreciate myself. At that time when I married and then I got three kids and my uncles, aunties, they say, "Oh, why you do this small job? You do business. You are educated. You can earn. You can earn more than this. " I said, "Okay, I educated because of government so I want to be a honest lady, to serve the country or to my people when they needed me."

I'm okay. I don't go after money. So I was—and then, my husband came in America in 1993. Then I said, "Okay, I don't want to go until I can—I want to work for my country." My husband get so angry. He say that, "You served twenty-three years for the country and now what you left? Your body is old now." So he left the government, now everybody is coming to America. This is good life. So I left my country. I mean I left my job and I came to here. So I did good job for my country. That's the . . . I'm thinking.

TY: In India, did your parents or you yourself obtain Indian citizenship at all?

TS: No. At that time we don't. We are involved all day and night in our job and dad and mom they are with their income they do small business. They do—summertime they do field work. So we have no time to thinking all these things. Otherwise there is some benefit to be an Indian citizen. But I didn't . . . I don't think of that and I never tried. I don't know how to apply even.

TY: So in India your status, what was your status?

[3] Rupees.

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TS: In India when I was about to leave to America I was working and I was transferred on the Tibetan government staff so Indian government say me and my husband when first I start doing job in Mundgod as office secretary and then they transferred me and my husband to Mainpat. Then they transfer me to—my husband transferred to Delhi and I was transferred to Bir. We are separated and then we appealed. We are husband and wife. We can't go one there and one there so then they moved my husband to again in the Dharamsala. Then they send me to Leh-Ladakh. It's a real remote country in the Jammu and Kashmir side. And there I really suffered at that time. And then we come forth and we went . . . like nomad, the nomad people where there is good grass. They move whole, their livestocks like animals and their tents and move like . . . same thing Tibetan stuff. They have to move, like today I bought a big fridge, tomorrow I got order. "Okay, you move to Mapusa. We need a vacancy so you are moved." I say, "Will you buy my freezer?" And they say, "Okay." I paid a hundred dollars. They say, "Okay, I'll pay fifty dollars." "Okay, you take it. Otherwise I can't take it over there."

So we move. All my life move here and there and here and there and at last, I was in Tibetan Education Department so there I am, my rank up to undersecretary so I got ten staffs under me. All a lot of young staffs. So I'm working in the admissions, school admission and sponsorship, sponsorship dealing. And I have one boss, big boss, but he mostly, he won't be in the office. Mostly I have to do. Then if I couldn't take decision then I have to consult my boss. So at that time I left my job.

TY: So when you decided to move to Minnesota, did you move to Minnesota from India or from somewhere else?

TS: Yes. My husband was in Ithaca near the New York State. It's a real nice place. There's lots of big universities and then I liked that place. But there is really less job for us because all jobs occupied by the students, so one of my friends, she asked me to move to Minnesota. We said, "Okay. Is it okay, we get job? We have five family members so can we get job?" And they said, "Oh, yes." They will help me. Then okay, we moved here and they helped me and we got job and we like Minnesota. So we bought—we moved in 2000 and 2001 we bought house here.

TY: And you mentioned before that when you were working for the Tibetan government and also when—did you come here first or did your husband come?

TS: Yes. My husband came in 1993.

TY: So you mentioned that you and your husband were sort of separated . . .

TS: Yes. Separated for six years. But he came twice to see us, me and my three kids.

TY: How was that period like for you when you were separated?

TS: Yes. It's a little hard because usually my husband helps me handling with kids and all this when he left and I'm really . . . but I can handle and then I was exciting to move

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to USA so I don't suffer much. [Chuckles] I was just waiting for . . . my package to reunite my family.

TY: So when you moved to Minnesota, can you talk about like what kind of work you did?

TS: Oh, I did . . . just when I moved from—when I came to New York I got a job in bakery and we do the bagels and muffins and all this stuffs. It's a very interesting job. I can learn lots of things from the seniors. Daily they make different cakes. Also they let me do sometimes and they show us how to do it then. But they pay less, much less than in Minnesota. So when I left that job.

When I came here, then my friend suggest me, "Oh, you better to take nursing assistant job." It is very good for the Tibetans because we are really . . . our spiritual leader, Dalai Lama, always tells you always help the sick people, old people. This is religious. Religious is not important to go in temple and pray and say, "Oh, be happy to me," and all this is not necessary. The best thing is helping others. Is best thing. So it's a really good relation with your job and with your religious. Then I thought, okay. And I ask my friend, "Can I do that? Is it not hard?" She said no. We handle with our babies, with poops and all this pees, and the same thing what we do in babies and sometimes you will be trouble but you just . . . if your mind says do it, you do it.

Then same thing. I did the nursing assistant. First time I was really hard. Some residents, some patients, they poop all over the pan and on the floor and they smelling. About throw up. Then I just thought, "Oh, God, in my mom is like this so I'll do that." Okay. Same thing. She is someone's mom. Then I just do it.

After three months is all used to now. Now we have no, no problem touching poops and blood all these things. So it's very interesting my job because we got a good health, too. When I take two, three days off I couldn't eat much when I was in the job. I can't do—I have to lift patients and then we work too much. Whole eight hours we had no place to sit. We have to go visit rooms to rooms to help the patient and we lift some patient, they couldn't get out and we boost all this. It keeps busy and it helps our health. So we are getting not too much big body, too.

TY: Can you share like what kind of neighborhood you lived in when you first moved to Minnesota?

TS: In Minneapolis just near from here five minutes. It's on Central Avenue. Central Avenue. I stay with my friends for six months. Then I bought this house. This is Madison Street in Colombia Heights, Northeast.

TY: So you moved to Minnesota first then?

TS: Yes.

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TY: And you stayed with your friends for a while?

TS: Yes.

TY: And you had your family move here afterwards?

TS: Yes.

TY: And how did your family feel about moving to Minnesota?

TS: Oh, they like it because here we got lots of Tibetans and we got a real culture. The young kids, they talk Tibetans. In New York we have only thirty-five Tibetans and then all the kids there don't talk Tibetan. Even to the parents. They talk in English because, I mean, they stay a whole day with the American students and then when get home they don't feel talk in Tibetan. But in here lots . . . they have encouraged by the other—lots of the students they talk in Tibetan so they feel bad if they couldn't talk in Tibetan. So I like that. I like to—my kids they also like to read Tibetan books and they are very involved with the Tibetans and my older daughter, she was good in typing Tibetan so she download the Tibetan in the computer and she would keep busy and sought out the news of Tibetans and then she tell to our family. So I like that in here.

TY: So when you moved here your first job was as a nursing assistant at Abbott Northwestern Hospital?

TS: No. First job was . . . I worked in Briarwood East Healthcare Center. It is in the—just where I live. My friend's house is just two blocks from there. That's interesting. I tell you that. First I moved and my friends stay in the first floor. We live in the basement. It was really moist and suffocating like . . . but we had no choice. We stay there.

Then one day, after one week I told my husband it is so risky to get sick. We should get—move to apartment. Then we . . . me and my husband and going out and my kids said, "Where you guys going?" We said, "We are looking for apartment. Is better to move from here." Then we go there. There are two apartments where I work and they say, "All up. No vacancy." And I said, "Okay, we'll move next."

Actually this was a nursing home but the same shape as this apartment and this nursing home center. We go in there. "Do you have vacancy apartment?" [Chuckles] And the owner says this is the nursing . . . this is not apartment. This is a nursing home. And oh, that's good. I said, "Oh, that's good. I need job." [Chuckles] That owner, he really needs some people. He said, "That's good. We need some people. What you can do for us?" And I said, "Me and my daughter, we are doing nursing assistant. Almost done our course." He says, "Okay. We need two of you and what your husband want to do?" "I want do housekeeping." He said, "Okay, application. I'll try to see." And we two got—next morning we got job. [Chuckles] That's a good . . . fortunate.

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TY: That's good. Also can you talk a little bit about how like transportation was? Like how did you get to work at that time?

TS: Oh, yes. I walk. I walk. I got two blocks only. I get up early in the morning, five o'clock and then I finish my brushing and taking bath. I eat fifteen minutes. Then fifteen minutes I can reach by walking in the morning. And is so nice. Fresh air. We have no car. Nothing at that time.

TY: So how are you getting to work now?

TS: Now I go my car. I got a old car. Like me. I'm old and sometimes I gets . . . I go on trips with doctor and sometimes my car gets sick . . . I fix with garage so it works.

TY: And you drive to work then?

TS: Yes. I drive.

TY: Have you been involved in any community related activities in Minnesota?

TS: Oh, yes. I involved with . . . I mean I was president the Tibetan Community Women's Association,[4] the Tibetan—I mean to say Tibetan Women's—they elected me as president of Tibetan Women's Association. I did two years and then I resigned and now I was in the executive member but I'm not president.

TY: So you are still involved?

TS: Yes.

TY: Can you give a little background information on Tibetan Women's Association history?

TS: Oh, yes. Actually in Minnesota it was probably in . . . in 1998, as president then, Tenzin Chodon. So they did a good job for many years. Then they re-elect in 2001. I think 2001. Yes. So we are . . . I don't know. We actually is not so active because all are busy, busy, busy. Still we take a little time like five percent to one percent, maybe one percent, from our time and try to think about our problems in exile, government, in India, Tibetan refugees and even we are thinking in here to preserve our culture. We try to show the young generation should be cultured like, we want to save our culture alive but it is really hard because of this shortage of time and even we couldn't gathering . . . we have ten executive members. Every time when we had meeting we can come only five or four or six. So we didn't have whole, then we can't take decision. Still we are doing—still we never give up because something is better than nothing. So we do—we just do fund-raise. Then we serve our community and we do some awareness of our freedom and all this act with this. Yes.

[4] Tibetan Women's Association. (TWA)

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TY: Can you describe any specific activities that you conducted while you were president?

TS: Oh, yes. Yes. That's a good question. We just aim to preserve our culture in the . . . in 2005 . . . this is 5 and 2003. Today we had a talent show and that we asked to learn all our dances only in Tibetan and then we got the young people, old people and all mix up. So if we fix like this—this is only for Tibetan dance, not for Indian dance, not English, American dance. So when we dance then all the audience, all Tibetans they like it and they encourage us and this is a good inspiration for the young generations. And sometimes we try to do that but we didn't get good participants. They say, the young people, they say, "Oh, I can dance. I can dance in Hindi. I can dance in American style." All this. So it's sometimes hard to—and we perform some Tibetan drama, now play it's a good moral to show to this like some lesson in the play. So we try to take time . . . it takes too much time because we have to get like—have ten participants. We have to—at least a gathering of five times, ten times so it's hard to do it. Still, we did one time.

TY: What kind of message were you trying to send through the drama?

TS: Drama, yes. We did one drama that's like, what parents they do. Sixteen hours job in their job place and kids, they are at home. They can do what they like to do and they call their girlfriends in the house and they take the fridge open and they drink the dad's beers and then they smoke and they mess up all the house and then dad and mom says, "Oh, my goodness!" when they get from the job. They say, "Oh, my goodness. I came in America for the—to build my kids but now we are mess . . . we are doing wrong things. We didn't do—we both want to go for job. If kids do like this then what is the meaning to our money?" Their kids' life will be spoiled. So such—some other meanings, too. And the audience, they like such dramas and such plays and some other meanings, also.

TY: So in the drama you were trying to show that kids, Tibetan kids in Minnesota, and parents who are working sixteen-hour jobs have the freedom to do whatever they liked, and some were getting spoiled by that?

TS: Yes. Yes. Yes, some are getting spoiled and then what they had—they had trouble in—they get sick and they get police arrested. Having drugs. All these things. So that's . . . the parents they like—this is the right thing. They says . . . I mean don't all Tibetan peoples . . . some kids they mess up because parents didn't get enough time to look after the kids. And I'm thinking that this is also important for the parents to work sixteen hours because we are just newcomers. We are not American people. We are—we need house. We need—what American people need, we need it. So is . . . we need it. That's why we work for them. But kids, they don't understand, so they are spoiling.

TY: How do you think money has influenced in all this situation?

TS: Oh, yes. That's . . . I don't think so. The money is spoiling kids. It depends on the kids situation and parents . . . controlling. Like some people, they got nice kids, too.

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They got like, their kids they work and they're good. They work full time and they go to college part time and they got lots of money but they never spoiled their life. They just keep money in bank. But it depends on the—everyone's—like some parents they are good. They look up to them, what their accounts, what their money going, and some parents they don't care whether they work. "Okay. This is your money so . . ." They don't know where their kids money is spending. So I don't know. It's up to the personal. Yes.

TY: Do you think this could be due to lack of education?

TS: Lack of education . . . I don't know. That's . . . I have no answer.

TY: Were you ever involved in these kind of activities when you were in India?

TS: Oh, yes. That's a good question. Yes. I involved in—when I was in settlements, not in Dharamsala, in headquarter I had no time to involve in activities but when I was in Mundgod, Mainpat, I always, you know, with the Tibetan Women Association and even with Youth Association. So I keep myself busy all the time. So I like that though. [Chuckles]

TY: Also, like being involved in all these activities and in these organizations like Tibetan Women's Association and Tibetan—did you mean Tibetan Youth Congress?

TS: Yes.

TY: Has this led you to change your life in a way or has it changed your views, like how you view things?

TS: I don't think so. I can't change. I keep busy. That's I like. Sometimes I got lots of fun doing the get together with—we meet different people, different views when we get meeting and I'm learning something from other people. If I get home I couldn't learn anything. So I think it is fun sometimes to mix other people and do something good for the others. So that's why I try to participate where there is some Tibetan Associations.

TY: How do you think Tibetan Women's Association . . . like what kind of role has it played in changing the role of women in our society?

TS: Yes. We think that Tibetan Women's Association is very important for our society because in like our home, the mom is the most important thing. If mom wasn't there and dad—dad say, "Okay, mom not here, what we cook now, what we do now? What we have in the freezer?" Mostly the mom takes the responsibility in the house. Same thing. So society, community, start from the family. So I think the moms knows what we have to keep our kids in the good way and how to deal with our husband and our brothers. This is very important to build a good community.

TY: What about like—?

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TS: What we did . . . in here we didn't do nothing. We just mostly we—we do some activities like awareness. I before told you. Whenever we like, 10th March,[5] we participated. We go to the downtown to . . . know, to it. The world knows that we are crying for that freedom and we print our situation so what is in trouble in Tibet then will put the family to the other people. The main thing is what we can do in America is . . . good place to earn money and send to India so we did.

During my term, during when I was president, we sent—we are doing one sponsorship for the Tibetan kids who is from Tezu. In India is very remote country. So he was admitted in Chandara School. So we sent his fees from the Tibetan Women's Association. Three hundred sixty dollars per year. So this year is—yesterday we had a meeting so our president, she says she have to send for the 2005 for his school sponsorship and then this year we have new planning to help the Tezu settlement. What is the most important, I mean most needed in Tibetan settlement in Tezu . . . so we have to get information dealing with the representative of Tezu settlement officer. After that we have to decide how much we can help and what is their need. Most important need. So we can help . . . money.

But we can't do much like changing our life and we can't help—this is not like India. In India we are—we live like one neighborhood. So in here we are one in North, one in South. We are mixed up with Americans.

We are like American. [Chuckles] We can't see our family. I can't see my daughter all the time. She works the evening. I work morning. I came in. My daughter left for job for the evening. When she comes I'm sleeping. When she get up I'm gone in the morning. So one time she is waiting me, waiting for me at twelve. I say, "Why you didn't go back to bed?" She said, "I didn't see you for four days. I wanted to see you and talk to you!" [Chuckles]

TY: So do you think this is kind of affecting the mother-daughter relationship that Tibetans would normally have?

TS: No. I don't think so. I don't think so. But I mean to say is that we can't just stop for the Tibetan people in Minnesota by changing the lives, all these things. Even if we want to say something for our young generations, we say, "Okay, we have meeting from Tibetan Women's Association." Young guys, young generations, we have like hundred. They will—they can come only ten people. So we have time . . . the listeners they have no time. So we don't want—we don't feel to collect such meetings. We went many meetings organized from Tibetan Youth Association from the Tibetan Community Center but mostly we are really less in the meetings. Maybe they are . . .

TY: There is less participation by the community members.

TS: Yes.

[5] On the tenth of March, 1959, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, escaped from Tibet into India. Because of this, the tenth of March is celebrated as Tibetan Uprising Day.

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TY: And—?

TS: So we have no time for everybody, I think.

TY: So you said this change in lifestyle in America where you're working in the morning and your daughter is working in the evening and then you don't get to see each other and when you were in India like you didn't get to see your husband as you got sent to different parts of the country to serve the Tibetan government. So is it any different now like when you are not serving the Tibetan government but you are working for a private hospital?

TS: Yes. Is much difference. Here we keep busy. We get money. But in India, even if we keep busy, there's no money. All we do is volunteer after our office hour and I did lots of—thousands, thousands hours as a volunteer. My boss say, "Okay. We have to send this report tomorrow. So and so, this sponsor needs it or this child's report for tomorrow. You have to send email." He will give me ten pages and I'll do typing, typing, typing, typing. It gets ten o'clock and my family come to office. We have no telephone. "Mama, what are you doing? It's ten o'clock. Come on. We need you. We are waiting for you." I say, "Okay, okay. I have to finish it."

So we are in—as you know, Tibetans they are very honored to our bosses and we never say no. [Chuckles] So okay, I'm done. Then I will be happy I'm done so I put this on my boss table then I go to eat. There's no money for that. But here nobody does that. So I figure, why I do that? There's no good. But everybody does that because it's American style. So we don't feel . . . do volunteers like—so it's like changing the culture and changing the country when we are in America. What American people do, we do that.

TY: Can you share any other experiences of cultural differences that you've had in America?

TS: Oh, yes. I like American culture, too. Especially they are really helpful here. Tibetans, they say, "Okay, we are religious, we are very spiritual." And we say, "Okay, don't kill the animals. Don't harm the others," but we are not so practical. I mean . . . but like American people they are really practical. If they have—they help right away if somebody need help, ask. If you ask, "Will you help me?" Okay. They say, "Okay. Come on. I'll help you." So I like American culture, too, and I like this timing all this.

You know, in India when we say we have meeting at ten o'clock. Then all Tibetans will come. Some in ten, some in ten-thirty and some in at end of meeting. We have special—the best culture is to respect our seniors. Respect our dad, moms. This culture I think is very important in America because American—we can't just see American people because in America they have no time to stop their dad and mom. But in India, in Tibet, we have enough time to stop our dad, mom. We keep our dad, mom in here and all food served and what dad says, okay, okay, okay.

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But I don't think so. In my kids, now my kids, they won't do like . . . for me. I don't blame American culture because they have no time. Because of changing timing and the changing—like everything changing. So we have to go as they go. Still we need to respect. Like, I was really noticed when I work in Abbott Hospital and then the like, the mom is sick in hospital and then American guys coming visit mom. "Hi, how are you? Are you okay today?" They just keep up. Then they sit on the chair. They say, "Bye, mom. I have to go now. Okay? Bye." And then gone. If we are like this we feel bad, but they are—they don't feel bad because they are cultured. They are cultured. That's their culture. Because they have no time.

Same thing our young generation will do for us if we are in America. But actually we have to keep that good culture in future because the bad, the worst thing is when we are sick. So if my kids they come to me, even they have no time to sit in front of me, I feel good. I don't mean all American people. Some are really good. Some are really good. They just stay with dad and mom and some people they say, "Okay, you don't have to wash today. I'll wash my mom." And they wash by themselves. But the majority they are like—not like this. So we have like culture mix . . . I can't say that. It's a real difference here.

TY: Does it concern you then that because your children are growing up in this culture that they will not serve you as you have served your parents?

TS: Yes. I really bothered that. Yes. Actually I don't need to serve right, but is the culture if somebody is in front of you when we are sick it feels good. So I try to encourage like Tibetan young generations to keep what we do in India. These things shouldn't change, I mean to say.

TY: I'm going to move on to our community center now. So how far, like how close are you to the community center?

TS: I'm so close. Yes. I always try to go where there's meeting, where there's activities and where there's parties. I try to go. Sometimes, because of time, I don't get there but I try to get all information from my friends, whoever's going to the next day. What happened yesterday? You guys go there? What happened? What he says? What is going on in our community? What is going in Tibet? What is going in India? All this I keep the information and I think this—everybody need to keep it important, to make it important, otherwise . . . if we don't keep important then who will come?

American people won't come to keep our culture important. Nobody cares because this is our culture. So still some people this think, "Oh, you guys, this is important and then American peoples, they donate money for our culture." We should appreciate it. Why they donate money for our culture? They think this is important for Tibetans but Tibetans ourself, we don't take care of that culture and one day it will be gone. Once it's gone, it's hard to forms it.

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So I think everyone's responsibilities . . . even I encourage to my kids when there is meeting, I say, "Okay, let's go with me you all here." And sometimes they say, "I have homework." "Okay, you can do homework after when we come back." Mostly I try to take my kids to make it habit going to. When they go there they say, "Oh, I enjoy it. He talks good." "See, I told you, you ought to attend the meetings for culture show all this."

TY: So you feel that taking your kids to community activities like this—?

TS: Yes. And our temple, the religious place, and my kids they also like to go there. Yes.

TY: Is this kind of way to keep in touch with the—?

TS: Yes. It makes habit. Once you usually go then we feel to go. If once we don't go we don't feel good.

TY: Also, like how do you think the community center building has served our community?

TS: Is nice these days. I heard that there are lots of hiring all the time. Saturday, Sunday they hired by our Tibetan people and it cost—they pay—the fees is five hundred something. It's a good idea and a good place to gathering. If we have to hire someone's place then we lost our way. Oh, wish I didn't get mail, I didn't get something message. All this. We got our community center because the meeting is in community. The party is in community. Okay. So you can drive it once we know. We can drive easily. This helps too much. But I don't know how far extent. It goes . . . it's expensive like my small house I have to pay lots of money. For that big house we have to pay too much money. That help from where is coming so is coming from our community fees. Thirty-five dollars per year, not per month. So some people they are not paying for that. I regret. That should be paid. Then we can enjoy our community center.

TY: And how do you feel about the community in general? Like how are we doing as a community right now?

TS: In general, we keep busy. This times the community is doing so good. I mean all the Tibetans, our members, they are doing good. They keep busy in the community. They get dance, Tibetan dance and Saturday, Sunday Tibetan learning and all this are so good. We think that it's good to keep continuously. Otherwise if we keep the community center empty, it's no use. It's a house. It's not a community center. So we should use this for our culture.

So that's why yesterday in Tibetan Women's Association we had meeting that the dance party, Tibetan culture dance party, all are getting their class twelve and they are going to college and some are going to army and they are moving. They did good job for three,

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four years. They sing and they dance and then they know guitars, Tibetan music dramnyen.[6]

So we said they, oh, they did a good job. So we need to continuously . . . for that we should have a party for them. So we put party for them one . . . I think in August. End of August we have a party for—dinner party. Appreciation party. So you guys did a good job for the—because if they're good, the others will also come. Then they will think that, "Oh, someone there, appreciation for us." So we should encourage the other coming people. Then those who are learning Tibets, the kids, small kids, and there we appreciate those parents. They have to go to reach there and to get there they have lots of trouble. They spend lots of time. But they are getting good and now some are reading and writing in Tibetan and in future it helps good. I think so.

In Canada like in 1970s some Tibetan come and they didn't get chance to learn anything and now they are like twenties and twenty-fives. They even don't know how to speak to Tibetan. When they come to India they says—they speak their English language, no Tibetan. Are you Tibetan? One time I see one guy. He said, "I'm Tibetan. I don't know Tibetan." He knows only tashi delek.[7] He is like a Canadian. They regret it. Really regret it.

They say, "Yes. At that time no Tibetans to . . . even my dad and mom they speak English. They didn't told us." And they blame to dad and mom and others, all the people. But right now the young Tibetan kids said they blame—they don't want to learn Tibetan. Some students they say, "What's the use of Tibetan? I'm going American school. I'm American. I was born in America." [Chuckles] One day maybe we get freedom. We go Tibet and they don't know Tibetan. They will be belittled by themselves. So this is learning by—I mean part time. It won't waste the other time because they are free. After Saturday, Sunday. They are free. So they are learning without disturbing other subject. So it's important. Very important, I'm thinking.

TY: And how old are your kids and do they attend the Tibetan school at their age?

TS: No. They are out of . . . they all three go—my older daughter, she done four year degree in accounting. She works in TCF Bank as accountant in downtown and she is doing CPA by corresponding. The younger one, she is doing registered nurse. She all done her subject, her classes, but she have to get her state test. And my son, he's going UM[8] for computer engineer. So they know so very good Tibetan. They like to read Tibetans and my son especially, he's very good in Tibetan writing and he write letters to his uncles and aunties. They know English. My sisters. They know English but he write Tibetan purposely. He says, "I'm forgetting. Maybe it helps me and this is fun for me." He says yes. And the younger daughter, she don't like Tibetans. That's why she's forgetting now. Then my older daughter and they are teasing to my younger daughter.

[6] A Tibetan instrument similar to a guitar.
[7] Tashi Delek is a traditional Tibetan greeting.
[8] University of Minnesota.

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"Why you learn ten years Tibet language if you forget it? It's really shameful to you." They always tease to her. Yes. They two are very interested.

TY: So when you are at home, normally do you communicate in Tibetan language?

TS: Oh, yes. Of course. But . . . sometimes my kids they mix up Tibetan with the English sometimes and I say, "No. We've got Tibetan words. Here, no American in here. You can speak in Tibetan word. Make it correct."

TY: You mentioned before that like where you are living now in this neighborhood, do you have any Tibetan friends around the neighborhood?

TS: Yes. We have one from just one block from here. He was ex-Tibetan staff in exiled government and his wife. Just near from us and we see each other sometimes. Mostly we can see. When they are off I'm not off. When they are off—when I'm off they are not off. So.

TY: And also in this neighborhood, how well do you think you have integrated into it?

TS: Oh, yes. They all neighbors they are nice, especially this one lady. She likes . . . she like to us so we always chatting outside. Sometimes she come to my house and they like Tibetans, too. Yes.

TY: Are you—just in general, are you able to do things now being in America that you weren't able to do in exile?

TS: What able do you mean?

TY: Anything. Like do you feel that you can do things now that you weren't able to do before?

TS: Oh, yes. I don't think so. Like when I was in India I worked in office work and when I come first time I try to get job. And things changing and they says—I interviewed with one office in the New York and they says, "Do you know to keep the bookkeepings?" And what I learned in 1970s is much, much difference in this century, so I said—they said, "Do you know this? You know that?" I said, "No, no. [Chuckles] I know typing good and I can take the telephone, but I don't know."

My pronunciation is little mix up too much because I learned British English. Little bit. Taught by Indian teachers. They say F and M and all this. And learning by Tibetan people then mix up foreign accents. So when I first time came here nobody understood my English. They say, "What? What? Excuse me? Excuse me?" Then I was—then what I have to do. Then I write it and show them. They say, "Oh, like this?" And still in hospital, some my patients, "Tendell, what you say?" I say, oh—then they say okay. Then I'm still learning from them. One time she say, one lady said, "I need . . ." Her pillowcase mess up. I said, "I'll get you pillowcase. Pillowcase quick." We say

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pillowcase and she don't understand. "What you say? What you say?" I get pillowcase and she said, "Oh!" Then I said, "Okay, you say one more. I have to learn from you." And she say, "Peellow." "Okay. Peellow." This way I'm learning from my nurses and from the patients and pronunciation is—accent is very different. One time my patient, his name is David, "David you wanted . . ." "How you pronounce my name?" I said, "DaVID." I say—got it so quick. He say, "I'm DAvid." "Okay, I'm sorry. You are DAvid." So it makes me too confusing.

Still the patient understand that and they like what I am doing. I say always—sometimes my patients—one time one patient, he don't want to get up. He don't want to eat. I said, "What happened? Yesterday you get up and take shower. Today you are too sick today? Do you need pain pills or can I get you another?" He said, "No. I'm too depressed." I said, "What happened?" He said, "I got kidney cancer." "Oh, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. But you know what? It happens to million, million peoples. Once it happens we can't change it. You don't off your mood. You just accept it or you try to get treatment. Many people . . . there are lots of cancer relievers in this world. So you don't give up. You try to fight with that disease." Okay. Then after three hours he get up. He wash up. You are talking too much.

So I always touch with patient. Try to make it comfort. Some day . . . I always say it's not only for you. This comes to everybody. Even to the millionaires. Even to the Bush. There's no exception of for it. Everybody. When my time comes I'll accept it. We can't change it. So you're better to accept it or you go for five to eat good and walk good and keep happy. So if you take off your light off and sleep and eat worse it makes you worse. So I try to counsel. My job is very interesting. I don't know where I am . . . [Chuckles] I'm sorry.

TY: That's okay. Just in general, a lot of Tibetans pay Tibetan Green Book fee.[9] How do you feel about that?

TS: This is very interesting and this is very important because you know what, it's a way of thinking. We pay lots of tax for American government. Like even getting one thousand dollar for my paycheck. I pay three hundred for the government tax and why should—I couldn't pay only hundred dollars a *year* for the Tibetan tax. It's nothing. It's small thing for—and I'm thinking it's a good chance to start . . . at least if there—if our government don't take tax we don't feel to send money. So that's very good. Actually we don't say it's a tax. We say it's a volunteer. Yes. Volunteer money to send to the government. It's a good chance to put ourselves some donation. We pay in lifetime. And even my kids they always remind us. "Mom, did you pay this year's?" That money we send to government. My husband, he was very organized. All these things. He always pay advance. One year advance.

TY: So your kids, do know about this and they know that you are making these payments?

[9] The CTA has a volunteer tax system. People who make payments have these payments recorded their 'Green Book.'

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TS: Oh, yes. Sure. It don't help our Government . . . when I was in staff in Tibet Exile Government, it is the only—only twenty percent from the Tibetans for the expenses like two million. This is only a hundred thousand. Like this. So it don't help much but it helps. Really it helps. So when I was—one time I was accountant, not in education, I was in personnel. Like staff. Staffing office. I was accountant then. We have to—all the account make it balance sheet. So we got about two hundred thousand less shortage from the income. So we have to submit that, the report to the Dalai Lama and our Kashag Office, cabinet. Then Dalai Lama knows that shortage. He says, "Okay. Don't worry. I got money, that money," and he sent from his office. Dalai Lama sent from his office. So it don't help much, but it really helps. Yes. Especially it's in American dollars. When it comes in the Indian rupees it comes larger.

TY: Have you been able to—just being in America, have you been able to help the Tibetan community in exile personally?

TS: Yes. Personally I don't help in the Tibetan government. I help my poor family members like, I got mom in India. I got sister in India and I got a sister daughter. She's in school. I pay her fees. I'm thinking this is also helping because they don't need to ask help for the Tibetan government. So I do everything for them. I'm helping one of my aunt's daughter. I'm giving fees for the school. They are in TCV. So I send fees for the two students. That's it. I can help right now. When I get more money I'm willing to pay. My older daughter, she want to sponsor for the newcomers, Tibetans, who are in TCV. This year she went there and she asked the—she want to help. Not this time because she—just now she's like, she got boyfriend and they have to buy a house and all this. She went in office and asking how to help, what's the situation and how long? If I couldn't help then what happens that student and all this. She got all informations. But she didn't start right now.

TY: You mentioned that your daughter has a boyfriend right now and I just wanted to ask like when you got married was it arranged or did you like—?

TS: Yes. Love.

TY: Mostly in general, Tibetans get married by arranged marriage. It happens. It's very common. So how do you feel about that?

TS: My kids?

TY: Yes.

TS: They get by themselves. Especially in America. I can't—but my kids, they are good. They are showing me their photos. "Mom, this boy proposed me." I ask, "What he is doing?" "He is doing this and this. Doing the computer." The photos. And they show me. "How you think?" I said, "Oh, no good." "Yes. He is just graduate high school." My girl did. "It's no good." "Yes, you are right. I want educated one." [Chuckles] I said, "You will get it." "I'll try." And sometimes, oh, he's ugly. He's

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most ugly than me. [Chuckles] But only my older daughter, she got boyfriend in California and the other one she don't have right now. She's little ambitious. I said, "Don't be ambitious. You get old." [Chuckles]

Those were proposals. You choose one. You are right. Some parents they, Tibetan parents, say no, no. Not this. Not that. But I don't say. If they like, their choice. Otherwise they will blame for me after some time. So I said, "This is your life. You choose. This is my suggestion. Don't take him but . . . take better than this. This is my suggestion but take your decision," I always tell them. I don't need blame from them in future.

TY: Would you like to share anything else that you think is important and we haven't touched yet?

TS: I think what I know is all talked and then is good question you performed. I think I have no more to say.

TY: Do you have any questions?

CL: Yes. I have just a few questions. You talked about your children and you know, dating, who they want. Do your children mostly date other Tibetans or are they dating Americans?

TS: No. They don't like Americans because they're grown up in India. [Chuckles] So they like . . . more involved with the Tibetans and . . . I don't know. They don't—they have no interest in American-African and Asian. They like—they always go with the Tibetans. But no dating at all right now. The dating sometimes mess up so they don't go for dating. They only chat in the computer and sometimes they talk in telephone and actually I'm very strict in all these things. Dating, all these things.

My younger daughter, she likes to go for dance. She like dancing. I never let them go, let her go because I don't like—because I'm sleeping here while she's doing outside and I scared and then I said, "No. No way. We go together is okay." Then sometimes we got Over-Thirty. Over-Thirty means we got old ladies, old guys. Have dance party. Then she say, "Mom, I come with you." "Oh, you can come. Most welcome. Come with me." And she dance with us.

Sometimes she go with our friends. Still I check. I check their dad, mom. "Is she at your house?" I never trust my kids because they can make trick. So I never sent—one time she said, "Mom, my friend's birthday having in her house. I want to go." I said, "No, no, no. It's now late." She came from job at eleven-thirty and what is party this time? Everybody going home. Then she get angry and she say—I don't—because she was ready. She pull out new shirt, everything, and she was ready. I thought maybe she's gone. I get up and she did. She's gone. I was so angry. I just stay in the door and sleeping on the chair and she came in three o'clock. I just push her like this. "Why you go down there? I told you. You don't go. And you say yes. Now then why you gone?

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Okay. You get out of my house. If you want to stay in my house you have to honor my house. Otherwise you get out of my house." She says, "Mom, I'm so sorry. My friend came here to pick me up." "Who's your friend?" And she said, "Tsering is my friend." I called Tsering. "Did you come here to pick up my . . .?" She says yes. "Why you came? Why you spoiling her? I told her not to go and she say yes. Why you take my daughter? Okay. Don't touch my daughter since from today. Okay Don't touch my daughter. Don't call her." [Chuckles] And she never call her. And then she never ask me to go now. She never go now.

Once they got their boyfriend then they go anywhere they like. But I don't want to mess with any other boy who use—then is no good for them. And to my one daughter, she don't go. My son he don't go. They don't like dance. All these things. And clubs. We don't know clubs.

She like casino . . . my younger daughter, she like casino. I said, "Don't start with the bad habit." And she said, "Please let me go only one time." I said no. I said no. Then she said, "We all go, okay?" I say okay. For her. We all go. My husband, me and my old . . . I was planning on sleeping and she never finish. I lost fifty dollars in the machine. I said, "Oh, my goodness. I lost fifty dollars. Let's go now." "Mom, don't worry. I got fifty dollars," my daughter says. "I don't know whether you lost or you get . . . but this is no good for me. Let's go." Then we never gone since then. We just said goodbye. We all lost on that day. [Chuckles] I said, "That's where we all lost. If we gain then we start going, going, going. Then is a bad habit." Yes. You won't get millionaire by going in casino.

TY: So you think like because now like here there are more clubs and more casinos and things like that, it's sort of a bad influence?

TS: Yes. Very influence. Yes. Right. We have lots of things to do like entertainment. We go to the outing in the parks and we go in the Lake Calhoun two times this summer. We make momo[10] and some nice food together and put this music and one . . . like tingmo[11] it finish everything one hour and we pack in the hot case and then we go outing together and come together and we feel like we all family together and touch more close.

Then they don't—my daughter-in-law and the one my son they don't eat meat and then we make a nice dish for them. Usually they are not getting good food. Because we eat meat. They have make separate food. And when we go out there we make some special things for them and then . . . we've got lots of things to do like family gather. And sometimes we go buffet together. That's the Old Country Buffet. Sometimes we invite our family friends and I ask the . . . to invite my kids friends and then I respect—I just host them and make nice dish. What they like. They play cards. Let them play. They listen music. Sometimes they watch Hindi movie and I let them do but at twelve I let them go home.

[10] Tibetan dumpling.
[11] A kind of Tibetan bread.

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So it's good. We know each other, what they are doing. So I don't mean that you . . . I'm so strict and don't go . . . not like—no entertainment. But it's not. And we go movie, Hindi movies together. So the main . . . I'm thinking . . . I'm always telling to my kids, too, the main thing is the mind. The mind is happy, we are happy. Some people they are going outing to get happy, like picnic. They go picnic. Last time we went to Lake Calhoun. They sent my kids . . . they wants to go. We say, "Okay. Let's go." We got lost. So shower, shower. Everything's wet. I said, "Is it happy now? Better to get on sofa, watch TV, eat good snacks. Is more happy. This mind takes you anywhere they like."

My say, "Okay, let's go casino." Then the body will take it. But the wish will come to our mind. Oh, no. No. I better to stay. I finish clean my house. This is when I thought sometimes . . . we keep our mind happy by ourself. I always keep my head. I never get upset. I'm always thinking I'm very happy, lucky lady. I'm healthy. That's the most important thing. This is the most here.

I never get sick and just sometimes I get a headache, sometimes I get like the flu, dizzy. Then if I get sick then I can't help my kids, I can't help myself. So I'm thinking worst thing on the top then I'm thinking I'm happy.

So one time I was sitting in the hospital with the psych people that we got meeting, community meeting, and I'm nursing assistant and then all nurses together. Then the nurse, head of the nurse there asks us, tell each body, what's your problem? How are you today? Everybody says, "I'm stressed . . . I'm . . ." they're crying and they said, "I'm upset," and one lady said, "I want to smoke then I feel better. Otherwise I'll kill myself." She pulling her hair. Then my turn comes. I said, "I'm very happy. No problem. I have enough to eat and I'm healthy and why you guys are not happy? Make happy from here." And they are laughing. "Oh, yes. Me too. I'm very happy today. I did double job," she said. [Laughing]

I'm just thinking our mind keeps happy. So we got to . . . especially in America. It's like heaven. Really. Why we want to eat? We eat. We need money? Go to job. I got two jobs. If I need more money I go double in the other job. Other job both. If I get tired I say, "Okay, I don't work today." I just stay there and read scriptures, books and read nice books which gives the mind peace and keep—cook my kids . . . it feels better. Oh, you are dishes, you have prepared dishes here. They have. Oh, mother, you did it and I feel . . . I appreciate myself. So that's nice country, nice people.

Oh, goodness. In India you know that? Yes. We have—I didn't have enough food and when I was school we got in the morning, not your time but my time in 1970s, 1960s, we get oatmeal thojha thukpa . . . oatmeal. We cook in the water and put little oil and then we get it. It's very tasty. Oh, my goodness. Like . . . America is like, the sticks is much better than that thukpa because we have nothing to eat. That's why I'm thinking of big. The worst thing I'm thinking then I feel much better. Over here we can eat what we like to eat. We can stay. If you don't want to work you can stay. If you want to, you need the money, you can work. And we want to buy good clothes you can.

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Otherwise you can get the—mostly I get all my clothes from the Unique Thrift Shop, used clothes. This is very good. Is worth. I don't have to . . . the rest is my money. So my kids sometimes buy expensive things. I say, "Why you buy this for me?" Then they say, "You buy old clothes all the time. I don't like." Why you don't like? I like what are my choice. So it's very important keep our mind peace that I'm thinking.

TY: It seems you've incorporated the religious way of thinking very much into your life.

TS: Yes.

TY: How do you think your children are doing with that?

TS: My children, they . . . my older daughter, she is really good. My younger daughter, I think she goes little bit out of my way. So still I try to tell her. She say, "Mom, that's enough. That's enough." She's get angry. Then I don't force. Okay, you don't go in your ear. I don't help. Because it won't keep you happy. My son, when he do something wrong, I tell him. He won't against me. He say—I say do this and he didn't. No. He don't say. Okay. Okay. Then I told what I want to told. He run to the bedroom. I follow him to bedroom. "Mom, no." Then he cried. Then I leave. [Chuckles] If I don't stay they don't change it. Then they cry. Then tomorrow they change it. That's why I have to say it. It's my duty. If they listen. They don't listen then it's their way. If I don't say they feel that oh, when I was young I did this and I did this bad habit. I didn't study. My mom didn't say at that time. She should say . . . she should told me like very good. So I always tell them.

TY: As you brought up you like to go watch Hindi movies.

TS: Yes.

TY: When you go watch Indian movies it's a family event sort of?

TS: Yes. Yes. I just go for purpose of for them. In the whole. Mostly I got the cassette player from in there and then I watch in here. It's more comfortable. I just put my legs and then relax. In movie they are so sweating and hot and then pay more money and then coming way back to home and all this unnecessary trouble. So my kids sometimes they say, "Everybody goes in the hall. It's a big one." I said, "That actress is same face and story is same whether you watching there or watching here." And they say, "No, no. There is a big difference." I go there. A little bit different there. It is more clear and for them I go sometimes with them. Mostly if I want watch them I watch movie.

Sometimes it time wasted. Just better to work. This TV is a little bogus. Like . . . that's why I never bought a big TV. This I get free with house and my son always say, "Mom, we need a big TV." "For what? To pass your engineer? You don't want to get in front this TV. You just finish your computer engineering. Then I'll buy big TV." [Chuckles] He don't like. And no cable. Just basic. Because we watch news and then five channels coming. That's enough for us.

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We have no time to watch. Very little time. That time also wasted for their TV. Then what we do for cleaning and all this cooking? So they don't want to waste this much time. That's the worst trouble for my kids. They watch 'til eleven. Then I was so angry. I off the TV and plug out and then they go with angry. Bed. Otherwise they like TV.

TY: That's all the questions that I have down.

CL: You mentioned, talked a little bit about like a mother's role in the Tibetan family and a little bit about women. I know that your involvement with the Tibetan Women's Association and they tried this following year to sponsor someone for the Miss Tibet Contest. I was wondering what your opinion was of the Miss Tibet Contest and how that fits with the women's role.

TS: We didn't sponsor Miss Tibet.

CL: Did you try? I remember seeing like ads on the internet for . . .

TS: Yes. And I think this is good to recognize Tibetan is a government and we should try to involve what the world doing but for one reason they don't like it . . . Tibetan government, they don't like the rest of the world to Miss Tibet they are showing their body. That's not in our culture. Maybe that's the reason why they don't like. But from my point of view I appreciated those who are organizing Miss Tibet. It's a good thing to show in the world. Tibet is there.

As Miss Tibet. Is a good tool, a good method to show in the world that Tibet is still there. Miss Tibet is there and then otherwise, the only bad part of it, we put paper, the people don't take much attention. But Miss Tibet, it shows in the TV and it comes in the newspaper and then it takes more attention, drawing more attention from the world. So especially this in 21st century everybody need to, want to see in their own eyes. So then Miss Tibet comes in the computer, in the TV. So oh, okay. Tibet is still there. So this is important, I'm thinking.

CL: Have there been two Miss Tibet's now?

TY: Yes.

CL: And I think they've both been from India.

TS: Yes. From India.

CL: Do you think there needs to be or there's a place for a Miss Tibet from the US? Or from somewhere else or maybe Europe where other Tibetans live?

YS: I'm thinking that why there is nobody spends from the US and from other European . . . they think that this, traveling is expensive or maybe they lost their jobs. In here is not easy to go right away. Then they take off long vacation. Maybe some reason but there's

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less participants and especially they put the height is too tall so they should put like five foot five like we have lots participants make it because the most beautiful ladies—some beautiful ladies but they are short. So they can't participate. They should be . . . put little . . . they put five foot seven, right? Yes. Five foot seven or something. So almost six. And Tibetans, we are little. So maybe that's the reason no more participants. I don't know.

CL: You talked too about the community spreading out, the people live all over the place now. Do you think that that's a good thing or a bad thing for the Tibetan community to be moving farther and farther away?

TS: Yes. That's both, I think. Both. The good thing is we learn different culture when once we get free Tibet. Then some Tibetans they know Germany. Then they got Germany culture. We said like, "You come from London. I come from US. You come Europe and then when we get freedom, then all get meeting." And then you say, "Oh, in Germany we do this and that. We put constitution in this . . . this rule is so good." You put this in. You say, "Okay. In Europe we don't do this and you do this and . . . all the good advantage will become collected." But the bad thing is loss . . . like in the Tibetan . . . is like this. Put in the ocean. We lost in the war. We are no more Tibetan. But those who Tibetan . . . in Tibet they are become Chinese people and those in America they become Americans. Those in Germany they become Germany and after twenty years, no Tibetans alive. But it depends on the Tibetan people. If Tibetan people, they keep their standard, keep their culture in . . . they can preserve and is good. Is hard to preserve for long time. Even this, my generation, they are just losing. So I think it got both benefit and disadvantage.

TY: You mentioned that like the bad thing about it is that we're like, we're spreading apart . . . like we're sort of turning to an ocean. We'll get lost. How do you think our community has done to make sure that we don't get lost in the ocean?

TS: Now yes, I mean that's for time being. But after a long time it won't stand. I'm sure. This time we got like . . . we got like . . . for this time we got, a fresh culture from the India. Like my generation. We got good culture. School in Tibetan community. Not mix with the Indian people. Then we came here. We got a little left over. Now you guys also less than me but you guys got enough culture from your parents and from India, too. And your kids, they are born in here and then they don't know much from Tibetan. You teach, maybe fifty percent you can teach. Then your kids, your grandkids, they get only twenty-five percent from the parents. And then who will teach from the government? Who will teach where we go? Then value will be less, less, less year by year. After twenty, thirty years then they can . . . they keep the face maybe. If they don't mix it with other people. They keep the face like small little body, chunky eyes. Then they don't know Tibetan. They can say, "My grandparents they are Tibetan. Now I'm American." And they are Germany and then after some time they even don't say I Tibetan. I don't know Tibetan. I was born . . . because Tibetan is here because of the Dalai Lama. He is very popular. And everybody wants to say I'm Tibetan. If he won't live in . . . Tibetan government won't live.

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Then like, I tell you one thing . . . once one of the employer works in Abbott and he got three small kids and then she went to Amdo in Tibet for vacation to see her mom and brothers and that's very in the countryside. The countryside is very poor condition and they have no toilet. They have . . . they build a house and make it whole but . . . my dad and mom says we used to do it in Tibet in ancient time and then their toilet in that and then put some mud in the stuffs and then she went to Tibet with these kids. These kids they scared in the toilet. "No, I can't sit in there, get other toilet." Where they get other toilet? There is no choice.

Then they give us Tibetan food like tsampa.[12] You know tsampa? They put tsampa. The kids say, "I can't eat that. Get cereal with milk." They got milk but no cereal. They puts the tsampa in the milk. They say, "It's not good. I'm choking." [Chuckles] Then after some time they are crying. They said, "Let's go to America. I won't stay in Tibet." When they came to here they said, "Mom, next time we don't take to Tibet. Okay? We born in America. We are American. I'm not Tibet. You might be Tibet." [Chuckles] See, in this generation they are saying like this. So after then our Tibetan culture we well will be down and then nothing will be left and then nobody wants to say I'm a Tibetan. [Chuckles]

TY: You mentioned that after maybe the Dalai Lama is gone and after—if the Dalai Lama doesn't live long and if the Tibetan government is not there then we have—then we might sort of disseminate like in . . . but as long as His Holiness is there and as long as the Tibetan government is there do you think we can maintain that ability that we have right now?

TS: Yes. But that also, that number goes so . . . yes, the Dalai Lama will be there. In our religious Dalai Lama will come continuously so we believe that he will be there. But you know the main thing is we need the government. We need a population. We need trust. We need honor. All this. Who will stay in India now? Everybody is going. And then who will going to . . . if Dalai Lama takes birth in Tibet and Tibet China government will change some other way, if Dalai Lama born in India then . . . right now the fifty percent Indian Tibetan population is going some in Europe, some in south so all gone then. That's why it's very difficult. Maybe, maybe we can stay. Maybe it's getting better for the next Dalai Lama. Because his ability depends . . . his ability . . . he will take good in charge. So we never know in future. I'm thinking right now the condition is . . . he is seventy now. Then if he gone then it takes time. Maybe . . . he says he can . . . his miss . . . live 'til more than hundred. Still is thirty years, forty years.

TY: I mean looking at that . . . like when we came, when you came from Tibet and you were the first generation in your family to be educated and that was due to the Tibetan government and the CT, Central Tibetan School, and from that—were your children educated in Tibetan school as well?

TS: Yes.

[12] Roasted barley flour.

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TY: Which school?

TS: They are . . . two are from TCV[13] and one from Mussoorie.

TY: So in a way being in exile many Tibetans who are in exile have had the opportunity to gain a modern education and sort of be out there in the world and experience things that we haven't . . . that we wouldn't have gotten an opportunity to experience. How do you feel about that?

TS: That's . . . sometimes that's a good . . . like my kids. They are little lack of American education. My daughter, she's a nurse. So when she's getting her exam the American people they read one time. They got question. At this one they read question, but they don't know sometimes. But they knows the question. What it says. Question. But when we are second language, she have to read two times what question is saying. Okay. Is this? Then time goes. She got . . . she's came late in here and she got a little lost from here and she got good because she got all cultured. She don't like the fancy things and all this. She like home and she likes the respect Dalai Lama. She like Tibetan government. All these values are still with her. One thing is good for her to come in late. She don't miss all this. She got everything where she wants from Tibet and one thing she was little late to reaching here because she would learn more in the British English. Same like me. Because they all three . . . my older daughter she finish high school in India and this too, one in class she going in here. Class eleven and one going in twelve. I don't know how to say.

TY: Do you have anything?

CL: I don't have anything.

TY: Then, thank you so much for being willing to participate.

TS: Yes. You're welcome and I . . .

CL: I wanted to thank you for participating in our project.

TS: I appreciate you guys are doing for Tibet and that's the most valued . . . yes. I appreciate for you guys, too.

CL: Thank you very much.

TS: You're welcome. And I talk too much and you can take off those which are unnecessary for your project. Okay? Even I don't like . . . I'm very talkative. [Laughs]

TY: Thank you.

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[13] Tibetan Children's Village.