

Business Class for Family and Friends  
May 28, 2010

Geshe Michael: Hi. So first I'd like to give a special welcome to all the friends and families of Diamond Mountain students, especially those going into three year retreat. And I hope you have a good time this weekend, and please feel free anytime to grab me or anybody else and ask us any question you want. And the second half of this class tonight will be, I wanted you to see what a real business class is like at Diamond Mountain so maybe the first hour we'll do a normal business class and then we'll stop and then we'll take...I thought we could take questions and answers from the parents or the friends about the three year retreat or what's happening at Diamond Mountain in the coming years. So during the business talk if you'd like, please feel free to scribble down any questions you have or anything you want to ask about, and then during the whole weekend I hope that you'll feel free to grab anybody, especially Board members, and ask them any questions that you might have, especially about the three year retreat. I would like to ask the Board members to stand up, and then Lama Christie. So these are the Board members. And if you have a personal question that you'd like to ask you can always grab one of them during the course of the weekend. So thank you guys.

So we're going to do what we would do in a normal business class. And maybe we could start out by saying why we have a business class at a Buddhist university. Like, why are we doing business classes. Why is everybody dressed up in a suit, and what's that all about. So I thought I would talk about that first.

We feel pretty strongly that what people learn here, the course of study here has been very rigorous. They have done, the older students, we have 130 people in the advanced courses. They've been doing six to seven years of preliminary courses and seven years of advanced courses. So we'll be holding our first graduation in June. What, next month. And instead of the square hat we might make every body wear a Tibetan hat, I don't know yet, but we still have to talk about that, right? But you know, we're graduating the first 130 people. Many of them. The full course of study takes fourteen years. And they are the first graduating class of their kind in the United States, in the West I would say. And they've worked very hard for fourteen years. And I think the impression from the outside, and maybe from the inside, too, is like, what are you going to use all this stuff for?. Fourteen years of Buddhist philosophy, what do you do with that exactly? Do you go into a cabin and spend three years? So I think what we encourage people is that most of the 130 graduates who are graduating this term, most of them are already running their own centers. They are already teachers, globally, all over the world. Some of them have five hundred, six hundred students, a thousand students of their own. And so as a teachers' college I think Diamond Mountain has been really successful in the last seven years. And I think those on the inside, those who day-by-day have passed through thirty-six courses now, thirty-six terms, they sort of don't realize how talented they are or how much they have gained.

So recently we took a crew of people to Asia, and we visited in December. We visited four different countries. We were in Taipei, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Vietnam. And

we started to give their business courses. I was in the car from my house to Phoenix. I go by shuttle so that I can translate in the back seat. And somebody sitting in the car, there's like six people; it's a van, right? And somebody said, 'Well where...are you going down to the airport?' And I said, 'Yeah.' And they said, 'Well where are you going?' And I said, 'Hong Kong.' And they said, 'Whoa!' That's, you know, for central Arizona, that's a big deal. And then they said, 'Well, what are you going to do in Hong Kong?' 'Well, we're kind of business consultants.' And then they said, 'An American telling Hong Kong people how to do business? Like, there's more gold reserves in Hong Kong than in North America combined, Canada and the United States. There's more wealth in a few miles of Hong Kong than in all of the western hemisphere. And you're going to tell them how to do business?' And I said, 'Yeah that's what we do.' And they said, 'Wow! That's cool.' And I think what you can learn on the tour...we took twenty Diamond Mountain teachers on a tour, and they gave what we call success seminars which are two nights at public talks in a major city like say, Saigon or Hong Kong, and then we gave three day workshops, a weekend workshop. So people came for the three days and, you know, mostly business people, but also normal people. And then we had twenty Diamond Mountain teachers giving the program. And it was extremely successful. And today I was talking to some students and it occurred to me, America has reached sort of a maturity as a country, or as a nation, where we are no longer exporting technology really, you see. The last Atlantis flight was this week. The shuttle is being, that shuttle is being retired, and there are no plans for NASA to make anymore rockets. The next Americans to go into space will be going on Russian boosters because they don't make them in the United States anymore. And that applies to computers. We gave this retreat in Detroit last month, and the population of Detroit is two million, right? It has dropped to one million in the last ten years. The population of Detroit has dropped by fifty percent. In the last ten years. We were talking in an area where half the buildings are empty. You can walk into any house in downtown Detroit and just go in and lay down and sleep there. The doors are open because nobody wants them, you know? Somebody came, I think it was Ben Kramer, went to his old house where he grew up and he walked in and laid down and it's open. And then kids come in and then burn them. America has reached a kind of maturity where we are no longer producing those products.

I was in China, Lama Christie and I went on a retreat there not long ago, and after retreat we were anxious to see part of China because we were locked in this farmhouse for two months with nothing good to eat. And then we went on a...we said, 'Let's go see the new dam on the Yangtse River.' So it's the largest dam in the world. So we got on this boat, this really terrible Chinese liner and all they had was rice to eat for three days. And we got to the dam at the Yangtse River, and they said, 'Okay,' (nobody spoke English on the whole boat), and they gestured that we should get off here, so we got off. And suddenly the boat disappears. Suddenly the liner just goes away. And we're like, what's happening? And everybody's like, we don't know. And then we go on this bus. And they took us through an army base, and they took us to see the dam on the Yangtse River. And the tour guide is like eighteen years old, this girl. And she pulls us out of the bus, and they take us over to the side of the dam. And there all these cranes around a huge stage and there's like a thousand people sitting there, all tourists. And then there's a show put on by like five hundred Chinese actors, and half of them have got wings on and those

long sleeve silk things. And they're being thrown by cranes around the whole place, these huge construction cranes. The girls are like five hundred feet in the air, and there's a spotlight on them. And then they go over there, and then all these young Chinese people are like "Look at this dam!"

Like people come, like an eighteen year old Chinese person comes up and says, 'Where are you from?' You say, 'America.' They said, 'Look at this dam! This is the biggest dam in the world. This is a mile and a half long. This dam has replaced eighteen nuclear plants in this province. Isn't that fantastic? And our army built it with their own hands!' And they're so proud of their...the whole thing was so un-American that first of all, that they would want to do...

We were in Shanghai, and we had to go to the airport from downtown. And we had to meet with this spiritual leader in Shanghai. So I said the only time I have is on the train to the airport. We can meet on the train from the airport. So we get on the train to the airport, and we sit down with this, with Master Chang, right? And he says, I would like to...you know, in China, you have to say 'How's your father? How's your mother? Is your wife well? How many kids do they have? And then you finish that for like eight minutes and then you can start your meeting.

But first you have to have this discussion. So we sit down and Master Chang, 'How are you? And how are your students?' And the conductor says, 'You've got to get off the train.' And I'm like, 'Why?' He says, 'You've got to get off the train. We're at the airport.' I said, 'We've only been here eight minutes.' He says, 'The train goes two hundred and ten miles an hour.' That's it, you know. You left Shanghai eight minutes ago and the airport's way outside of the city, and he says, 'We're there.' And you've got to get off the train. We've got to get off. And they're so proud of their train. They're like, 'This is the fastest train in the world.' And then I was thinking they built the largest, the highest building in the world. (can't hear)...competition. Taipei builds one hundred one stories, and then Shanghai built the big spindle thing. And then someone in Guadalumpur decides they have one hundred and two stories. And then I'm thinking: who in America would bother to do this anymore?

You see, like who in America would care that they had the fastest train? Or who in America would care now would care that they have the fastest train in the world? Or who in America would care that they'd have one hundred and four stories now? You know, nobody cares. They can't even get the World Trade Center built. There's nothing there. It's how many years? It's nine years. There's nothing there. We can't do it anymore so what can we do, you know? What can Americans do?

The weird thing is, you take twenty Diamond Mountain teachers to Ho Chi Minh City or Singapore and Hong Kong, and suddenly in Taipei twelve hundred people came every night to hear them talk, you see? Twelve hundred people in a city of a million thought that they wanted to hear what the Diamond Mountain teachers had to say and they keep coming back. Thousands and thousands of people keep coming back. We had three teams of Diamond Mountain teachers were touring Asia in a month's period. This last month,

Lama Christie came through with her tour and exhausted everybody. Then Lisette came in with her tour through Hong Kong and exhausted everybody. And then we came and everybody was already in bed. (laughter)

But what I'm saying is that we have in America... I think what's happening is that I don't think we're incapable of building the fastest train anymore. I think it's nobody cares anymore. I think it's that we've evolved as a people, as a country. And that we're just not into having the fastest train anymore. We'll take the second fastest train, and we'll still get there. And then maybe we would like to something else with our time. Maybe we wouldn't like to work. And in Taipei, you just work sixteen hours a day, and that's how everybody works. Everybody works like that in China. It's normal because they want the material things. They need a bigger house. They want to have a Mercedes Benz. They want the kids to go to NYU, and they do. But then there's this hunger for something else. So in a way I think that Diamond Mountain is at the cutting edge of what America has to provide for the world, you see? They already have spaceships. They already have airplanes. They don't need 747s anymore. They make a better Aerobus in France. And they don't need our rocketships because they make them better in Russia. And cheaper, much cheaper. And the long march in China. So who needs them, you see?

But I feel this atmosphere in America, that Americans are no longer interested in the material things. Americans are somehow going inside. They are more interested in the ecology. They are more interested in their internal life,. They are more interested in living a good life than a wealthy life. You see what I mean. They want to have a comfortable life. They don't want to live in a tent in the desert. (laughter) But they would like to live in a small, comfortable, simple home that's solar powered and has a 1.5 liter toilet and where they divide their garbage into glass, metal, and cardboard, and it's recyclable. You see? And no, that's where Americans are at. Talk to somebody in Shanghai, and they're like 'Huh?' So I think we, you know, people rag on us as a country, that we are no longer making the best cars or like that. And I think we have moved beyond that. I think there's a general feeling in the United States that we would like life to be more than the fastest train or the tallest building. And in a way we've evolved past our parents' generation. My, baby boomers and X Generation on, in a way, we have evolved, I think, past the generation of our parents which just wanted material prosperity. And then we're saying we'll take a little bit less prosperity. We'll take basic comfort and simplicity and responsible living. But then we want to know more about the bigger things of life. You know, why do people die? What can we do about poverty, war, pain in the world. Is there some way of living which can help the world in a way that material...everybody needs material comforts and that should be the first step of every country. Every county has a right, every person has a right to a comfortable home, and a refrigerator, and a car, and maybe a washing machine, okay? I have one, my first one in my life, it's cool! Like I don't have to give my clothes to my friends anymore. And that's okay. But then you need...you hunger for something more. We have...we are working in Eastern Europe. We are working in China. We are working in Southeast Asia. People are finally getting, what do you call, prosperity. They have reached the middle class. There's more middle class people in India than in the United States. There are more people living at middle class level in India than in the entire United States.

Okay? So it's, something has changed in the world and now there's this weird thing happening. They want to know their spiritual stuff back. They want it back. The people in China who can't read the Heart Sutra anymore are calling the Americans in. They're importing Diamond Mountain University teachers. Almost like products; it's really cool. They go to Africa to get aluminum, and then they go to Bowie to get inner knowledge. And they do. They do. I mean people fly here from Shanghai to steal a couple of teachers. So I think what's exciting about Diamond Mountain, I think we're on the cutting edge of a cultural phenomenon where somehow we have preserved the wisdom of the east and now we're in a weird position of all these western people are going to Asia and other countries and offering them the next step in a person's evolution. Okay? So our fathers, our mothers, our grandparents, they brought the car, the airplane, and the rocket to the world. And the air conditioner, and the refrigerator, and now everybody basically has one. And now people are saying, 'What's next.' you see? And I feel like Diamond Mountain teachers...to see the reaction of Asia to our teachers...on the last tour thousands of people, I think the total tour four or five thousand people came to the programs.

And it was awesome. It was just really awesome. And they were so grateful, and they want more. So what we've done is we've created a non-religious, necessarily, like in China, we can't go give a Buddhist program and I can't wear robes in China. And anyway, people are coming up to us and saying, 'Can you teach us spiritual things without the baggage? Without the priestly order and without the books that no one else can read unless you are initiated. And without the rituals in another language. Can you just teach us something we can do in the morning at home? In our living room on the floor to do some meditation, do some yoga. Can you teach us something practical that we can use at our office or in our business or in our real life, in our family? Can you teach us something that helps us live a normal life, without all the churches and the class separation of the religious people, the priestly caste, and the normal people?'

So the vision of Diamond Mountain is can we offer people a spiritual way of living a success...a materially successful life in a way which is available to everybody in the country and which can be taught by normal people to normal people. Can you teach a normal person who has a family and has a job you know and is living a normal life, can you teach them something that will make their lives successful? And something that they can then pass on to other people without any kind of churches or synagogues or any of that? Can you have a spiritual way of life that spreads from common person to common person without all the baggage? Without all the mystery? Just plain, understandable, functional guides to a successful life, successful relationship, successful health, successful financial situation? Right?

And then a successful life over the length of your life,? Can you affect the facts of aging? Can you affect the facts of death itself? Can you go into those uncharted territories and also offer people something useful for when their relatives die? Or when they themselves get old? Or the deeper questions of life,? Can you export something from the United States which is carried by Diamond Mountain teachers to other countries that will help a

person in their life now and in the larger questions of their life? What happens when people die? Why do people get sick? Why do people age? Why do people get in car accidents? Can you stop war? Can you stop poverty? And really, that's what Diamond Mountain is for. We have trained in fourteen years' time. One hundred thirty people who are capable of going to other countries and these foreign countries like Detroit and New York, and they're able to give people some kind of lasting hope after you got your refrigerator, and airplane, and spaceship.

I think Diamond Mountain is where it's at. And I think in Asia that's what we've seen. And we've seen tremendous response. There are...we have five years of invitations for Diamond Mountain teachers; it's booked out. I was in the car today trying to find an extra half a day up, up til the end of what, into 2012, for when we could cover another city, and that's where it's at. So I would say that we have a very...we've had some kind of fantastic success in creating people who can serve the world and now you are here to witness the end of it. My mom came the day I was made a monk. My stepmother came to India - 1983. She was there. The night before, she got lost on the way to the monastery from the airport. She slept on a table, on top of a table in a chai shop in Molokopi (sp?) She's like seventy, right? And then she came the day I was made a monk and then the day I graduated as a geshe - 1995 - so it was twelve years later. She came to the ceremony, and she was there. And you know how all the monks, they doted on her; they gave her so many katags, you couldn't see her. She was buried behind a mountain. There was a pile of silk scarves for her, and she was buried behind them. So I think those of you who are here as parents and friends of people who are graduating especially and who are about to do the three year retreat, the three year retreat is going to cement their knowledge. It's going to change their personalities forever.

We did a three year retreat from 2000 to 2003. Five people. And it changes you forever. And it makes you an even more committed teacher, a more valuable person in the world at large. So don't think we're just putting them away for three years. The goal is to have fourteen years of training. They have three years of curing like a fine wine. What do you call it? What do you do with fine wine in a barrel? Aging? I don't like to call it aging. (laughter) Let's call it, it's like mellowing. Now their hearts will change drastically during the three year retreat. And when they come out. The people who did the last three year retreat are very, very fine teachers. They have built universities. They have built major organizations throughout the world. They changed through the process. It's like the final curing, or the final, what do you call it with a knife? When you make the steel harder. When you temper it, the three year retreat will temper their hearts, and they will come out as extraordinary people and extraordinary teachers. So the...don't think it's just a bunch of weirdos out in the desert. We are. (laughter) But we're good weirdos. And we're changing the world.

So what I thought tonight, just before we open for questions, we have a few more minutes. We took a crew to Vietnam, and we were in Ho Chi Minh City. It was a big thing for me because I grew up in the Vietnam war, and it was a big part of my growing up. And we had our business retreat on the side of the underground caves that were used by the Viet Cong. So we had our business retreat on the site where the Viet Cong used to

hide underground. And for me it was a very, very moving moment to be invited to Saigon, Ho Chi Minh City, and to have all these Vietnamese people clustered around, many of them who had been in the war, some of whom had been handicapped from the war, or from the chemical agents used, or the land mines left over. So in the audience, there were crippled people. There were people who had fought in the war. And the first thing I did in Hanoi, there was a statue of Ho Chi Minh behind me. I don't know if it was on purpose or not. But here's this big Ho Chi Minh statue behind me, and I'm supposed to give this talk to the Chamber of Commerce in Hanoi. And I'm up there, and I'm like first of all I want to apologize for the suffering we caused in your country. And universally they said, 'Just move on. We want to hear what you have to teach us about business. We want to make our country stronger. We want to make our economy stronger. You are our friends now, and just forget everything that ever happened between us. We don't care anymore. We want to be successful and want you to help us.' They didn't even want to talk about it. And we didn't.

I thought tonight it would be kind of cool for me if we saw how some of our students responded to questions from the audience in Vietnam. So we're in a large...in Vietnam you'll see a Christmas tree. I don't know why they put it there. They thought we would like it. (laughter) Because we're Americans. And you'll see about...we usually have seven or eight Diamond Mountain teachers up there answering, fielding questions from the audience, okay? So I have a choice of questions; let me see here. Who wants to be a star? I'll just go in order, okay? Can we just go in order? So we'll just go in order and then I won't do a lot. I'll just do a little bit because I want to prepare us, to give a taste. This is what we're creating in the world, and this is how they're changing the world. And your love and support of them and their training. And they're changing the world ... (can't hear)...these are questions being given to the .....(introduction to the videos of Vietnam tour) (videos of questions – can't hear)

I think we'll stop there so we have time for questions. You know, people ask me...so they're giving up...they're telling people how to make money; what kind of Buddhist university is this? The point is I had an opportunity to work for Cesar Chavez many years ago in Phoenix. In fact, we're going to rent the building we used to use to have our meetings with Cesar Chavez for the classes in Phoenix it looks like. It's a Franciscan retreat center in Phoenix. I met him, and we worked for him for a couple of years. And one day I asked one of the senior people, I said, 'We're working for immigrant people so that they can get more money and they can have a better house and they can have a better car.' And I worked really hard for a couple of years for them. We got paid \$5 a week, so Diamond Mountain's not so bad, and now we...and they said, 'You know, Michael, people need to eat before they can do the higher things like...People need to have a house, and people need food, and people need shelter and clothing before they can go on to the higher things.' So that's kind of the principle we're using in Asia. We're trying to teach people how to be prosperous and then we move on to the higher things. Once the ideas or the theories have been proven in their life with their finances, then we kick them higher. We kick them up higher. But if a person is hungry, they can't meditate. If a person doesn't have a room, if they're sharing a room with twelve other people, they can't do yoga. And then, so we're trying to work from the beginning of a person's needs and then

work up to their higher needs and that's the program that we're doing. Eventually most of the people who come to our business seminars, they get successful then they start meditating. Then they start doing yoga, and then eventually they start teaching and that's very common for almost everyone who comes to our seminars. Within five to ten years they end up as teachers, because they see that it's the most valuable thing for helping people. So that's why (can't hear) the business course.

Now I'd like to go on to some questions about the three year retreat. Lama Christie's here. She'll be leading the next class tonight, which she has done now for eighteen terms, and she's the retreat leader. She'll be the person onsite in the retreat, guiding the retreat, and she'll be able to answer a lot of questions that you have. I did the last three year retreat. I was one of the people who did it on the last three year retreat. The counseling people in this three year retreat, a couple times a month or something like that, whatever they need. But I would like to answer any questions the parents or friends have about the three year retreat. And then we can go on deeper in the next class where the actual leader of the retreat will be able to answer other questions about the retreat. So if anybody wants to ask a question - if none of the parents have enough courage to ask a question they've had on their mind for the last six months somebody else can make up a...that's what we did in Vietnam, like I write a couple of questions just in case nobody has a good question and then we hand the paper to the person. So I'd like to open the floor to any questions or concerns then the parents would like to know (can't hear) the 3 year retreat.

I have a question...(can't hear - something about why 3 yrs, 3 months, and 3 days)

Oh, I hate that question. Do you know Lama Christie? I mean it's...yeah, so by tradition... in Tibetan this retreat is called nyen chen. Nyen chen means, nyen means retreat and chen means great so it's a great retreat. So nyen chen means the Great Retreat. So by tradition it's three years, three months, three days. Don't ask me why it's not three years, three weeks, three days. I don't know. But it's 3, 3 and 3 okay?

Oh, there's no weeks, but it's very traditional and I always prefer to call it the Great Retreat rather than the three year retreat. It's called, in Tibetan, it's the great retreat. And every very, very serious student who finishes a geshe program, for example, a lot of them would finish and then they would go into a three year retreat. And as Lama Christie said, you can find in scriptures, there's an explanation that during three years, three months, three days you'll take a certain number of breaths. And if you are meditating or praying deeply during that many breaths, it changes your mind in an...what do you call it...in an incontrovertible way. You become (can't hear) to do what these people are doing which is they are really trying to bring higher levels of happiness, prosperity and happiness. The goal is to make teachers who are well cured. What do you call? Tempered. By the retreat...is very, very difficult and it's very, very difficult to do a three year retreat and the process makes you a person who has real compassion. And that makes you a much finer person to help other people, to teach. Any other questions?

I'm going to repeat the question if someone didn't hear. So if someone left the retreat after two years rather than three years, would you still consider that a successful retreat? I

think the first thing to say that's important to say is that this retreat is completely voluntary. We don't have any chains in the cabins. Some of them were naughty students we were considering that, (laughter) but the thing is, maybe the most difficult thing about our three year retreat is you can walk out at any time. If you have a bad day, you can walk out the front door. It's a five minute walk off the retreat (can't hear) and then you're out. And then you can't go back, you see, because once you've broken the boundary, it's uh, I don't know, it's a spiritual energy to it and once you break, once you leave the boundary, you can't come back. So there's this...the person putting pressure on you in retreat is yourself because you know you can stand up and walk out the door any time you want. And just as a logistical thing, the parents should know that if a person walks out, they will walk out to the caretaker center, there will be a car there. There will be somebody waiting there. And they'll say, 'Where do you want to go?' And they'll say, 'St. Louis.' And they'll get them to St. Louis within twenty four hours or something.

So you know it's completely open. So, but what's the effect of a person who leaves after two years? Do they get sixty seven percent of the effect? In the last three year retreat, we did have one person who left after a year and a half, and we had another person who had to leave for medical emergency of one of their parents. And then I would say that their retreat was different. I think they had a different result. But definitely a beneficial result. So those people were also changed deeply. And they have a very beautiful successful retreat. And there's a ceremony you can do that sort of gives them closure. And they had a success. We would consider it a very great honor and success to be in retreat for a year or two years and have been able to complete it. And it definitely has a powerful affect on the heart, and it's an extraordinary achievement. To stay in for a year or two years. Finishing the entire three years is a lot better. It's on a different level altogether. So if you stay for a year, if you stay for two years, in my experience, my understanding, you are changed forever, and you are an extraordinary person. If you make the commitment to stay for three years and you actually make it, you can't imagine how it feels and you can't imagine... We believe that in a three year retreat, sitting in a cabin, a person can change the world in ways that you can't do by three years by giving these talks all over the world. You see? We believe that, a Buddhist believes a large part of the world is coming from their mind. So if you spend three years in deep contemplation on love for all people then that has an affect on the world. Which is less obvious, but maybe more powerful.

Then going out in the world and giving these talks...it's very important to realize they're not avoiding the world, or they're not disengaging from the world. We believe that a person with good training in retreat is doing more for peace in the world than a person who's out talking at peace talks or something like that. And we believe that that change in the world is almost measurable. We believe it's a real measurable thing that happens in the world, that people change. And then I have to say that what's crucial for that to be successful is that the person is well trained, you see? So you can say I'm going to go in my bathroom or my closet for three years, I'll see you put the food under the door for me and if any bill comes just take care of it, okay? Which we did in the last one. But it won't be the same. You're talking people who have had on the average...the people went through a whole course. I think Vilma is here; where is she? She missed one class in thirty

six terms in fourteen years. She missed one class. (applause) So what you're talking about is people who've been trained really, really thoroughly, really carefully. There are...9606 pages of new translation were used in the last fourteen years. They have studied the classics, texts on these subjects from ten thousand pages of things that have never been available before. Their training is extraordinary. So you take a well trained person and you put them in a cabin for three years. The effect on the world is outstanding.

And that's what we're doing. They're not avoiding the world. They're trying to serve the world in a higher way. And it does change the world. There's a vibration that will leave from this place for those thousand days, and it will change the world, and it will be like ground zero for something more positive. We believe that. And they're very courageous, I think, to try to undertake it.

There's not many chances in modern life to do something courageous. You know you can get on a sixty foot boat and try to go to Fiji without water or something, and people do that, you know. K2. I read this thing, the guy tried to go to K2 without an oxygen tank, and I feel these people are braver. And that their achievement will be more remarkable because they're doing it to change the world. They believe it helps the world.

Any?

(Q)

Yeah, I mean, I'll repeat the question. The question is: it seems kind of anti-family, or it seems like not honoring the tradition of a family for a person to leave and to go into a three year retreat. Obviously, the family's going to miss them. Things will happen in the family; there might be major changes in the family. The retreatant won't even know about those changes so it would seem that doing a retreat is not...isn't in support of the family system. And there was a very moving thing in the New Testament. I don't know if you know the story, but it's a very beautiful story in the New Testament. Jesus is sitting with his disciples in a room, and he's giving them some teachings, and they're doing prayers, and they're kinds of meditation. And then I believe it was his mother and his brother. I don't know if it was his elder brother, I believe, but they came to the door and they knocked on the door, and they said, 'Can you tell Jesus that mom is here?' And then Jesus refused to interrupt the teaching and he said, 'Tell mom I'll be out after the teaching's over.' And then they said but it's your mother.

And then he motioned to his disciples and said, 'See my family.' So I think what's happening in this atmosphere with a person in a three year retreat is they are actually trying to serve their family in a higher way, okay? So we would say we believe that in the process of a deep three year retreat, in the process of exploring your mind in the silence of three years, you may be able to find the very forces at work in the causes of suffering in the world.

All families must separate. In time, all families are separated by time. By old age. By death. All families are separated by these forces, the very basic forces of our life. And a person is going into three year retreat, the purpose they're going into three year retreat is to explore those forces. What are the causes deep within the being of the person? Which actually caused the ultimate separation of family and caused the ending of the family or the death of the grandparents? What are the forces of the world of all the things which cause pain in the world and the more common things that happen in the family which is all the tensions you know day-to-day things that happen in the family? So the three year retreatants, their task and their goal is to explore the ways, deeper ways, to make a family life more successful and to make it ultimately successful. So we don't see it...and their motivation is not to escape their families or escape their responsibilities or anything like that. That the motivation is to serve their families in a higher way so that when they come out, the families will be tighter, and the families will be higher.

I'll tell you a funny story. Lama Christie and I went into a three year retreat. We went to L.A. to meet her parents. And we went with her father. It was Christmas Eve, I think or something like that, I don't remember, it was some religious holiday. Okay? Well anyway, it was something special, but anyway we went to the church and the father was a very spiritual person. He's catholic, and he was really in support of the retreat. He was excited before the retreat. And he was very excited when she came back. And he was very proud of her, and he was very happy. He was happy before, during, and after the retreat. Then the auntie, Rita, she was very unhappy. And she's especially...she was mad at me. That you took my niece away for three years, and for what? So we all went to church together, me, and the dad, and the family, and aunt rita to church. And the church was filled; it's a Catholic church. It's Arnold Schwarzenegger's church in Santa Monica. And we were sitting in the pew, and the church was packed. And then I'm...being the last person, I was on the end of the pew. And then there was one seat left next to me. Aunt Rita shows up. (laughter) There's no place to sit except next to the guy who took her neice into the three year retreat. So she, like, looks all over the church, and then she comes down and sits next to me. And I'm like 'Hi' and she's like (facial expression).

And then the priest got up and he delivered the hominy, the sermon, and we were listening in tense silence. And he said, 'I want to talk today about the story of the Capuchin. I almost said cappuccino. The Capuchin order of Catholicism. And he says, 'This order of monks and nuns is the most famous in the Catholic church because it is the only order in the church which never had to be reformed.' There has never been a reformation of the Capuchin order because it never got deformed. And then he was joking, right? And then he said, 'I want to talk to you how that happened, because I think it has to do with the founding of the Capuchin order, how this order started. There was a man named Father Bruno, and he had a vision. And he decided he would do a long retreat.' And so I'm looking at Aunt Rita, and then the priest says, 'In fact, he did a three year retreat.' And I'm like (shrugs - laughter). And then he says, 'Father Bruno did this three year retreat, and he stayed in a hut and then other like minded people came to do three year retreat with him.' And I'm like (shrugs - laughter). 'And then slowly, more and more people came and there grew to be a whole spiritual community. And it's the most successful order of the Catholic church. And I think it's because Father Bruno had the

courage to stay in a silent retreat for three years and founded through this three years of examining your heart and trying to develop true compassion for others. Three years of silent introspection during which you develop, you tend to develop, higher love for other people.'

And then I was like...I wanted to get up and applaud for him. And then I got this feeling that she thought I had paid him somehow? (laughter) But then since then Aunt Rita and I have become the best friends, I think, of all the family members. I think it's Aunt Rita and myself who feel the closest, and I think probably because of Lama Christie's example. Aunt Rita in the last five years, last number of years, joined Jimmy Carter's Habitat for Humanity and has become a major force in L.A. And I think it's because of her influence, and really, it's the influence of the three year retreat on her aunt whose life has been changed by the retreat. So I would say you will find that the process of the three year retreat makes your family much more dear, much more close, much more harmony, and a much more beautiful life together. I think you'll find that, and that's the goal of the three year retreat. It's not to leave your family. It's to give a higher appreciation and a higher love for your family that lasts longer and has a higher meaning. And I think that's what you'll find. I think you'll find that all the previous three year retreatants have now gotten much tighter and much closer to their family and that's our goal. Is that they become more loving people and more responsible people, and that they serve their families in a higher way and I think you'll find, I think you'll be thanking me in about four years. So I think we have time for one more question.

Yeah.

Q

Yeah good, good. Yeah, dad-Daniel asks are we going to get updates from our...about our children. So yeah, we have a very nice system in place, and we'll have website, and we'll have newsletter coming out, and we also encourage parents and friends to come and volunteer. You know, when we got out of the last three year retreat, I remember Lama Christie and I sat down and we sent a note to, I forget, I think it was Elly and Chukyi, and we said, 'Could you send us the names of the people who helped in the three year retreat for cooking and maintenance and stuff like that? Could you just send us a list of the people who helped?' Because when we went into retreat, we had three caretakers, and we thought we would just write them all a personal note and thank them for taking...people cooked for us, people shopped for us, people brought the food out to our cabin. You don't see the people bringing the food. They put it in a box. We didn't see them for three years. So I...when we got this note, it had four hundred people's names on it. And they sent us four hundred thank you cards, and they said, 'Here you go, there's four hundred names.' Four hundred people have heard about the retreat, and many of them you don't know. They heard about it online or they heard about it through friends, and they showed up to help. Four hundred people cooked. Four hundred people got groceries. Four hundred people helped to fundraise. And so it turned out to be a whole, I don't know, out-pouring of love for many, many people in the country, many of whom we'd never met. And we gave up after about two hundred notes, and we just couldn't do it all, you know? But I

think what we'd like to encourage the families to do: there's different ways you can show your love and your support. You don't have to think that because you're not talking to them, you're not with them, and what we encourage you to do is maybe once a year or when you have time, come out and help us cook for them and help us serve them and it's very beautiful. And there will be a silent love and a silent feeling of service between you and them going on. And you will sense it, and it will be very deep. It's deeper than words, and it's deeper than actions. And you will feel so, you will feel so close to them if you come out so we encourage you to come out.

We'll set you to some big task like peeling bananas or potatoes or something and then in that way you'll be sending your love to them, and they will feel it. And in the three year retreat, we felt it. We could feel it, and we knew that people loved us, and people were there. So that's a beautiful thing you can do, and we encourage that. And you'll get updates. I think Elly during the last retreat, she sent out, I don't know, I encourage a monthly newsletter. So we'll send you a monthly newsletter which will say, we didn't hear anything from them (laughter) and there haven't been any forest fires. No, but you'll get news. And they will be exciting news. The university now is an exciting place. There's hundreds of people from all over the world coming here. There's cool stuff going on. There will be programs going on. So we really encourage you to come out and help. And you will find you'll be really happy and after the retreat, your family will be much tighter.

Q.

Oh, you just have to give us your email. So proactively, we will contact you and say. 'Here are the opportunities for service and here's what's going on.' Mainly you'll get requests for food money. No, we did some good fundraising. We have about a \$50,000 war chest we call it. We're ready. I mean, we have a good, we've gotten many sponsors already. We have about \$100,000 in commitments for food, but we'll be sending out newsletters. They'll always have an envelope at the bottom. And you'll get newsletters, but if you give us your email and say I want an update on this or that, we have staff all ready in the Board meetings.

There have been...the caretaking staff have been members of the Board meetings for the last six months or so, so they're already...and there will be there is a Board of Directors; I'll be helping them. I'll be on the outside and we'll continue. The Board of Directors will continue to oversee the logistics of the retreat and make sure everybody's safe and everyone's happy. And then I'll be...there are two people will be in this three year retreat who finished the last three year retreat. Lama Christie and Lama Pelma, who both finished the last 3 yr retreat. So they'll be available to help the people who have any kind of emotional challenges which is not uncommon. And then we have two nuns, Venerable Jigme and Venerable Chukyi, who have been nuns for, I don't know, fifty years or something. (laughter) They caretook the last three year retreat. So they were with us for a thousand days in the last retreat. So you've got four people in the retreat who can...and Chukyi is also a psychologist who used to be a psychologist for the Catholic church in New York, who's a professional counselor. So we have those four people inside the

retreat who are there for people who need... It won't be encouraged because they're supposed to try to keep silence, but if there's a severe need, there will be people there, in the retreat who have three year retreat experience, and who are very experienced spiritually. And then I'll be giving counseling, I'll be, like, coming once a week, or twice a month, at a specific house and then if a person needs advice or they need some kind of...they have some kind of problem, they can come down, they can make an appointment, and I'll be counseling them. So we have that kind of emotional support for everybody going in.

Medically, we have already prepared a governmentt approved helipad on the property. I think we've had one evacuation already. We did, right? We...they had a test, but there's a medical facility in Willcox which is, by car if you go that way, it's about a half hour and they have a helicopter pad there. And we've already made an agreement. And we have approved helicopter pad here so if there were an extreme emergency here, if someone has a heart attack, or something like that we can get them to Willcox in about ten, fifteen minutes once we get them out. So medically, we've taken a lot of...there's a large water system ready, a firefighting system is ready. There are vehicles ready to evacuate people if there is a problem. If someone has a problem. And all of the cabins have been built by code, by county code. So each of them has fire fighting equipment. Each of them has carbon monoxide detectors, fire detectors. They are all...we've worked with the county that every cabin has a road to it. We've built, you'll see when you come, we've built many miles, maybe not miles...every cabin has access to a fire road. And then all of the cabins have been given a certificate of occupancy by the county so nobody will be staying in any kind of half, in any kind of hut or anything else which is flammable or something like that. Every building in the three year retreat has been gone through the county process which is federal licensing for the buildings. So the buildings are all safe. And we've spent...there's been a lot of time and a lot of money spent on the land. That's mainly David Stumpf (applause).

My time is up. if you have more difficult questions, then wait for Lama Chrstie. She'll be starting. What time is it? It's 8 oclock now. So let's say 8:30 or 8:40. So we'd like to take a break, give you a chance to walk outside, relax. And I hope you got some kind of feeling for what your family has been doing here and the effect it's having on your world. These kinds of talks that you saw here are happening several hundred times a year throughout the world in all the continents of the world. And it's all coming from this university, and I think it's something really beautiful and something important for the world. And we thank you for supporting them. I know it's difficult. We're not a usual place. But I think the difference is somehow important, and we feel that we can serve the world in ways that maybe a normal university couldn't. I think you get some sense of it, and I think you'll see more of it, and the three year retreat is crucial to that. So thank you for supporting them, and I know it's hard for the families. You know, I went into three year retreat and I didn't see my brothers, I didn't see my mom. I know it's hard. I know it's hard for the retreaters and hard for the families, but you have to be brave and you have to be strong and you have to feel it's important. It's going to serve the world. It's going to make many people happier, and it's going to make them better teachers. So you know they're going to need your support, and they're going to need you to be brave and

support them. So do your best to give them your moral support because they really need that. It means a lot to them. When you're in three year retreat, you're thinking of your family all the time. And they're going to need your support. So before they go into retreat, you're going to need to tell them how brave, they are how smart they are. And how much you're going to pray for them. Help them get through the three year retreat, okay? And then we're here for the three years, the Board of Directors, we're all here on the outside. Any problems you have, any needs you have, anything you need, just contact us through the website. And maybe we'll give out, can we give out a piece of paper with all the information? Just contact us. You can also contact me directly or the Board members if you have an extraordinary need or something ...just feel free because we've all been there before, and we want you to feel good, and we want you to feel happy, and we're very proud of that. So thank you very much. (applause)