

My Country is Tibet, a BYKids film, directed by Namgyal Wangchuk Trichen Lhagyari

Rationale:

My Country is Tibet

The King of Tibet, living in exile in Dharamsala in Northern India, is the 16-year-old Namgyal Wangchuk Trichen Lhagyari. As the only recognized descendent of the first Dharma King of Tibet (617-698 AD), Namgyal carries the unique responsibility of representing Tibet's unbroken history and heritage. Yet, as a teenager, he also represents a new generation of young Tibetans who are caught today between the peaceful traditions of Tibetan Buddhism and a desperate desire to fight for the freedom of their people. These young Tibetans speak about the slow obliteration of their very identity – their livelihoods, their right to choose where they live, their ability to be educated in their languages – and the stark choice they face of either remaining in Tibetan areas under these constraints or seeking to flee to other countries.

BYkids film mentor Dirk Simon, whose film *Between the Lines* has received world-wide recognition, worked with Namgyal during spring 2008 to help him tell his emblematic story through film. In addition to diving into the technical aspects of filming, which the young king learned quickly, Dirk and Namgyal looked closely at how to shape narrative storytelling through image. Namgyal demonstrated a quick mastery of the craft of filmmaking, and conducted his interviews and narrated his footage in both Tibetan and English. He has narrated the film in English and the film is in final production.

Dirk actually met Namgyal in Dharamsala four years earlier at the time of the young boy's coronation ceremony, presided by His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, in June 2004. The previous Dharma King of Tibet, Namgyal's father, had died just a year earlier. Namgyal's father had been incarcerated by the Chinese authorities for 20 years and struggled for the survival of his lineage.

Dirk describes the young king as carrying the vision of two worlds: the one-thousand-year-old heritage of Tibet's Dharma Kings and the current struggle of a people striving to survive under repression, abuse, and ethnic genocide. "With his devotion to the principles of Tibetan Buddhism, his kindness and modesty, he touches the heart of everyone who meets him. Now we are back here to help him tell his story."

Key Concepts

- **His Holiness, the Dalai Lama:** The Dalai Lamas are believed by Tibetan Buddhists to be manifestations of Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and the patron saint of Tibet. Bodhisattvas are realized beings, inspired by the wish to attain complete enlightenment, who have vowed to be reborn in the world to help all living beings (www.dalailama.com).
- [Read about the Annexation of Tibet by the People's Republic of China](#)

Featured Individuals

- **Namgyal Wangchuk Trichen Lhagyari:** director of the film and King of Tibet
- **Tashi:** employee at Rajpur Tibetan refugee factory
- **Namgyal's mother**
- **Namdol la:** Namgyal's sister
- **Namgyal Choesom la:** Namgyal's other sister who is resistant to speaking in front of the camera
- **Lobsang Gansit:** Namgyal's friend who he speaks with about politics

Discussion Questions

1. After introducing himself as the King of Tibet, Namgyal then portrays the everyday activities of his life. He shows us how he washes his own clothes, spends hours praying and studying, and goes for a jog each morning. Why might he have included these details in the film? Why would these be important enough for him to include?
2. Namgyal and his fellow Tibetan people are refugees in India. What aspects of their Tibetan culture are they striving to preserve?
3. Describe the emotions that Namgyal feels in both learning of the death of his father and in taking on the subsequent responsibilities that come with coronation the following year.
4. Why does Namgyal include the conversation with his sister, Namgyal Choesom la, in this film? She clearly does not want to speak with him in front of the camera, and the quick cuts suggest that they tried for a long period of time. Why include this discussion at all?
5. What does Lobsang Gansit expect of his friend when he can fully commit to his role as Lhagyari Trichen, a Tibetan Dharma King?
6. How does Namgyal react to the present and historical violence taking place in his country, Tibet? What does he envision should be his role in this conflict?