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**Listen to the other side of Tibet issue**

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When I happily announced to my Chinese husband that I obtained a coveted ticket to hear the Dalai Lama, he frowned. To him, the Dalai Lama is a divisive political leader, not a compassionate holy man.

These days, I feel caught between widespread U.S. support for Tibet and an angry, pained reaction from my Chinese friends. Born and raised a Jones in Ohio, I am now a Yang, married to a man from China. Fluent in Mandarin, I often have long discussions with Chinese friends in their native language. As a journalist who covered China for eight years, I was trained to aim for objective coverage.

Recently, at a dinner party, my friend Li pleaded with me to be neutral. But I find there is no neutral ground on the subject of Tibet. Both sides view the other as manipulated. I can't explain the popular American perspective to Chinese people without being lumped in with the demonstrators who wave Tibetan flags because it's cool. And I can't explain the Chinese perspective without an American calling me an apologist.

What I am finding is that Chinese people -- not the government propaganda machine but flesh-and-blood people -- are angry and hurt at the world's increasingly negative portrayal of their beloved country. Through their eyes, American free expression can look ignorant and insensitive. What upset my friend Li was that a CNN commentator called China a "bunch of goons and thugs."

My hackles rise when I hear charges of media bias. I notice how often newspapers try to be fair, interviewing Chinese counter-protesters and identifying the Dalai Lama as a political as well as spiritual leader. Yet news analysts get away with vitriolic comments that sound like 1950s-style red-baiting.

This Olympics, meant to bring the world's people together in peaceful competition, is driving a dangerous wedge between China and the West. Deeply held antipathy to China is bubbling to the surface in the U.S. and Europe. That trend scares me. I have a child of mixed heritage. What future does she face if these two countries continue to pull apart?

Almost all Americans side with the Tibetans, and I understand why. They admire the ideals of the Dalai Lama and believe they are taking the morally correct position.

Yet to Chinese people, including many in the U.S., the central question is also moral: What right do foreigners have to interfere in Chinese internal affairs? Americans, who live on land stolen from native people, have problems of our own to solve, in inner cities, on reservations, in race relations, in Iraq. So why do we insist we know how to resolve theirs? When Chinese see Americans demonstrating to free Tibet, they see unwitting agents of a U.S. policy that aims to weaken their country by dividing up its territory. They cannot forget the "national shame" of the period when European colonial powers occupied parts of their country.

While most Americans see China as powerful, most Chinese do not see it that way. In the past 80 years, China went through starvation and drought, invasion and civil war, and destructive political campaigns. They see China just emerging as a country that can provide a good life for its people and hold its head up with pride. Just as China stands up, Americans seem eager to tear it down.

For 30 years, China has been on an upward trajectory toward greater freedom and prosperity. Each time I visit, I see modern buildings, highways, even new houses in poor farm regions. My husband's relatives, who suffered in earlier decades, are thriving. Never before in history has China enjoyed such a high level of prosperity, stability

and even human rights.

It's true the Chinese do not have the freedoms we do here. Yet every time I visit China, I hear people vociferously criticizing their government. They can even protest in the streets, although not violently. What they do not have is the freedom to organize opposition to the government. But the realm of what is possible is wide.

As an educated American, I pride myself on having an open mind. I hope other Americans, too, will realize that they are subtly influenced by an anti-China bias. I hope Americans will listen to the anger of Chinese people and realize that there is another side to this story.

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