



His Holiness Karmapa Thaye Dorje

*His Holiness the 17th Karmapa
Trinley Thaye Dorje is the spiritual
head of the Karma Kagyu lineage of
Tibetan Buddhism*

Learning From Lehman

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Saturday 15 September marks four years since the fall of the Lehman brothers, the beginning of the economic crisis. Seeing and experiencing how the economic system has caused pain and sorrow for many people around the world, we cannot forget, however, that it was once intended for something good and to benefit everybody. With the economy as well as our day-to-day lives, we have to remember to combine the qualities of compassion and wisdom with everything we do.

Since I first started travelling almost 14 years ago, I have visited a great many different countries. While all my travels taught me a lot, this year's European tour, 'The Wealth of Europe,' was particularly educational. I met with many young people, including some Young Ambassadors of the Prince's Trust, and listened to what they are going through, how they feel about life, about the present economic situation, and also how they perceive the future.

We are all connected

What I've also understood through all these interactions is that as long as we were born as human beings and live in this world, then no matter what kind of life we lead, we are all very much connected with all individuals and all societies of the world - so we cannot run away from worldly responsibilities and circumstances.

Even for myself, a Buddhist teacher who tries to follow the path of Buddha Shakyamuni, it is crucial to be aware of and connected with whatever is happening in the world.

With this in mind, I set up the Wealth of Europe initiative. Over 700 young Europeans have shared their concerns, aspirations and priorities in a poll over the last 10 weeks. The results of the poll clearly showed that the vast majority of young people rate non-material values far higher than material wealth. Based on what I have learned from the Buddha's teachings, I had already expected these kinds of results. Nevertheless, they were very encouraging for me and gave me a lot of hope and inspiration.

Positive qualities lie within us

No matter how challenging things may seem at times when we look at the state of the world, there is always hope and a way to overcome these challenges. Seeing the potential of young people in particular, all we need to do is share and communicate. By communicating and sharing our thoughts, the positive qualities that we all have, naturally emerge. Without communication we may have all kinds of positive

means and ideas, but they lay dormant. However, once we start communicating, even the smallest of means becomes so vital and so effective.

We don't have to put ourselves under pressure to change or reform the world: through awareness, as well as constant and clear communication we can have a holistic view and perspective of the world. We can take the simple example of the Wealth of Europe initiative: A few thoughts and insights were shared that raised awareness for the wealth of Europe through the lens of young people.

With awareness we naturally know that we have to focus on our inner wealth - that our inner qualities are among the most important factors in having a meaningful life. Through these qualities we will also have the wisdom of knowing how to go about material values, to what extent we have to utilise material wealth, and how to do so responsibly.

I hope that through further communication all of us will be able to bring awareness all over the world, to help learn and apply the lessons of the past.