

Tenzin Khenrab
Narrator

Tenzin Yangdon and Charles Lenz
Minnesota Historical Society
Interviewers

Interviewed for the
Minnesota Tibetan Oral History Project

August 29, 2005
Tenzin Khenrab Residence
Fridley, Minnesota

Tenzin Yangdon - TY
Tenzin Khenrab - TK
Charles Lenz - CL

TY: It's August 29, 2005 and we are at Tenzin Khenrab residence. Present are Tenzin Khenrab, Tenzin Yangdon, the primary interviewer, and Charles Lenz, the secondary interviewer.

Can you please spell your name and tell us your age?

TK: T-e-n-z-i-n K-h-e-n-r-a-b. I'm twenty-six years old.

TY: Where were you born and raised?

TK: I think I was born in Bhandara in India.

TY: Bhandara, India.

TK: I was mostly raised in Dharamsala.

TY: What part of Tibet are your parents from?

TK: The region?

TY: Region. Like what region are they from?

TK: They're actually Topa.

TY: Topa? Okay. So they are from Utsang?

TK: I guess it is.

TY: Have they ever mentioned to you about their reasons for being in exile?

TK: Of course, that's from the Chinese invasion of our country. So they must have to flee the country with their parents.

TY: And how was life for you in exile?

TK: Life was good.

TY: Were you able to go to school there?

TK: Yes.

TY: Can you tell us what school you went to?

TK: I did my schooling from TCV,¹ which is in Upper Dharamsala.

TY: So when you were like in school what was your parents' occupation in India?

TK: My dad, he works for the Tibetan Government in Exile² and mom, she's like a stay home mom.

TY: And what level of education did your dad have?

TK: Oh, I don't think he went through college or anything. I think he graduated like—he finished his tenth grade and then he took a test for the position for the government, Tibetan government, and then that's how he got a job.

TY: And did you ever finish school in India?

TK: Yes, I did. I finished my high school and then came to the United States.

TY: So did you like have a profession there before coming here?

TK: No.

TY: Can you tell us when you came here?

TK: October . . . it was October 1997.

TY: And how were you able to come to the United States?

¹ Tibetan Children's Village.

² Central Tibetan Authority (CTA). The Tibetan Government in Exile.

TK: Family reunification.

TY: How was your mom or dad—was like your mom here before?

TK: Yes. My mom was here before and then sent for me and my dad, our whole family now. We came later.

TY: How was the immigration process for you guys?

TK: I don't really know. Dad, he actually took care of the things so I wasn't really involved in anything.

TY: And how old were you when you moved here?

TK: I think I was eighteen and . . . I think I was eighteen.

TY: So you finished high school in India and you moved here, so . . .

TK: Yes. It was the year I finished high school when I came to the United States.

TY: So you didn't have to leave school or anything like that.

TK: No.

TY: So when you were here did you have to go back to school at all?

TK: You mean high school?

TY: Yes.

TK: Well, I tried to go to Southwest High School or call them, and they told me I can't go to high school if you have done high school before so I wasn't able to go to high school.

TY: And did you try going to college then?

TK: Yes, I did. A year after I joined MCTC.³

TY: So you were here for a year and then a year later you joined MCTC.

TK: Yes.

TY: What were you doing during that year?

TK: Working.

³ Minneapolis Community and Technical College.

TY: What kind of work were you able to find?

TK: It was at a Chinese store which is right next to my apartment so it was easy to get there and I was kind of new so I just took the job.

TY: How was it like working for a Chinese store?

TK: Oh, the guys were cool, you know. I mean they're not the kind of Chinese that are from China, you know. They're the old Chinese. They actually flee from China, too. I think in [unclear] or something. They are Chinese but they are not from China.

TY: So did you work that for the whole year?

TK: Yes. I think a year.

TY: When you joined college what was like your goal? Like what studies did you want to do?

TK: I had no goal. I had no goal. I just joined college. I kept going there just taking some classes, general classes.

TY: Like what kind of general classes were you taking?

TK: Math, no science, English, speaking, listening and speaking, writing. That kind of stuff.

TY: Were those classes that were required for you or—?

TK: Yes.

TY: Like prerequisites to—?

TK: Yes.

TY: So going back to when you first came here, like what was your perception of America before coming to America?

TK: Before coming to America, America is great. [Chuckles] That's . . . we hear all the time, right?

TY: And so like when you left India were you like having—was that your decision or everything just like happened?

TK: Yes.

TY: So in India when you were in school you had to speak. Did you speak English at all in school?

TK: A little.

TY: So how was it like coming here and having to speak English all the time?

TK: It was hard, but . . . yes, it was hard and then it was also hard for me to hear the Americans talking, you know, because they have this totally different accent that we are not used to so it was kind of hard.

TY: So was that a problem at all in like—like did it affect your work or like your studies in college?

TK: Maybe in school, yes. In college.

TY: And so you didn't like have any goals as to when you went into college?

TK: No.

TY: Were you able to finish college?

TK: No. Dropped out.

TY: Why did you drop out?

TK: It was hard for me.

TY: What was it that was hard?

TK: No one reason, you know. There are a few different reasons. A few other reasons that I wasn't able to do more college. I mean, first of all, I wasn't really liking the environment. You know, with the students. It's hard for me to get interacted with the American students so basically every day in my class you can always find in the back of the class. I don't try to listen to anything. Besides, I had some friends in there. I don't go to my classes on time.

TY: So was this all like a cultural transition problem do you think or—?

TK: Part of it, yes. Because Tibetans, we were told like back in India, not in America, but in India we were—Tibetan . . . if you don't speak like the American people they do you are meant to be a good kid in India. That's how we see the students.

TY: Can you describe it a little more?

TK: Like [speaks in Tibetan].

TY: So don't be like aggressive and greedy sort of. So you said you used sit all the way in the back of the class and you didn't interact with other students very much. Was it out of your own shyness or was it that other students weren't interacting with you?

TK: Me. Myself. My problem.

TY: You were shy.

TK: Yes.

TY: And that shyness was like out of your own cultural background sort of?

TK: I think so. Yes.

TY: So like did you go on to taking other classes in college?

TK: I did. I took some computer classes, business classes, economics. I failed all these classes. Some of them I dropped. It wasn't in my field.

TY: Why do you think was the reason that you were getting like bad grades or failing?

TK: I don't know. I wasn't doing good. I wasn't going to classes.

TY: What about out of school like when you weren't in school? What kind of things did you do for like activities or something?

TK: Work. That's all I do.

TY: What other places have you worked at other than the Chinese store?

TK: Oh, I worked at AmeriSource. That's in Eden Prairie or something. And I worked at GFI. That's a meat company on Nicollet. And now I'm working in St. Louis Park at Novartis.

TY: And what do you do there?

TK: Oh, QC, quality control.

TY: So how is your work like?

TK: Now?

TY: Yes.

TK: Oh, it's really simple. It's easy. I like it. Because I have a few other friends, Tibetan friends. We all work together so it's good.

TY: So you generally interact with Tibetan people more?

TK: Yes.

TY: Do you feel more comfortable with them?

TK: Yes.

TY: Easier to talk and things like that?

TK: Oh, yes.

TY: And is it because they're—like you have a lot more similarities with them?

TK: Yes. It's always easier, you know, with your own Tibetan friends. It's always easier.

TY: As far as like living like when you came here, like did you know you were going to go here soon?

TK: I knew it when I was in seventh or eighth grade.

TY: That you were going to come to America. And what were you thinking at that time?

TK: I don't know. I don't remember.

TY: So when you moved here and you didn't join college for a year, did you have any worries that you weren't going to be able to continue with your education and things like that?

TK: No. I wasn't thinking about graduation. I was just taking classes. That's all. Because my parents they want me to go to school. So I was just there.

TY: What about like when you first—when you moved here and you got a taste of American food and things like that? How were those changes?

TK: Oh, yes. I remember going to the McDonalds and getting me a Big Mac. It tasted really awful. But then you know, slowly and gradually you get used to things. Yes. Now I'm loving it.

TY: Going back to your time in—like the short time that you've gone to college here. What are the things that mostly bothered you in school?

TK: I don't know.

TY: Are there things that you didn't like? Like when you were in college? Are there things that you did like very much?

TK: Nothing that I liked. Nothing that I didn't like. But I loved school, loved going to school when I was in India.

TY: When you were in India. How was being in like school in India different than being in school here?

TK: It's the students, you know. Here it's all American. There it's all Tibetans.

TY: So you were in an all-Tibetan school there?

TK: Yes.

TY: Can you describe like what your school was like a little bit there?

TK: Our school?

TY: Yes.

TK: It's a big school about twenty-five hundred students.

TY: All Tibetans?

TK: Yes. All Tibetans.

TY: Were all the teachers Tibetans as well?

TK: Yes, most of them. A few Indian teachers. Mostly they were all Tibetan.

TY: So when you were in school in India you didn't use English very much in school?

TK: They tell us to use English in school. In classes we have to speak English and if you don't, we get fined. We have to pay money for that. But we always try not to . . . be naughty.

TY: So in school there you didn't have much interaction with Westerners or like with—?

TK: No. Except for some teachers, interns, I believe.

TY: Interns? Okay.

TK: Yes. They come over there and then try to teach for like three months and then they go back.

TY: So have you had any classes like from those people who come there for three months to teach or something like that?

TK: Oh, yes. I did have one. There's one English teacher. When I was in eighth grade she came from England.

TY: How was it like interacting with her?

TK: Well, she's actually a Tibetan.

TY: Oh, she's Tibetan. Okay.

TK: But she went to England for her studies when she was a little kid. It was easy with her, you know. Speaking English and then all of a sudden if you think you can't you just talk to her in Tibetan.

CL: You said you went to Upper TCV in Dharamsala, right?

TK: Yes.

CL: Did you ever interact with any of the Westerners in Dharamsala that were just—?

TK: The tourists?

CL: Yes. Like in McLeod Ganj?

TK: Not really. But a lot of guys they do.

TY: How is your work environment here? How is interacting with like your coworkers or supervisors?

TK: Over here?

TY: Yes.

TK: My manager, she's really nice. Supervisor, he's a good person. There are only like four or five guys there I speak with at work.

TY: They are all Tibetans?

TK: No. Who are Americans. Other than that there are other people who work in different departments that I don't really . . .

TY: Do you socialize with them at all like outside of work?

TK: With who?

TY: Like with your coworkers or anything?

TK: Company party, maybe. Sometimes the company, they give us party, you know.

TY: Are there like any particular things that you like at work or things that you don't like?

TK: My boss is nice. That's why I like it.

TY: You like it there. Like when you were in school and you weren't interacting with students but you were at work and you've learned to interact with your coworkers and things like that, can you like compare the two? What was it about the students that you didn't want to interact with them and what is it with—?

TK: I don't know. It's easy for me to talk to an elder person, you know. Someone who's older. So my supervisor, he's like in his forties and manager, she's in her fifties. So it's always easy for me to talk to them.

TY: So it was like an age difference?

TK: I guess so.

TY: How are you like adapting to the difference in culture? Like clothes, music, hairstyles, things like that?

TK: It's all right.

TY: For example, in America like many people look forward to having a nice weekend and things like that. Do you tend to feel the same way?

TK: Not necessarily, but if you are working like eight hours a day for five days, you know, like Monday through Friday you work and when the weekends . . . you do want to do something. You just don't want to stay home and just let the day go, you know.

TY: Did you feel that way when you were first here and working?

TK: No. When I first got here I wasn't—I didn't started my job as soon as I got over here. It was after two, three months. So, no.

TY: Like during those two, three months that you didn't have a job and you weren't going to school, what did you do around that time?

TK: I just stayed home.

TY: Did you have other Tibetans living around you that you talked to?

TK: Yes.

TY: And were those also people who weren't going to school and didn't have—?

TK: Well, I have friends who were not going to school and I have also friends who are going to school.

TY: When you get together with Tibetan people, what kind of things do you do?

TK: We do a lot of talking.

TY: What is it, like a major topic to talk about?

TK: Oh, we touch every topic.

TY: So what do like in general, like Tibetan, like young Tibetans talk about mostly? Like is it—?

TK: Mostly, I don't know. I don't know what we talk about.

TY: So do you, have you gotten used to like listening to American music and things like that?

TK: Yes.

TY: Do you tend to like it?

TK: Yes, some are good. Some of them I don't like it.

TY: Like how would you compare them to Indian music, Hindi music?

TK: I prefer listening to Indian music when I'm getting ready for my bed. But if you want to go out for a party you don't want to listen to Indian music so it has it's own different . . .

TY: And what about Tibetan music?

TK: Yes, I listen to Tibetan music, too. But not during a party.

TY: So like what kind of things do you do like for fun here that you wouldn't do in India? Or you wouldn't be able to do in India?

TK: I wouldn't be able to . . . driving around.

TY: Do you go out with your friends often like driving around or anything?

TK: Almost every weekend.

TY: How do your parents react to that?

TK: They don't say much.

TY: Like do they ever like advise you?

TK: Yes. They do. They did. Too many times. And I guess they are tired now. They just let me do whatever I want.

TY: So like in general, like for Tibetans in exile, the spiritual aspect like of our culture is like very much embedded in everyday life. How do you find that here?

TK: I don't know.

TY: Like what kind of things have you found helpful to keep in touch with your Tibetan identity?

TK: What kind of things? Tibetan gatherings.

TY: Why do you find those helpful?

TK: You get to be with your own Tibetan people, talk with them, see new faces.

TY: I know you have been involved in like political activities to raise awareness for Tibet and like Tibetan Freedom Movement. Why did you choose to get involved in those activities?

TK: I think it's better to do something even if it's a small thing. Just do it, you know. I haven't done much for my country or people so you feel like you want to do a little thing to contribute.

TY: Can you tell us some of the activities? Tell us about some of the activities that you have been involved in.

TK: Here?

TY: Yes, in Minnesota.

TK: I went for a bike ride from Minneapolis to Chicago. I can't remember the year now. Then I did another one from Washington to New York and I went for the protesting with Yangdon a few times, I think. Three or four times.

TY: When you get like involved in these activities, what kind of things like go through your mind? Is it like trying to make a difference and things like that?

TK: Nothing really comes to your mind when you are—like if you are doing a protesting in Chicago. While we are traveling in the bus, nothing really comes into your mind, but as soon as you get there in front of the Chinese embassy and see the Chinese people then something comes out.

TY: Like before you came to the U.S. were you involved in like any activities? Like did you get involved—?

TK: No, no. Except for this one thing. March 10th.⁴

TY: How is like protesting in America different from like back in India?

TK: Oh, it's almost same thing. It's more violent in India.

TY: Like when you have to go protest and things like that and you have to leave the state, like sometimes you have to take leave from work and like do you find those difficult sometimes?

TK: Not in my job because I'm more like a part time worker. So I can take days off anytime I want to. That's what I like about it too.

TY: The general hope is that like when protests are—like when we do protest we want to like make a difference and things like that. Do you feel it is a responsibility for like Tibetans to get involved?

TK: It is.

TY: Do you have friends who always get involved and like friends who don't get involved?

TK: What do you mean?

TY: Do you have friends who get involved?

TK: Yes, yes. I do have friends, too.

TY: And there must friends who don't get involved at all?

TK: Yes.

TY: Why do you think there's this difference in like idea?

TK: I don't know. I don't know why but some of my friends, it's easy for me to tell them like, "Hey, you know, do you want to go to New York for this thing that's coming

⁴ 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.

up on this . . .?” and then they go like, “Where is it? I want to go, too.” They just get ready for it, you know. A few other friends, I tell them about things and they say, “The ones who go, they’ll always go. Not me. Maybe next time.” That’s what they tell me.

TY: Has the like—just general questions about the community center. Do you think like the community center building has been of service to like everyone in the community?

TK: I don’t know.

TY: Is there any difference in the Tibetan community here than like the community in India?

TK: I don’t know.

TY: You said you attend community activities often so what kind of things do you like there that they organize?

TK: Nothing they—I mean I just like going there, meeting old friends, you know.

TY: So those give you a chance to get together with your own friends that you wouldn’t see normally or—?

TK: Some of them I won’t normally see.

TY: So you’re working part time right now and all your family members are here?

TK: Yes.

TY: Can you tell us like a little bit about your family life? Like is it hard to get together as a family together here?

TK: Oh, I think so, because they all work different shifts. Yes. When we want to like go out for something we have to wait for the date, you know. If my dad’s off then my mom’s working. When mom’s off my sister is working so we’ve got to plan ahead of time. That’s something that we don’t have to do in India.

TY: What do you think about that kind of life here? That everything has to be scheduled ahead of time?

TK: Yes, yes. I don’t like it.

TY: You don’t like it.

TK: I don’t like to plan.

TY: So like before you moved to America—are you a U.S. citizen right now?

TK: Right now, yes.

TY: So before you moved to America, you had refugee status in India, right?

TK: In India, yes.

TY: So how do you feel about becoming a U.S. citizen now and—?

TK: Ah, it makes no difference.

TY: Why doesn't it make any difference?

TK: Oh, there could be some differences like going to Tibet, you know. I never been to Tibet but I was told that it was easy for you to get there if you have U.S. passport. Other than that I don't see any differences.

TY: How do you feel about your community in general?

TK: Great.

TY: What is great about our community?

TK: I don't know. I just like our own community. We are good.

TY: Can you like share some things like that the community has done like in the past?

TK: You won't really see them doing anything. It's always easy for us to blame something, criticize like, these people they don't do anything. But the good thing about our community, if something comes up like really needs our help or something, now it's easy among our community to let them know and they always like kind of ready to do something, you know, like . . .

TY: Provide help.

TK: Yes. In India like, somebody comes from India and tells us like we are building this monastery in India and we need some help. I see like people helping them.

TY: Do you think this is like having—like come to America and like now in America most Tibetans are in good financial situations? Do you think it enables them to provide help for people in India?

TK: It's not necessarily about your financial status, you know. It's got to be in there. It's not the money, you know.

TY: No, it's not the money, but it is like how you feel about the cause?

TK: Some people they have a lot of money but still they don't do nothing. But on the other hand, some other people don't have much . . .

TY: A lot of Tibetans in Minnesota have moved into like the suburbs and bought homes and things like that and you're also living in a home now with your family. How do you feel about that? Do you feel that this is your home?

TK: No. I never felt like that.

TY: Why not?

TK: I don't know. I just . . . I just don't feel it that way. Maybe because I wasn't too young when I got here. Because I spend like more than eighteen years in India so I'm pretty much in India even though I'm here in the United States of America. I don't feel at home here.

TY: You don't feel at home. Do you like have a desire to go back to India or to—?

TK: And live there forever?

TY: Yes.

TK: No.

TY: So you don't feel at home here but you can't go back and live there.

TK: Yes. Now that I have spent almost eight or nine years here I don't want to go back there and start all . . .

TY: Over again?

TK: Yes.

TY: Are you getting used to the American way of life then?

TK: Yes.

TY: Like working and enjoying a little bit.

TK: Yes. I am getting used to it.

TY: Do you have—like do you wish to go back to school at all?

TK: Yes.

TY: So are you planning now for that?

TK: Oh, I've been planning on that for a long time. It's just not happening.

TY: Actually like going back to the newer course, like when you first applied for college, did somebody help you with the application process or did you have to go do that all alone?

TK: No. A friend of mine, she actually told me that there is a test that you have to take and me and her we went and took the test together.

TY: So it was a friend that helped you.

TK: Yes.

TY: So when you were in college, like how was your interaction with teachers and counselors that were there to provide assistance?

TK: I don't know. I'm really bad in class, you know. Like I don't speak. I don't listen much. There is one listening and speaking class that I took and which requires you standing up in front of the class and talking to them, you know. She was telling me that it's going to be fifty points to do that and I said, "I will never do it if I have to be in front of the class and talk to them." And then she told me like, "You will fail the class if you don't do it." Well, then you fail the class then. Then all the students, I mean a few students, they came to me and they like, "No Tenzin, you shouldn't do that. You should try." And finally I did it, which is a good thing but it's . . . I would say it's my problem, you know. Because I don't tend to speak with people. I try to stay away from them. I don't know if it's only my problem or it's with a lot of kids who come from other countries. Sometimes they also feel the same thing.

TY: Do you ever talk about that kind of thing with your friends when you get together?

TK: Sometimes when we talk about school. Yes.

TY: Do you think like other kids your own age, not kids but like young adults your own age, are going through similar problems in our community?

TK: I don't know, but yes, I think so. Some of them because when we talk together they tell us that . . . like in every class you go, I mean you feel like these Americans are really smart, you know. Because the professor, if he asks something I always see these American kids having something to say and then I feel like, man, these guys are really smart. They know everything. But the thing is, I mean . . . it's not about whether they know it or not but the thing is, I mean, they speak their own language. It's just easy for them to speak with anything, even it's right or wrong. They just speak it out. It's easy for them. For us, English being second or third language, it's kind of hard, you know. So we just try not to speak.

TK: So English is definitely a barrier for you?

TK: Oh, yes.

CL: What do you think the hardest thing about living in the U.S. is?

TK: The hardest thing? What's the hardest thing? I don't know.

CL: What do you think the best thing is? What do you enjoy most about living here?

TK: You get all the things that you can't get in India.

TY: Can you describe some things, like some particular things?

TK: The car, the phones, the stuff at home. In India if you own all these things then you'd be a rich person. But not here.

TY: Going back to your like work experience, like when you first went to work were you like, when you go to work now you drive there, right?

TK: Yes.

TY: So before, like before you got your license, did you have to go to work and ever take the bus and things like that?

TK: No. I never had to take a bus because my first workplace was just a block from my place.

TY: Can you talk a little bit about how working there was? Like what kind of customers you received and how was it interacting with the customers there?

TK: Oh, I didn't have to a lot of talking to the customers. They come over with their own stuff and then I would just ring them up. Tell them the total.

TY: You were a type of cashier?

TK: Yes. Some of them they asked me questions like, "Where can I find such and such stuff?" And then I don't have to talk. I just show them it's over there. Just point.

TY: When you came to America what things were new to you?

TK: What things? Almost everything was new. First day we went to get a social security . . . so that we have to take a bus. Even the bus was new.

TY: How was it like getting used to the transfer?

TK: Yes. That thing. That thing was so new.

TY: Did somebody have to show you?

TK: Yes.

TY: And like when you were there in the office, in the social security office, trying to get your social security card, what did you think of the people that were there? Like how everybody was calm and waiting.

TK: I can't remember the whole thing.

TY: Like when you first got here, did you get to go out to places? Like did somebody take your family out to the mall or things like that?

TK: Yes. A friend of mine took me to the mall. I never saw such a place in my life before.

TY: You'd never seen a mall before. How was that like?

TK: It was good.

TY: Did you enjoy shopping and things like that?

TK: No. Because I don't like shopping. We went straight to the video arcade room. Played some video games and then came back.

TY: Are you like in touch with other Tibetans here often?

TK: Yes.

TY: You said like here when you have to—like when you plan something with your family you have to schedule everything and things like that and like how does that make you feel about like living here? Like where you have to schedule everything ahead of time and—?

TK: [shrugs]

TY: Like right now, you are planning on going back to school?

TK: Yes.

TY: Is it because you want to go back to school or are like your parents pushing you?

TK: It's me. I want to go back to school.

TY: Before when you went to school was it your own decision or did—?

TK: It was my decision and also my parents. They were always—the good thing about them is they were always willing to help me out.

TY: How do you feel about American culture? Like in America a lot of like young people move out of homes like very early and like many Tibetans still live at home. What do you think of that cultural difference?

TK: It's their own culture. They have their own culture and their culture . . . it's their decision to move out of the parent's house as soon as you reach eighteen. But in our own culture we don't move out. That's their own culture.

TY: Like you don't feel like, having the need to move out?

TK: No, no. I don't feel the need to get out of my house.

TY: Do you like the fact that everybody is living together?

TK: Yes. I like it.

TY: Because in Tibetan families it's common that all the family members stay together and live together so you prefer that?

TK: Yes.

TY: Do you know why you prefer that? Is there a reason?

TK: I think it's easy.

TY: What's easy about that?

TK: Here we're all staying together. It's always easy for like, any one of us. Like if my dad, he needs a ride to get somewhere, someone's always around. If all the kids are out of the house, my mom and my dad both, they don't drive. There's going to be a problem for them. So we just live with them.

TY: How many other siblings do you have?

TK: Three others. One's married.

TY: And they're all girls or boys?

TK: Girls.

TY: You have three sisters. Have they ever expressed like any desire to go out on their own or anything like that?

TK: I think one of them, she did. She chose not to now, for a while.

TY: At first when she did, did your parents object to that?

TK: No. No, my mom and dad, they actually told her like, “It’s going to be good experience if you live on your own. You will get the chance to see how it is to live by your own because we have been dependent all our life on our parents.” Sometimes, yes, it’s a good thing if you move out of your parent’s house and try to see the world.

TY: Do you have any feelings about paying for the Green Book fees?⁵

TK: No. I’ve never done it. My dad he’s the one who always took care of it.

TY: When you came here all the immigration process was handled by your dad?

TK: Yes.

TY: And even now like your father’s paying for your Green Book?

TK: Yes, he does.

TY: Do you have a wish to get involved in those things?

TK: Oh, yes.

TY: And now take some responsibility on?

TK: Oh, yes. I always think about it but no actions so far.

TY: Do your parents like push you? Like to do those things?

TK: No.

TY: You said you were mostly raised in India, like you grew up in India and like were your sisters young when they came here or did they grow up in India, too?

TK: They’re not really young when they came here. I was eighteen. My younger sister was fourteen.

TY: So they were quite young when they came here then. Did you have any like—did you see any difference in them in terms them having grown up here?

TK: No.

⁵ The CTA has a volunteer tax system. People who make payments have these payments recorded their ‘Green Book.’

TY: Have they caught on . . . like did they have—?

TK: Oh, yes. Maybe one. Maybe one of them. But the other one . . .

TY: Did they have any problems like you did when you went to school?

TK: I don't think they had any problems. They're doing good so far.

TY: They've done good. They don't have problems interacting with other Americans and foreigners.

TK: I would say that.

TY: Have they been able to go to college?

TK: Yes. They finished their colleges.

TY: Can you tell us like your sisters' names and what degree they pursued?

TK: My sister's name. One is Tenzin Shingley. She got a degree in R.N. and then Tenzin Dechen, also the same degree. They are both R.N.

TY: Do you think like for them to go pursue R.N. degree, was it their own choice? Was it like—?

TK: Yes. It was their own choice.

TY: And they preferred to be in that field?

TK: I think so. Yes.

TY: Do you have any idea what you would go to school for?

TK: No. My biggest problem, I never knew what I was going to do and still I don't know what I'm going to do.

TY: You said that TYC, our TYC might be organizing a protest to go to D.C. when Hu Jintao arrives to meet Bush. Are you planning to go there?

TK: I just heard about it today so . . . I could go. I don't know. I would like to go.

TY: Do you find it easier to get in touch with friends on these kind of events that come up?

TK: It's not about getting in touch with friends when we go for these things. First of all, it does something meaningful, you know. To people in Tibet, they get some help out of

the things that we do here in outside Tibet. First of all that's the main thing. So it's also a good time. You also get a good time doing all those things and not necessarily you focus on the same subject for the whole twenty-four hours. You get to take a bus. I don't know. It's a fun time, you know.

TY: How do your parents react when you get involved in these activities? Are they supportive or are they reluctant like to have you going these?

TK: They don't say much. My dad he was—it was a good thing if you can do something. That's what he always tells me. Other than that they don't really say much.

TY: Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experience living in America?

TK: I have no experience.

TY: Just like in general.

TK: Like what? I don't know.

TY: Okay. That's all the questions that I have down so thank you for participating.

CL: Yes. We want to thank you for being part of our project here.

TY: Thanks a lot.

Minnesota Tibetan Oral History Project
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