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Cindy Gu  
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Helen Li  
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## Toronto

The Epoch Times Media Inc.  
201 Consumers Road, Suite 103  
Toronto, ON M2J 4G8  
Tel: 416-298-1933  
Fax: 416-298-1299

## Vancouver

210 - 5481 Kingsway,  
Burnaby, BC V5H 2G1  
Tel: 604-439-9777  
Fax: 604-439-9779

## Ottawa

988 Pinecrest Rd.  
Ottawa, ON K2B 6B5  
Tel: 613-820-2580  
Fax: 613-820-8107

## Edmonton

#106, 10510-121 St.  
Edmonton, AB T5N 1L4  
Tel: 780-428-8657  
Fax: 780-988-5911

## Calgary

P.O. Box 21072  
Calgary AB T2P 4H5  
Tel: 403-512-3329  
Fax: 403-508-9933

## ADVERTISING:

## Toronto

Adam 416-298-1933 Ext 223  
Helen Li 647-899-8748  
canada\_ads@epochtimes.com

## Vancouver

Andrea Hayley 604-715-0334  
van\_contact@epochtimes.com

## Ottawa

613-853-7494  
ottawa@epochtimes.com

## Edmonton

780-428-8657  
edmonton.ca@epochtimes.com

## Calgary

403-512-3329  
calgary.ca@epochtimes.com

## Regina

Gary Yang (306-596-5488)  
sask\_ads@epochtimes.com

Editors: Jason Loftus, Matthew Little, Joan Delaney, Jim Fogarty, Jeffrey Thompson, Lishanthe Caldera, Rahul Vaidyanath, Cindy Chan, Franklin McCoy, Tanya Harrison, Ryan Moffatt, Anna Skibirsky, Elisabeth Reynolds, Cary Dunst, Titus Hsu

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# People will give up anything but cell phones

By MARTHA ROSENBERG

CHICAGO—"Attention passengers—there has been a fire on the tracks and fire crews are on their way," said the PA system on Chicago's Red Line mass transit trains.

"There's a fire on the tracks and fire crews are on their way," said 40 people into their cell phones.

**Raise your hand if you've been on a lunch date and found yourself competing with a 1-inch screen for 'immediacy.'**

"Please remain in your car until further instructions."

"We're remaining in our car until further instructions," said 40 robot cell phoners.

Imagine life without the cell phone relay system—especially during an emergency. People might talk to their seat mates and say things like—"Are your feet getting as hot as mine?" or "Should we open the emergency exit doors for air?"—instead of

talking to the people who know them as "Hi, It's me."

Recently, pedestrians and motorists witnessed a near-miss accident in Chicago's Loop. An SUV, its driver blathering while trying to turn right, almost mowed down a pedestrian chattering into her hand. Screams were heard, fists were shaken, but neither the driver or pedestrian missed a beat in telling their cell phones, "You know what a &#x26; idiot just did to me???"

Of course neither hung up. Nor are drivers and walkers the only demographic hopelessly devoted to their cell phones. Raise your hand if you've been on a lunch date—or real date—and found yourself competing with a 1-inch screen for "immediacy."

Moms—imagine bidding your kids goodbye and not hearing from them via the electronic apron string until dinner time? That's what your mom did! Imagine getting one letter a month from your college kid instead of daily calls for wardrobe and dorm roommate consults?

Thanks to cells, everyone is an independent communication substation, transponding orientation information to the next substation, which—surprise!—transponds back, content and message optional.

The insipidness of real-time reporting, whether on cell phones or news, was described by former Chicago Tribune columnist Bob Green when the Southwest plane he was flying on had an inflight navigation emergency in 2005 and had to return to Midway Airport. "We landed, to the audible re-



lief of those on board, pulled up to the gate, and—before the captain could tell us what had gone wrong—four people entered through a Jetway. One held a television camera; another began handing out release-permission forms," wrote Greene in the New York Times. They were from a reality-TV show.

While the "what's-it-like-to-almost-die" coverage didn't please the airplane crew—no panic attacks or missed wedding days, huffed the producer—some

passengers welcomed the electronic documentation because it made the moment "realer," says Greene.

Cell phones are called the neocigarette because of their ubiquity and health dangers like car wrecks, germs, and even brain tumors, but the legions of "chain callers" prove they are addictive too.

Why else would they end up in so many toilets? (Who remembers when public washrooms were silent instead of echoing with "stall

chatter"?) They are so addictive, Roman Catholic bishops in Italy suggested people take a high-tech fast and give up their cells for Lent.

But no one would. It's not that people don't want to sacrifice for Lent. After all, they give up meat, coffee, chocolate, playing the ponies, and the river boat. It's just if they gave up their cell... who would they tell it to?

Martha Rosenberg is a writer living in Chicago.

## Slowing down and building peace by building schools

### One man learns an important lesson and improves thousands of lives

By CÉSAR CHELALA

NEW YORK—You can try to force peace through military might—and you are bound to fail—or you can build peace through education. That seems to be the main lesson behind Greg Mortenson's life and work.

Thanks to his efforts, 78 schools have been built in Pakistan, and thousands of children have been educated, mainly girls. For Mortenson, building schools is proving to be a better way to fight terrorism than the force of arms.

After his sister Christa died of severe epilepsy, Mortenson went to Pakistan to climb K2, the world's second-highest mountain, as a way of honoring her memory. Unable to climb to the top and feeling totally dispirited, he started to climb down under subzero temperatures until he reached the village of Korphe. In that village he was fed and taken care of by the local people, who helped him recover.

One day, while walking around the area during his convalescence,

he came upon a group of 84 kids (79 boys and 5 girls) who were attending a makeshift school. The children were kneeling on the frozen ground, doing their multiplication tables with a stick in the sand.

Seeing these children's desire to learn even in the most difficult circumstances reminded him of his sister, Christa's fierce determination to overcome obstacles in her own life. He promised the villagers that he would build a school in their village. At that point his life changed forever.

He went back to California and sent hundreds of letters asking for financial support. They were mostly unanswered. His 16 grant applications were also denied. Finally, he found a sponsor for his project, went back to Pakistan, and started building the school, never imagining the kind of obstacles he would have to face.

In 1996, three years after his failed attempt to climb K2, the school was only up to the roof level, and he was increasingly frustrated by almost insurmountable obstacles. He felt that

in spite of all his efforts to make people work faster and be more efficient, he was going nowhere.

At that point, the village chief, Haji Ali, invited him for a steep climb. What follows is told in the book that Mortenson and Parade's contributing editor David Oliver Relin wrote, entitled "Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Fight Terrorism and Build Nations... One Child at a Time," published by Viking Penguin.

"You can't tell the mountains what to do," Haji Ali told him. "You must learn to listen to them. And now I am asking you to listen to me. By the mercy of Almighty Allah, I appreciate what you are doing for my people. But now you must do one more thing."

"Anything," replied Mortenson. And Haji Ali told him, "Sit down. And shut your mouth. You are making everyone crazy."

Afterwards, holding porcelain bowls of scalding tea, Haji Ali spoke again. "The first time you share tea with a Balti [the people from Baltistan, in northern Pakistan] you are a stranger. The second time you take tea, you are an honored guest. The third time you share a cup of tea, you become family, and for our family we are prepared to do anything, even die." Then, laying his hands over Mortenson's own he continued, "Doctor Greg, you must make time to share three cups of tea. We may be uneducated, but we are not stupid. We have survived here for a long time."

"That day Haji Ali taught me the most important lesson I've ever learned. We Americans think you have to accomplish everything quickly. Our leaders thought their 'shock and awe' campaign could end the war in Iraq before it even started. Haji Ali taught me to slow down and make building relationships as important as building projects. He

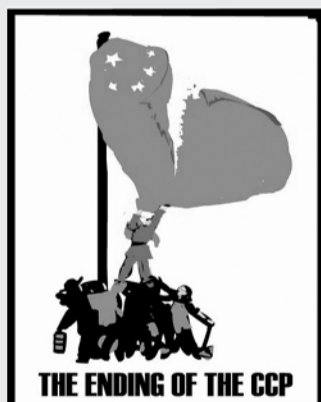
taught me that I had much more to learn from the people I work with than I could ever hope to teach them," Mortenson said.

He finished building the school at Korphe and continued building more schools, placing emphasis on teaching girls. When questioned about that, Mortenson said that his position on the issue was based on a UNICEF study that shows that when you educate a girl to at least a fifth-grade level you do three important things for society: reduce infant mortality, reduce population explosion, and improve the basic quality of life for the girls and the whole family. He had also found that in areas where there was more education, women were refusing to allow their sons to join the Taliban.

Over 33,000 educated Pakistani and Afghan children are living proof of the effectiveness of his approach. In 2009, he received Pakistan's highest civilian award. For Mortenson, the main enemy is ignorance. By building schools and educating children, he is providing them not only with basic skills; he is giving them hope and the skills to have a better future.

Cesar Chelala is a co-winner of an Overseas Press Club of America award for an article on human rights.

## QUITTING THE CCP



Inspired by the 'Nine Commentaries,' as of 22:44 EST, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009

52,457,184

Chinese people have announced their intentions to quit the Chinese Communist Party and its affiliated organizations on a special Web site established by The Epoch Times. Many others, unable to break through the Chinese Internet blockade, have posted their withdrawal statements on poles or buildings. Others have written them on Chinese currency. Read recent statements of Chinese quitting the Party, the latest news on the "Nine Commentaries," and more at

<http://www.NineCommentaries.com>

The 'Nine Commentaries' is the book that is disintegrating the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and changing China. This award-winning Epoch Times editorial series discloses the true history and nature of the CCP. Now it is serialized here.

## Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party

### Commentary Six (cont.)

On how the Chinese Communist Party destroyed traditional culture

Traditional culture values the unity of heaven and humans and harmonious co-existence between humans and nature. The CCP has declared endless joy from fighting with heaven and earth. This culture of the CCP has led directly to the serious degradation of the natural environment that plagues China today.

Take water resources for example. The Chinese people, having abandoned the traditional value that "a nobleman treasures wealth, but he makes fortune in a decent way," have wantonly ravaged and polluted the natural environment. Currently, more than 75 percent of the 50,000 kilometers (30,000 miles) of China's rivers are unsuitable for fish habitat. Over one-third of the groundwater had been polluted even a decade ago, and now the situation continues to worsen.

A spectacle of a strange kind occurred at the Huaihe River: A little child playing in the oil-filled river created a spark that, upon striking the surface of the river, lit a flame five meters (16 feet) high. As the fire surged into the air, more than 10 willow trees in the vicinity were burnt to a crisp.

One can easily see that it is impossible for those who drink such water not to develop cancer or other strange diseases. Other environmental problems, such as desertification and salinization in Northwest China and industrial pollution in developed regions, are all related to society's loss of respect for nature.

Traditional culture respects life. The CCP urges that revolt is justifiable, and struggling against human beings is full of joy. In the name of revolution, the Party could murder and starve to death tens of millions of people. This has led people to devalue life, which then encourages the proliferation of fake and poisonous products in the market.

In Fuyang City of Anhui Province, for example, many healthy babies developed short limbs,

thin and weak bodies, and enlarged heads during their lactation period. Eight babies died because of this strange disease. After investigation, it was discovered that the disease was caused by poisonous milk powder made by a black-hearted and greedy manufacturer.

Some people feed crabs, snakes, and turtles with hormones and antibiotics, mix industrial alcohol with drinking wine, polish rice using industrial oil, and whiten bread flour with industrial brightening agents. For eight years, a manufacturer in Henan Province produced thousands of tons of cooking oil every month using materials containing carcinogens such as waste oil, oil extracted from left-over meals, or discarded argil<sup>ii</sup> that contained residual oils after its use.

Producing poisonous foods is not a local or limited phenomenon, but is common all over China. This has everything to do with the single-minded pursuit of material gain that comes in the wake of the destruction of the culture and consequent degeneration of human morality.

Unlike the absolute monopoly and exclusiveness of the Party culture, the traditional culture has a tremendous integrative capacity. During the prosperous Tang Dynasty, Buddhist teachings, Christianity, and other Western religions co-existed harmoniously with Taoist and Confucian thought.

Authentic Chinese traditional culture would have kept an open and tolerant attitude toward modern Western civilization. The four "tigers" of Asia (Singapore, Taiwan, South Korea, and Hong Kong) have created a "New Confucian" cultural identity. Their soaring economies have proven that traditional culture is not a hindrance to social development.

At the same time, authentic traditional culture measures the quality of human life on the basis of happiness from within rather than material comfort from without. "I would rather have no one blame me behind my back, than have someone praise me to my face; I would rather have peace in mind, than have comfort in body."<sup>iii</sup>

Tao Yuanming (A.D. 365–

427)<sup>iv</sup> lived in poverty, but he kept a joyful spirit and enjoyed as a pastime "picking asters beneath the eastern fence, gazing upon the Southern Mountain in the distance."

Culture offers no answers for questions such as how to expand industrial production or what social systems to adopt. Rather, it plays an important role in providing moral guidance and restraint. The true restoration of traditional culture shall be the recovery of humility toward heaven, the earth and nature, respect for life, and awe before God. It will allow humanity to live harmoniously with heaven and earth and to enjoy a heaven-given old age.

.....  
"Chen Guili, "Warning of Huaihe River" (1995).

"Argil is a type of clay used to fade salad oil in the manufacturing process."

"From "Prologue to See Li Yuan to Return to Pangu," by Han Yu (768–824), one of the eight great prose masters of the Tang and Song dynasties.

"Tao Yuanming (365–427), also known as Tao Qian, was a great poet in Chinese literature.