



I N T E R V I E W

Women Waging Peace



Conversations



Swanee Hunt
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About Swanee Hunt

In 1999, Swanee Hunt established Women Waging Peace, a global initiative that promotes women's role in formal and informal peace processes. While developing a strong and substantial network of women peace builders worldwide, the organization has also worked to draw attention and support for the cause among policymakers.

For Hunt, director of the Women and Public Policy Program at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government for the past five years, it seemed logical — and essential — that women be given seats at peace negotiating tables around the world.

In this interview, she explains the perspective that women bring to those tables and the contributions they add. She outlines how the program was developed and describes the day-to-day experiences of women who persevere for peace against insurmountable odds in hot spots such as Bosnia, Rwanda, the Middle East, and Afghanistan. Hunt also shares the lessons she learned about peace and security during trips to conflict areas around the globe and while serving as U.S. ambassador to Austria from 1993 to 1997, as the war in Bosnia raged next door.

To date, the Mott Foundation has made \$125,000 in grants to Women Waging Peace, which started with women from a handful of countries and now includes participants from more than 21 conflict areas. These grants fall under Mott's Civil Society program and support the Foundation's goal of improving race and ethnic relations and strengthening citizen participation globally.

Prior to her current work, Hunt first made her mark as a civic leader and philanthropist in her adopted city of Denver, where for two decades she led community efforts dealing with public education, affordable housing, mental health services, and other social justice issues. Her foundation, Hunt Alternatives, funded some 400 grantees in the Denver area. She is also a writer, photographer and composer. Her book, *This Was Not Our War*, profiling women who contributed to the peace process in Bosnia, was published in 2001 in Sarajevo.

She grew up in Dallas as an heir to the H.L. Hunt oil fortune and now resides in Cambridge with her symphony conductor husband, Charles Ansbacher, and the youngest of their three children. In addition to her role at Harvard, she is chair of Hunt Alternatives, a private, non-profit organization encouraging grassroots solutions to strengthening democracy and fostering constructive social change. She earned a bachelor's degree in philosophy and master's degrees in psychology and religion. Hunt also earned a doctorate in theology.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the first of what will be an occasional series of interviews or panel discussions on issues of interest to the Mott Foundation and its audiences. This interview was conducted in June 2002 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, by Mott Communications Officer Maggie I. Jaruzel and Program Consultant Jeanette Mansour. Photos were taken by Margaret Lampert, Boston, Massachusetts.

To read a separate interview with Hunt about women's involvement in the peace efforts in Afghanistan, visit our Web site at www.mott.org.

Women Waging Peace

Swanee Hunt, Harvard University

Q Describe the circumstances that surrounded the Women Waging Peace Program.

A When I was in Vienna as ambassador, I hosted negotiations between two parts of the warring factions in Bosnia. There were about 40 people involved in those negotiations, which lasted over 15 days. They were all men. Now, you may think — if you don't know Yugoslavia — that that's somehow explainable. But it's not, because Yugoslavia had the highest percentage of women Ph.D.s of any country in Europe.

And if you look at the pictures from the Dayton Peace Accords, you see the same thing. It's all men. So that just started my wheels turning because it seemed to me that there was some kind of systemic issue here. I've talked to people at the U.N. and they said, "Well, of course. In Africa the warriors tell us why they don't want women on the negotiating team because they're afraid the women will compromise." Like that's not what you're supposed to do.

So, I did a lot of thinking about that. I talked to Haris Silajdzic, who was the prime minister of Bosnia. And I said, "Haris, if you'd had half the people around the table women at the very beginning when decisions were being made, would there have been a war?" And he said, "Oh no." And I said, "Well, why not?" And he said, "Because women think a very long time before they send their children out to kill other people's children."

Now that's a pretty bold statement, but the more I thought about it, the more I realized it goes back to there being these other sorts of overpowering concerns that take precedence. It's not that women don't care about the political issues, but they often care more about the safety and security of families.

And so I came to Harvard and started teaching a course here. The course is about "inclusive security," and I brought a couple of women to talk from different conflict areas. We were sitting around my kitchen table at breakfast and they started talking to each other about the work they were doing in Serbia, Cyprus and Northern Ireland.

Q How dynamic.

A And, it was so interesting because the woman from Cyprus was kind of slumped down. She was saying, "Oh, I don't know if I can keep doing this. My children, I'm not spending enough time with them." And the woman from Northern Ireland said, "Well, have you dealt with the death threats yet?" And Katie from Cyprus said, "What?" And May from Northern Ireland said, "The death threats, you gotta think about the death threats. You have to organize protection for your children as they go to school."

Now what I found fascinating was that as May was talking, Katie's body language was changing. She starting sitting up, straightening up, which should have been the opposite. I thought she should be just collapsed under the table, and instead she's sitting up, she's clearly feeling better. And they just start engaging: "Well what did you [do] then?"

And I'm enough of a psychologist to know that there was something else happening there besides exchange of very bad news, which was that Katie was feeling understood, supported and like she wasn't out there all isolated.



"It's not that women don't care about the political issues, but they often care more about the

safety and security of families."

So we pulled together this colloquium here at Harvard. We brought 100 women from 10 conflicts. We had three primary goals. One was obviously for the women to meet each other, exchange their strategies, strengthen their skills and support each other. But then we wanted to look at these women, at what they were doing, to actually analyze it, because the plural of anecdotes is not evidence.

Q That's a great line.

A We wanted to really get deeper and figure out, for example, what is it about the way this investigative reporter presented her story that actually made a difference to the politicians. How did this member of Parliament push her way into the Burundian peace talks, when they said they were absolutely closed and there were no women? How did this grassroots organizer in Pakistan create this protest of the war without getting put in prison, how did she use the media, for example, in a way that protected her instead of condemning her?

So we began bringing researchers around who could have that kind of eye, and that was the second purpose, to analyze what women were doing.

The third purpose, which turned out to be wildly successful, was to effect public policy. We invited 100 policymakers to meet with the 100 women. Policymakers meaning people from the World Bank, the White House, U.S. State Department, the U.N., European Union, etc. And after this full day — where the women were

the experts, not the undersecretary who was there, but the woman who was telling the undersecretary how it really is in the Chiapas area of Mexico — these policymakers left changed.

I had a former assistant secretary of defense say to me, "You know, this was really interesting because I've never talked to anyone who is actually affected by our policies." Now that makes me crazy, but that's the reality! That's where we're starting, and it's important to know that that's where we're starting. The important thing is that we get those policymakers carrying the message, rather than me carrying the message, and that is beginning to happen now.

Q Did you actually have women involved who were from one conflict on both sides?

A In every case, that's what we had. We brought them in groups of 10 so we could have enough cushion, so it wouldn't all be dependent on one personality against another personality. And also so they would be a whole range, from grassroots to officialdom. In one case we had a princess from Cambodia who's a member of Parliament. We've had leaders of political parties, military officers, business people who work across the conflicts.

The most difficult was the Israeli-Palestinian group, who had a very tough time, and this was before the shooting started. Other groups would start out with a lot of difficulty, but by the end of the two weeks, they would be doing much better. Now, having said that about the Israeli and Palestinians, when they went back and the conflict started and they couldn't get through to



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see each other as they wanted, they used e-mail and the Internet to stay connected.

Q So they did develop a relationship?

A That's right.

Q Where do you see this going?

A We want to strengthen the work of women peace builders all over the world but not by trying to build the widest network possible. The leverage point and that leverage point is the people sitting at the desks in the U.N. and the State Department, etc., who actually are deciding how the budgets will be allocated. Right now what we're spending on, for example, imposing economic sanctions or dropping bombs — those numbers are huge. And what isn't on that list is strengthening the role of the women who are already there in the war situation. And we would like that response to a conflict to be right up there with the other list.

Q Are the women sufficiently organized so that if somebody wanted to direct a flow of money their way, there would be some sort of formal organizations that could receive it?

A Yes, when we choose to work in a conflict area, we choose a local partner, a non-governmental organization [NGO] on the ground that is respected on both sides of the conflict. And then they are the ones who select the 10 who will come as part of the group. But we have a lot of criteria for choosing the NGO, and for the group that will come. They nominate them, and we probably accept 90 percent of their nominees.

Q So when you're working with NGOs in the case of the Israel-Palestinian group, you're working with NGOs in Israel and also in Palestine?

A The Jerusalem Women's Center is Palestinian, Bat Shalom is Jewish. Together they call themselves the Jerusalem Link, so our work is through the Jerusalem Link.

If we cannot find a local partner in an area, we don't work there; it's just too difficult. And unfortunately there are plenty of conflicts to go around. But I think when you get people who've survived genocide in Rwanda, where 10 percent of the population was wiped out, and you get them talking with women from Cambodia, where about a quarter of the population was wiped out, they understand each other in ways that I will never be able to grasp. And it is extremely important for those Rwandans to have that contact with the Cambodians, to believe that they can rebuild.

Q So what goes on beyond the understanding? Where does the change come in?

A For example, one of the Cambodians is Nanda Pok, who has now trained over 2,000 Cambodian women to run for office. The Rwandans are very excited about that, and they meet with her and they say, "Would you do one of your trainings for us, and show us what you do?" Nanda can actually do a training, a two-or three-hour session, saying, "Here are the steps, here's the material I use," etc. It's very concrete.

Q So they're saying, "This is what worked for us," basically sharing lessons and learning?

A That's right. We have a meeting in Vienna in a week with 32 of these women.

Q Are they always the same women?

A What we've done is we've brought in 190 women, and now we've scaled down, selecting the most articulate, the most, if you will, cutting edge in the work that they're doing. Because as I said, our goal is not to have this giant network, it's to have enough examples to convince the policymakers this is real.

The media plays an important role too. Yesterday I had a meeting with the deputy foreign editor of *The New York Times* in this office, and she said to me, “You know, on Saturdays we do these profiles. I’m really tired of these white guys. Could you find me some women?” I said, “Well, I could probably, if you twist my arm.” Jill Doherty from CNN, she broadcasts out of Moscow, and I had an e-mail from her saying, “I’m going to be in Atlanta, I’m going to pitch them doing a series on Women Waging Peace.” There are lots of those kinds of examples.

I meet Tuesday with undersecretary of state for political affairs, Marc Grossman. Marc understands this project and he’s working within the State Department to get the embassies all over the world to have some way to connect with this kind of emphasis. So we’ve got direct work with a policymaker and we’ve got work with media people who then influence the policymaker.

Q Do you have an ongoing process so you can understand the impact?

A We’re working with a number of partner organizations like the International Crisis Group, and we’re asking them, as they go into a conflict area, to actually build into their analysis looking at the role of the women. I keep reminding my staff, our goal is not to be the experts on any conflict, and our goal is not to resolve these conflicts. I mean, we’d like to see that happen. But I remind our group, “We have one slice of expertise, and that is the role of women in conflict. Don’t confuse it with the Middle East Institute, or the Carter Center, or this or that or the other.” That isn’t to say we don’t try to understand as much as we can, but I don’t want us to think we can do something we can’t do.

Q I’m wondering whether you’re going to pull from some of these general evaluations to surface the best practices, and reflect the wonderful lessons coming from these women?



“We have one slice of expertise, and that is the role of women in conflict.”

A We have hired Sanam Anderlini, who wrote the Ford Foundation report on a meeting on women and peacekeeping, and who wrote similar reports for International Alert and the U.N. Sanam is heading up what we call the Policy Commission.

We pulled together about 10 policy types who are particularly analytical and broad in their thinking. By design, we brought in the people who would be the hardest to convince. We had three days of meetings and said, essentially, “What would it take for you to become true believers in this?” And they said, “We want to see situations that are very carefully analyzed, to see where having women in the peace process made a difference, and how it made a difference.”

So Sanam has now created a series of case studies, and today, the first case study writer is getting on a plane and heading for Rwanda, where she’ll spend three weeks. And she’ll have a local Rwandan researcher working with her to write a 15- to 20-page case study on the role that women have played in trying to avert the violence, to stop it, and in the post-conflict situation, to stabilize.

When our researcher goes, she will talk to the women, and she’ll say, “What are you doing? What have been your biggest obstacles? What kind of support have you gotten from other women? What kind of support have you gotten from men? Are you thinking about running for office based on this? Why not? What would it take for you to be elected in the official process?” Then she’ll go talk to the men: “What

do you think about what this woman is doing? Do you think she's credible?" Then she'll talk to someone at the university. She'll talk to the president's office. I did a letter of introduction for her to President Kagame, saying, "Please spend time with Elizabeth. You know it's really important. This work will be read all over the world."

Q So how does the work that Women Waging Peace is doing fit into the broader societies where they're working, where these women go back as far as civil society building, capacity building, participation in democracy?

A Let me start out by saying these are not professional war stoppers. You're a dentist or a teacher or a business owner and war breaks out. Now, most people at that point shrink back, and they get very much into their protective mode. But there are few people — I don't know why — who lean forward. They're going to protect their families, and that family, too, and that family, too, and then they're going to try to figure out who it is that's shooting, etc.

And those are the kinds of individuals we're talking about. They emerge from the society; they're not from some kind of marginalized group. They've never been to a conference for war stoppers. When they meet the other women here at Harvard, it's often the first time they've ever realized that they were actually part of a larger group.

Q "I did what I had to do."

A That's exactly right. So when we talk about how these women contribute to civil society, usually they are very much part of civil society already. For example, one of our network members is an investigative journalist who has covered these massacres. There are over 300 massacres now a year in Colombia; it's the most dangerous place in the world. She's writing about these massacres and she says, "This is crazy; what is going on here!" And she gets on a horse, and goes eight hours into the jungle — some very treacherous terrain — looking for the head of the paramili-

taries. And she finds him and she says, "Why are you doing this?" She does a four-hour taped interview with this guy, where he talks about watching his father be murdered, and how he and his brother vowed revenge, and how he has spent the last four decades leading this killing and he can't get out of it because it's a cycle. And he's sick of it, but he doesn't know what to do. And he confides all of this.

I asked her later, "Who did you have with you?" She said, "Well, no one. He would have killed me if I'd had anyone with me." You know, she's 35 years old doing this. This is not a Sylvester Stallone. I mean, if you saw Maria Cristina, there's just nothing about her that says this woman is going to go someplace that nobody else would go. Then she goes and finds the head of the guerillas, does a similar interview, and publishes a 60-page document, saying, "Look. Side by side. Here's what they said. Look how alike they are."

Now, did she stop the war in Colombia? Obviously not. But it's actions like that that keep hope alive, that open up the possibility, open the psychological space for some kind of peace. That's why the women in Northern Ireland won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977; they didn't stop The Troubles. But they were leading marches through the neighborhoods, and they were coming from both sides, and all of a sudden the world had to look at that conflict differently.

Q Have you discovered a culture of peace among women?

A Is there a culture of peace? We're not talking about all women being one way, and all men being another way. Clearly we know an awful lot of men who are much more peace loving than a lot of women that we know. But it does seem that men have to work harder not to get caught up in violence.

I've had a little boy and a little girl, and I actually think my little boy was much nicer than my little girl. But that doesn't change the fact that when he was 2 years old, everything became a weapon. I can't explain that. We'd go walking down the street, and he'd be stabbing in the bushes. He'd just pick up a stick and attack the

bushes. I cannot imagine my daughter doing that. Teddy would take out of my purse two credit cards, and they'd go to war with each other. Lillian would take out my purse, and she'd start stroking it: "Oh Mommy, it's so soft." I can't explain that. My hunch is that we're hard-wired differently, and that it's easier for most women to get into a place where they're trying to restore the balance and collaboration than it is for most men.

Q And partly because of that, mothers don't want to send their kids off to war?

A That's right. And then you've got the reality that because men have usually been in the official positions, often it's harder for them to give up some of the territory that they've been identified with. I get all these ideas from the women themselves; this is not something I make up. I spend hundreds and hundreds of hours talking to these women. And one of them said to me, "We could cross the bridge after the war to go to the other side, in part because we wouldn't get killed, because nobody thought we'd been the ones shooting."

And I started thinking about that, what you have to do psychologically to get yourself in a place to kill. You really have to do a certain amount of psychological maneuvering. And that puts you in a place you then have to recover from, to move from, and you have to completely change your role to reaching out to the other side.

Q You've spent hundreds of hours talking to women about peace, and men as well. Is there anything that really stands out to share about peace?

A Yes, I was quite struck when I heard recently that on September 11, 30,000 children died of illnesses that were caused by things like dirty water — you know, preventable illnesses. Now, of course, 30,000 children also died on September 10, and September 12.

When violent conflict is present, you can't go in and work on vaccinating the kids or trying out a new crop that is more productive for the country. All of that goes by the wayside when you've got war going on. And so when you think about the developing world, and all of the efforts that are going into building an economy and building a health-care system and building an education system — it all gets destroyed because some political leaders are duking it out about which side is going to have dominance over another. And it's a tremendous tragedy.

The story I'll tell you is about Mary Okumu from Nairobi. Her master's degree is in public health. She was sent out with a couple of men to do a survey in some villages; I believe it was Uganda. It was to survey a famine area; people were starving. And so they got to the village and there was no one there. The village people fled, and so the fields were all lying unharvested as the people were starving to death.



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They went on further into the bush and Mary said, “You know, we’ve come a long way. I’ve got to stop.” She was breastfeeding a child back in Nairobi, and she had to express the milk from her breasts. So she’s doing this and she sees this figure approaching from a distance. Finally, this woman gets close enough and says, “What are you doing?” And Mary says, “I’m just getting the milk out.” And the woman says, “Oh please, oh please” and she reaches inside of her wrap and pulls out something and holds it out in her hands. Mary thinks it’s a rat, but it isn’t; it’s a baby that has never been fed, because the woman has no milk. And so there’s this shriveled-up creature, and the woman said, “Please feed my baby.” And Mary said, “I can’t make your baby live. I’m only going to be here a day or two.” And the woman says, “Please, I don’t want my baby to die without ever tasting milk.”

Now, it’s taboo. If Mary feeds this baby and the baby dies, then Mary has cursed the baby, etc. But she finally decides to do it, so she takes this tiny little thing and tries to give it some milk. The baby’s never sucked, doesn’t know what to do, but finally he starts taking in some of the milk. And the next thing is another woman comes and another woman comes. Mary ended up spending three days sitting under a tree nursing 10 babies that then were going to die when she left.

But the information that she gained during those three days about what had happened in the conflict, what the women perceived was going on — can you imagine how rich? ... The real significant part of the story was what happened to Mary because she said, “I resolved from that moment on that this isn’t about going around with surveys about how many people are starving. This is about stopping the conflict.” And it was a transforming experience for her. That’s what I mean to say, these were not professional war stoppers, but they had these kinds of life experiences that changed them forever.

Q How do you take those stories and pull them into the curriculum in the courses you teach?

A I stand up at the beginning of every class, and I use words like “inclusive security,” “untapped resources” and “public policy,” etc. And I make sure that I frame it in that kind of security jargon.

I try to use conventional phraseology, and then I tell these stories. Or better yet, I have this woman tell her own story on video, and that’s much, much better than me telling the story. And these students tell me in their e-mails that a course like that changes their lives forever. They are determined to go out and make it a different world, and hook up with women like these. And I have men and women in the class.

I just listened to National Public Radio and they were doing an interview with Colin Powell about the Middle East, and it was your traditional back and forth about Sharon, about Arafat, etc. And then the broadcaster said, as Secretary Powell left the room, he added one more thought, which was the importance of the women as major actors resolving conflicts around the world.

Q Sometimes that only comes about because the situation’s so desperate the policy people don’t know where else to turn?

A And that’s how I pitch it. I say, “Folks, I’m not here to tell you any of your other approaches are the wrong solutions, but if they were adequate we wouldn’t all be tearing our hair out. So let’s talk about untapped resources.” For example, I don’t say that we should take away the men who are gathered around the table, the warriors. But the idea that if you’re an expert at making war, you’re an expert at making peace — that is ludicrous! So why wouldn’t you bring around the peace experts, if what you’re coming up with is a peace treaty? It’s a matter of adding chairs, as far as I can tell. But when you put women in those chairs, they sure need to have self-confidence.

The confidence issue is very, very important, and it’s a big challenge because women very quickly can retreat if they’re highly criticized and

they can think, “Oh well, I don’t really have the expertise to be at this table. Guys have a much easier time of just assuming they are competent.

Q Don’t you remember elections back in school, the girls would never vote for themselves, but the guys always would?

A And there’s some interesting research that says it may not be that men are more aggressive, it may be just that they think they can win. So it’s your self-confidence that actually gives you the cue to go to battle.

Q Does this kind of tie into the women that you’re now focusing on — to give them the confidence to articulate, to be at the table?

A That’s right, and we will actually be doing training on talking to policymakers. We’ll be talking about what words you use, what your voice needs to sound like. Stand up and introduce yourself, tell me what you’ve been doing over the last year, and do it in a way that will convince us!



“I think you could summarize my commitment as inclusive transformation:

finding situations that are not working ... and including in the solution the people themselves who are suffering. And helping them change from victim to actor.”

Q Are there some common visions that you see among these women sitting around the table?

A The common vision, the common dream, is stability and security, in which their families can live. They constantly put it in very personal terms, talking about their children and their grandchildren. That’s how they describe their country, in terms of the people.

Q We’ve mostly talked about international efforts, but is there a piece that’s for the United States?

A You start thinking, “In other countries, it’s a domestic component. In Colombia, it’s their domestic situation that we’re talking about, not their foreign situation, so what is it in our country that’s comparable?”

Well, clearly, we have major problems here in terms of racial concerns. If you look at the numbers of young black men in prison, it’s more than the numbers of young black men in college. And you say, “How did that happen? What does that mean?” And we say, “Oh, we’re putting them in prison because they’re violent.” Well, isn’t that what we’re talking about here? — this intergroup violence and the causes that are often very much socioeconomic-based in these other countries as well. We act like our situation is different somehow, but it’s not. So the lessons from the women in these other countries are often very applicable when we bring together women from the United States who are working in very tough neighborhoods.

Q And they want the same things, they want stability?

A That’s right. They want safety for their kids, too.

Q What about homelessness? You talk about war and you talk about conflict. We’re also talking about people looking for a place to stay, or people who stay at a place that isn’t adequate. Do you get the chance to address that?

A Through Women Waging Peace, we're focusing on the specific violent conflict piece. But part of my background is working with the homeless, which I did in Colorado, where I put together and then chaired the Governor's Coordinating Council on Housing and the Homeless. I am on the board of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees. So, I'm dealing all the time with these facts and figures about tens of millions of refugees (UNHCR). In a trip I took to Afghanistan, I was with the UNHCR group, and looking at a camp with 600,000 refugees. It's partly because of my acute interest in alleviating suffering that I go back to the violence as cause for that.

Now there are a lot of causes for homelessness, but one of them is violence. Sometimes it's domestic violence. That's not something we deal with directly through Women Waging Peace. Obviously with homelessness in this country, 30 or 40 percent are mentally ill, and that has to do with our policy of de-institutionalization. Women Waging Peace is not dealing specifically with AIDS, or with rape and domestic violence, etc. But often the women who are in our network are dealing with those as part of what they're doing.

Which leads me to another fine point, that these women may be in an organization where a big chunk — even more than half their time — is working on an issue like hunger or economic development. But they're working in such a way that it's across the divides. And that's why we bring them into this network.

Q Besides providing financial support, what can the average person on the street do to help with peace-building efforts, not only in this country, but around the world?

A I would say to go to Web sites and look around for international organizations that connect you, whether it's through UNIFEM, the Red Cross or Amnesty International. There are all kinds of organizations that are out there working on these kinds of problems. Clearly if people want to send a check to Women Waging Peace, we'd be very glad to have it, and it will go directly into the work of these women.

Q How did you personally shape your role as a woman philanthropist?

A I came from a really unusual family — very conservative fundamentalist, Southern Baptist, so lots of zeal, and "you're responsible for other people, saving their souls." My father was an ardent anti-communist who actually launched a campaign, sort of a single-handed campaign, to get the United States out of the United Nations, etc. I had these various models of teachings: "You can go out there and change the world, and you ought to; it's your responsibility." Dad used to talk about people who would say, "Let George do it." You know, we have to be George and do it ourselves.

And so that zeal and that determination to make things better took these turns as I had experiences with people who desperately needed the kind of help that we, who are in these stable situations, can give. I actually directed a halfway house for about three years and out of that came my understanding that the mental health system is pretty hopelessly mangled and we had to reform it and so we did. In about five years we created a new mental health system for Denver. And then out of that came the homelessness work. And then I went to Vienna.

Q So the international focus didn't come until you actually found yourself in Austria?

A That's right. I had lived in Heidelberg for four years in my 20s. I spoke German, and I got very involved in the Clinton campaign, because I thought he understood inner-city issues. When I was asked if I would be part of the administration, I said, "Yes, I'd like to work on welfare reform." And they said, "Well, we have a real long line of people who want to work on welfare reform. There are lots of women there; what about the international?" And I said, "Well, I speak German, I speak French, I've lived in Europe," and I ended up in Vienna.

I think you could summarize my commitment as inclusive transformation: finding situations that are not working, where people are

being ground up, and transforming those situations by including in the solution the people themselves who are suffering. And helping them change from victim to actor.

Q And the role of mentoring in all of that — other women philanthropists, or in Women Waging Peace — that's taken on new importance?

A Well, it has for me. The fact is we have enough resources in the world. That's the good news. The bad news is that the people with the resources don't understand that those resources are theirs to figure out how to share, and they think that they are theirs to keep. I don't know where we get that idea, but we do. And there's an awful lot of mentoring to be done to help women understand their power. They control the majority of the money in this country, if they want to, and they tend to not. They tend to turn it over to some men to say, "Just tell me what you think my husband would have wanted to do with this." And, if we can get women excited about their ability to change the world, it will be helpful not only to the people in need, but to those women themselves. These women who don't understand their power actually are people in need as well.

Q So what would be your personal philosophy of giving?

A I give away half of my income, every year, and have for 21 years. It was a one-time decision. I've never questioned it, never reneged on it in 21 years.

I do a lot of political giving that comes from the 50 percent that I keep, and that's because I think there are a lot of different ways to change the world, and one is by helping elect candidates who share my values. I give my time because first of all, I like to give my time, and I would much, much rather be talking to that woman whose letter I received yesterday from Bosnia, than walking down Newbury Street and looking in shops. I just would, in terms of what's meaningful and what's interesting, what feeds my soul, what makes me feel like a worthwhile person. And I'm sad for a lot of wealthy people who don't have those connections. They think they're so well connected, isn't that an irony! They think of themselves as well connected, and in fact they're isolated, because they're not hearing about the real people with the real needs, dealing with realities that we live so distant from.

Q And not just real needs, but who also have so much to really give?

A That's exactly right, because they are surviving in extraordinary circumstances. And the wisdom, and the forgiveness, and the bigness of those people, the big heartedness, is inspirational. It keeps me going, it keeps me anchored.

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