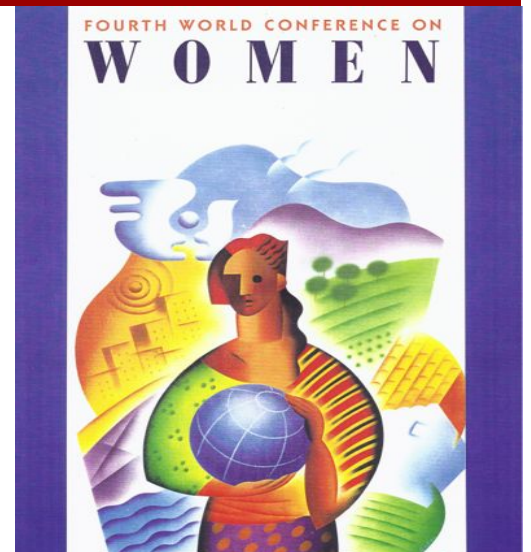


Jalbert Consulting

1995 to 2015

The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace Beijing, was held 4-15 September 1995. The NGO Forum on Women in Huairou preceded it 30 August to 8 September 1995.



Remembering

Jalbert Consulting promotes peace by enabling equitable business development strategy and advocating parity policy.

1995 4th United Nations Conference Revisited

We've come so far, yet still so far to go.

To honor the 20th Anniversary¹ of the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women and the NGO Forum on Women, below is a glimpse of the Huairou² and Beijing experiences as lived from August 30 to September 15, 1995³. I was privileged to actively participate in both events.



What did you experience at the Beijing conference?

Why was the event so important?

Keep on moving forward!

This simple message was repeated in song as the symbolic torch passed from the Nairobi planners to the Beijing/Huairou organizers during the August 30, 1995 inauguration of the NGO Forum on Women at Beijing's colossal Olympic Stadium.

Wide-eyed, eager and filled with anticipatory emotion, women from every corner of the globe sat with great expectancy for what this world conference would bring, individually and collectively.

Why was this event so important? For the first time in history, we witnessed the world's largest gathering of women. The attendance, in and of itself, represented a powerful message to leaders throughout the world. Focused

on global development, peace and equality, we sat in the enormous open-air Beijing Olympic Stadium alternating with shouts of joy; thunderous, appreciative clapping for the colorful, dynamic Chinese performers; and contemplative moments of silence to assess who we were and why we were in China at this auspicious moment in time.

We attended workshops, demonstrations, exhibitions, trainings, cultural events, dialogues, plenaries, receptions, and celebrations in both Huairou and Beijing.

The NGO Forum on Women was officially hosted by the small, cordial city of Huairou, but this tiny town could not accommodate some 30,000 women, and a sprinkling of men.

Byline

Susanne E. Jalbert, Ph.D.



We were bused daily to Huairou logging three or more hours a day in travel time.

Many attendees, like me, were based in hotels in Beijing. We were bused to Huairou logging three or more hours a day in travel time. Taken in stride, the busing opened opportunities for quiet dialogues and intercultural interchanges. Time was spent exchanging personal stories of what expectations, missions, and visions brought us to China. We planned our day enroute to Huairou. We debriefed on the bus at the end of the day. Each person assessed enlightenments acquired at workshops, learning circles, and many other events.

Was China ready for the thousands of NGO emissaries? Well, she did her best, but frequently her best wasn't good enough. China mobilized her huge human and economic resources for NGO participants. Newly constructed hotels,

uncompleted apartments, and just-built exhibition halls were quickly hoisted in Huairou; albeit, most were partial skeletons, damp, and musty.

Daily, shuttle buses, mini vans and taxis moved the masses from Beijing to Huairou. Market centers, hundreds of activity tents, toilet facilities, lunch tables, umbrellas, and security checkpoints were operational upon arrival. Students eager to practice English appeared on street corners to offer directions and, as possible, limited translations. Communication and language were big barriers often proving either dreadfully frustrating or totally hilarious.

As a developing economy in 1995, China should have been applauded for her accomplishments toward trying to provide facilities, transportation, and organization. Could any country have welcomed, managed, and lodged 30,000+ people? It was a Herculean effort.

Creativity was heightened. Songs, poems, articles, journal writings, spontaneous plays, and dramatic discourses flowed effortlessly. Here's an excerpt from Ying Klua (Brave Women), a song written by

Was China ready for
30,000 women?

Thailand's Wichai Naraphaiboon:

Build this beautiful world
With our beautiful hands, women.
Let's create justice in place of the
injustice under which women's
bodies and souls are exploited.

Dawning is a new day,
when international women join
hands.

And with one dream, we shall
walk forward, to free our souls,
unchain ourselves
on the long road to freedom.

Finding a moment for solitude
amidst the masses in Huairou, my
dear friend, Rita Thapa, from
Kathmandu scratched out her
poem on a scrap of paper.

In Huairou -

I cast off my skin anew

And slithered forth

From my hole

To reclaim

My rightful space

My feminist strength

As I left behind

The empty shell

On a track

That was no more.

Rita found more than a moment
of solitude for poetry in China.
She was imbued with inspiration to
create Nepal's first philanthropic
women's foundation. Titled,
TEWA,⁴ which in Nepal translates
to support, the organization was
conceived in September 1995, just
after her return from Huairou/
Beijing. The preliminary charter
was drafted in early January. I set
myself in motion to organize its first

fundraiser to honor Rita and TEWA
June 1996. Then owner of
Denver's premier boutique
Tapestry, Carolyn Fineran was in
Beijing with us as a credentialed
journalist. Back in Denver, CO,
Carolyn hosted the first event,
now called Tewa Teas. Fledgling
TEWA officially launched with
offices and computers July 1996.

The NGO Forum consumed all of
quaint Huairou. Female activists,
community leaders, factory
workers, journalists, migrant
workers, mainstream media,
government representatives, UN
delegates, curious onlookers, and
even a few men occupied every
hotel, restaurant, shop, garden,
street, and path. Participants
arrived from every earthly corner
representing over 180 countries.

Bewildered by the constantly

changing weather from sunny
and comfortable one day to
wet and frigidly cold the next,
women were undaunted. We
simply bought rain slickers,
rubber boots, umbrellas,
sweaters, jackets, and coats.
Warmed by our purchases, we
marched with unstoppable,
resolute perseverance to the
over 5,000 programs, plenaries,
and workshops, and all the
while claiming with pride that
purchases were economic
support for the small local
shopkeepers.

Some bargained. Some didn't,
but everyone purchased
protection from the unpredictable
wet weather.

After pushing the well of water off her
tent, the author pauses for a photo.





Huairou Session: Support Strategies for Entrepreneurial Success

Nadine Hollander
from Israel makes a
compelling case for
entrepreneurship.

My favorite rain outfit was a snazzy European woman who briskly passed me clad in a bright purple slicker with matching calf high rubber boots topped by an equally bright purple plastic hat and umbrella. Weather could certainly not dampen Huairou spirits.

The primary frustration came from knowing that so much was in store and knowing all too well that you could only take in only so much - or so little in this case. The workshops averaged over 500 selections per day. In a two-hour slot I counted 37 workshops on economics, not to mention others on politics, poverty, violence, health, human rights, education, media, and more. On Sunday, I wanted to attend 8 economic sessions, but alas could select only one. That's how every day went; many choices always funneled down to only one or two activities. Every day I wanted to see and do more.

When the plethora of Forum activities overwhelmed us or logistics fatigued us, we sought solace in China's great culture.⁵ We visited the Great Wall, Forbidden City, Summer Palace, Ming Tombs, cloisonné factories, universities, silk markets, etc. We took only short reprieves and returned refreshed eager to partake the commotion of Huairou.

Logistics deemed it nearly impossible to communicate between Huairou and Beijing for a number of reasons: many rooms had no phones, too many people stood in long lines restless to use a short supply of pay phones (yep, those were the old days), people relocated often from hotel to hotel trying to move into Huairou's heart of action, phone lines were bad (noisy, inconsistent, busy, unavailable,

Workshops
averaged over 500
selections per day.

The Beijing communication board - no cheap and easy mobile phones in 1995.



Mainstream media did not tell the real story.

and often just plain not working). Fate always intervened. Colleagues, long distance friends, co-presenters, organizers, and special people magically materialized. It was bizarre, but predictable that I would meet at exactly the right moment the person I was desperately seeking. Mental telepathy proved much more reliable than the Chinese telephone system.

The constant chatter in China's newspapers and TV propaganda professing the well being of Chinese women and denigrating the West was unsettling, disturbing, perplexing and maddening. The East versus West (or North preference over South) media stories grew irksome. Here's one pint-sized account that first unfolded first in a Chinese publication, and then was further perpetuated by Thailand's newspaper, The Nation, "One contentious matter . . . was the obvious difference in the treatment given to delegates from the northern and southern hemispheres. Many of the meetings specifically for women from the southern hemisphere had to be held in makeshift tents while delegates from countries in the northern hemisphere from the large international organizations were often allocated meeting rooms in comfortable hotels."

What nonsense! Here's the real story. I was invited to present a workshop titled, *Entrepreneuring: Women's Economic Solution* on the last day of the conference in one of those so-called makeshift tents (see the photo on page 5). The weather was at its wet worst.

For the workshop, I requested an overhead projector. The approval notice indicated my request would be fulfilled. Upon arrival at Huairou, I went immediately to the location, which, by the way, took the better part of the day to find. Huairou was just big enough that you needed the entire day to walk throughout the conference site.

This is what I discovered. My workshop was, indeed, located in a "makeshift tent." O.K. No problem. I understood the hotel space restrictions. The tent had no electricity; thus no overhead projector. Did this spoil my workshop? No! Flexibility is the name of any presentation game. I regrouped, designed a plenary, and invited women from Israel, Nepal, and California to sit on the panel.⁶ Each woman literally connected with me as we physically ran into one another during the course of the forum.

My original presentation text was reworked, and we subtitled the workshop as *Support Strategies for Entrepreneurial Success*. Each speaker concentrated on business associations that they had personally developed in their home countries to assist female entrepreneurs with training,

networking, tax, legal, and other support services.

On September 8, all speakers arrived at the tent, but not without stories of difficulty. It rained, it poured, and buses ran late. Participants left Beijing at 6:30 a.m. to arrive for the 9 o'clock sessions. Mud was ankle deep, tents were collapsing from the weight of the rain, chairs were soaked, and guess what -- people showed up anyway.

All speakers were present. Soaked participants arrived to fill my tent. For two hours we discussed how and why women entrepreneurs, laid out strategies to support them, and ended the session keen for more time together. Much to my surprise, by the time I arrived home from Asia, several participants had faxed to request information on business plans. Now that is remarkable follow-up given the logistical and weather nightmares.

So, why the wicked media propaganda? Was there a difference in the treatment given to delegates from the northern and southern hemispheres? My experience says unequivocally -- no. Media speculation. Media hype. Pure garbage. Some of us had tents. Some of us had hotel rooms. It was the luck of the

draw. The important point is, that no matter where we were or what the conditions were, we savored meaningful exchanges, threw our hotel rooms open to strangers without a room, and pitched in as needed. Every instance offered opportunities to learn.

The one-on-one talks with all women, especially Chinese, were warm, rewarding, touching, and always stimulating. Connecting as individuals, listening to the concerns of our homelands, offering tenderness, providing support, and, when possible, suggesting strategies, we linked our hearts. We bonded whether from the East or West or from the North or South. Personal dialogue was the most fertile, profitable moment. These deep meaningful minutes far exceeded the thrill of Forum activities, and always rose above media hyperbole.

It wasn't just the Chinese media that baffled us. International news coverage proved to be uniformly deplorable. The real conference "stuff" was not at all given due coverage. Leaders, speakers and delegates of the conference were misquoted. Every story seemed to be presented with a malicious political twist. Is contemptible coverage apt? Is nasty media

treatment deserving of a world conference of such magnitude and importance? Or was the coverage presented so biased and negative because it was perceived to be a “woman only” thing? Why were there so many misrepresentations? I wonder.

The NGO Forum on Women and the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women drew the world's attention to twelve critical issues, which we outlined in great detail in the Platform for Action:⁷

- 1. Poverty**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Health**
- 4. Violence**
- 5. Armed Conflicts**
- 6. Economic disparity**
- 7. Power Sharing**
- 8. Institutions**
- 9. Human rights**
- 10. Mass media**
- 11. Environment**
- 12. Girl child**

Although each participant may have stood for a particular issue, we recognized the importance of solidarity for all critical areas of concern. The strength and intensity of so many women in one place at one time cannot be ignored. Our imposing presence, the sheer magnitude of our numbers, was a forceful, potent message sent to governments

and UN delegates whose duty it was, and still is, to hear, deliver and act upon our demands for development, peace and equality. The formulated Platform for Action was a positive document to guide us through the upcoming decades.

We became accustomed to seeing protest demonstrations, marches, sit-ins, sit-downs, and rallies at every street, corner, nook and cranny. Diversity abounded in presentation style and range of issues. Protests featured dance (the silent ballet of the Korean comfort wives), song (Japanese harmonious peace chants, “No more Hiroshima), poems, silent marches (Tibetans covering their mouths with cloth gags), fist-thrusting, ear-shattering shouts such as the Iranians yelling “Down with the imperialists,” and art (posters, paintings, weavings, handicrafts, origami birds of peace, and so much more).

Walking to and fro every day in Huairou and Beijing, we were all constantly impressed and inspired by multi-culturalism. Women we passed by or stopped to chat with and question were elegantly attired in exquisite national ensembles. With unabashed curiosity, we all stared at one another. We simply couldn't stop

ourselves! Women appeared in dazzling, gorgeously kaleidoscopic national costumes. All the more reason to stare. Yet, no one minded.

In the USA I am accustomed to feel as one within a majority. Not so in Huairou.

In China I was one within a minority. I stood on the outside peering into the crowd of majority. Their faces did not mirror my pale white skin.

Although I was dutifully aware of my minority status, I was never made to feel out of place or ill at ease. This is a tribute to the sensitivity of all women at Huairou.

I wonder if any other conference in history can express as much dignity, beauty, creativity, diversity, and calm. It truly was a wonderful place to be.

What did I learn? What did I take home from this enormous and consequential summit? What did I decide to do next? Twenty years later, I continue the query. The conference was huge, powerful, overwhelming, amazing, and challenging. I expect that the compilation of information taken in and the lessons learned will synthesize, filter and percolate for the remainder of my life.



Planned and spontaneous protests

As recorded in 1995, I professed:

Women can never again be silenced.

Women are fortified knowing that there is no going back.

Women must find venues in their own voice, style, culture, and method to be heard.

Women must take risks.

Women must initiate change.

Women must lead, even if we lead only ourselves.

Women must stand alone, and women must stand together.

Women came to China to be together. We came to voice opinions on profoundly critical issues as outlined and adopted with the Platform of Action. We came to ensure that we would be heard,⁸ not misunderstood or misquoted. Yet, conventional media did not grasp well or report accurately our cause, purpose or outcomes. We clustered in Huairou and Beijing to channel information, strategies, and energy. We endeavored to transfer what we learned into our own countries. The tactics we acquired were intended to advance the environments where we work, live, and love. We, who witnessed the devotion of activists to their venerated causes, anticipated that we would convey ideas and solutions, and thread them into the social fabric of our homes, businesses, governments, and cultures.

What was the 1995 Beijing take away?

My main discovery in 1995, and it remains true today, is that I am clear on what I can do for development, peace and equality with immediacy.

- **First, I can continue consulting, teaching, training and mentoring.** It was abundantly apparent how important the alleviation of poverty is. Entrepreneurship is one strategy to put financial empowerment into the hands of women with a measure of speed.
- **Second, I can lobby.** I remain highly irritated by the amount of money allocated to militarism, instead of peace processes. Five percent is a small amount to knock off the defense budget. My letters, calls, and e-mails will demand from our congressional leaders a reduction of at least 5% of our military budget. It's a modest beginning.

I know what I can do right now. Here's my challenge. What can you do? Not tomorrow, but today. What can you do today to promote development, peace and equality? Think about it, then write it down. Realizing that your discoveries will probably not reflect mine (and that's O.K., why should they!), I want to know what your contributions will be. Tell me.

Because I have worked in Russia extensively (remember this was 1995 and now it's 50 countries later), I am asked this question frequently: How did the NGO Forum on Women and the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women effect women in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe and the CIS?

A primary affect is the realization that women must lead. It is time for leadership to frame a female face. A global call to arms exists for women to assume political responsibility. To guarantee the viability of having our voices heard, we must be prepared to:

- **Lead** by creating a shared vision,
- **Anticipate** highly unpredictable futures, and
- **Navigate** through uncertainty with strong coalitions.

For many of us, leading means setting lofty, scary goals for our future. For others, it means reviving our core competencies. Linked to leading are elements of empowerment, motivation, lifelong learning, a clear sense of direction, equitable utilization of resources, and respect for all.

- **Empowerment** - The essence is organizing people into teams that can cut across old boundaries. Identify people's

abilities and match their skills to what must be achieved. Don't hover! Turn people loose to make decisions, establish objectives, and take full responsibility for reaching defined goals.

- **Motivation** - The main thrust is to release individual energy and passion. Good leaders set people free by lighting a spark in others so everybody can recognize their own desires and assimilate their known facts.
- **Lifelong Learning** - In the New World Order, education is a lifelong undertaking. Launch an individual program to collect the information you require. Take a moment to write a list. Identify exactly what you need. Is it business information? Or political data? Or clarity about health, poverty or violence issues? Use this list to propel personal action or create your own distinct priorities.
- **Direction** - Produce a clear sense of direction. If you own a business, write a plan to manage and grow it. This method is equally effective for personal purposes. Set long-term goals. Yes, we have problems that we need to solve today. Yes, the problems are serious, time consuming, and

demanding. If you hear nothing else from me today, please hear this -- *set goals now*. Push your brain to envision the future, set short and long-term goals, assemble performance indicators, and set success targets. Move beyond problems of today by planning for the future you wish to see.

- **Responsibility** - Take personal responsibility for making the best use of resources. The continual environmental demonstrations in Beijing highlighted the importance of conserving our natural resources. What actions can you put into place to use financial, human and environmental resources well? Be creative. Share ideas.
- **Respectfulness** - Show respect for all people. Approaches, lifestyles, religions, politics, ideas, and so many other life areas differ. Listen. It is from listening and gaining understanding that solutions evolve. Place a high emphasis and value on treating everyone in a fair, open, kind, and honest way. Considerate treatment encourages people to perform to their highest level.

The presence of leadership is how women will have the most

influence in the future. Our feminist legacy will be the hope we kindle in this generation to inspire the next. We have options. We can make changes. We can conduct business, political agendas, and our personal lives on our own terms as well as in collaboration with others. My message from this important milestone conference is that change is *always* possible. 30,000 women said so.

You don't have to get it right the first time, but you do have to move forward, and we do have to work jointly. Women and men are working together better and better every day to safeguard the important legislative gains made to protect human rights⁹ on national and international levels.

Perhaps some arrived in China with skepticism about the role of the NGO Forum on Women, but I believe that none left without absorbing a truly extraordinary experience. While working for women's rights and equity issues, the spirit of feminist was flamed. My 1995 feminist soul was slightly sleeping before Huairou, or at least quieter than it was in the Seventies. After Beijing it is forever impossible to quiet this one re-energized feminist force.

There is knowledge that women

have the commitment to equity from the whole world, well, at least from all who attended the Huairou/Beijing forums. Knowing that we are working for justice for the whole of humanity is a unique power. This power can redress the global gender imbalance.

By contributing in our individual ways and by joining efforts collaboratively, the whole world is (or we hope it can be) transformed in a positive direction.

We remember Huairou¹¹ fondly. Memories motivate us to do more, lead more, write more, and voice more. We are obliged to proffer more of ourselves today and every day, whether in a large way or a small way.

And, we must, at all times,

**Keep
On Moving
Forward!**

Jalbert Bio

Jalbert was an invited presenter at the 4th U.N. Conference on Women



**Beijing 1995 Closing Ceremony:
Rita Thapa with Susanne Jalbert**



**Susanne E. Jalbert, Ph.D.,
Founder/CEO Jalbert
Consulting – International
Development, Winter Park, CO**

Understanding female economic empowerment and the relationships between different forms of power are threaded throughout the tapestry Jalbert's international career. Women are grossly under-represented in public institutional and business leadership. They are far less likely than men to be elected to decision-making posts or high-level private sector positions; thus, offering few role models or mentors for girls. These imbalances contribute to inequity that is ensnared within societies worldwide.

As an activist to end violence against women and to stop trafficking-in-persons, Jalbert uses economic development as an essential tool towards a more equitable, safe life.

Through Jalbert Consulting working with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), she has successfully implemented over 85 projects in 50 countries on 4 continents. LinkedIn has detail.

Endnotes and Sources:

1. [http://www.unece.org/genderwelcome-new/monitoring-progress/beijing-platform-for-action/genderbeijing-20.html](http://www.unece.org/gender/welcome-new/monitoring-progress/beijing-platform-for-action/genderbeijing-20.html)
2. <http://huairou.org/csw59-beijing-20-conference>
3. This article was written shortly after the China experience for friends, family, and colleagues who were unable to attend the conference. To capture that 1995 moment in time, I have not significantly edited or altered the original text.
4. <http://www.tewa.org.np/site/>
5. <http://www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/china-top-10-attractions.htm>
6. The women that joined me for the plenary I re-organized became friends for life. We still meet in California, Israel and Nepal as often as my travel schedule permits. Life is **amazing!**
7. <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/>
8. One voice, to me the most memorable and powerful gendered message, reverberated worldwide from then-First Lady Hillary Clinton, spoken in 1995 at the 4th U.N. Conference in Huairou, "**If there is one message that echoes forth from this conference, let it be that human rights are women's rights and women's rights are human rights once and for all.**"

9. Ibid.

10. Jalbert, Ph.D., Susanne E. (2007) *Women in Business Conference: Iraq: Baghdad Al Rasheed Hotel.*

11. http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/publication/2012/09/20120905135625aef0_4823986.html#axzz29UQ3WO2U

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Gratitude:

To Genevieve Fiore, peace activist and my mentor, who insisted that I attend this remarkable event.

To the 30,000+ women, and the few men, who deemed the issues of the day important enough to gather en masse, to set aside differences, responsibilities, and other life pressures for development, peace and equality.

Peace is not only absence of violence, but is also a just rule of law and equitable economic well-being.¹⁰



Honoring the 1995 4th
U.N. Conference on
Women
1995-2015

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