

Beyond War: Causes of Conflict, Prospects for Peace Conference
June 2, Dinner Program Speakers

Ambassador Swanee Hunt Remarks

You all, thank you. It's great to be here and I applaud the Pulitzer Center. This work is critical and I'm delighted to be here with other women who are on stage with me because I really am one person representing women all over the world, women leaders like the ones you have brought into the Pulitzer Center in so many ways through their stories, through their actual presence.

Nathalie and I are becoming fast friends, and that's because she has been saying over and over to me how pleased she is that I'm here to speak to you for seven minutes. And I said, you know, Nathalie (she's very subtle, could be a diplomat—I happen to know because I've been teaching at the Kennedy School for 20 years now), I know it takes 50 minutes for me to deliver a point. So, coffee is being served later, I want to assure you.

Oh, by the way, you left out one title, I mean, thank you for all the things you said, but where's Jina Moore? Hi, Jina! You know how I really met her. I am Jina's sous-chef. And so I arrived in Kigali and it's about almost midnight, but it's Thanksgiving. So, Jina has me over. Her kitchen is a little bit bigger than this podium but not much, and it's all concrete. And she has somehow gotten her hands, literally, on a wild turkey. Now, she's been boiling and her guests, her friends, are at this table right outside the kitchen and she's trying to figure out what to do. Because, I mean, a machete wouldn't get through this turkey. And so I say, Jina, come on. You take this leg and I'll take this leg and we literally tore this turkey apart limb by limb. So, thank you Jina for that stirring memory and as you know, a good journalist tries to get the local color into the story. Human interest here!

I was, though, in Jina's session beforehand and I see some of you who were on the panel and I want to thank you for what you said about our portrayal of women as tending to be presented as the victims, isn't it awful what's happening to them, and we lose sight of women as agents. Nathalie told me that last year, the whole theme here had been "Gender Lens" and it was really important to her to see that theme threaded through the years, it's not just one isolated idea. You can tell from the introduction, that I am going to be speaking about women. I don't meant to be chauvinistic, but I am a chauvinist, so what can I say.

So I could tell you all about women's rights, very important. I'm not going to talk about women's rights. You know why? Because if you believe in women's rights, then you don't need to hear me, right? And if you don't, I'm sorry. I consider you kind of hopeless.

I'm also not going to talk to you about fairness, and why it's only fair to have women at the table, the negotiating table. The reason I'm not going to is because it's kind of a yawn at this point, or it sounds really whiny. So we don't really need to go there.

And I'm also not going to talk to you about women as victims. You all know those stories, we lie in bed at night thinking what can I do about these women as victims. The problem is when you are writing about women as victims, it is extremely hard for readers or your audience to get the point of these strong women leaders because you've just got this picture in your mind of these women victims.

But what I *will* talk to you about is women as untapped resources because this is critical. This is critical for our world. And the political leaders who get this, they understand that if you have women deeply involved in peacemaking and coming up with peace agreements instead of a five-year life for the agreement, which is typical, you've got a really good chance of having 15 years. This is so important. Can you imagine if you had 15 years instead of five years for this peace agreement?

Also, military leaders understand women as untapped resources. They're starting to. John Allen, you know the name, four-star (general), Afghanistan, Iraq, etcetera, and he's now the head of Brookings. So he made this spectacular statement recently that if he were a commander going into an operation, he would be devoting a huge amount of resources to finding out where the women are. What's their role? How can we empower them? Because that is our tactical advantage if we do this.

That's what we call inclusive security. But it's about the journalists too. These are fabulous untold stories. That's why I wrote "Rwandan Women Rising." We all knew about the Rwandan genocide and we could analyze Paul Kagame until the cows come home.

The untold story was about the women leaders, it is about the women leaders. So, how does this play out? This is how it plays out. I'm in my kitchen, I look at the *Boston Globe*, and I see a picture, a beautiful portrait of a woman who has been indicted for plotting the genocide. *New York Times* writes a story about another woman who not only ordered rapes at the checkpoints, she was handing out condoms to the men who were doing the rapes. Why was this the front page story? Because of shock value. Why is it shock value? Because in our minds, women actually don't go around planning genocides. And actually, they don't. They really don't. That's not what we sit around doing, or talking about. You know, how can we have a genocide here, right? 92 men were indicted for plotting the genocide, and one woman. The exception here proves the rule. The exception proves the rule.

So I want you to be thinking about why this happens in the news. Like, you can bet that the story was not: "oh and she was plotting the genocide," but the parliament now is 64 percent women and half the president's cabinet is women and half the judiciary is women. And you all are choosing, journalists I should say, are choosing which angle of the story to pick up. So, I could talk to you all right now about Tunisia, and about Colombia, I mean these are current stories, women have been very involved in. Is it problematic? Yes. Is everything being implemented like we wished? No. Right? But women are in those constitutions and they are taking big, big bold leaps. It's happening. And that's the story you all need to be covering.

I'm going to now wrap this up by telling you a failure story. My failure story is that I was hosting negotiations in '94, 14 days, 14 days, two rounds of negotiations to bring Croats and Bosniaks (the Muslims) together to face off against the Serbs. OK, 14 days, maps spread across my office, different rooms at the embassy with the different delegations, I had them over to the house for dinner. I got them singing folk songs on the piano. And then the peace agreement is being signed at the White House. President Tudjman comes in, then President Izetbegović comes in, President Clinton comes in, OK, three guys up there. I turn around. You all, there isn't a woman there. It's like 60 gray suits and I think holy Toledo. Well, I didn't think holy Toledo actually, I thought something else. Seriously, how did that happen?

So I was telling Joe Nye—the Dean who brought me to the Kennedy School, and, of course, soft power is his thing—and I told him this story and he said you've got to follow that story. And that's how I came to do this work. Following that story, and you all, you need to follow that story also. How come... I was looking through a security lens, nervous... I'm one of the good guys right? I get it, about women, but I didn't even see it. It really matters what lens you're looking through. That's pivotal.

I'm going to close and tell you about what I learned in terms of the coverage of Bosnia. On the right, there's Queen Noor and other women leaders. We have come, we're working on maybe 60,000 women who are in a big stadium, it's one year after the genocide. They are fired up. They are going to make a difference in Bosnia. They're all determined. And there's 20 years later and look. Our 21st anniversary and what is it? [On the screen, images of news coverage depicting women crying over caskets.] I mean, does that look like a woman leader? Do I care that she's crying? Yes. Do I care that she's bent over a coffin of her son or her husband? Yes. But that does not change the world. And our job is to change the world.

So, I'm going to leave you with Alenka, civil engineer. She was one of 26 women I interviewed for seven years. She's an activist, she's organizing, and basically what she's saying is that while they were there in Tuzla, the propaganda was coming in tiny tiny bits and it was invisible. It was, you know, kill them or they'll kill you. And then that fear becomes the mechanism for war and that's a kind of fake news. She said you can't recognize it, cause it's coming at you in so many directions. So you can't tell what's a lie and what's not and you need an outsider to come in and say, that's bullshit. And it takes you into a place where you cannot tell the lie from the truth. And because of that, the lie becomes the truth. And you all, that's Bosnia. And it's today.

I don't know what it's like being a journalist today... I can't imagine, with what's happening, talk radio and the local news. It takes you to come in and say, you know what? That's fake news. And that's your job.

I want to thank you for what you're doing and I'm going to urge you, urge you to go out in your work and find Alenka. She is by the thousands in these conflicts. You've got to find her, you've got to write about her. Because, you are creating history in your writing. And if what you're doing is talking about the male political leaders who are working with the male warriors, that becomes the primary source. That's history. And if you're ignoring the fact that in Nigeria and Liberia, women organize Christian-Muslim

marches with thousands and thousands of women who are calling for calm, and recently they were doing the same thing in the Middle East. Are those stories front and center? Put them front and center, because what you're writing, becomes the history. I want to say it again. It's a stunning responsibility.

Please, please, please, if you remember nothing else from anything I said, go out, and find Alenka.