

China Philanthropy News

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China Philanthropy News is produced by Grantmakers Without Borders (Gw/oB) for grantmaking organizations, donors and individuals interested in philanthropic engagement with China. It provides current news on giving, useful resources, people and books to provide a better understanding of the landscape of philanthropy in the country. For more information about Grantmakers Without Borders, visit www.gwob.net.

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-- Commentary --

1) Philanthropy in a Time of Crisis: Responses to the Earthquake in China
By Elsa Fan, Grantmakers Without Borders China Intern

It has been difficult to turn on the news recently without being haunted by images of the destruction and travesty that the earthquake has brought to Sichuan province in southwest China. As we watched helplessly from the sidelines, as people struggled to move on with their lives, as some held on to the hope of new survivors, and as stories continued to stream out about the losses incurred by families, a new philanthropy gradually emerged that, in large part, has been spurred on by this devastation and yet reflects the deep-rooted humanity that lies within us all.

Philanthropy, while having a long history in China, has only recently emerged as a more definable movement, particularly in conjunction with the growing middle classes and burgeoning wealthy classes that have begun to cultivate such a spirit. The Associated Press reported that in the week after the quake, over USD\$1.3 billion in donations were collected, with about 85 percent from within China itself. From Hong Kong alone, donations topped HK\$1.1 billion (about \$140 million USD), with funds flowing from individual and foundations alike (South China Morning Post 2008).

What is striking about the outpouring of donations in response to the earthquake is that it represents a grassroots movement where money has been flowing from the bottom up. In China, this philanthropy has in large part been spurred by the actions of millions of ordinary Chinese who have "opened their hearts and wallets" for the quake victims (Washington Post 2008).

Philanthropy, however, does not stop at just money. The mobilization of volunteers has been an impressive endeavor following the earthquake. According to the *Australian*, the number of volunteers reached over 100,000 people who have travelled to Sichuan province in order to assist with the relief efforts. People from around the country have travelled from as far as Guangdong to help the government and others, bringing with them supplies

and food for the affected families. The government, to their credit, has been largely cooperative and receptive to such support, both of volunteers and funds.

In a country where private charities were banned until 2004, the recent earthquake has signaled a tremendous shift in the political and social landscape, where more and more non-state actors, whether nongovernmental organizations, international aid, and philanthropy (in the form of individual and foundation) has inserted themselves instrumentally in the crux of the crisis. The Associated Press recently reported that according to the China Charity Information Center, private foundations will become the country's main source of charity in the next five years (Associated Press 2008).

Many have speculated whether the flexibility of state surveillance and monitoring of such charity groups for the moment will emerge into a longer-term shift in the legal landscape for philanthropic charities. Some see this as "an opportunity for growth and test ground" (China View 2008). Yet how this will play out in China is still ambiguous, particularly in terms of the more distant future. If the current scenario is any indication, however, the role of philanthropy has proved to be a complementary force in the deliverance of social goods and services, and the state would be hard-pressed to admit otherwise in the face of the recent earthquake.

In terms of whether this outpouring of support will be sustained following the earthquake remains to be seen. As many have seen following the tsunami that struck SE Asia in 2004, recovery and reconstruction from such natural disasters require a long-term commitment that necessitates more than just funding, but a replenishment of human and social capital, and most importantly, cooperation with local and national state institutions. Nonetheless, the earthquake has proved to be a powerful unifying force for the people of China, and the spontaneity of the philanthropy movement here underscores the deep-rooted belief in the spirit of humanity. It is this hope that we bring with us into the future.

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– Current NEWS –

2) Can charity change China?

In light of the earthquake, philanthropy has accelerated rapidly, as donors have contributed in millions to the relief efforts. The government, traditionally cautious and suspicious of the public sector, has had to react quickly to the outpouring of donations flowing into the country and has promised to change policies to ensure more money goes towards aid. Even ordinary citizens have set up new initiatives to give to the earthquake, adding to the spur of philanthropy in the country. All this offers a promising direction for civil society. As reported in the Wall Street Journal.

http://online.wsj.com/article/SB121201756914927669.html?mod=googlenews_wsj

3) Hong Kong, Taiwan tycoons lead charity giving for quake victims

As philanthropy continues to grow in China, and while entrepreneurs are still grasping the concept, the earthquake has allowed for the differences between Taiwan, Hong Kong and the mainland to disappear under a common goal of supporting humanitarian efforts for the earthquake. While many new entrepreneurs on the mainland have been criticized for being ‘stingy’ and not donating enough, the devastation in Sichuan has instilled a sense of patriotism among philanthropists everywhere, particularly in Hong Kong and Taiwan, who have given in increasing amounts. As reported by Bloomberg.

http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=20601088&sid=a7Uf9n_9omGQ&refer=muse

4) Citizens’ groups step up in China

Informal groups and nongovernmental organizations have been crucial towards getting supplies to workers and relief efforts in the earthquake. Despite continuing suspicion towards such groups by the government, in light of the Sichuan tragedy, they seem to be much more open to the contributions such groups are making, perhaps recognizing their value. Moreover, through online donations, blogging and other means, non-state interventions have

been important in raising funds and attention around the country. As reported by the Washington Post.

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/28/AR2008052803398.html?hpid=moreheadlines>

5) Is corporate giving enough for Wenchuan earthquake victims?

Although many companies have given large amounts to the earthquake efforts, others have come under attack for not giving enough. This article asks whether corporate giving has been enough and offers recommendations for companies to better implement and align their CSR policies to maximize social benefit. While donations for the relief efforts have been led by Hong Kong and Taiwan companies, mainland businesses also need to be more aware of their responsibilities, and having strong CSR policies will help them towards that goal. As reported by CSR Asia.

http://www.csr-asia.com/weekly_detail.php?id=11396

6) Giant quake proves Chinese NGOs are a rising force

In Sichuan, quickly after the earthquake a number of small NGOs mobilized their efforts to begin assisting with the relief. A joint office of the May 12 Concerted Action of Civil Organizations was opened in Chengdu to help coordinate nationwide support, and thus far more than 120 NGOs have joined the initiatives. Each day, the office sends out large sums of money towards the efforts. While there have been continued restrictions to these organizations in some parts of the quake zone, this has also been seen by many as a new testing ground for civil society in China. As reported by China View.

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-05/26/content_8256445.htm

7) A civil society emerges from the earthquake rubble

The level of civic engagement and voluntarism that has occurred following the earthquake has been unprecedented in China's history, and combined with the relaxation of the government's restrictions towards civil society groups has allowed for the blooming of a civil society. This article looks at three primary factors: the government's open media approach, the immediate impacts resulting from media (national and international support and sympathy), and the role of citizen participation and NGO mobilization for relief efforts. The article asks whether China will sustain this social capital generated. As reported by Yale Global Online.

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=10910>

8) China quake could speed growth of ad-hoc activism

A new form of activism has been emerging in China, even before the earthquake, comprised not of large NGOs, which are often subject to government monitoring, but by small groups of concerned individuals, mobilizing around issues rather than organizations. This article suggests that activists may find other outlets for their spirit post-earthquake. As reported by Reuters.

<http://www.reuters.com/article/latestCrisis/idUSPEK264342>

9) China quake: controls cautiously lifted on flood of volunteers

The earthquake relief efforts have brought out thousands of volunteers wanting to contribute to helping quake victims. While the government has been open to volunteers as an asset to society, many question whether this is simply a "small leap forward" or significant of a larger shift in policy. Some believe that although the earthquake and the mass of volunteers have resulted in a relaxation of policies, the threat of civil society and what it could represent continues to be regarded cautiously by the government. As reported by the Christian Science Monitor.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0529/p01s05-woap.html?page=2>

10) After quake, China's migrant workers rush home

Many migrant workers from Sichuan, who are spread out across the country, have rushed home following the earthquake to see their family members. Part of the 120 million migrant labor force in China, they have returned to help with family members, particularly those from the rural areas. Some of the families have refused to leave their homes, worried about what will happen to their homes if they leave, more content to survive on maize porridge and salted meats. As reported by the Christian Science Monitor.

<http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0520/p01s09-woap.html>

11) China struggles to shelter millions of quake's homeless

After the earthquake, China is now dealing with the need to house millions of the displaced people who lost their homes. Already, the government has made an appeal for international aid, asking for tents and supplies to feed and clothe the victims. Moreover, continued aftershocks have exacerbated the already tragic conditions. Beijing has pledged US\$9 billion for reconstruction efforts, and has received an additional US\$4 billion in donations. The government is planning to build 1.5 million temporary homes, and the UN OCHA estimates the need for at least 3.3 million tents. Over 150,000 soldiers have been mobilized towards relief efforts since the quake. As reported by the New York Times.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/05/26/world/asia/26china.html?_r=2&hp&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

12) Quake took much for China's children

It is estimated that the earthquake affected 3 million children and left over 4,000 orphaned. Efforts are being made to quickly house children, albeit in temporary tents and help them return to some form of normality as soon as possible to help them cope with the tragedy. Already, makeshift schools and classes are being started in order to help give children some sort of familiarity and stability in these challenging circumstances. As reported by USA Today.

http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-05-22-china_N.htm?csp=34

13) Mothers who lost children in China quake given new baby hope
China has loosened restrictions on the one child policy and has sent doctors to the Sichuan region to provide reverse sterilization procedures for women who lost their only child in the earthquake and would like more children. It is estimated that 7,000 children lost to the earthquake were the only children in their families. As reported by Agence France Presse.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/afp/20080607/sc_afp/chinaquakepopulationpolicy_080607175328

14) China working to prevent epidemics in disaster zone
Workers have come into Sichuan spraying disinfectants in order to try to prevent a disease outbreak among the 5 million people left homeless by the earthquake. For the government, the greatest priorities are to provide clean and safe drinking water, food and temporary shelter. Currently, there has been no sign of any outbreaks. Groups such as the Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent have been helping with purification units for drinking water. As reported by the Associated Press.

http://ap.google.com/article/ALeqM5gBr_dOzJ9Pnc_U9gSgtTgE-cR-KwD9121SF00

15) Chinese sex workers find their way to Kabul
Prostitution is illegal in Afghanistan, but many women from China are making their way there as part of a growing sex trade. In part, the women are pressured by the vast unemployment that continues to plague China. They are willing to take the risk of living in a dangerous environment such as Afghanistan in order to make money. The wages here are much higher than what they could have earned in China, despite suicide attacks and sporadic raids by the government. As reported by Reuters.

<http://in.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idINISL12604420080519?&pageNumber=3&virtualBrandChannel=0>

16) China kicks off drive to kick plastic bag habit
In a bid to help protect the environment and save energy, the new policy to ban plastic bags has started in China. Under the new policy, flimsy bags not meeting requirements are illegal, and shopkeepers must charge for carrier bags. Those breaking the law will face steep penalties. Despite the policy, however, how well this will be implemented remains to be seen, and it may take time to effect. As reported by Reuters.

http://news.yahoo.com/s/nm/20080601/ts_nm/china_plasticbags_dc_1

17) China increases lead as biggest carbon dioxide emitter
Recent studies show that China has overtaken the US as the leading emitter of carbon dioxide, increasing by 8 percent in 2007. This increase accounted for 2/3rds of the growth in the year's global greenhouse gases. It is unlikely that these emissions will decrease anytime soon, experts predict, in part because they are so closely tied to China's economic growth and mix of power and

industry sources. However, the US continues to lead in terms of per person carbon dioxide emissions. Neither country has signed on to the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012. As reported by the New York Times.

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/14/world/asia/14china.html?_r=1&scp=45&sq=china&st=nyt&oref=slogin

18) Religion in China

This article looks at the different forms of religion that are practiced in China. Although the government is officially atheist, surveys from a state run newspaper shows that about 31 percent of the population of Chinese adults are religious. The government continues to monitor closely the practice of religion in China and recognizes only five different religions. The practice of other religions is considered illegal and is subject to persecution by the state. As reported by the New York Times.

http://www.nytimes.com/cfr/world/slot2_20080516.html?pagewanted=2&_r=1

– Useful RESOURCES –

19) Gw/oB Conference Recording: “Strengthening China's Grassroots Movement to Address Climate Change”

Most efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in China have focused on top-down, governmental initiatives. Yet to be successful, these and other initiatives will have to be implemented at a grassroots, community-based level. This recording of a workshop at Gw/oB’s recent conference provided an overview of on-the-ground environmental efforts in China and explored obstacles and opportunities for grantmaking to China. With David Gordon and Daniela Salaverry, Pacific Environment; Fu Tao (China); and Ge Yun, Xinjiang Conservation Fund (China). Available for purchase (\$15) at

<http://www.conferencerecording.com/aaaListTapes.asp?CID=GWB28>.

20) Report: “Building capacity for health promotion-a case study from China”

During the period 1997–2000 a technical assistance project to build capacity for community-based health promotion was implemented in seven cities and one province in China. The technical assistance project formed part of a much larger World Bank-supported program to improve disease prevention capabilities in China, commonly known as Health VII. The technical assistance project was funded by the Australian Agency for International Development. It was designed to develop capacity within the Ministry of Health and the cities and province in the management of community-based health promotion projects, as well as supporting institutional development and public health policy reform. Based on this experience, this paper presents a model for capacity building projects of this type. At

<http://heapro.oxfordjournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/20/3/285?etoc>.

21) Report: “Governance reform towards “serving migrant workers”: the local implementation of central government regulations”

This article examines the extension of social rights and social security coverage to intra-national migrants in China as a public governance issue. More specifically, it analyses how central government regulations on improving the situation of migrant workers are being interpreted and implemented by local governments. In this regard, it offers a unique case study of difficulties encountered in the local implementation of policy directives issued by the central government. At

http://www.bricsinfo.org/bricsinfo/research/journal_view.jsp?seq=26&serviceCode=AAA005&lid=re.

22) Report: “Sex, drugs and HIV/AIDS in China”

China has made impressive strides in the past couple of years to control the spread of HIV/AIDS, but if it is to quell the new wave of infections in the general population, it will have to confront the country’s changing patterns of sexual behaviour. At <http://www.eldis.org/assets/Docs/36468.html>.

– Upcoming EVENTS –

23) “Asia-Pacific Sub-Regional Preparatory Conference for the 2009 World Conference on Higher Education-Facing Global and Local Challenges: the New Dynamics for Higher Education,” APEID, UNESCO and Government of Macao, 24-26 September, 2008, Macao SAR, China

The aim of the Sub-Regional Preparatory Conference is to take stock of major developments and trends on higher education in the Asia-Pacific region. The outcomes of this conference will serve as one of the inputs to the 2009 WCHE. More specifically, the objectives of the conference are to: prepare a series of thematic debates on important issues on higher education in the region; collect inputs from governments, intergovernmental organizations, non-government organizations, higher education networks and other partners in the WCHE follow-up; and report on what is happening to member states in the field of higher education. More at <http://www.unescobkk.org/index.php?id=7910>.

– Latest BOOKS –

24) *A Floating City of Peasants: The Great Migration in Contemporary China*, Floris-Jan van Luyn, New Press, 2008

The following book was reviewed by Malia Politzer, a freelance journalist based in Beijing, featured in the Far Eastern Economic Review, May 2008 issue.

In 2005, there were 191 million international migrants, or people living outside their native countries, according to data from the United Nations. Compare this to as many as 210 million Chinese migrant workers moving from their rural homes to cities, and it's easy to see why some immigration experts call it the largest mass migration in human history.

There's no question that rural peasant labor is fueling China's economic leap forward. They build the high-rises that grace Beijing's skyline, the roads and highways, and provide the cheap labor that has made China “the world's factory.”

This colossal internal migration—an integral facet of the China story—is the subject of journalist Floris-Jan van Luyn's book, *A Floating City of Peasants: The Great Migration in Contemporary China*. A Dutch journalist who spent nearly six years living in and reporting from China for the Rotterdam-based NRC Handelsblad, Mr. van Luyn tells the stories of the people behind China's rapid economic growth, following them from the faltering economies of China's rural heartland to the metropolitan boomtowns of Shenzhen, Shanghai and Beijing. Once in the cities they do the work that the urban population will not do—construction and manual labor, cleaning, childcare, working in the dish rooms at restaurants, garbage collection and factory work.

Through more than a dozen intimate vignettes, the author paints human portraits of the people who are often spoken of only in statistical terms. We meet Chunming, a 16-year-old-boy who runs away from home in order to join an uncle in Beijing, earning money by scavenging urban trash. Then there are Cai Lulu and Yi Congcong, two children sent to the cities by their parents to earn income by selling flowers; and Yang Chun, a 23-year-old woman who works in the textile factories of Shenzhen.

China's rapid growth has pulled millions of people out of poverty in an astonishingly short period of time, as economic liberalization and rapid urbanization has led to a wealth of opportunities in cities. It should come as no surprise that rural workers seeking better economic prospects are moving to cities en masse—where they not only earn more than they would working in rural regions, but are also able to send some of their newfound wealth back home in the form of remittances.

Women are among the largest beneficiaries of urban opportunities: Factory jobs, often preferring to hire women—who are seen as more dexterous and obedient than men—present uneducated woman with a means to financial autonomy far beyond any they would find in rural regions. Interviews with factory workers in Shenzhen show that many of these women—young, unmarried, independent—find in their labor financial independence and self-respect.

Yet Mr. van Luyn also finds that peasants pursuing these economic incentives

often walk the fine line between opportunity and exploitation. Women, though often beneficiaries of urban opportunities, are also the most vulnerable: While those lucky enough to secure factory jobs find economic empowerment and self-sufficiency, many others—lured to remote regions with false promises of legitimate work—find themselves coerced into sex work at bath houses, karaoke bars and brothels.

The reality peasants seek to escape is darker still. Much of Mr. van Luyn's book dwells on the rural problems peasants face at home: Illegal land seizures and lack of private property ownership prevent peasants from taking advantage of real-estate opportunities. Despite recent attempts by the Chinese Communist Party in Beijing to relieve pressure on peasants by officially abolishing the agricultural taxes, they still suffer under heavy (often illegal) local taxes forced on them by corrupt officials.

The author discloses a series of narratives illuminating how commonplace it is for development and infrastructure to be obstructed by corruption—roads that fail to be built, large central funding schemes that fail to reach their intended beneficiaries. In one particularly horrifying account, Mr. van Luyn introduces Li Lusong, a 20-year-old man who is abducted, beaten—nearly to death—and has his tongue partially cut out in order to silence him when he persists in petitioning local officials to build a new school.

This paints a dreary, but incomplete picture. Though he dedicates a cursory chapter to the economic incentives driving migration, the bulk of his book focuses on the push-factors behind migration—corruption and the absence of an independent judiciary and rule-of-law. While these problems certainly exist, this approach obscures the primary factor driving migration, economic opportunity. Entirely absent from his analysis are any substantive suggestions on what can be done to make life in the countryside more economically feasible.

Certainly, there remains much of which to be critical. Though the government has loosened many of the restrictions posed by *hukou* (hereditary household registration issued at birth), migrants are still required to transfer their hukous to cities in order to access worker protection or benefits—an expensive and time-consuming process corrupt officials often use to extort money from migrants.

The children of workers holding rural hukou are not entitled to urban education—forcing migrants either to leave their children behind, or to simply to leave them uneducated. And rural hukou holders do not have access to health care or social services in the cities where they work, and are sometimes exploited or abused by both employers and the police. Meanwhile, employers, aware that migrants are often unable to take complaints to police, wait months to pay migrants, or do not pay them at all. In 2006, President Hu Jintao

estimated some \$12 billion were still owed to migrants.

Implicit in Mr. van Luyn's book is a critique of a system that necessitates such mass migration for peasants who are unable to secure a promising future in their hometowns. But he also realistically accepts that as long as cities provide better economic opportunities than those found in rural regions, "the peasant invasion is inevitable." At the end of the day, migration might be a growing pain of China's rapid growth. But what will shape China's future is the way Beijing chooses to deal with this migrant population.

25) *Beijing's Games: What the Olympics Mean to China*, Susan Brownell, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc, 2008

The following is an interview with the author as published in the Wall Street Journal.

Susan Brownell has qualifications that few can match as an authority on sports in China.

An academic and Virginia native, Ms. Brownell speaks and reads Chinese. She has lived in China for years and knows all the top Chinese sports officials. To top it off, she was a nationally ranked U.S. track-and-field athlete who also competed on Chinese teams.

But Ms. Brownell has a conclusion that many in the West might find surprising: that China's sports system isn't the evil medal machine portrayed in the popular press. She also thinks China will not only put on a good Olympics but is a worthy host in the best tradition of the Olympics -- even with the turmoil in the West over Tibet.

"The moment is right for China to hold the games," says Ms. Brownell, who thinks the uproar can help push a rethink in China about its policy toward Tibet and other minorities. "How it responds, we'll see."

Ms. Brownell has laid out her views in her second book on China's sports system, "Beijing's Games: What the Olympics Mean to China," which was published in February. She says she expects the book to be widely criticized.

In fact, she says even her mother had trouble with the book.

Last summer, when she was revising the book, she went home to visit her mother and asked her to review it. While Ms. Brownell sat on an upstairs balcony reading proofs, she began to hear her mother on the patio below.

"She'd yell upstairs her disapproval," Ms. Brownell says. "It was the idea that China is an evil government that oppresses its people -- human rights, religious freedom and so on."

Ms. Brownell doesn't dispute that China has problems, but she says many Western criticisms are hypocritical or ignore the huge progress China has made in many areas. More than that, she sees the two sides' failure to understand each other as a tragedy.

"When you see the enthusiasm, the idealism and the faith in a better future and then when you look at the perception abroad -- that it's propping up a regime, air pollution, child-athlete factories -- there is a disjuncture," Ms. Brownell says.

Ms. Brownell, a 47-year-old anthropologist at the University of Missouri, St. Louis, has also recently translated into English the biography of China's only member of the International Olympic Committee. And she has gone further, sometimes advising Chinese officials on how to be more effective in communicating with the West.

In the small world of academics who write on sports in China, Ms. Brownell's positions are by far the most optimistic.

"Susan wants to counteract prejudices against the PRC and she seems, sometimes, to become an apologist for the regime," wrote Allen Guttman, a professor at Amherst College in Massachusetts who has written on sports history, in an email answer to a query. "Mostly, however, I think she's about as objective as is possible. I don't think, in anthropological jargon, that she's 'gone native.'"

Ms. Brownell says some of her sympathy for China comes from her personal athletic and educational background. She grew up on a farm near the Appalachian Mountains in Lexington, Va. That was before the Title IX federal act required schools to give girls equal access to sports. She ran on the boys track team in high school and went to University of Virginia on a full athletic scholarship. She was immediately attracted to anthropology because she felt it tried to understand other cultures rather than immediately judge them.

In sports, her disciplines were the pentathlon and heptathlon. She competed in the 1980 and 1984 Olympic trials but didn't make the team. She went to China the next year as a graduate student in anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. While in China, she competed for a team made up of Beijing athletes in the 1986 National College Games. Her stunning success -- she won a gold in the heptathlon and two silvers -- earned her the sobriquet of "The American Girl Who Won Glory for Beijing."

She was on her way to qualifying for the 1988 U.S. Olympic trials, which would have meant an impressive three straight trials. But she realized that it wasn't her profession anymore and stayed on in China. "I had to say I am an anthropologist, not an athlete," she said.

In 1995, she came out with a book on the growing importance of sport in China, which also recounted her adventures in Chinese athletics. She said participating in China made her realize that Chinese athletes are hardly different from other countries'.

"I got involved in figure skating in the U.S. and believe me, the children there are up at all hours practicing, and the parents are pushing them, too," she says. "When I see things like 'assembly line of pain' in the U.S. media to describe Chinese sports schools, I think it's ridiculous."

One of the main problems, she says, is that the people who write about Chinese sports know very little about China. "One of the problems really is sports journalism," she says. "Most sports journalists are commentators and don't really investigate."

Western reporters, she says, also assume that much is secret in China and use that as an excuse to make all sorts of claims or generalizations. She was recently asked by a reporter for a national U.S. magazine to use her contacts to get him a copy of China's policy on athletes' commercial endorsements. Half an hour later, Ms. Brownell emailed the reporter a copy -- it had been on the sport authority's Internet site. "People assume it's all secret in China but that's only because they can't read Chinese," she says.

Likewise, she views skeptically generalizations about Chinese not having a sports history -- a critique often made to debase China's gold-medal haul. The argument is that China participates in the Olympics only to win national glory and not out of any legitimate sporting tradition. But Ms. Brownell says that most of what we know about the Olympics is based on more than a century of intense archaeological work in Greece. That sort of work has never been done in China, she says.

A cursory glance at the written record, however, shows that some sports, such as horse racing and wrestling, played key roles in some of the dynasties that ruled China. "China has been written out of sports history," she says.

This accounts for the lack of non-Western sports in the Olympics -- in fact, the only explicitly non-Western sports are judo from Japan (introduced at the 1964 Tokyo games) and tae kwon do from Korea (introduced at the 1988 Seoul games). China tried to get its own form of martial arts, wushu, introduced this year, but the request was turned down.

Although she now has tenure at the university, her efforts to understand -- and even help -- China haven't always been to her professional advantage. She spent four years translating the biography of IOC member He Zhenliang for a government-run press in China. She did it because she "felt a sense of mission" to explain China's IOC involvement from its point of view. She has also screened government Olympic ads aimed at foreigners.

"Chinese do have trouble communicating with Westerners," she says. "They are more reserved and formal and careful."

Ms. Brownell is in Beijing for the year on a Fulbright grant. She is researching a book on how the Games played out and putting down her thoughts occasionally on a blog (<http://thechinabeat.blogspot.com/>). The U.S. Embassy in Beijing has asked her to write a biweekly blog.

"I view my work as a cultural bridge. I assume that how I write is not how Chinese people see it, and they wouldn't agree with everything, but I do my best to represent their views so they can be understood by English speakers."

ABOUT GRANTMAKERS WITHOUT BORDERS

Grantmakers Without Borders, a philanthropic network, is dedicated to increasing funding for international social justice and environmental sustainability and to improving the practice of international grantmaking. Our membership, currently numbering some 325 individuals from roughly 150 grantmaking entities, includes private foundations, grantmaking public charities, individual donors with a significant commitment to philanthropy, and philanthropic support organizations. Availing of this wealth of experience and expertise, Grantmakers Without Borders provides capacity-building support to international grantmakers both novice and experienced. We offer a space for education, community and collaboration among international social change grantmakers. We advocate before policymakers on behalf of social change grantmakers, and we work to leverage the philanthropic sector to increase funding to the global South. In all our efforts, Grantmakers Without Borders is committed to the ideals of justice, equity, peace, democracy, and respect for the environment. We value and respect the wisdom and experience of local communities in all their diversity, and we are dedicated to amplifying the voice of the global South in international philanthropy. Founded in 2000, Grantmakers Without Borders is a project of the Tides Center.

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