

Caroline Watson Speaker Profile



Caroline Watson is an actress, entrepreneur, speaker, writer, consultant, and guest practitioner. She is the founder of Hua Dan, a China-based social enterprise that uses participatory theatre as a tool for personal and social change amongst China's migrant workers, and Scheherazade Initiatives, a global organization replicating the Hua Dan model in Europe and emerging markets,

using theatre to empower migrant, refugee and displaced populations.

An engaging and inspirational speaker, Caroline weaves stories of her struggle and success setting up a social business in China and the subsequent growth of her model globally. Born in Hong Kong of British parents, Caroline returned to China in 2003 after her university studies in Britain with a vision of sharing her background in theatre with underserved women in China.

Speaking little Chinese, with no background in either business or non-profit management, but with a huge passion for sharing the transformative effect of theatre, from her home base in Beijing she set about growing the organization, in partnership with the migrant women themselves. Now based in France, she is working to develop the model of using theatre to empower migrant, refugee and displaced populations globally through Hua Dan's sister organization, Scheherazade Initiatives.

Caroline knows how to follow a dream, despite the fear and huge adversity in a politically hostile environment. She is expert at living in and doing business in China and is a passionate advocate for the arts and women's empowerment.

Storytelling is key to Caroline's speeches and, as an actress and theatre practitioner, her talks often include a theatrical, narrative element and interactive participation with the audience. Caroline introduces her story with props, video and written materials as a stimulus for some of the larger themes in her talks, making them authentic, lively and fun.

Her areas of professional interest and expertise are China and the emerging world, facilitating personal and social change, innovation and entrepreneurship, theatre and the arts, corporate social responsibility, global leadership, women's empowerment, and the transformative impact of spirituality on leadership.

Caroline's inspirational story and approach resonate with any individual or organization that needs a push and some motivation and guidance to follow a dream, aim higher, work harder, understand more and do more good in the world.

Using humour and a sense of fun, Caroline pushes the boundaries of thought, offering new paradigms for ways that we see and act in our world.

Caroline can deliver talks in English, French and Chinese.

Audiences:

- **Corporations** with an interest in doing business in China and the emerging world; and those seeking inspiration and insights into entrepreneurial leadership, innovation and creativity.
- **Universities, colleges and other educational establishments** keen to offer their students an inspirational world view and new ideas for career opportunities
- **International organisations and non-profits** working in the field of women's rights, migrant and refugee populations and innovative forms of education and training

Follow Caroline's work at www.carolinewatson.org.

Videos of Caroline speaking can be found at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGP8Q30aDF4&list=PLsRNoUx8w3rPSB7Btp4THatp1t1gmr8w8&index=7>

<http://knowledge.insead.edu/HuaDan090217.cfm?vid=184>

<http://www.weforum.org/videos/forum-live-interview-caroline-watson>

And some recent media:

<http://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2015/nov/20/how-our-theatre-workshops-are-empowering-migrant-women-in-china>

More information can be found at:

www.carolinewatson.org

www.hua-dan.org

www.scheherazade-initiatives.com

Caroline blogs for Medium and the Huffington Post and also on her own blogging platform www.love-not-fear.org where she talks about how her philosophy of love not fear empowers her work and her understanding of migration, arts for social change, China and the emerging world, women's empowerment, entrepreneurship, innovation, global governance and spirituality and leadership.

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Topics

The story of Caroline and the Hua Dan girls

Caroline's key note speech focuses on her journey growing up in Hong Kong, witnessing the city state at the height of its prosperity in the 1980s through the lens of her grandfather's business as a portrait photographer of Hong Kong's elite society; her study of transformative theatre at university in the UK and her return to China at the age of 25 where she founded Hua Dan.



She recounts the experiences of setting up China's first and only non-profit dedicated to using theatre for social change and shares the stories of the young migrant women who helped her grow the organization. Caroline shares her perspectives on witnessing China's growth through grassroots leadership, her knowledge and experience of working with bottom of the pyramid populations, and her vision of harnessing the arts and women's leadership as a tool for global progress.

Key takeaways:

- Inspiration and motivation to follow a dream, despite huge adversity and the threats of working in a politically hostile environment
- Key insights into being an entrepreneur and doing business in China
- The potential of women's leadership at the bottom of the pyramid
- The use of the arts as a tool for social change
- Understanding the power of thought to effect change: love not fear

Audiences:

- Corporations with an interest in doing business in China; and those looking for inspirational insights into leadership, innovation and entrepreneurship
- Universities, colleges and other educational establishments
- International organisations and non-profits

Unleashing the potential of China and the emerging world

Born and brought up in Hong Kong and having lived and worked in China and Asia for over 20 years, Caroline brings unique perspectives on China's current growth and its relevance to global leadership. She offers thoughts and perspectives on how we need to look at our relationship to China, smashes many of the myths we have about China's rise to power, and addresses the fear-mongering about China in Western media.

Key takeaways:

- Challenges and opportunities of working in China and the emerging markets
- Leadership skills for navigating cultural differences
- Managing the tension of local vs. global as companies globalize

Audiences:

- Companies looking to expand into China and emerging markets
- Government departments
- Chambers of Commerce/Trading organisations

Migration, the supply chain and bottom of the pyramid populations

With the recent horrors of migrant deaths in the Mediterranean, governments and corporations are beginning to wake up to the reality of global migration. Through her work with Hua Dan, and the subsequent growth of her model globally to now working with refugees and other displaced populations, Caroline has witnessed the biggest migration the world has ever known and brings to her talks her perspectives on what migration can do to build a prosperous society. She outlines the challenges and opportunities that migration poses and offers solutions for how migration can be harnessed as an asset, not a liability, whilst offering new ways of thinking about the role diaspora communities also play in their homeland. She shares her knowledge and experience of bottom-of-the-pyramid populations and how companies can both attract and develop products for this growing consumer market.

Key takeaways:

- Ways to harness the potential of migrant workers in your enterprise
- Insights into the role diaspora communities play in global leadership
- Tools for ethical leadership across the supply chain

Audiences:

- Government
- Corporations employing migrant workers
- Corporations delivering their services to bottom-of-the-pyramid markets
- Diaspora organisations
- International NGOs

Women's Empowerment: The role of feminine leadership

The empowerment of women is central to Caroline's work and, she believes, is a key engine for growth in business and civil society. Hua Dan was built with the support of the migrant women she worked with in her first workshops, and it is through women's leadership that she is replicating her work in other countries. Caroline combines the stories of these women and the challenges they face with her own struggles to define herself in a man's world and shares perspectives of what it is that women bring to business, government and society. For her, empowering women is not just an objective in and of itself but is a fundamental tool to enable practical solutions to the world's most pressing problems.

Key takeaways:

- Perspectives on the challenges that women face today, such as domestic violence, tensions between work and family life, sexuality and identity
- The power of feminine leadership
- The role of women in bringing about change in their communities
- Women and work – challenging the dominant paradigms of masculine corporate models
- Women's empowerment as a tool, not just an end in itself

Audiences:

- Women's initiatives with multinational corporations
- Corporations with an interest in attracting and retaining top female talent
- Women's professional development networks
- Women's groups

Arts for Transformation: Building a culture of creativity and innovation

The arts are increasingly being used as an education and training tool, especially in large corporations that seek to inspire innovation and build the 'soft' skills of leadership, creativity, communication and teamwork. Furthermore, culture in its broadest sense is the single most significant lens through which we negotiate global leadership issues, creating a pressing need to become competent 'cultural empathisers' so that we can work effectively across borders. Caroline's background as a theatre facilitator and her work as a creative entrepreneur enables her to share the relevance of the arts to education and skills training, economic growth, personal

transformation and societal change. Her spearheading of an initiative to create the Global Arts Impact Agenda to both challenge and support international institutions to achieve concrete development indicators offers new models for progress.

Key takeaways:

- Knowledge on how to deliver inspirational and informative training
- Understanding of the importance of 'soft' skills development for employees, especially in the Fourth Industrial Revolution
- The role of the arts in innovation
- The impact of culture on global leadership
- The importance of arts education in the public school system

Audience:

- Creative companies at the forefront of innovation
- Companies seeking to be more creative
- Education and training departments in government and business
- Schools and educational institutions
- International NGOs

Spirituality and leadership

Spirituality is foundational to Caroline's entrepreneurial journey, and the concept of 'mindful leadership' is increasingly talked about in the C-suite and at meetings as high-profile as Davos. Caroline shares her belief that we need to find a way beyond religion to talk about the essential spiritual truths that can transform our societies and how her vision of transforming fear into love helped her to set up Hua Dan. Building on her links with the World Economic Forum, Caroline is now launching a dialogue on the role that spirituality has to play in leadership and its ability to transcend religion and politics. See https://www.huffingtonpost.com/caroline-watson2/post_12704_b_11248218.html

Key takeaways:

- Techniques for mindful leadership
- The importance and value of taking time for spiritual growth to lead well
- Inspirational role models of leaders – Gandhi, King, Mandela, Suu Kyi – and the legacies they left

Audiences:

- Government
- Business
- Religious institutions

Caroline Watson Detailed Bio

Caroline is a trained actress and the founder and director of Hua Dan, one of China's first and leading social enterprises. Hua Dan uses the power of participation in drama-based workshops to reveal and develop individual and community potential. Hua Dan has a particular focus on working with China's rural-to-urban migrant workers, particularly women, who work in the manufacturing and service industries that are at the heart of China's economic boom. In founding Hua Dan, Caroline has pioneered the importance of participation in the arts and creative education in a country that has no precedent for anything other than a hierarchical, rote-learning education model; empowered female migrants from the countryside to lead and manage the organisation through a vocational training model; and refined a sustainable hybrid non-profit/for-profit business model for arts-based learning methodologies.

Born and brought up in Hong Kong, of British parents, Caroline has lived in Asia for over 20 years. As a child, she grew up around her family's business, Anthony Buckley and Constantine, a Royal warrant holder portrait photography studio whose clients included Hong Kong and Asian business, political and cultural elite. This exposure, combined with her professional experience of running a social enterprise in China, has given her the knowledge and perspective of contemporary China at all levels. She blogs, speaks and consults at the intersection of China and the emerging world; migration; innovation, social change and entrepreneurship; women's empowerment; arts for social change; global governance; spirituality and leadership.

- Caroline has a **BA in Theatre Studies** from Lancaster University.
- In 2007 she became an alumni of **INSEAD's Social Entrepreneurship** Executive education programme and was also elected a Waldzell 'Architect of the Future'.
- In 2010 she became a **FYSE Fellow** (Foundation for Youth Social Entrepreneurship).
- In 2011 she became a **Young Global Leader of the World Economic Forum**.
- Caroline is former **Chair of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on Arts in Society** and is an advisory board member of Compassion for Migrant Children. She is also a **Social Entrepreneur in Residence for INSEAD**.
- In 2012, she became an alumni of **Harvard University's Kennedy School** of Government programme, 'Global Leadership and Public Policy in the 21st Century'.

Caroline has lived and worked in China, Hong Kong, Mongolia, Spain, the UK, the US,

India, Argentina and is now based in France. She speaks English, Mandarin, French and Spanish.

She has recently formed two complementary organisations, both using the theatre-for-social-change model:

- **Scheherazade Initiatives**, a not-for-profit that replicates the Hua Dan model in Europe and the emerging markets and currently has a particular focus on working with refugees.
- **Scheherazade Consulting**, which provides global leadership training to corporate executives around the world

Caroline is also the founder of the Global Arts Impact Agenda (GAIA), an initiative that grew out of her Chairmanship of the World Economic Forum's Global Agenda Council on the Role of the Arts in Society, that seeks to enable government and business to unleash the potential of the arts for human development. More information can be seen at www.globalartsimpactagenda.org.

She is also the founder of the Young Global Leader "Spirituality and Transformative Leadership Initiative", more information can be found here: https://www.huffingtonpost.com/caroline-watson2/post_12704_b_11248218.html.