**Beijing & Beyond: The Birth of the Disabled Women’s Movement**

“The contributions of the extraordinary women of the Women’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD) not only improve the lives of women and girls with disabilities in their home countries, they also play a critical role in combating discrimination, promoting inclusion, and defending human rights the world over.” - 67th U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton

**The Brilliant and Resilient Project** recognizes the leadership and outstanding accomplishments of disabled women activists from around the world through a professional photographic book with personal stories. This project honors the 1995 Beijing UN World Conference on Women, a historic event that ignited the international disabled women’s rights movement. The project also highlights the crucial role of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in advancing the status of women with disabilities, as well as the importance of ensuring women with disabilities are included in all efforts to reach the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

**The 1995 UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing**The 1995 NGO Forum of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing provided unexpected opportunities for women with disabilities to build international, cross-disability solidarity. Restricted by impassable pathways, inaccessible venues and lack of accessible materials or means of communication, nearly 300 women with disabilities gathered together, channeling anger and frustration into strategy meetings and workshops on such critical development issues as income generation, reproductive rights, parenting, leadership and policy development. On the third day of the Forum, disabled women convened a spontaneous demonstration on the steps of an inaccessible workshop building, capturing international press coverage and drawing the attention of the global community to women with disabilities as a vocal and visible force at the UN World Conference on Women.

With a unified voice, women with disabilities successfully articulated their needs and issues to the world. In particular, they demanded more opportunities to develop leadership skills and to create more networking opportunities for women with disabilities. In response to this request, MIUSA made a commitment to create a space for uniting women leaders with disabilities from every region of the world. MIUSA held the firstWomen’s Institute on Leadership and Disability (WILD)in 1997.

**UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**The 2008 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) formally recognizes discrimination against people with disabilities as a human rights issue.  The CRPD also represents a crucial milestone for women with disabilities worldwide, as the first legally binding international agreement that explicitly acknowledges women with disabilities as a protected group.

Article 6 of the CRPD requires countries to “take proactive measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by women and girls with disabilities of all human rights and fundamental freedoms”, and offers a framework for including women with disabilities in poverty reduction strategies, which is essential for meeting Millennium Development Goal targets by 2015.

**World Renowned Photographers**

“Over twenty years ago, I first saw Brian Lanker’s book, “I Dream a World,” featuring photographs and vignettes about African-American women who have changed the face of our nation. The book was deeply moving and left me with one overriding question: Why isn’t there a similar book and photo exhibition celebrating the lives of women with disabilities? Two decades later, this idea has been nourished and grown from a thought into an emerging reality.”

- Susan Sygall, CEO of Mobility International USA

**About the Photographers:**  
The photos in this book and exhibit were generously contributed by the following photographers:

**Brian Lanker**  
A Pulitzer Prize winning photographer, Brian Lanker received numerous international awards for his work for LIFE Magazine and Sports Illustrated. He was also a six-time winner of the National Press Photographers Association’s (NPPA) regional photographer of the year and named the NPPA national photographer of the year in 1971. Lanker was perhaps best known for his collaborative project with Maya Angelou in 1989, a book and exhibition of portraits entitled, "I Dream A World: Portraits of Black Women Who Changed America." The debut exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. set attendance records for the 111 year old museum. Currently, "I Dream A World" is in its 14th printing.  
 **Paola Gianturco**  
Paola Gianturco has worked as a photojournalist for over 16 years, documenting women's lives in fifty-five countries. She has had four acclaimed photographic books published, which bring together inspiring stories and photographs that motivate her readers to engage with, learn from, and support women around the world. Her book Women Who Light the Dark (2007) showcases 23 women-led groups in 15 countries who are using creativity to tackle the intractable problems that darken women's lives. She has been a guest on The Oprah Winfrey Show, CNN, NPR and Voice of America programs as well as many other TV and radio programs around the world. Her work has been exhibited by the United Nations - New York; UNESCO-Paris; the US Senate and several national museums.  
  
**Darcy Kiefel**  
As a photojournalist for over 20 years, Darcy Kiefel has worked with diverse humanitarian organizations contributing to positive world changes, including Heifer International, InterAction and Frank Foundation/Child Assistance International. Her work has been featured in several hundred national and international publications, including USA Today and Sports Illustrated, and has been exhibited at the United Nations - New York.