

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

by Robert A. Geake

Nearly a decade after our emergence into the 21st century, there are still places in the world where a poor child must study with worn books and paper notebooks beneath the dim light of a naked bulb; all within the shadow of the gleaming, computer filled skyscrapers that tower over the slums and shantytowns of the city, whether it be Rio or New York.

While primary education has increased throughout the world, largely due to a concerted world wide effort from hundreds of charities and volunteers in the past twenty five years. But beyond the minimal education the choices become limited.

Poverty plays a pivotal role in constraining an individuals progress, whether they be in Kenya or Kentucky, the slums of Cairo or Chicago. The economic choice of finding a poor paying job rather than continuing their education for a better paying job later is often not a choice at all but borne of some necessity, a need for the family to have more income whether it be due to illness, an unplanned pregnancy or loss of another income in the household, any of the factors that come into the house of cards that one lives under in poverty.

To be sure, a young adult has more opportunity in America to find work, make a living and have food on the table than a young person in rural Kenya, but there is another important factor to consider, one that shows itself increasingly here in the United States, and one that can be comparable to other societies classification of the poor, the disengagement of a culture shared, those shanty towns beneath the shadow of the towers.

“ people do as a rule equate self worth with or at least partially measure it by, the degree to which they feel included in society. If they possess a sub-culture of their own, they will hopefully be insulated from some of unwantedness' effects. Since every benefit comes at a cost, to the extent that this subculture of poverty becomes distinct, it will be disdained by the rich culture in sight of it. “<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Vollman, Poor People pp128-129

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

I began the idea for this paper with the thought that the struggle to educate the young faced in some of our own communities could be similar to those struggles in other parts of the world, especially places under siege of violence or extreme poverty. Some may scoff at comparing any community in the US with that of a third world country. The two cultures and environments may seem at first distinct and unrelated but for their poverty. Yet one may look at the result of “ unwanted-ness “ as Vollman states, or the desperation and rebellion against the inherent dependency that weighs as heavily on young black americans as on young muslims who have been taught that such poverty, where and when it falls, is one’s destiny.

“ How can poverty not entail dependence ? Self reliance is a luxury of the rich.... a poor person is someone who cannot be sure of holding the resources to meet his necessities. Therefore, he is unfree, in peril of humiliation and servitude, and certainly dependent upon circumstance if not on any fellow human being. “ <sup>2</sup>

Is there such difference then when we examine the fundamental allure of those culture’s escape from that poverty and unwantedness and desperation ?

Young Americans living in projects or slum communities grow up amidst violence and fast choices between alliances. It seems that at an increasingly younger age, that a path is taken by accident or unfortunate design that determines the outcomes of their future, to be working at McDonald’s at seventeen or to be part of a gang whose culture of tinted windowed BMW’s, women, and bling mimic the hip hop video’s glamorization of a scene that usually brings it’s participants to jail or a violent death.

The Center For Disease Control in a report issued in 2006, “ Among 10-24 year olds, homicide is the leading cause of death for African-americans, the second leading cause of death for Hispanics, and the third leading cause of death for American Indians..... “<sup>3</sup>

In such a culture, a young black or hispanic or dominican is shown that if he or she chooses the path of staying in school, if they survive the violence in their community, if they can obtain and sustain a job in that community, they may one

---

<sup>2</sup> Vollman, Poor People pp 132

<sup>3</sup> CDC Injury Center fact sheet on youth violence, 2006

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

day afford a small apartment and a car which hopefully will not break down too often, and likely be able to save little for the future while still facing down the stares and fears of whites on the street; an unwantedness prevails as they struggle to attain even a marginal status.

It has not helped that the public school systems have systematically abandoned segregated schooling in what Jonathan Kozol calls “ the restoration of apartheid schooling in America.” Conservatives would call this the return of state rights, and place the responsibility on “ community “ for where funding and support from the federal government leaves gaps.

President G.W.Bush’s “ faith based “ initiatives encouraged local charity and church groups to step in and help replace school breakfast programs, tutoring and after school activities all of which have been cut by local schools across the country due to cuts in federal education, and the achievement bar that the administration has set to reward or punish school programs with little or no regard of the disparity that exists between these communities. As Kozol writes:

*“ any child can learn...the advocates of President Bush s “ No Child Left Behind “ ....say hypocritically, as if the tireless reiteration of the slogan could deliver to low income children the same clean and decent infrastructure and the amplitude of culture by experienced instructors that we give the children of the privileged. “<sup>4</sup>*

In the combined school districts of Chicago and New York, which represents roughly 10% of the nation’s blacks in public schools, there is a 70 % failure rate among these young people to graduate from high school.

Such a failure often relegates these young people to a bleak future of attempting to overcome again and again those ethnic assumptions, stereotypes and conditions of poverty that exist in their community. Especially for young black males, the thug image is often prevalent, an alternative belonging while one drifts in the jetsam of the low income job market.

The image itself and the violence often depicted on the nightly news of the genre’s protagonists and their followers elicit fear among the general public, as mayors and law enforcement officials and school committee chairpersons alike, thus creating a wave of WASP induced backlash against this subculture: the

---

<sup>4</sup> Kozol, Jonathan “ The Shame Of The Nation “ pp 206

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

cancelation of concerts, the always misguided attempts to enforce a modest high school dress code, or to introduce a school wide uniform that will eliminate any mandate against the student 's using this culture's expression to reflect their own frustration.

As Tricia Rose points out in her book on the culture of rap music *Black Noise*,

“ Public Enemy’s target logo, a central symbol for the group... the rifle sight with a young black male at he center.....is also the primary image on all merchandising and it appears prominently on their album covers and in PE press coverage. The target captures the widely held belief among african americans that young black males are sighted for elimination by way of police brutality, poor education, drug access, and truncated opportunities. .”<sup>5</sup>

In fact, blacks in the United States are imprisoned at more than five times the rate of whites and hispanics are locked up at nearly double the white rate, with states in the Northeast and Midwest having the widest disparity in the nation, including Iowa, who imprisons blacks at more than 13 times the rate of whites.

The state’s administrator of the Division of Criminal and Juvenile justice planning attributed the disproportionately high black arrest rates are likely linked to high poverty rates among blacks and lower educational achievement.<sup>6</sup>

For those students who might have aspirations to attend college, the chances of graduating are slim, and now there is evidence that the grip of poverty has forced many to abandon any hopes for higher education.

In fact, “despite the lofty goals of presidents and policy makers, over the past 30 years the poor have made little progress earning bachelor’s degrees.....in 2003, 8.6 of the nation’s poorer young adults earned bachelor’s degrees by the age of 24, barely up from 7.1 percent in 1975.....the divide between the wealthy and poor in educational opportunity threatens to perpetuate the cycle of poverty ...”<sup>7</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Rose, Tricia *Black Noise* pp120

<sup>6</sup> Pitt, David Associated Press article reporting on a study released in July 2007 by the Sentencing Project, a Washington based criminal justice policy group.

<sup>7</sup> Nyhan, Paul Seattle Post “ College Divide Threatens To Keep The Poor In Poverty. Sept 27, 2005

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

In an interview, then Harvard University president Lawrence Summers said:

“ I am worried that we will become a stratified economy. like many in Latin America where the prosperous and the advantaged stay prosperous and the poor and disadvantaged stay poor. “<sup>8</sup>

Many high school advisors see students from poor families as being ill prepared:

“...too often no one ensures that they take every college required course. Or students become lost balancing school, a few hours of sleep, a poor diet and part time jobs to help their families... “ We have a bunch of kids who are inherently bright enough, but who don’t have the grades, don’t have the SAT’s, don’t have the foundation “ said one advisor “<sup>9</sup>

In 2002, the Congress of the United States was informed that after graduation, only 53 % of the nation’s poorest high school students were prepared for college compared to 86 % of wealthy graduates, that the thirty year, 32% gap between low income students and wealthy students attending college has barely moved, and that at the nation’s top 19 schools, only 6% of those graduating two years before, had been the first in their family to achieve the college level.

## 2.

In rural Afghanistan, in the hills of Pakistan, the slums of Cairo or in the Palestinian communities on the fragile west bank of Gaza, those poor Muslim communities whose children grew up under the notion of poverty being by “ divine design “ are now rebelling against this “ destiny “, which has often in reality been the result of one regional conflict or another, or been reinforced by sanctions imposed by European or American administrations on “ subversive “ governments that the poor of all people had little part in choosing.

---

<sup>8</sup> ibid

<sup>9</sup> Nyhan, Paul Seattle Post

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

Their faith, and the political zeal upon which nearly countless factions have seized since the success of Al-Quaida, is the impetus to many young Muslim men and even women to escape that impoverished destiny- when a young Afghan fighter tells an interviewer “ when their is no job opportunity, your only choice is to take arms.” . he is not talking about armed robbery, but the security in being fed each day and given a place to sleep, the chance to gain also a renewed purpose, a greater destiny, to achieve a “ wantedness “ with their “brothers in arms. “

In these communities a local Mullah may well take advantage of these needs among the young people that come to him for study of the Koran. Using carefully chosen passages and the ideology of later disciples, he can, much like Christian-leaders have done with the Bible, distort the prophets message and influence the fervor of the new practitioners of Islam in the middle east and southeast Asia.

But this is only half the story, the story we hear in the media each night as more bombs are detonated, more civilians killed. It is easy to lose sight of those innocent victims when we only hear about the protagonists of such violence, and then the reports play on our own fears, our own sense of the futility of the war in Iraq. We seldom hear about the average man or woman living amidst this so called “ civil war “ , those who are bravely struggling to live a life of normalcy so as to retain their hold on dignity and self worth, to envision a future free of such strife and to envision a place for themselves and their children in the future.

In Baghdad, a now well known blog is transmitting from a nondescript dormitory building in the city’s university. The blog and the message it conveys is a stunning testimony to perseverance.

The students video tape their way through the half ruined city, knowing that any moment while filming at a market, a bus stop or a mosque, a car bomb could take their life and those around them. So frequent have the attacks become, that the expectation to die or be injured has become part of the grim ritual of their lives.

These young men could easily be expected to give up their studies and fight with one faction or another in the streets, or as they have chosen, they could stay at their books and keep a thread of hope intact that they might still claim a kind of

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

normalcy in remaining and achieving their degrees. These are men of courage in their given moment, the one we all hope to rise to if needed as human beings.

Vollman might likely call present day Baghdad a “ nest “ of poverty for the students and other ordinary citizens that must move about the city by day. Though by third world country standards, even at war, Baghdad is a wealthier city than many, the poverty must be measured as he points out in “ Poor People “ by what was lost from what it once had.

It can be argued that these same citizens had little freedom during the time of “ peace “ under Saddam Hussein, but it must also be said, as our misbegotten policy makers now understand, that the tyranny kept in check all the factions that are now fighting for control; and that these students and citizens then did not live under the fear of such unremitting violence as exists today.

In July 2007 when the Iraqi soccer team put in an extraordinary effort to win the Asian Cup, the nation erupted in joyous celebration for this team made up of Sunni's and Shite's and players from all parts of Iraq that banded together for this victory. The media portrayed this as a rare sign of unity, but I thought immediately

“ these are the people we rarely see on the news, the true face of Iraq who wants nothing more than peace and normalcy. “

My thoughts were echoed moments later in the broadcast by an elderly man standing alongside the road while the celebrants drove down the street, hanging from car windows and waving the tri-colored flag with it's central pine tree, itself a symbol of strength and renewal.

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

### 3.

“ More Aid, Better Directed “ was the catch phrase among policy makers at the United Nations not so long ago, but to many, this became just another tired cliché in the long struggle to eradicate poverty and to bring education to the world’s children.

It was not until after the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 that the UN declared that free primary education ( up to the eighth grade ) is the basic right of every child worldwide, and began spending toward that goal among our most impoverished countries.

It would take another paper to examine the tangled web of agencies and aid around the globe, but suffice it to say that the UN’s critics see nothing but waste, misplaced funds and little accomplishment. But it takes more than lofty goals to eradicate poverty, and until that happens, there will always be an uneducated segment of the population.

UNICEF currently sites that there are 121 million children worldwide who do not receive an education from public schools.

To understand the factors that hamper such ideals, let’s examine the difficulties of one African nation.

When Kenya emerged as an independent country in 1963 its first president declared the primary challenges to be “ disease, ignorance and poverty. “

But forty three years later, one Presbyterian minister from Jula declared “ these three..... are still a challenge to this nation. To me, education is the backbone, “ he says. “ To me, it’s the one that can eliminate diseases, because if people know what causes the disease, they may be able to overcome it. “ <sup>10</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Baker, Becca “ Poverty Steals Education “ The Guardian Unlimited April 30, 2007



# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

His statement is not surprising as Aids has devastated Kenya, taking countless adult lives and leaving countless orphans. These children are brought into the free education system, but in all schools in Kenya, the drop out rate is high.

The minister, Stephen Kabuba speaks for his community when he explains

“ There is what we call the vicious cycle of poverty. I am poor, I cannot take child to school, This child of mine will not get a job, because this child did not go to school. That means no income, that means this person becomes poor. This means that this person, if he or she is going to start building up a family, that family will not go to schools, then means no income-that is poverty. “

“ There is a saying in Kenya , “ Kabuba says “ The greatest gift you can give to a child is education “. But the majority of Kenyans live on the poverty line, that is “ they live with less than \$ 1 dollar a day”

Parents also rely on their children to contribute to the family income, Kabuba-says. And while surviving daily living is in question, putting one’s child through the education system isn’t a practical first priority.

A teacher at a rural public school in Nanyuki, Kenya has seen many of the same problems among the primary students.

“ Because of the free education, they have come....but because of the drive of poverty,you find that even though they have come, at times they also drop out of school because of the same reasons- the poverty at home. “<sup>11</sup>

The nations secondary schools suffer from low attendance and poor performance, and these same observers point out that at an estimated cost of \$ 450.00 a year for secondary school, that price is beyond the affordability of most working Kenyans. As a result, less than 60% of those children who attend primary school will continue on to secondary education.

Teachers like the one in that rural town struggle hard to help students pass the exam to gain admittance into secondary schools only to find that even when they pass, most students will not go anyway.

Another teacher in the same rural school explained:

---

<sup>11</sup> ibid

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

“ There are cases of students doing so well, being admitted into such good-schools, but the parents can't afford it.....so what do they do ? They drop out. “<sup>12</sup>

In the levels of higher education, the country has seen two strikes within the last decade by lecturers demanding pay increases from the government at institutions that already rely on the government for 90% of their funding. The latest strike caused the government to close 5 out of the 6 public universities in November of 2006 when teachers demanded a 500% pay raise. The strike caused many students to depart for home kilometers away as they could not afford to stay at school while the strike remained unresolved.

The roots of the problem stem from one of those tangled threads of aid that went wrong. In the 1970's with funding from the UN and other sources,

“ a university professor was paid more than a judge, an MP or even a permanent secretary. But since then the tables have turned. Lecturers salaries have been standing still compared to the meteoric rises in the pay of other public sector positions in a country badly hit by corruption. “<sup>13</sup>

To complicate matters, professors who work at private colleges receive lecturers fees from students that sometimes excel the salary they are receiving from the College.

The Kenyan government counters that

” lecturers earn more than their peers in neighboring countries. What is more, public institution professors take home more than those working in the country's ten or so private universities. “<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>12</sup> ibid

<sup>13</sup> Nordling, Linda “ Learning To Live With Unrest “ Guardian Unlimited Nov.7, 2006

<sup>14</sup> ibid

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

The strike dragged on, raising fears among academics that the ramifications could

“ result in apathy apathy and an exodus of teaching talent.....What eventually will happen is either that people say enough is enough and quit their jobs.....or people will stay because they have no other option, but when something opens up they will quit. “<sup>15</sup>

With this and other such bleak examples from countries that have received decades of aid , those nations who contribute aid are looking outside the UN at where the money is being spent, as well as the compounding pressure of the World Bank and globalization on those aid dependent nations.

In a report from Britain’s Royal Society in 2006, citing that 80 % of the country’s current aid went to primary education, stated that

“ we need a more holistic approach where support and investment for the higher levels of education is embedded into the development plans of the UK

and other international donors.....This more balanced view of education will enable these countries to “ home grow ‘ professionals and people with the technical skills to develop solutions to their own needs and help break the cycle of poverty.”

The nation of Kenya currently sends more students to the US to gain a college education more than any other African country. An exodus of talent that will still be felt for years to come.

Other support has been wrangled over because of political ideology. USAID, an agency which has provided some \$ 764 million in aid to Egypt since 1975, has recently come under criticism from the current government, citing the agency’s wishes to change the curriculum and that it wants to change cultural and religious values.

---

<sup>15</sup> Makawati, Dominic Biochemistry professor, University of Nairobi

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

These beliefs were fanned by statements made by United States Vice President Dick Cheney at an economic conference in Jordan when he said that Washington wants to launch a series of educational pilot projects supporting girl's literacy in the Arab world, and promote a new curriculum devoid of Islamic fundamentalism.

One MP told the Al-Ahram weekly that "they want to amend the curriculum in a way that will promote the ideals of the three monotheistic religions (Islam, Christianity, and Judaism), rather than just Islam, while highlighting western civilization's role in human progress."

Other critics within the Egyptian government contend that

"USAID's focus on rural areas in recent years stems from a belief that these areas, especially in Upper Egypt, have long been fertile grounds for extremist and intolerant ideas. They also contend that USAID conditions the money it provides for Egypt's educational sector on the monitoring of curricula for anti-Semitic or Islamic fundamentalist ideas."<sup>16</sup>

The US Department of Education strongly denies meddling with aid given or in the public school curriculum, but the accusations and wrangling highlight a geopolitical hurdle that is bound to become even more difficult to overcome as resentment and disharmony widen between the Western world and the Middle East.

"More Aid, Better Directed" is threatened with becoming just another forgotten initiative. Amid scandals and misspending, catastrophic events that demand huge amounts of aid and support, armed intervention in tenuous circumstances several locations worldwide, the UN's archives are filled with proposals for improving the global citizen's lives including:

"pro-poor growth, meaning prioritizing full employment, equality and economic growth, small scale agriculture, technological development, environmental protection and education, all the while reducing family size; *managed globalization*, the maintenance of *democratic space*, forgiveness of poor countries' interna-

---

<sup>16</sup> El-Din, Gamal Essam "Education In Flux" Al-Ahram Weekly 2003

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

tional debts, conflict prevention and resolution, the creation of new global markets, and of course *strengthening the United Nations role and leadership*.<sup>17</sup>

All well intentioned means of dealing with ongoing global problems, but unfortunately, the UN today faces its own loss of credibility among its largest donors and a seeming lack of genuine diplomatic “muscle” to avert corruption of funds and gain control of its massive aid programs.

The first UN Special Rapporteur on The Right To Education, Katarina Tomasevski, spent six years compiling a report in which she states emphatically:

“A major difficulty in realizing the right to education is the labyrinth of global education strategies with different visions of education. The UN, and its lead agency on education UNESCO, are formally committed to the right to education but many other global stake holders are not. The United States government and the World Bank lead those who deny that education is a universal human right. That education should be free and compulsory is absent from the World Bank’s educational vocabulary. Instead, education is analysed in terms of supply and demand. This approach denies that compulsory education is a governmental responsibility. The result is that governments are pressured *not* to provide free education, but to transfer its cost to families and communities.”<sup>18</sup>

Among her recommendations are the following:

“All governments, rich and poor, as well as the UN and World Bank should

acknowledge that the key problem in ensuring universal education is not lack of public resources, as evidenced in high and increasing military expenditures, but the global political will to tackle economic exclusion from education;

reaffirm education as a public responsibility and eliminate financial barriers so that all children, no matter how poor they are, can go to school;

---

<sup>17</sup> Vollman, William “Poor People” pp 221

<sup>18</sup> Tomasevski, Katarina “The State Of The Right To Education Worldwide” UN Report 2006

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

end contradictory policies and institutional rivalries between global educational organizations... “<sup>19</sup>

Until these issues are dealt with, there seems little reason to believe that any proposal, any initiative, can be fully enacted.

In a report issued by Save The Children in 2003, the writer’s address these same issues:

“ In terms of promoting child well-being and preventing poverty transfers, three area’s of policy integration stand out. First, more substantial consideration is needed of the potential impact of different policy choices on children. This requires recognition of the many ways in which economic stress can affect children and can perpetuate poverty cycles.....It also requires commitment to actions that will enhance the well being of the poorest families and children.

Second, greater integration between sectoral priorities is needed, so that, for example, an agricultural policy promoting intensification of agriculture and requiring greater labor inputs does not conflict with education policy....Third, a process of policy design is needed that promotes coordination between different government departments, citizen voice, and reduced “ transaction costs “ to governments of coordinating with donors. “<sup>20</sup>

### 4.

So what works ? What programs woven into the fabric of aid and assistance manage to produce results and give hope for the future ?

Certainly the UN’s goal for world wide primary education is working in many respects. Some twenty three nations now provide free primary education. In parts of Africa, the introduction of free education has created a large influx of students which has overcrowded many schools, making the student teacher ratio about

---

<sup>19</sup> ibid

<sup>20</sup> Harper, Caroline/Marcus, Rachel “ Enduring Poverly And The Conditions Of Childhood “ 2003

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

55-1 a formidable number for any teacher who wants a class to make good progress.

So well publicized has this become among American and European schools, churches and charities that scores of well intentioned world citizens have traveled to these desolate regions to build new schools. Such is the zeal for this effort, that recently a US charity whose mission is to place a laptop on each student's desk worldwide, sent 300 to a rural African school whose infrastructure does not yet include electricity.

Still, as one teacher observed,

“ Well, in one way it's a problem, but in another way it's something positive... because when the free primary was not there, these children could not have gone to school. ”<sup>21</sup>

and while an institution such as the Royal Society acknowledges that

“ bolstering primary education in developing countries is clearly vital, ‘

it's report also adds that

“ measures should be taken to ensure developing countries retain their skilled academic labor, the migration of which has a crippling effect on economic well-being of countries.....much more needs to be done to help revitalize and direct tertiary level institutions towards developing countries' needs, poverty alleviation and economic growth. ”<sup>22</sup>

Many countries are re-examining the outcome of the aid they are providing to other nations. In one aspect, this is a necessary step back from blind funding UN initiatives, but this can also lead to imposing conditions and geo-political wrangling as we have seen.

---

<sup>21</sup> Baker, Becca “ Poverty Steals Education

<sup>22</sup> “ Eliminating World Poverty “ White Paper from the Department for International Development 2006

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

In 2007, The G8 Summit in Germany produced a paper entitled “ Growth And Responsibility In Africa “ that while calling for more aid from western countries, also stated that

“ We need to support sound development strategies with appropriately targeted aid, to ensure that it achieves the greatest possible effect, particularly in poverty eradication. We therefore continue to work with African countries to establish clear objectives, result based implementation plans, benchmarks for measuring and effective monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure transparent and accountable results from development programs. “<sup>23</sup>

Such has been the mismanagement of funds, gridlock on policy, and government disruption of aid in developing nations that more and more, despite the UN’s urging that education in particular “ is a “governmental responsibility “, the hope for the elimination of poverty, global health care and education, may well rest in the hands of private foundations and global activism.

Some years ago a popular catch phrase among us was “ Think Globally, Act Locally “. and while this remains as a reminder of community responsibilities, in the greater political arena, this has now metamorphized among the younger activists today into “ Think Globally, Act Globally “, as internet access among the wealthier nations has spawned on-line activism, fundraising and raised awareness of issues in ways that were unimaginable even a decade ago.

Activist political parties in Europe particularly, have lodged massive and successful protests against globalization and raised important issues with the G8 summits, while activists outside the political arena have raised awareness and support for UN proposals such as U2’s Bono who has lobbied for debt forgiveness for developing nations in the Parliaments of Europe and the White House, while Australia’s Peter Garret, former lead singer of the band Midnight Oil and a staunch advocate of Aboriginal rights and environmentalism has become a member of Parliament.

---

<sup>23</sup> “ Growth And Responsibility In Africa G\* Summit, June 2007



# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

Universities and Colleges around the US and other countries are engaging their students in global activism, researching ongoing health issues, experimenting with hybrid seedlings to bolster the agricultural crops in desolate regions, helping to build schools and taking part in the effort to bring free global education to fruition.

And both primary and secondary schools around the world are engaging students in the discussion of global concerns. In New York City, a non-profit group called Global Kids Inc. teamed up with Gamelab, a large gaming development company to create an online game called “ Ayiti: The Cost Of Life “ with the express purpose being

“ to educate players about the obstacles to education faced by children in developing countries. When distributed and used within either a classroom or after school setting, the game will be a strong tool for building student’s global awareness and civic literacy. “<sup>24</sup>

The Bill and Linda Gates Foundation has already committed 3.4 billion US dollars into grants that are mostly spent on the present priorities of improving the quality of water and health care, developing new crops for agricultural growth, and finance, to stir economic growth among the world’s poorest peoples.

With another 33 billion available for grants on worldwide projects, the impact of this gift from the private sector could well eclipse any progress made by government sponsored initiatives, and could well change the global view of how to distribute and manage such aid.

By establishing a foundation by which to distribute aid in a prioritized manner, to team with like minded philanthropists and engage discussion on a global level about poverty and health care, and most importantly to set these projects on a firm course of action and oversee the progress or lack thereof, and make adjustments as needed to ensure progress; in other words to establish the business foundations that are all too often missing when governments or the United Nations oversee the funding of such programs.

---

<sup>24</sup> Global Kids Digital Media Initiative, Nov. 15, 2006

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

“ More Aid, Better Directed “ might just fall into the model that the Gates have given to the world.

But lets get back to “ Think Globally, Act Locally “ for a moment. Working in the the health care environment and then education, I have talked with non-profit directors starving for volunteers from local colleges, and they seem peeved when discussions come around to what the students are doing in Africa or Latin American countries. How can their programs, as important as they are, compete with travel and charity in an exotic locale ?

I don't begrudge a student's wish to go to Africa to help build a school or a hospital, or to go to Latin American and study health care among the indigenous-peoples, all the students I've met and talked with who had done these deeds or were on their way to do them were going for the right reasons.

So what works on a local level ? The answer seems to be the same as the global question: money and activism.

In reviewing the website of US Philanthropy Today, one finds that by last calculations in 2003, the total of giving including, corporate, individual, foundation and bequest giving amounted to a staggering 240.7 billion dollars,with 8 % of that amount given to human services to offset poverty and improve education.

26.8 million was given to colleges and universities in 2001. The endowments since then have raised the bar for aging baby boomers whose estates worth between 1 million and 10 million have reached the number of 1,500,000.

There is no question we are a wealthy country, and yet even while we face a growing gulf between wealthy and poor in the US, the total of charitable income given by individuals remains constant at 75 % .

When last polled, 86 % of Americans reported that they are regular contributors to one charity or another. The crux of course, as it has always been, is how these funds are managed, distributed and utilized. This has become increasingly difficult with the burgeoning of foundations in the US, grown from 23,770 in 1982 to 64,843 twenty years later and growing still. The organization forsee's that both

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

the giving, and the foundations who want to spend those funds will continue to grow, with an estimate 571 billion in charitable giving by 2017, given to an estimated 1000,000 organizations by 2020.

In a paper entitled “ Seeds Of Change In Philanthropy “ issued by The Monitor Group, these concerns are examined and directed in a path the group sees for future philanthropy with

“ experiments that began in the late 1990’s (which) sought to replace the arm’s length relationships that traditional funders maintained with the organizations they supported with a much closer and active relationship. This so called high engagement philanthropy, born of efforts to incorporate successful practices

from the venture capital industry into philanthropy, brings the donor and the grantee into a partnership in which the donor’s money is allied with other assistance, and where the achievement of measurable goals is carefully tracked. “ <sup>25</sup>

And what of private foundations supporting the communities in which they do business or educate ? One very hopeful example recently gained national attention because of the roots of it’s investiture and the precedent which it boldly set.

\* In 2003, Brown University President Ruth J. Simmons appointed a Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice to investigate and issue a report on the University’s relationship to slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. “<sup>26</sup>

The appointment of such a committee drew attention because of the growing advocates of slave reparation, the history of the school itself and it’s founding brothers, and the fact that such an investigation was put in place by the school’s first African-American president who just happens to be one of the world’s most determined and outspoken women.

In it’s “ Report On Slavery and Justice, issued in the fall of 2006, among the recommendations for the University’s response was the acknowledgment that

---

<sup>25</sup> Fulton, Blau, Kaspar “ Seeds Of Change In Philanthropy “ The Monitor Group 2005

<sup>26</sup> Report Of The Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice 2006

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

“ This situation represents a direct challenge to Brown University. One of the most obvious and meaningful ways for Brown to take responsibility for it’s past is by dedicating it’s resources to improving the quality of education available to the children of our city and state. “<sup>27</sup>

While acknowledging the work that hundreds of students already do within community programs funded by the University, the report pointed out the apparent lack of coordination between the programs and the lack of funding for these programs to see progress. The report states

“ If Brown is to make a meaningful impact in local schools, it will require a sustained, substantial commitment of energy and resources over many years. “<sup>28</sup>

In February 2007, the University “ as an outgrowth of that report and the three year process of research, scholarship and community discussion that supported it;.....has decided to respond to the report and is committed to the following course of actions..... “

Addressing first the revision of history that must be made, the report contains an outline of initiatives to be taken, including the continuation and expansion of already existing programs such as the provision of technical assistance to Historically Black colleges and Universities, as well as reaffirming Brown’s commitment to the community, acknowledging that

*“ there is little in the broader society that correlates as closely to the University’s own mission as elementary and secondary education, and because access to education is essential and just and equitable society, Brown University also commits to the following:*

*“..... a permanent endowment in the amount of 10 million to establish a Fund for the Education of the Children of Providence.*

*..... free tuition to as many as ten admitted graduate students per year who, after successful completion of a master s degree in teaching, or a master s degree*

---

<sup>27</sup> ibid

<sup>28</sup> ibid

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

*in urban education policy, agree to serve in Providence area schools....for a minimum of three years.* <sup>29</sup>

The response was both praised and criticized by some pro reparations groups who considered the sum and commitment to be largely too little to late.

But when is it too late to make an impact ?

The response was the most carefully considered, and as the report suggests, the “ most meaningful “ response that the University could undertake.

Other universities have similar community outreach programs in their communities public schools, but Brown sets a precedent not only by committing millions of dollars, but more importantly, in beginning a concerted effort to integrate the University and it’s resources in the community with the expressed purpose of real growth and development in local schools.

The trend among the nation’s other leading schools is to offer more funding.

“In the past year,... Harvard, Yale, and the University of Virginia have all offered to cover more of the educational costs for students of low-income families. At Harvard for example, a student whose family earns less than \$ 40,000 won’t pay a dime to the school.”<sup>30</sup>

These so called “ free-ride “ initiatives signify a movement by some colleges away from the popular “ need-blind “ admissions, but such offers are worth little in communities where children lack the confidence to even consider such an education and don’t apply.

Brown’s experiment therefore, is even more important as an effort to sew the seeds of equity among some of Providence’s poorest children.

Our nation’s own response to a tenuous economy, the growing gap of poverty, and the school budget cuts at federal, state, and local levels has been a fierce

---

<sup>29</sup> Executive Summary: Brown University’s Response to the report of.... 2007

<sup>30</sup> Nyman, Paul “ College Divide Threatens To Keep The Poor In Poverty “ Seattle post 2005

# Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:

## The global challenge for the 21st Century

advocacy of student rights from parents and community leaders. Certainly those “faith-based” and other volunteer programs were well established before President Bush waved the banner of those hard working community activists.

Parental involvement has also increased, due also in part to the internet and access to organizations for special needs students, support groups, and a host of educational sites. In a survey released in 2005 by the Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement, , 72 % of parents recognized that without parental support, students can “fall through the cracks”, and that

“schools with involved parents engage these parents, communicate with them regularly, and incorporate them into the learning process.”<sup>31</sup>

Communities have also begun to align with private philanthropists. local firms and non profit organizations, as well as collaborating with colleges to make up for gaps created by budget cuts . These communities know their schools best, and the worth of any school is measured by the holistic involvement of administrators, teachers students and parents alike.

These are all trends, I think, in a positive direction. The cultivation of private resources and community involvement is a necessary step away from dependency on government funding and initiatives. On a world level we see what the economic effects of poverty and war can mean to both developing and wealthy nations and the inevitable impact this has on education around the globe.

The challenge of the 21st century is to create a more sustainable foundation for our children’s future, and to manage the growth of programs and initiatives that prove effective into a more permanent partnership with communities to foster equity, freedom from poverty and self reliance as the stepping stones for generations to come.

Robert A. Geake

Submitted Aug. 2007

---

<sup>31</sup> “ Meeting The Challenge: Getting Parents Involved In Schools “ CSRI august 2005

# **Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:**

**The global challenge for the 21st Century**

# **Eliminating Poverty, Enabling Education:**

**The global challenge for the 21st Century**