

## **What The Girl May Be Thinking**

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Pity the young girl who saw her most cherished hopes and dreams dashed by cruel fate, biased and incompetent enforcers, and unscrupulous profiteers, often from overseas! While her own life was handicapped from the start, she had been given cause to dream and hope. But now.... this.

First her own promising South African team was beaten, and then all of the other teams of the African nations were eliminated from the 2010 World Cup Games in South Africa!

Is it any wonder she is so despondent? She, like so many other young Africans, had been encouraged by the fact that her country was chosen to hold such an important world event, and inspired by the fact that South African officials had organized and managed the Games so successfully and spectacularly. This in a country that only a few short years ago had been among the most despised of nations. Where the cruel policy of apartheid had reduced so many of its inhabitants to a state of destitute second class citizens at best. Years of colonialism and oppression had wrung all hope out of them, but suddenly by inspired leadership and good luck, South Africa had pulled itself up by its bootstraps, with comparative ease and peace, and shown, at least by holding the Games, that it was fully a worthy member of the family of nations.

But in fact, how worthy a global participant is South Africa--or any part of Africa—she wonders, given the fact that once again the world championship was contested between two European nations? In spite of all the talk and aid and education and effort, Africa seemed to prove itself inept at what matters most in this world--to win football championships. Even the United States did better than any African nation!

And that of course was the underlying key. Africa needs to develop much more. It must catch up with the rest of the world. It needs to throw off the old ways and adopt the new ones. What was once of value is now manifestly obsolete, and deserves to be an object of ridicule--or tourism. Not only are tribal ways clearly backward travesties to be discarded with all haste, but also must everyone strive to move from agricultural villages, to urban slums and factories, and then to flats and office buildings--if one is not fit enough to become a world class athlete or entertainer which is where the real glory, honor, and money is to be found.

Yet here she sits, on the wretched doorstep of her wretched compound--a mere girl at that--with no hope for a bright future of any kind since it is clear that neither she nor any other African (certainly no female!) is able to compete where it most counts on the world

stage, and competing and winning globally is all that matters. The successful in the world now are competitively interconnected while she is manifestly disconnected from it all.

However, above her are words that say, "Reaching the Marginalized". This suggests that some of the surplus money and people of the developed world should be used to reach out and help her become closer to the Center instead of remaining Marginal. What could be worse than to leave her behind?

And how best can she be moved from the margins to the centers? Through education—"Education for All", another motto says. That means removing from her family and fields and putting her into a classroom where she is taught, by a foreigner or a foreignized African, how to read, think, and work like a properly-developing person. She must be educated to despise her ancestors and their pasts, and strive to become a full member of the working classes of the world.

She must be taught not to want to have children (though at the same time taught, by a million movies and videos, to provide sex). Indeed one of her main responsibilities will be NOT to have children so that the population of the world can decline to a sustainable number, and the best way to urge her not to want to have children is to teach her to want to have a job that pays money.

But much more than this, above all, she must be taught to consume. She must understand that her primary duty in life (especially as a woman!) is to learn to Shop Till You Drop; to want more and more of the products of development. Indeed, it is more important that she strives to consume than that she learns how to produce since very little human labor of any kind is needed in the manufacturing and distribution of products. All that is needed is humans who can consume products—or otherwise turn them into trash. Production must increase. The economy must grow. Seeing that it does is her responsibility. So she must be properly educated.

This has come to pass in many places across the world, though more so in some places than in others (Africa as a whole is still quite backward). Once upon a time, for example, Japan and Korea were isolated agricultural nations with very high birthrates. Now, by following the Stages of Economic Growth and Education, fertility in the two countries is so low that they both seem to be racing towards extinction.

How did this happen? It wasn't easy, but when properly educated, girls just want to have fun. Give women an education that makes them believe that their role and value is not as mothers and wives (how demeaning!) but as Working and Consuming Women. Let them see that they can truly be equal--no, superior--to men in advancement, achievement, income and hence freedom, and they will soon learn that husbands and children (and other conventional religious and cultural signifiers of what it means to be a "woman") are sorry burdens that they can and should avoid so that they can move forward on their own as self-motivated, self-concerned, consuming individuals, like all proper postmodern people. Looking good. Possessing the latest cell phone. Standing out from the crowd (not too far out!) is what counts.

But examine the face of the girl more closely. Maybe her look is not one of despair, but of contempt, perhaps even shaded by hope. Perhaps she is asking us why we are continuing to flog the dying horse of "development" when the world before her and all humanity may no longer be one of neoliberal economic, high-tech, globalized consumerism?

Globalization is yesterday's tomorrow which the west continues to proclaim, even though all the indicators show it may be nearly dead and over.

She is becoming aware that the way of life from which the advocates of progress say she should be educated from may not be a useless remnant of the past after all, but actually a wave of the future. The ideology of development that has increasingly dominated policies of the world for over a hundred and fifty years may finally and fully have been proven to be false—or at least illusory and transitory.

Growth, development, and progress have shown themselves to be the cancer that some have always said it was. Development has all but eaten itself by now, and a world where we can live simply and locally is now able to emerge.

Of course, this may not necessarily be a world that everyone wants, though some clearly do. But it is not a matter of choice. It rather is a matter of options, which are few. It is, as the Russian futurist, Igor Bestuzhev-Lada, put it years ago, a choice between New Civilization and No Civilization—a choice between celebrating and embracing a world without oil or any similar cheap and abundant energy source, or denying and ignoring that likelihood, as the lights flicker out; a world where adapting to rising seas and other local aspects of global climate change will replace the rat race of endlessly acquiring new gadgets hawked by seductive advertising; a world where production and consumption will be of local food, goods, and services rather than imported from the mines and sweatshops of the world; a world of local governance instead of distant bureaucracies; a world the way it used to be in some fundamental sense, but also a new world informed by a synthesis of scientific and indigenous knowledge and processes.

So behind her uncertain stare may be an emerging grin of confidence that says: "Now YOU must learn from ME! I still know how to farm. Do you? My village knows how to find pure water and fertile soil. Do you? Of course, there still can be aspects of high technology that are still valuable and sustainable. We need not--should not--"go back" to a primitive past where an abscessed tooth or a burst appendix causes death. We might even find ways to use still-functioning space satellites to communicate globally via locally-produced electricity. Life will be meaningful and good, but based on values and processes I know, and that my ancestors have cherished and taught me, that I now must teach to you.

Who is marginal now, in such a world? Where is the center that will not hold?

What is the content and mode of Education for All now?

If the young girl is still somewhat sad it is because from the time of her great-grandparents onward, a sustainable and meaningful way of life that had nurtured them for generations had been ridiculed and all-but destroyed in the name of progress only to find now that it may be necessary to restore neglected aspects of that way of life once again.

If only those in the west forcing development on them had had the eyes to see and the ears to hear, maybe we would not have had to progress by such cultural and environmental destruction, so that she would not be so wistful. But still, her gaze shows she knows that the future may finally be on her side now.