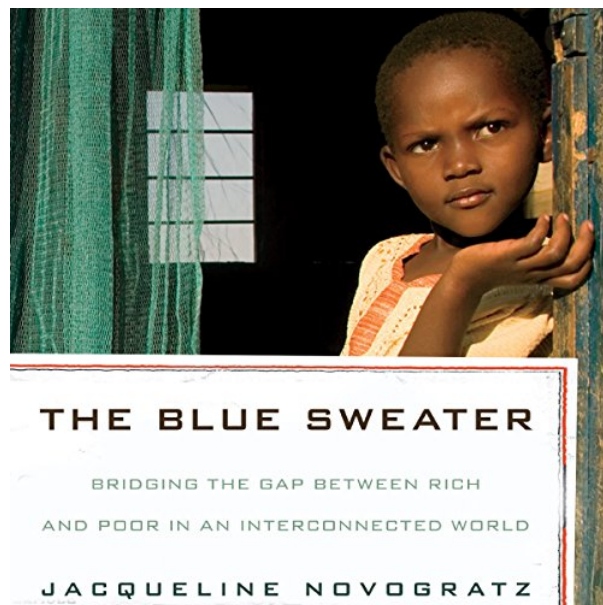
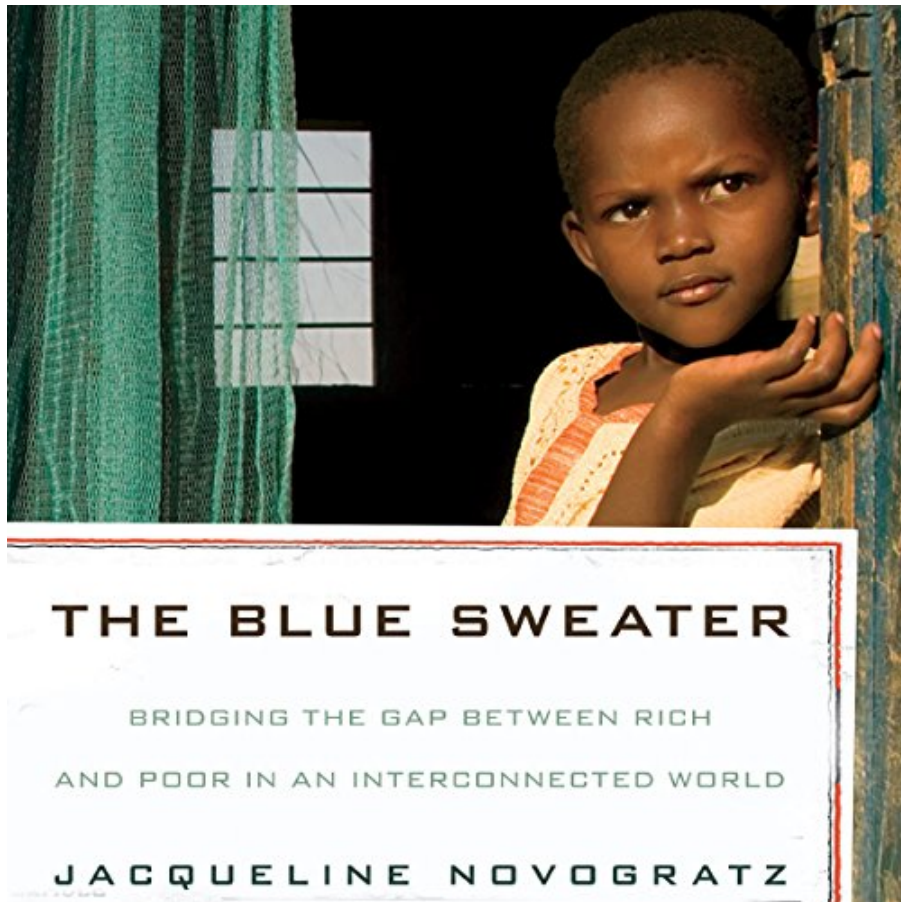


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THE BLUE SWEATER: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN RICH AND POOR IN AN INTERCONNECTED WORLD BY JACQUELINE NOVOGRATZ PDF

The Blue Sweater is the inspiring story of a woman who left a career in international banking to spend her life on a quest to understand global poverty and find powerful new ways of tackling it.

It all started back home in Virginia, with the blue sweater, a gift that quickly became her prized possession - until the day she outgrew it and gave it away to Goodwill. Eleven years later in Africa, she spotted a young boy wearing that very sweater, with her name still on the tag inside. That the sweater had made its trek all the way to Rwanda was ample evidence, she thought, of how we are all connected, how our actions - and inaction - touch people every day across the globe, people we may never know or meet.

From her first stumbling efforts as a young idealist venturing forth in Africa to the creation of the trailblazing organization she runs today, Novogratz tells gripping stories with unforgettable characters - women dancing in a Nairobi slum, unwed mothers starting a bakery, courageous survivors of the Rwandan genocide, entrepreneurs building services for the poor against impossible odds.

She shows, in ways both hilarious and heartbreaking, how traditional charity often fails, but how a new form of philanthropic investing called "patient capital" can help make people self-sufficient and can change millions of lives.

More than just an autobiography or a how-to guide to addressing poverty, The Blue Sweater is a call to action that challenges us to grant dignity to the poor and to rethink our engagement with the world.

- Sales Rank: #45422 in Audible
- Published on: 2010-12-10
- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Running time: 653 minutes

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171 of 192 people found the following review helpful.

I really wanted to love this book.

By Blair

I really wanted to love this book. I've been a big fan of Jacqueline Novogratz ever since I started reading about the Acumen Fund's work while serving in the Peace Corps in central Africa. In the years since, I've been working for a global health organization in several countries and read up on developments in this field regularly - and like Novogratz, I'm a UVA grad! And getting my MBA! I thought I'd eat this book up.

What first struck me was that this book is much less about the developing world (to say nothing of the

Acumen Fund) than it is about Novogratz herself. The author is not a gifted writer, as others have pointed out, and the constant attempts at vivid descriptions of scenes of Africa and India become very tiresome. They also lend to the strong theme of the author's utter naivete. Novogratz seems to be constantly shocked or surprised when something she tries doesn't work, and nevertheless repeats the same self-sure pattern of presumption on her next "project."

I was an innocent abroad once too. The developing world, especially Africa, has a steep learning curve... but it's one that the author, from her luxury accommodations in the capital, jet-setting between countries as an overpaid ADB "consultant," hobnobbing with expat (read: white) elites in tennis clubs and fancy restaurants where local Kenyans/Rwandans/Tanzanians/etc. are nonexistent, never seems to overcome. She's exactly the type of foreign "expert" which she skewers early in the book (and whom exasperates the rest of us in this field). My eyes became sore from so much rolling, hearing her wax eloquent about local people and cultures to which she clearly has little true exposure or understanding of.

I give it two stars because many of the lessons she discusses - about accountability, the power of business in bettering people's lives, instilling a sense of dignity through economic security - are sound. I just wish she would talk more about business and less about, say, how shocked - just shocked! - she was when she was mugged while jogging alone in Tanzania, or about how she feels about the Rwandan genocide.

64 of 76 people found the following review helpful.

good stories; lackluster writing

By Elizabeth Barry

Jacqueline Novogratz's writing is not particularly elegant or original, but her stories are powerful. She has worked all over the developing world as a consultant who helps poor women start businesses. She is a strong believer in the transformative power of capitalism.

She could be right about that. But some of her stories, particularly the ones about Africa, seem to point more to the rampant corruption that ruins attempts to improve lives than to the small successes that microfinancing sometimes creates. Her hopefulness and faith in people, despite this endemic corruption, is commendable, but at times it seems a bit romantic, although she often decries this over-optimistic romanticism in other Western development workers.

Her stories about Rwanda are the most riveting. She worked in Rwanda in the 1980s before the genocide and then returned often after the genocide to find her friends and hear their stories. The stories, not unexpectedly, are harrowing. Many women lost almost all their relatives and children; one was in prison for inciting genocide.

Her meditation on the efficacy of bed nets to prevent malaria is thoughtful and convincing, and she discusses honestly the pros and cons of selling versus giving away bed nets.

The reader comes away with a detailed picture of life in the developing world, in all its beauty and horror, and with admiration for the people who keep trying to help despite the enormous obstacles.

44 of 52 people found the following review helpful.

How to change the world

By Linda Bulger

There are so many things in the world that want changing -- how does a young, committed college graduate decide where to begin? Jacqueline Novogratz was an international credit banker on the fast track with Chase Manhattan Bank, but her work in Brazil showed her that big commercial banks had nothing to offer the poor. Having always planned to change the world, she turned her back on high finance and took a position in West

Africa with a nonprofit microfinance organization. *The Blue Sweater: Bridging the Gap Between Rich and Poor in an Interconnected World* is author Novogratz's own story of her love affair with that work.

Her early days in Nairobi were not a great success. The project was intended to provide microloans to poor women, but the local women leading the project did not appreciate a brash young American who knew nothing of their culture. Sidelined from any role in that enterprise, she wound up in East Africa where she developed a deep commitment to the women of Rwanda. Knowledge of banking principles was not enough to assure success, and she gradually attained the insights necessary for her work to succeed. Rwandan women were traditionally excluded from economic rights, and large international aid projects offered them nothing they could use. Novogratz soon learned that if you help a woman, you help a family. Her goal was to provide microloans AND the skill set necessary to start and grow business. The concerns of the women were food, clothing, and shelter for their families, clean water, basic health care, irrigation for the crops they chose to grow. Aid that fosters these basic services is a necessary adjunct to the development of income, if families are to lift themselves out of poverty.

Novogratz's trial-and-error stories are frank and sometimes funny, but the reader is constantly aware that a young woman alone in Africa is living on the thin edge of danger. After more than two years, during which time she formed strong bonds of friendship and established important local institutions in Rwanda, she was aware that she needed to know more about leadership to go further. She returned to the U.S. to attend business school at Stanford, and took a position with the Rockefeller Foundation where she established the Philanthropy Workshop, a four-week course offering training in the principles of strategic giving; and The Next Generation Leadership, a program for the development of leaders. She then founded and currently runs the Acumen Fund, a nonprofit venture fund for investment and development in the world's poorest regions. "Patient capital" is their term for bridging the divide between traditional charity and traditional business investment, using principles of moral leadership and empowerment.

Novogratz knew from childhood that she wanted to change the world. Easier said than done! But walk with her beside women who have nothing but dreams, hear the first-hand horror of the 1994 Rwandan genocide, read about well-meaning but meaningless aid projects, and experience a hundred little epiphanies about leadership and economic development; and you'll begin to believe in the possibility as well as the need. "The West wants easy answers for modern atrocities, revolving around ancient tribal hatreds, international aid gone astray, or political corruption. The real world does not oblige," Novogratz writes. The world wants to punish and prevent "...atrocities that can come only from a deep-seated fear of the Other in our midst; and such fear is fueled in a world where the rich feel above the system and the poor feel entirely left out."

This is a book about life-changing issues. It's a fascinating read and I recommend it wholeheartedly.

Note: this review is based on an uncorrected reading copy. Thanks to the publisher and to Amazon Vine for the opportunity to review this wonderful book.

Linda Bulger, 2008

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