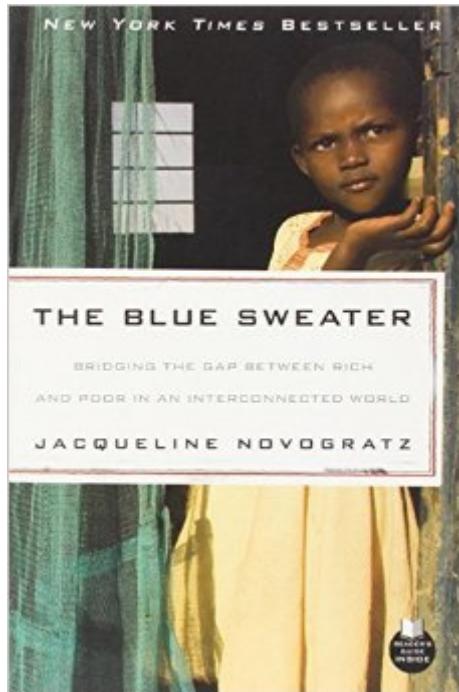


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The Blue Sweater: Bridging The Gap Between Rich And Poor In An Interconnected World



Synopsis

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 heartbreak, 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.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

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.

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.

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