



The Blue Sweater: Bridging the Gap between Rich and Poor in an Interconnected World

By Jacqueline Novogratz

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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 heartbreakng, 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.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Novogratz combined her twin passions for banking and philanthropy after she left a lucrative corporate banking position to work with women's groups in microfinance, the pioneering banking strategy that won Muhammad Yunus a Nobel Peace Prize in 2006. Her work merging market systems with development and social empowerment led her to create the Acumen Fund for entrepreneurs in developing nations, which she describes as the opposite of old-fashioned charity. Novogratz also focuses on her own developmental path as she charts her evolving views of capitalism and how she will change the world. Unfortunately, she stumbles when she strays into biographical territory, relying on clichés to bolster her professional decisions through a personal lens. The book is most interesting when it touches on the difficult decisions that Novogratz and her team must make about financial empowerment—should they charge interest on loans to poor women? can working women find acceptance in a patriarchal society?—but these dilemmas are facilely glossed, keeping the book in an uncomfortable limbo between a personal narrative and a primer on globalization. (Feb.)

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From [Booklist](#)

Acumen Fund founder Novogratz blends two narratives in this memoir about her years fighting global poverty. In one thread, she recounts her early experiences in Africa developing microfinance organizations to assist women. Many of her reminiscences focus on relationships with the local women in government who were key to her success as well as the personal trials she encountered matching her Western vision with their ideas about the future. She also writes about later work in India and Pakistan. The other thread focuses on her return to Rwanda after the genocide. Although her inside view of global poverty initiatives and politics at the most basic level makes for interesting reading, her personal story intrudes in a manner that some readers may find self-serving. Her reflections on the genocide also detract from the economic discussion in India and Pakistan, rendering the book more Rwanda-centric (and thus more political) than she may have intended. In the end, Novogratz does provide enough information on microfinance to make readers curious to learn more.

--Colleen Mondor

Review

“This is a wonderful book by a remarkable woman. It’s a story about doing enormous good while having some extraordinary experiences and even adventures. It touches the heart and the mind. I recommend it to anyone who wants to learn about what’s really going on in the world out there.”--Fareed Zakaria, Author of *The Post-American World* and editor of *Newsweek International*

“The decency of Jacqueline Novogratz shines through these pages and so does her strength. The stories she shares about the people she has met show the nobility of the human spirit and the breadth of the desire to stop suffering, to feed the hungry, to care for the sick, to empower the poor - in short, to make the world a better place. *The Blue Sweater* is a book of hope written by a practical idealist who won’t take “no” for an answer when it comes to building a better world. Jacqueline breathes new life into the phrase “a life of meaning” and she is living one everyday even as she asks us to join her.” --Senator Bill Bradley

“*The Blue Sweater* will inspire people around the world by seeing the difference one person can make in taking on challenges with courage, curiosity, drive and a great sense of possibility. It is a story for all of us, regardless of the country in which we were born.” --Mary Robinson, Chair of Realizing Rights: The Ethical

Globalization Initiative

“Jacqueline’s book and her work represent an entirely new way to look at things, a vivid opportunity for change and most of all, an obligation to spread the word about the way the world has evolved. We need to wake up and listen to what she has to say. Hurry!” --Seth Godin, author of *Tribe: We Need You to Lead Us* and *Purple Cow: Transform Your Business by Being Remarkable* ”Jacqueline is a national treasure. Her pioneering work at Acumen Fund is positively influencing a whole generation of donors and recipients.” --Seth Berkley, President and founder of the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative ”A captivating first-person account of a young woman’s quest to close the gap between rich and poor. If one person can change the world, this is your window into how it’s done.” --Chee Pearlman, former Editor in Chief, I.D. Magazine ”If you believe in the worth and capacity of individual initiative and in group commitment, or if you believe that our lives can be transformed by the events we live through, then you must read this book.” --Daniel Toole, UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia

Users Review

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Ann Gross:

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