



Letter to my African Sisters, "Technology and the Heart... Women's Health"



I have been following Nancy's and WOUGNET's Uganda blogs for some time now, often stopping my work for a prayer and tears. It is a great honor to write in this Arise magazine of innovation and style. My mother, now 94, was a tough feminist before her time, raising three boys while my father was on the road. She taught full time while getting her Master's in Education at Columbia University in New York City. I still have memories of her on her bed, sandwich in hand, with books and papers long after the nightly chores were done. Later, when raising my own daughter, Maya, I would drop her off at elementary school each morning telling her "Get straight A's, go to a good school and change the world." In my family, learning is everything. Today, Maya is a special needs teacher in Brooklyn, NY. This being said, I ponder what a visionary strategist in learning technology could offer to my sisters in Africa. My life has been filled with riots in Kenya's Rift Valley, the oppression of multinational factories, and the tears of beaten homeless women in the U.S. along with a [Brooklyn](#) church with races from all over the world. I cannot write another dry white paper, so here is a letter from an old father to his daughters about the gift of the global power you have yet to fully realize.

Dear Daughters,

I am writing to you about the health of your hearts and the power you have been given as women. I know life can be a long, hard road of oppression, bad deals and injustice. It is easy to harden your hearts. Have faith, your road is coming to an end. You have been given evolutionary gifts that you are just beginning to understand and leverage. I am writing you to tell you that we see you standing proud and transforming the world, but you can do so much more, so much faster. This generation has been blessed with a unity and strength that transcends the globe, but you must accept the gift technology brings, lock arms and use it. This magazine is just a taste of what could be a truly wondrous world for your children.

You are no longer alone: For over 50,000 years, men have held women in isolation to control them. Today, the device in your hand empowers you to connect with every man, woman and child in the world. From your phone, you have medical access from all the universities in the world. Sites like www.webmd.com will empower you with all you need to know about your bodies. Your voice can reach the globe on social injustice. In a moment, you can reach neighbors, families, groups or militia. Free of charge, the world will educate you from top universities and

set you free. All you have to do is "Seek and you will find." Sound familiar?

A friend recommended a mechanic to me to fix my car, and he wanted to cheat me to do the work for 3,800 USD. He charged me 100 USD just for the estimate. I discovered on the Internet that there was a kit for 175 USD that could fix my car. I went back to ask for my 100 USD back and informed him that I was offended that he would cheated me like that. He mocked me and said I could take him to court for it. I responded that I would not take him to court, but I would Facebook the estimate on his church's web site. He was furious and saw my phone was set for 911. Cursing me, he gave me my 100 USD back. You see, I had his church community and the police on my side (real time), what could he do? He learned the lesson about thinking twice before cheating another customer. Today, when we cheat a person, we cheat a community and the world. Welcome to the Matrix.

How you will defeat oppression? If someone is lying to you, you can find the truth. If they are cruel to you, you can bring them to justice. If someone cheats you, they cheat all of the women in the town. **The individual oppressor is always a coward that relies on the silence of the victim and fears the awareness of the masses.** Because of the Internet, you and all women must become united. Imagine if the father, leader, or business owner knew that sexual abuse would result in every women in town on his front door in minutes. My sisters, you have this power now, you are no longer alone.



One person on the Internet spreading the truth is like a candle in the darkness. Darkness hates the light, because it exposes its lies. On the Internet, you can assess the truth on HIV/AIDS and GMO seeds, and chemicals in baby food. Every company in your town can be rated in a public forum about their level of corruption. Internet software such as www.usshahidi.com maps voting corruption in Kenya and could map corruption of border crossings, company slave labor practices and more. Corruption and oppression relies on the silencing of women, but it is women who can expose it all. Drag the cowards out of the shadows and into the light of the town square for all to see. You now have the power to make the coward accountable.

How you will defeat depression. Isolation and denial of resources can cause you to sink into helplessness. Love denied crushes the heart. Yet access to the world's resources empowers you to love people by sharing what you have to offer. Even if you have nothing but a simple, kind word, you can save someone's life. Collaborative technology makes you a part of a community in need. Depression will lift in response to the needs of others. Your hopelessness will turn to strength when you offer hope with a group. Twitter and Facebook are designed for encouragement, joy, laughter and rejoicing. The traps of your old, oppressive patterns that resist change will transform with the discovery of new options. If health and weight are issues, unite the women in your community into food co-ops that purchase and grow organic foods and stop purchasing fake butters from petroleum companies and chips filled with artificial flavorings. Where there is a need there is business and profit. The content and collaboration on the Internet is begging to help you. You must search, adopt, collaborate and create. The solutions in the world are banging on your door every moment of every day. Open it. Again, seek and you will find.



You are now a powerful multinational: The colonial cultures and multinationals have tricked you into thinking they are the only option in town. This is no longer true. You can now market, bank and even ship internationally the same way they can. Look at all the startups in this magazine. You can order equipment from anywhere in the world. Learn how to make and service anything from anywhere. When two or more gather to seek and build, you have all the same tools the big factory has. The new multinational is you. Embrace it and you will have new eyes, wider vision, and bigger profits. Look at this magazine. No capital is needed, and your printing press is the PC, tablet and smart phone. Everything you need to learn about how to do this is on online waiting for you. From Africa, you can service the world.

In the U.S., the largest employers are small businesses. African women are no longer forced to look for jobs when they can now create their own companies and economy. What are you waiting for?

You have resources beyond what you can imagine. When you grew up in your colonial style school, you read from textbooks while the teacher filled up empty buckets with knowledge. Today your classroom is the world with 300,000 free educational web sites and training about how to do anything. Today you write in your text books and argue with the

authors. Today you are the author of a global fluid book written simultaneously by billions of women at the same time. You have power and knowledge beyond what you can imagine. Open up this gift and embrace it fully.

To understand this gift is to understand that the Internet consists of content and context. Like your school library, it is filled with facts (content). What is different is that those facts are all wrapped in the "context" of human experience. I might place a photo of a hungry child on Facebook. This is "content" or a fact. People's reaction to that photo is human "context;" the good, bad and the ugly. Think of it. It is your collaborative personal and social/cultural opinion that give content significance.

You will unite and conquer: Speaking out and giving your opinion is what makes you significant; it gives you power. The fact that there are UN Human Rights laws is just black type on white paper, unless humans are willing to speak out and act. The Internet provides women instant power to speak, unite and support. Women are now building highly profitable and scalable businesses which empower them and give them a political voice.

Be the light exposing the unjust. You have heard that a single match can start a forest fire. You also know that a match can be easily stamped out. However, when thousands of matches light at once, powerful states of injustice are overcome, from the Islamic Spring, to the riots in Los Angeles from the Rodney King beatings. Global digital democracy is here to stay.

Knowledge is your secret weapon. Women can access the Internet's resources to train and mentor other women. Not just by using MS Office, but literacy tools and in particular business literacy. Schools that teach students by day can open their technology to teach adults by night. Cyber Cafés can turn into small group meetings with youth listening to elders problems and seeking solutions on the Internet. Interns can work with women in business exploring knowledge from around the world to improve product and grow companies.

It is easy to make the mistake that it is technology or PCs in a cybercafé that will set you free. This is an illusion. If a woman becomes certified in Microsoft Office and then finds herself back on a factory floor or kitchen because there are no jobs, this is a cruel tragedy. It is by women collaborating together and leveraging access to the Internet which provides resources and community that will solve the problems of isolation, oppression and denial of access. If you were before me, I would have you all stand up and lock arms together

singing some great song together, this is collaboration. All unique and wonderful, but acting in one accord.

I can cook for you, but I cannot eat for you. There is a simple model you can use as a group when approaching the Internet:

1. Start with a problem
2. Discover the many ways to solve it
3. Adopt a solution and share it with the group
4. Collaborate, act and team up to implement the solution
5. Share it. Give back to other women and the world your solution, business and creativity

If you do these steps, you become part of the Global Learning Framework of billions of people questioning, collaborating and creating in the global knowledge experience. All this transcends our colors, cultures, religions, politics and continents.

In a large meeting during the 70,s between Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and the Media visionary, Marshall McLuhan, I asked Mr. McLuhan, "How can we change the resistant establishment?" I will paraphrase. He said, "The establishment is a huge fort with all the weapons of the world. If you stand before the huge main gate to scream and yell, eventually they will aim all their weapons at you and blow you up. However, if you look, you will notice that all big gates have a small door that is unlocked. If you can be silent, you can walk in past all the sleeping guards and into the King's chambers and force him to listen."

That small door is now called Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and social networking. Never before could the women of the world access world leaders like they can today. So arise, unite and buzz the king's cell phone in the middle of the night. Wake them up and speak your truth.

My dear sister, I will tell you one more time. "You are no longer alone." Now go create the new world that no other generation could imagine.

I am proud of you,

Dad



Richard Close, CEO-Servant, The Chrysalis Campaign. The Chrysalis Team has provided over two decades of strategy, professional services and business development experience in training, eLearning and education. As a senior consultant, he has developed programs for companies such as: Sun Microsystems, Catapult/IBM Learning Services, International Data Corporation, Oracle, Powersoft/Sybase and Global Knowledge, Lotus Development, Microsoft. This includes poverty curriculum development in Bridgeport, CT, and the development of a UNESCO PPN African portal, “I am Africa. This is my story...” <http://i-am-the-story.ning.com>

Richard is an international speaker and author of two African photo books. He has internationally published white papers, is an author and photographer and Richard is the developer of the Global Learning Framework. <http://globalllearningframework.ning.com>

Richard C. Close, Servant – CEO, Chrysalis Campaign, Inc. Email: rclose@richardclose.info Blog: <http://richardclose.blogspot.com/> Twitter: @iamafricastory