



EXPLORING THINKING, THEORY AND INVENTION

Living on a Dollar

Earlier this year, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation released their annual letter to dismantle three common myths around the world about development and poverty. “The belief that the world can’t solve extreme poverty and disease isn’t just mistaken. It is harmful,” stated the opening of the letter. The letter points to a couple of astonishing development facts: more than a billion people have risen out of extreme poverty; foreign aid has and does save and improve lives around the world; child mortality and birth rates are falling and so on.

Yet, though these positive facts give us a different perspective to the suffering we see on the news daily, it also highlights how much further the world needs to go to eradicate poverty – a completely possible and achievable task.

Living on a Dollar a Day, published by the Forgotten International Foundation, tries to make exactly that point. According to Forgotten International, as of 2007, there were still 850 million people going hungry everyday, close to 30 thousand children dying everyday from preventable diseases and there were still just over a billion people living on a dollar a day. While so many of the world’s poor have been propped up on their own feet, the wave of development has yet to touch so many more.

Through poignant and personal photographs of those living in dire conditions, the book strives to put a face to the humans behind these stark statistics. Here the Pulitzer prize-winning photographer, Renée C. Byer, involved in the project shares her experiences.

Overcoming poverty desensitization.

I strive to make an emotional connection through my photographs. All the people I photographed invited me into their lives and I spent a considerable amount of time with them. That allowed their stories to unfold naturally and enabled me to capture a range of emotion that people can relate to. These are not nameless faces and I feel that adds validity to the images beyond just a photograph. Time, access and an emotional connection are the essence of compelling photojournalism.

My subject’s dignity is foremost in my mind every time I make an image. I’m very sensitive to their human condition and I spend a lot of time understanding their plight and gaining their trust. Most are living in these conditions by no fault of their own and are very hard working. My pictures portray the unvarnished realities of life in an effort to elevate the public’s understanding and compassion. I work with a team of interpreters, social workers and local

non-profits to identify and translate my objective before I make any images. I am always humbled by the grace, generosity, fortitude, and bravery of the hardworking men, women and children that allowed me into their lives to tell their stories. Through them my life is enriched.

Major roadblocks to alleviating poverty.

There are not enough resources allocated to help the poor. The myth is that the poor are lazy but the reality is they work very hard just to survive and the cycle is impossible to break without help. Many point to overpopulation as a problem not understanding that many women have been exploited, raped, abused and have no control over the children they bare. Women are the most vulnerable and if one helps a woman, in most cases they are helping a child.

It's very complex but there are examples in this book that portray extraordinary examples of what one person can do. We all need to start by having a shared humanity. The 14th Dalai Lama who wrote the forward to the book has a meaningful quote on the cover, "Unfairness in the human condition can only be remedied when people everywhere care."

It's a hard reality to face, never mind try and fix. But if we cannot connect, cannot imagine, cannot see, we can never hope to change. That's why we have to continue to bring this issue to light. The numbers are improving but not fast enough.

"Look, really look, at these faces"

In India, I photographed a 22-year-old mother who was starving her child so she could use her to beg on the streets to earn money to feed her other children. The child was two years old and weighed nine pounds. Sacrificing one child to feed your others is almost unimaginable. This photograph is so searing that I fear you will dismiss it as something alien, something so outside your experience that it doesn't feel real. I'm asking you not to turn the page so quickly. Look, really look, at these faces. Imagine yourself behind these eyes.

I photographed and interviewed Jacaba Coaquisa Illari, 80, in Bolivia that works her own little farm. She grows wheat and beans. And she frankly didn't like us—largely because we were from the US. Over the past 20 years, she says, her wheat no longer grows, there's not enough rain, there's too much heat, and her beans are almost worthless. She says the biggest reason for this is countries like the United States putting so much carbon in the air. Her climate has changed and made it hard for her to survive. She lives on a mountainside where there used to be quite a bit of rain, snow, and fresh water. Subsistence farming is the number one livelihood of the rural poor so its impact is severe. Climate change is affecting an awful lot of the poorest of the poor, so they are the first to feel the effects when there's not enough rain or there's more drought or flooding.

There are harrowing images and there are images that lift your human spirit throughout this book. There is a chapter of children at play precisely to demonstrate we are all more the same then different. I learned the human spirit transcends even the worst deprivation.

Renée C. Byer is the senior photojournalist at The Sacramento Bee, where she has worked since 2003. Byer is a documentary photojournalist. She was awarded a Pulitzer Prize in 2007 for her photographic series 'A Mother's Journey'.

The Forgotten International was founded in 2007, by Professor Thomas A. Nazario who, for over 30 years, has worked to help identify the needs and defend the rights of children worldwide. TFI grew from his international work with the United Nations, the U.S. State Department, and Human Rights Watch.



Subadra Devi, 40, looks as though she has worked all her life and has yet to find a moment to rest. She, along with a group of women, work alongside a road in Dharamsala, India. They work as manual laborers on a construction site. In this area of the world, the Himalayan foothills, construction workers often find work doing one of two things: either they work rebuilding roads which have collapsed down mountain sides as the result of the summer monsoons which bring a deluge of rain to Northern India, or they work

building new homes or hotels for vacationers who escape to Dharamsala each year to find cleaner air and cooler temperatures than that found in India's central valley.

Alvaro Kalancha Quispe, 9, opens the gate to the stone pen that holds the family's alpacas and llamas each morning so they can graze throughout the hillsides during the day. He then heads off to school, but must round them up again in the evening for this is the work he does for his family. Photo taken May 27, 2011 in the Cayuyo area about an hour from Qutapampa, Bolivia. In the background is the snow-capped Apolobamba Mountain Range.





In an e-waste dump that kills nearly everything that it touches, Fati, 8, works with other children searching through hazardous waste in hopes to find whatever she can to exchange for pennies in order to survive. While balancing a bucket on her head with the little metal she has found, tears stream down her face as the result of the pain that comes with the Malaria she contracted some years ago. This is her life. Photo taken in Accra, Ghana on August 17, 2010.

Hunupa Begum, 13, has been blind for the past 10 years and lives close to the Nizamudin Bangala Masjid (Mosque) in New Delhi, India. She begs as the only source of income for her family that consist of a brother Hajimudin Sheikh, 6, center, who suffers fluids that accumulate in his brain and her mother Manora Begum, 35, right, who suffers from asthma, and she has a womb ailment and can't do manual labor. Their father Nizam Ali Sheikh died ten years ago of Tuberculosis. Her wheelchair was donated by a passerby. Photo taken on June 26, 2010.



Ana-Maria Tudor ,4, stands in the light of her doorway, hoping for a miracle as her family faces eviction from the only home they have ever had. Photo taken March 22, 2011 in Bucharest, Romania.