

# La technologie est la racine de tous les maux - Philip Emeagwali

[emeagwali.com](http://emeagwali.com)

Traduit de l'Anglais par Guy Everard Mbarga

D'après les livres d'histoire, des marchands d'esclaves Européens armés ont kidnappé un Africain sur cinq qu'ils ont transporté par les océans jusqu'en Amérique. La boussole (compas) est un dispositif utilisé dans le monde entier pour la navigation; un outil technologique d'extinction moins visible, mais non moins extrême. De la même manière que les Britanniques ont utilisé leurs connaissances maritimes et que les États Unis ont exploité leur capital intellectuel pour diriger le monde, les premiers marchands d'esclaves ont utilisé une simple boussole pour faire des ravages dans la civilisation.

Il est triste de constater que cet instrument de navigation s'est développé à l'époque de la traite des esclaves sur l'Océan Atlantique et grâce à celle-ci. Le développement technologique de l'innocente boussole, inventée en Chine pour la divination religieuse il y a 2000 ans a permis que l'Afrique soit ravagée d'une manière inqualifiable.

C'est la boussole qui a créé le Commerce Atlantique des esclaves, en permettant aux premiers navigateurs coloniaux — et à leurs marchands sanguinaires — de dresser une route précise de l'île de Gorée, sur la côte sénégalaise au Brésil; ouvrant la voix au commerce Transatlantique des esclaves qui débuta le 8 août 1444. Ce

commerce de la marchandise humaine a touché quatre continents, a duré quatre siècles et servi de guide honteux pour la dépravation de l'avidité et de la conquête humaine.

La boussole est devenue de fait l'arme de destruction massive qui a conduit à la décapitalisation et à la décapitation de l'Afrique. Elle a créé la Diaspora Africaine avec une personne sur cinq enlevée de la terre mère. Il s'est agi du plus vaste et du plus brutal déplacement d'êtres humains dans l'histoire humaine.



Il est difficile d'imaginer aujourd'hui qu'une telle destruction et l'enlèvement systématique d'une race puisse provenir d'un outil aussi ordinaire qu'une boussole.

Cependant, en tant que peuple ayant survécu au commerce des esclaves, nous devons tirer notre force des leçons apprises du passé et tirer notre énergie de la force de l'avenir. Et la force de l'avenir réside dans le "contrôle" de la technologie et dans son exploitation pour le bien de l'humanité, et non pour sa destruction.

Les africains doivent se rendre compte que l'Internet est un outil de navigation moderne et qu'il constitue leur propre ciment de sagesse. Alors que nous nous préparons pour notre long voyage dans le cyberspace du futur, avec sa promesse technologique, — son ciment de sagesse — nous devons saisir la valeur stratégique et le potentiel de cet outil crucial. Notre image du futur inspire le présent et le présent sert à créer le futur.

Le manque de connaissance technologique substantielle d'Internet en Afrique et de son potentiel pourrait conduire le continent à être agressé ou manipulé d'une manière inattendue, de la même façon qu'il fut dévasté voilà quelques générations faute d'une simple boussole. Nous n'avions pas reconnu la force de la boussole à cette époque ; le danger est que nous ne reconnaissons pas celle de la technologie aujourd'hui.

Pendant que l'Afrique envisage l'avenir, les pays occidentaux, les plus rapides à se servir des armes technologiques, font l'avenir.

Ce fait, et la manière dont la force de la technologie peut être utilisée contre les pauvres me sont apparus chez moi de façon claire lorsque j'ai récemment reçu le mail suivant:

"Il y a un an environ, j'ai embauché un développeur en Afrique pour faire mon travail. Je le paie 12000 dollars par an pour faire mon travail

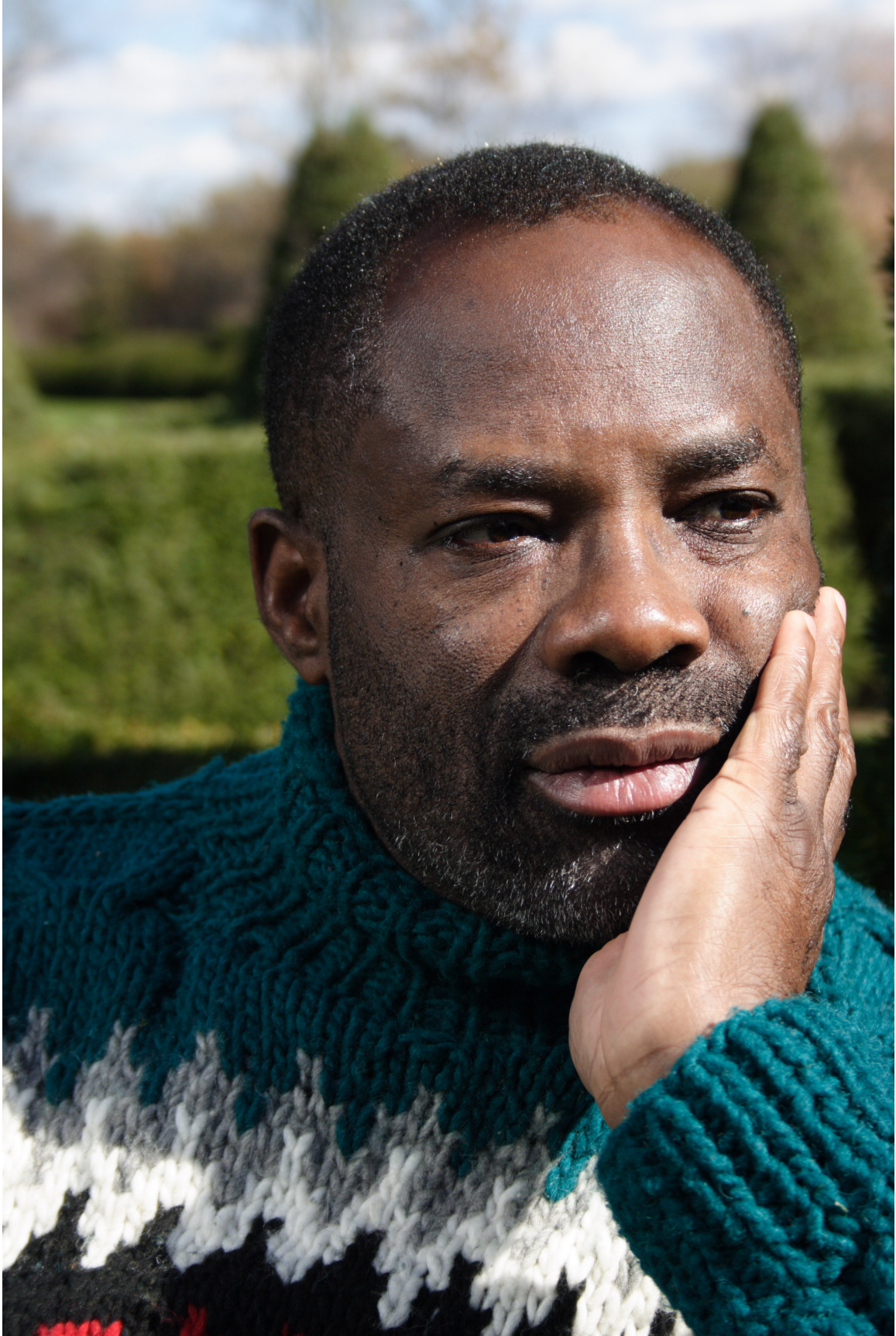
pour lequel je suis payé 67000 dollars l'année," écrivait l'expéditeur. "Il est heureux d'avoir un emploi et moi je suis content de ne devoir travailler que 90 minutes par jour. À présent, j'envisage d'obtenir un second emploi en faisant la même chose."

La technologie entre les mains des autres a été utilisée pour exploiter l'Afrique durant des siècles. Il est maintenant temps pour l'Afrique de saisir la technologie et d'embrasser enfin le ciment de la sagesse et de l'émancipation de l'âge moderne. L'Afrique a la chance de montrer au monde comment la technologie doit être utilisée pour le bien, et non pour le mal. Et les africains peuvent utiliser la technologie d'aujourd'hui, non pas pour s'auto exploiter, mais pour corriger les erreurs du passé et se doter du même outil qui a été utilisé pour les opprimer dans le passé. L'Afrique peut donner un exemple parfait au monde en utilisant la technologie pour sa propre élévation et pour le bien de l'humanité.

Cette fois-ci, nous avons le choix.

*Extrait d'un discours délivré par Philip Emeagwali à la Conférence de la Diaspora Africaine ( African Diaspora Conference) à Tucson, Arizona. La copie entière et la vidéo sont disponibles sur [emeagwali.com](http://emeagwali.com).*

D'origine nigériane Philip Emeagwali a remporté en 1988 le Gordon Bell Prize, le prix Nobel de superinformatique. Il a été surnommé "un des pères de l'Internet" par CNN et TIME; et vanté comme "l'un des plus grands esprits de l'Âge de l'Information" par l'ancien président américain Bill Clinton; et élu le plus grand scientifique Afrodescendant de l'histoire par New African.



# Debates on Slave Trade Overlook the Role of Technology

by Philip Emeagwali

[emeagwali.com](http://emeagwali.com)

According to history books, gun-wielding European slave traders kidnapped one in five Africans and transported them across the oceans to the Americas. A less visible, but no means less drastic technological tool of suppression, is the compass, a device used worldwide for navigation. In the same way that Britain used its maritime knowledge and the US harnessed its intellectual capital to rule the world, the early slave traders used the simple compass to wreak havoc on civilization.

It is a sad fact that the innocuous navigation tool originated during and was fuelled by the Atlantic slave trade. The technological development of the innocent compass, invented in China for religious divination 2,000 years ago, allowed Africa to be ravaged in unspeakable ways.

It was the compass that created the Atlantic slave trade, enabling the early colonial navigators — and their blood merchants — to chart an accurate course from Gorée Island, off the coast of Senegal, to Brazil; paving the way for the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which began on August 8, 1444. This trade in human merchandise covered four

continents and lasted four centuries, and serves as a shameful beacon for the depravity of human greed and conquest.

The compass became the *de facto* weapon of mass destruction, which led to the de-capitalization and decapitation of Africa. It created the African Diaspora with one in five people taken out of the motherland. It was the largest and most brutal displacement of human beings in human history.



Today, it is hard to imagine that such destruction and the wholesale abduction of a race could result from a tool as common as the compass. Yet, as a people who survived the slave trade, we must draw our strength from lessons learned from the past and draw our energy from the power of the future. And the power of the future lies in “controlling” technology and harnessing it for the benefit of mankind, not for his destruction.

The people of Africa must take note that the Internet is our modern-day compass, and within it resides our own clay of wisdom. As we prepare for our great journey into the cyberspace of the future, with its technological promise — its clay of wisdom — we must understand the strategic value and potential of this all-important tool. Our image of the future inspires the present and the present serves to create the future.

Africa's lack of substantial technological knowledge of the Internet and its potential may lead it to be assaulted or manipulated in unexpected ways, just as it was devastated generations ago for the lack of a simple compass. We didn't recognize the power of the compass then; the danger is that we don't recognize the power of technology today. While Africa merely *contemplates* the future, the West, the quickest off the mark to wield technology's weapons, actually *makes* the future.

This fact, and how the power of technology can be wielded against the poor, was brought home to me clearly when I received the following email recently:

"About a year ago, I hired a developer in Africa to do my job. I am paying him \$12,000 a year to do my job, for which I am paid \$67,000 a year," the sender wrote. "He's happy to have the work and I'm happy that I have to work only 90 minutes a day. Now I'm considering getting a second job and doing the same thing."

Technology in the hands of others has been used to exploit Africa for centuries. But now it's time for Africa to grasp technology and finally embrace the modern age's clay of wisdom and advancement. Africa has the chance to show the world how technology can be used for good, not evil. And the people of Africa can use today's technology, not to mimic their own exploitation, but to right the wrongs of the past and

empower themselves with the same tool that has been used to oppress them in the past. Africa can provide a shining example for the world in using technology for its own upliftment and the benefit of mankind.

This time, it is our choice.

Nigerian-born [Philip Emeagwali](#) won the 1989 Gordon Bell Prize, the Nobel Prize of supercomputing. He has been called “a father of the Internet” by [CNN](#) and [TIME](#); extolled as “one of the great minds of the Information Age” by former US president [Bill Clinton](#); and voted history’s greatest scientist of African descent by [New African](#).

Excerpted from a keynote speech delivered by Philip Emeagwali at the African Diaspora Conference in Tucson, Arizona on September 29, 2007. The entire transcript is posted at [emeagwali.com](#).

@ EMEAGWALI.COM 2007

General permission is granted for the publication of the above transcript.

# Debates on Slave Trade Overlook the Role of Technology

Diaspora Showcase Africa

Tucson, Arizona

September 29, 2007

According to history books, gun-wielding European slave traders kidnapped one in five Africans and transported them across the oceans. A less visible, but no means drastic technological tool of suppression, is the compass, a device used worldwide for navigation. In the same way that Britain used its maritime knowledge and the US harnessed its intellectual capital to rule the world, the early slave traders used the simple compass to wreak havoc on civilization. It is a sad fact that the innocuous navigation tool originated during and was fuelled by the Atlantic slave trade. The technological development of the innocent compass, invented in China for religious divination 2,000 years ago, allowed Africa to be ravaged in unspeakable ways.

It was the compass that created the Atlantic

slave trade, enabling the early colonial navigators — and their blood merchants — to chart an accurate course from Gorée Island, off the coast of Senegal, to Brazil; paving the way for the trans-Atlantic slave trade, which began on August 8, 1444. This trade in human merchandise covered four continents and lasted four centuries, and serves as a shameful beacon for the depravity of human greed and conquest.

The compass became the *de facto* weapon of mass destruction, which led to the de-capitalization and decapitation of Africa. It created the African Diaspora with one in five people taken out of the motherland. It was the largest and most brutal displacement of human beings in human history -

Today, it is hard to imagine that such destruction and the wholesale abduction of a race could result from a tool as common as the compass. Yet, as a people who survived the slave trade, we must draw our strength from lessons learned from the past and

draw our energy from the power of the future. And the power of the lies in "controlling" technology and harnessing it for the benefit of mankind, not for his destruction.

The people of Africa must take note that the Internet is our modern-day compass, and within it resides our own clay of wisdom. As we prepare ~~for~~ for our great journey into the cyberspace of the future, with its technological promise — its clay of wisdom — we must understand the strategic value and potential of this all-important tool. Our image of the future inspires the present and the present serves to create the future.

Africa's Lack of substantial technological knowledge of the Internet and its potential may lead it to be assaulted or manipulated in unexpected ways, just as it was devastated generations ago for the lack of a simple compass. We didn't recognize the power of the compass then; the danger is that we don't recognize the power of technology today. While Africa merely contemplates the

future, the West, the quickest off the mark, to wield technology's weapons, actually makes the future.

This fact, and how the power of technology can be wielded against the poor, was brought home to me clearly when I received the following email recently:

"About a year ago, I hired a developer in Africa to do my job. I am paying him \$12,000 a year to do my job, for which I am paid \$67,000 a year," the sender wrote.

"He's happy to have the work and I'm happy that I have to work only 90 minutes a day. Now I'm considering getting a second job and doing the same thing."

Technology in the hands of others has been used to exploit Africa for centuries. But now it's time for Africa to grasp technology and finally embrace the modern age's clay of wisdom and advancement. Africa has the chance to show the

world how technology can be used for good, not evil. And the people of Africa can use today's technology, not to mimic their own exploitation, but to right the wrongs of the past and empower themselves with the same tool that has been used to oppress them in the past. Africa can provide a shining example for the world in using technology for its own upliftment and the benefit of mankind.

This time, it is our choice.

Philip Inwekeful.