

# Technology Widens Rich-Poor Gap

## by Philip Emeagwali

**LETTERS:** The transcript of this speech was reprinted in hundreds of general circulation press. Below are random commentaries.

Greetings Netters:

This man's web presence preceeded all African known web presence. He has always been a trail blazer of ideas of global proportions. I have not always agreed with him, but, here, I think he speaks not only to Africans, but to the world. A voice worth listening to on this issue. Points to ponder...

*Adaoma - AfroCentrikWorld*

In a time when the United States is launching its newly restructured military command regime for Africa -- pointedly directed at providing Western access to oil and mineral resources -- friends of that continent fear the disparity cited by the author will only increase, not diminish. — *New America Media*

One of mankind's most forward-thinking analysts drives home the point that natural resources alone do not dictate the ultimate accumulation of wealth among the world's family of countries. — *The Awareness Center International*

The Euro-Americans, who amassed wealth beyond their wildest dreams through violent plunder of the rest of the world's human and natural resources, continue the process through control of technology. Rather than a source of wealth for developing nations such as Nigeria, "oil has become the bane of our existence," says the author. The dominant powers of the planet maintain their positions through technological wealth, which allows them to extract both the resources of mineral-rich nations and charge a 40-percent technology "tax" to carry away the

loot. The U.S. is the greatest beneficiary of this technological imbalance, empowering it to “accomplish a virtual economic colonization” of much of the rest of the planet.

*Black Agenda Report* - <http://blackagendareport.net/?p=326>

### Developed Countries Don't Exhibit Wisdom

To ascribe the rich-poor gap to technological superiority is a little too simple and leaves out a lot. There is no doubt that the materialistic, reductionist, Cartesian methodology of the West has led to an inhumane, atomistic view of existence. Its religions have also predicated a superior, exceptionalism—the inheritance of a 'chosen people.'

Nevertheless, the colonial impulse to subjugate “inferior” people and exploit their resources is not simply a factoid of history; it is, indeed, an ever-present aspect of the Western life of affluence, arrogance, and excess. Let’s call it neo-colonialism now, but it is just a different shade of lipstick on the pig. It was, originally, guns, germs and steel and the accident of geography. Now it is control of the world’s financial institutions, and nearly 1,000 military bases in over 130 countries that maintain the edge for such exploiters as the U.S.

Sure, technology enables this imperialism to a greater or lesser degree, and the rules of trade and intellectual property and patents are all determined by the powerful. However, I would not ascribe this to wisdom. If there was any wisdom in the governments of the Western developed countries, it would manifest itself in a modest ecological footprint at home and an empathy with the poorer

nations of the world that would translate as a level of aid beyond the paltry hundredths of a percent of GDP each year, and a desire to help the actual people of the destitute country and not their masters who dance to the tune of their benefactors as they raid the people's patrimony.

To put the blame on technology is to, in a sense, blame the victims for not developing the Western biases and greed-oriented market fundamentalism. Oil is a curse, as many Middle Eastern scholars are coming to realize, and technology may soon be seen in the West as its own curse. We will never invent ourselves out of the mess we are making by adopting a short-term flawed philosophy of abstract rationality not grounded in a connection to the earth or its creatures.

*Russ Tyldesley - Santa Fe, NM*

<http://baltimorechronicle.com/2007/021007Letters.shtml>

Cher aîné,

Votre cheminement émet de longues ondes de réflexion à la surface de la conscience. Vos réalisations et votre façon d'être sont plus qu'un exemple pour l'homo africanus disséminé à travers différentes régions du globe terrestre. Merci d'avoir fait progresser l'humanité par le biais de la science. Merci de redonner espoir ...

Emeagwali, you are more than wonderful and your name is a blessing.

May *Chineke*, the Gods and our great Ancestors continue to bless you !

Thanks.

*Thayi K. - Douala, Cameroon*

Dear Prof. Emeagwali,

As mentorship has being highly sought for amongst youths globally, Nigerian youths were not left behind. Many worshiped Wole Soyinka, Sunny Ade, Chinua Achebe etc, but for I and my upcoming organization, we unanimously made you our great mentor and role model. But please, don't allow the west to soil your mind as they've done to many African great minds. They knew their ways and must always strive to have it!. Together, we read your article on NIGERIA2DAY ONLINE about how petroleum has widened the gap between the rich and the poor, and with deepest thanks we congratulate you for taking the bull by the horn. Even though the west has made you by half, you are still bold in telling the Africans to stand up!

*Bernard Ikechukwu Nwachukwu*, Port-Harcourt, Nigeria.

Dear Prof, to that your article I hereby dedicate my poem.....

### THE WHITAKERS

I once knew a nation  
That was built on hope  
And were filled with dreams  
But there comes the 'Intruders' from helter  
And put amidst them the plow of shatter.

I once knew a nation  
Studded with touts and talented  
Yet gleefully, they lived contented  
But there comes the 'Intruders' with laws  
And amongst them grew enmity claws.

I once knew a nation  
  
That argued with smiling face  
And after fighting sought peace  
But there comes the 'Intruders' for their wealth

Thence comes killer instincts to their heart.

Oh! What a poor nation  
With clouds filled with fears  
Winds of chaos, rains of tears  
Rivers of blood and man-filled loam  
I shall be glad of another home.

*Bernard Ikechukwu Nwachukwu* - Port-Harcourt, Nigeria.

OUR DEAR PHILLIP,

IT IS WITH PROUD TAPS ON MY KEYBOARD THAT I MAKE THESE ASSERTIONS:  
THAT NIGERIA, NAY AFRICA OWES YOU APLENTY FOR YOUR SINGULAR,  
MILLENIAL ACHIEVEMENTS. YOU DID NOT CARVE A NICHE FOR JUST NIGERIA  
BUT THE ENTIRE THIRD WORLD. THE ALMIGHTY HAS GIVEN YOU THE TALENT TO  
ENHANCE THE ENDEAVORS OF MANKIND

*Henry Omoregie* - Port Harcourt

Dearest Prof.

You are in no doubt one of the world's prominent inventor, innovator,  
accomplisher and to say the least, a moving scientific encyclopedia. You have  
however carved a place for yourself in the anals of world history, but remember  
to whom much is given much is expected, whether you like it or not, you owe it  
as a duty to the society that gave you life to create more Emeagwalis.

My brother, for a person of your caliber to remain in another man's country for  
more than two centuries is not a credit. Come home and help develop the Igbo  
land, on that posterity will write your name in gold "*Obu aku lue uno,oburu  
ezigbo aku*"

*Hon. Kelechi Ansel-Oliaku* - Finland

Philip,

I'm proud of you on your great achievements. However effort needs to be organized privately to share and spread this intellectual knowledge that comes easy to you. There are hundreds perhaps thousands of minds that can and should be molded toward productive activities in Nigeria and on the Continent as a whole. Keep the faith but more importantly, do something.

Regards,

*Baba Ajose* - Los Angeles, California

YOU ARE GREAT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

From your photo albums, I observed that you have not forgotten your root; You dress like them and identify yourself with them. I also believe that you are sponsoring Africans that will take over from you. Once again be aware that it is only through this effort that the spirit of Prof. Philip Emeagwali will not die.

MAY YOUR SPIRIT LIVE FOREVER.

*Sheyin RBG* - Abuja, Nigeria

## Technology Widens Rich-Poor Gap by Philip Emeagwali

Oil has made us billions and fuelled our economic stability, but oil has also become the bane of our existence. For curse that has caused poverty and corruption, but for others it is an essential source of untold wealth and power. But as the gap between rich and poor countries continues some, it is a to expand, it is clear that intellectual capital and technology rule the world, and that natural resources such as oil, gold, and diamonds are no longer the primary determinants of wealth.

Surprisingly, nations with few natural resources demonstrate greater economic growth rates than OPEC countries. Japan's economic growth, driven by technological superiority, outpaces that of Saudi Arabia; South Korea is growing faster than oil-rich Nigeria; and Taiwan's economy has moved well beyond that

of oil-rich Venezuela. The United States and Norway are also rich in oil, yet their staggering economic growth comes from intellectual capital.

In reality, it is not money but intellectual capital that drives prosperity. More important, perhaps, is the reality that poverty is driven and sustained by a lack of intellectual capital. The intimate relationship between intellectual capital and economic growth is as old as humanity itself, and is well illustrated by this parable from ancient Babylon (modern-day Iraq). A man asked his children: “If you had a choice between the clay of wisdom or a bag of gold, which would you choose?” “The bag of gold, the bag of gold” the naïve children cried, not realizing that wisdom had the potential to earn them many more bags of gold in the future.

Seven thousand years later, Iraq — the cradle of civilization — has its own private bag of gold as it sits perched atop the world’s third largest oil reserves. Meanwhile, Israel, tucked away in the hostile terrain of a barren desert, has the clay of wisdom — the weightless wealth of intellectual capital embodied in the collective mind of its people.

The striking economic gap that persists between rich and poor nations has increased sevenfold over the past century to what is now an all-time high. The accumulation of intellectual capital by rich nations has helped broaden this gap because it has enabled them to control technology and collect hidden taxes from less affluent nations. For instance, Nigeria pays a 40-percent “royalty” tax on its petroleum revenues to foreign oil companies that are ripping out its family jewels — the huge store of wealth in its oilfields. These oilfields started forming when prehistoric, dog-sized humans — our common ancestor with the apes — walked African grasslands on four legs.

It’s a shocking reality, but the deep oil reserves laid down by Mother Nature millions of years ago and nurtured through the millennia in Africa have been whittled away within decades. And, for the dubious privilege of surrendering its natural resources forever, Nigeria is required to pay half its petroleum revenue in the form of “royalties” to the rich kids on the global block, the United States and the Netherlands. That oilfield has been exchanged for a bowl of porridge,

and the black gold that should serve the underserved in Nigeria is helping wealthy Westerners get wealthier.

Today, half the world's population — three billion people — live on an average of \$500 a year. In contrast, Bill Gates earns \$500 every second. By controlling technology and taxing computer users, Gates has become wealthier than each of the 70 poorest nations on earth and using his financial might has conquered more territory than Genghis Khan, Julius Caesar and Alexander the Great combined.

While Bill Gates is the new millennium's Prince of Technology, he is by no means the first to have taken on the huge potential offered by the realm of technology. The Romans used roads and military technology to expand their empire. And, for centuries, Britain ruled a quarter of the Earth due to its unparalleled ability to command maritime technology and conquer the Seven Seas.

Britain undoubtedly established itself as the world's first superpower through its rapid and ruthless colonial expansion program. The British raised the Union Jack over Canada and Australia, India and Hong Kong, Egypt and Kenya, and countless other countries — even the United States. The Union Jack cast its shadow in every global time zone, giving rise to the saying, "The sun never sets on the British Empire," a fact that was cold comfort to the colonized nations.

In the same way, the United States has embraced its technological supremacy, both offensively and defensively, to build its own global empire without a physical presence in any of its "colonies." The sole remaining superpower is at the forefront of every major technological advancement, which it has used to become deeply embedded in three-quarters of the globe. The US has accomplished a virtual economic colonization manifesting its presence throughout the globe by harnessing the power of technology and capitalizing on its clay of wisdom.

Africa's inability to realize its potential and embrace technology has left it at the mercy of the West. The time has come for Africa to seize the day and resist the

efforts of America and others to leave their imprint and plunder its natural resources.

Numerous examples throughout history support the idea that technology can be used as a tool of oppression. And there's little doubt that America's technological advancement has allowed it to exploit natural resources around the world. This is particularly evident in Africa, where the US is exploiting oilfields beneath the pristine rainforest — and being rewarded with a 40-percent tax at the expense of the African people. This lends credence to history's assertion that those who control technology oppress those who do not, eventually enslaving them and, finally, wielding power around the globe.

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](http://emeagwali.com).

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](#); praised as an “unorthodox innovator [who] has pushed back the boundaries of oilfield science” by a leading European oil and gas industry journal; extolled as “one of the great minds of the Information Age” by former US president [Bill Clinton](#), and voted history's 35<sup>th</sup> greatest African by [New African](#).

Technology Widens Rich-Poor Gap  
Diaspora Showcase Africa  
Tucson, Arizona  
September 29, 2007

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