



The Three Meanings of ODFL

People ask, “What is ODFL all about?” And there’s a simple answer. But there are two deeper levels of meaning that are perhaps more important than the obvious one.

The first meaning, of course, is about building schools and other projects in the developing world; the classrooms, medical clinics, and computer labs in Kenya, Malawi, Nepal, Nicaragua, Indonesia, Yucatan, South Africa, and Haiti. These exemplify our highest purpose and our most noble pursuit: a single humanity working to reduce human suffering.

But there is another, deeper level of meaning: to transform a generation of students from being isolated, selfish, competitive, and impotent, to being connected, compassionate, cooperative, and competent. If we can cultivate these values in tens of millions of young people, we *will* create a different world. The dollar is only a token, a device to actuate bigger people, for it’s in the act of *choice* — helping someone else — that a person grows. Growing a generation of bigger young people is the second thing that ODFL is about.

The last thing ODFL is about is helping turn upside down the way culture is created on the planet. For 500 years, since Gutenberg, we’ve lived as recipients of culture, passive consumers at the bottom end of a one-way pipe. It’s no wonder so many feel isolated and impotent. Yet soon, every person on the planet will be able to connect to every other person. Even more important are the new tools that allow us to create culture ourselves, to upload rather than simply download. Instead of being passive recipients of culture, we can be its co-creators, its active owners. But connections and tools are still only mechanisms.

What we need is the content — like programming for television — that reflects a different set of values. How do we model the *values* of a single humanity working to reduce human suffering? How do “bigger people” really act? Instead of “me”, “us”. Instead of want, sufficiency. Instead of predation, stewardship. If we give our young people the means to embody those values, they will grow organically, as an integral part of the emerging global culture. That culture will come to reflect our highest ideals rather than our deepest fears. It will look like the world we’ve always longed for but scarcely dared to believe could be possible. It is possible. But only if we act now, before the new values are fixed.

Noble projects. Bigger people. A transformed global culture. All of these meanings are there for those with the daring to believe in a better world, *and* the courage to act to bring it about. YOU are one of those people. Thank you for your participation in this vision.

Yours in a Better World,

ODFL