**Our Current Youth Development Situation: Big Brands, Big Money and Apathy Rule Part One**

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In any field, it takes a young person coming up through the ranks a good deal of time to get the lay of the land: Who and what matters? How do things go? What is virtually unchangeable? What must change?

I have to admit that in 26 years of developing youth, I am just rounding the corner today in understanding where the international youth development scene is and where it is not. Here is what I have learned:

First, most people do not care about young people unless it is to use them and this includes many governments and youth development organizations. While advertisers have created a world around young people that sucks in every dollar and moment of their consciousness, most of the world simply doesn't think of young people. They do not care because they are either otherwise engaged in trying to figure out their own lives, marriages, livelihoods and problems or because their own children have been an impossible puzzle for them, leaving them without much wind in their sails to try to impact the behaviors of billions of other people's children.

Second, when people do turn to care for young people, they most often do what people most often do: They look for easy, evident answers. They find the biggest organization: Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Boys Club, Girls Club, the International Youth Foundation and a series of flavor of the month groups that are currently receiving US congressional funding and they pour their dollars into these groups. Never mind that these groups, in all honestly and directly from the mouths of those who evaluate their work, suck. Never mind that these groups offer cute programs that last a few weeks and please the funding agencies but never impact beneficiaries in lasting ways. Never mind that these groups take right dynamics like mentoring and misapply them so as to actually violate the first rule of youth development: "Do no harm." Never mind that these groups give millions of dollars to their CEOS and never mind that our situation remains either unchanged or only slightly changed.

We can do better. Youth deserve and require more than a two hour talk with a businessman. They need love, care and dedicated relationship.

Third, we are nearing a tipping point in losing the capacity to hep youth. Even in the US, we have transformed our culture to allow men and women to reach their dreams at the cost of stability in our families and neighborhoods. In 1972 it was more common for the mother of a 16 year old to be a stay at home mom than it is today for the mother of a 16 month old. Today, buying things and lots of things is by far a greater value than raising our kids. Like the ancient Babylonians who sacrificed their babies and buried them into the foundations of their homes so that their lives would be blessed, we now do the same.

We are kids who have never grown up and we are sacrificing anything and everything to try to build some life that we see as being "good" but we are really simply focused on what is good for us. Without families thriving, neighborhoods are spiraling downward and with a huge impact on our kids. Our preoccupation with work and ignorance of our neighbors leaves us uncomfortable with our children even going outside so we drill conduits into every wall of our house to pour in media: cable television, broadband internet, video games and movies. We pop a tube into our kids, fill them up and check on them right before bed.

Read on in Part 2: [http://goo.gl/bR6pi7](http://www.linkedin.com/redirect?url=http%3A%2F%2Fgoo%2Egl%2FbR6pi7&urlhash=LPsw&_t=tracking_anet)