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# THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

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Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have  
Done So Much Ill and So Little Good



**WILLIAM EASTERLY**

# *The* **WHITE MAN'S BURDEN**

**Also by William Easterly**

*The Elusive Quest for Growth: Economists' Adventures  
and Misadventures in the Tropics*

*The*  
**WHITE MAN'S BURDEN**

**WHY THE WEST'S  
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AND SO LITTLE GOOD**

***WILLIAM EASTERLY***

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**FOR RACHEL, CALEB, AND GRACE, AS ALWAYS  
TO LIZZIE, WITH LOVE AND RESPECT**



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*The*  
**WHITE MAN'S BURDEN**



## SNAPSHOT: AMARETCH

I AM DRIVING OUT OF Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to the countryside. An endless line of women and girls is marching in the opposite direction, into the city. They range in age from nine to fifty-nine. Each one is bent nearly double under a load of firewood. The heavy loads propel them forward almost at a trot. I think of slaves driven along by an invisible slave driver. They are carrying the firewood from miles outside of Addis Ababa, where there are eucalyptus forests, and across the denuded lands encircling the city. The women bring the wood to the main city market, where they will sell it for a couple of dollars. That will be it for their day's income, as it takes all day for them to heft firewood into Addis and to walk back.

I later found that BBC News had posted a story about one of the firewood collectors Amaretech, age ten, woke up at 3:00 A.M. to collect eucalyptus branches and leaves, then began the long and painful march into the city. Amaretech, whose name means "beautiful one," is the youngest of four children in her family. She says: "I don't want to have to carry wood all my life. But at the moment I have no choice because we are so poor. All of us children carry wood to help our mother and father buy food for us. I would prefer to be able to just go to school and not have to worry about getting money."<sup>1</sup>

When another group of Western television cameramen encountered the depths of poverty in Ethiopia for the first time, they went back to their hotel rooms and cried their eyes out.<sup>2</sup> That is the right response. What can be more important? I dedicate this book to Amaretech, and to the millions of children like her around the world.