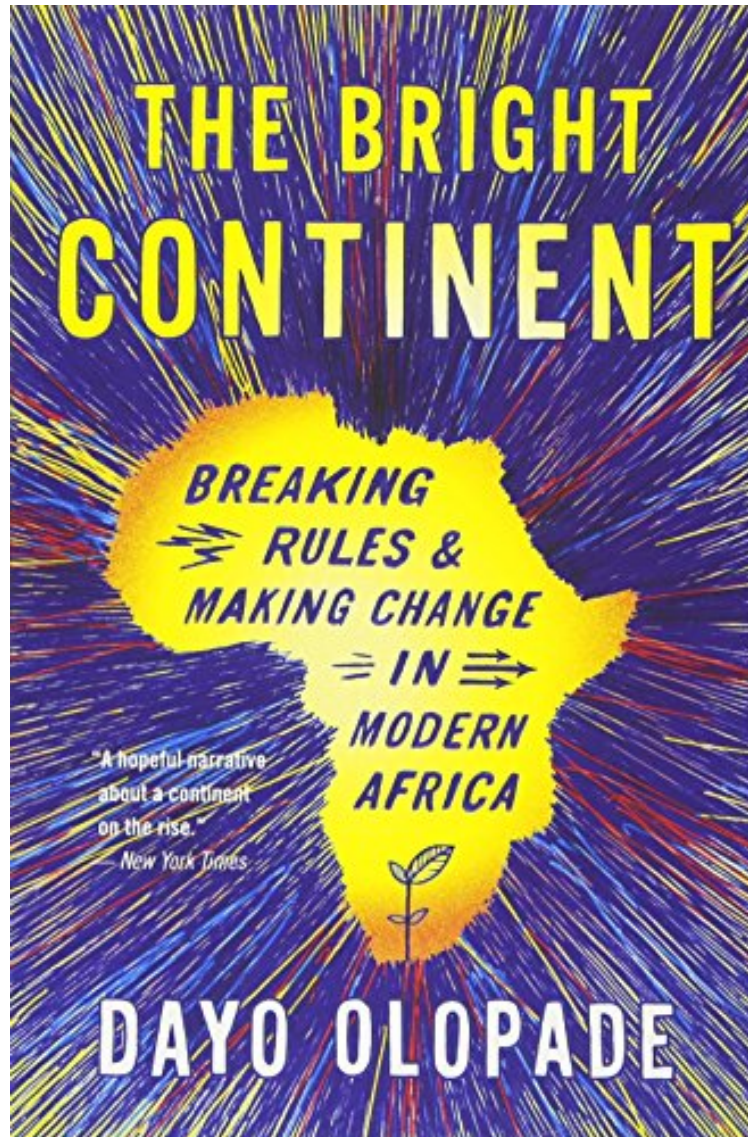


(Mobile book) The Bright Continent: Breaking Rules and Making Change in Modern Africa

The Bright Continent: Breaking Rules and Making Change in Modern Africa

Dayo Olopade

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Dayo Olopade : The Bright Continent: Breaking Rules and Making Change in Modern Africa before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Bright Continent: Breaking Rules and Making Change in Modern Africa:

9 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Bootstrapping change in Africa By Mal Warwick It starts with the

title itself Dayo Olopades challenge to the prevailing sentiment that sub-Saharan Africa today is little different in its essence from the dark continent perceived by nineteenth century colonialists. In *The Bright Continent*, Olopade catalogs an impressive number of innovative businesses, social sector ventures, and even an occasional government initiative that contribute to the fast growth of this long-underestimated region. To put Olopades story in context, the World Bank recently announced that economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa is expected to rise from 4.7 percent in 2013 to 5.2 percent in 2014, compared to 3.5 percent globally. And the CIA World Factbook lists eight African countries among the twenty fast-growing nations in the world in 2013. However, these numbers must be interpreted with caution, since the measurement of economic indicators in most countries in the region is notoriously unreliable (as economist William Easterly reminded us in *The Tyranny of Experts*), and growth in GDP or even GDP per capita doesn't necessarily mean that life is getting better for the seventy percent of sub-Saharan Africans (600 million) who live on \$2 a day or less. Still, there is clearly a lot going on in Africa these days, and it's time for the world to pay much closer attention. Olopade, a first-generation Nigerian-American whose parents, both physicians, have roots in rural Nigeria, brings a fresh and well-grounded perspective to the project. She refuses to accede to conventional word usage, rejecting terms such as developing country, emerging nation, poor country, and rich country in favor of her own constructions. One is the term fail state, connoting a country whose government fails to deliver essential services but is not a failed state, which she applies only to Somalia. Another is the distinction between lean economies and fat economies. (You can guess which is which. Not a bad way to look at things, is it?) She also organizes her material around a clever device she calls mapping, relating new developments in terms of five maps that dominate the reality of Africa today: Family, Technology, Commerce, Nature, and Youth. These five maps showcase the unique institutions that bind black Africa together and are building its bright future, Olopade writes. Permeating the book is the concept of kanju, a term in the Nigerian language Yoruba that the author loosely translates as hustle, strive, know how, or make do. In practice, kanju means bending the rules and devising workarounds a concept similar to the Hindi and Urdu term jugaad, which also is often used to characterize the unconventional solutions that people come up with out of necessity. Here are just a few of the many recent ventures featured in *The Bright Continent*, every one of them an example of kanju in action: ** EGG-energy (Tanzania) wires homes and businesses and furnishes them with reliable electricity using rechargeable batteries, charged at central locations where customers exchange them for new ones at half the cost of energy from the local (highly unreliable) grid. ** MPedigree and Sproxil (piloted in Ghana) use scratch-off codes with a phone number a customer may text to learn whether a medicine is authentic in a region where thirty percent of drugs are counterfeit. ** M-PESA (Kenya) provides two-thirds of Kenyas population with a banking and person-to-person funds transfer service using text messaging on mobile phones. ** Bridge International Academies (Kenya) operates hundreds of bare-bones private schools that offer consistent, quality education for \$5 per child per month, supplanting ineffective and unreliable public schools. Olopade emphasizes that virtually everywhere in the region, national governments are a constant impediment to development progress, typically ignored if possible and almost universally disdained. (She reports that ninety-two percent of the businesses in Lagos, Nigerias largest city with a population now estimated at 21 million, operate outside the law.) Rwanda is an outlier. There, the autocratic government of Paul Kagame enforces rapid and orderly development free of corruption in a pattern similar to that of Lee Kwan Yew in Singapore in decades past. Visitors to Rwanda, including friends of mine, note the surprise they registered when they learned that everything works there. The country is on a fast track toward middle income despite (some might say because of) a lack of high-priced natural resources. The author does have blind spots. I detected a couple of errors in her reporting, and, more consequentially, she seems to have been bamboozled by Columbia economist Jeffrey Sachs, the driving force behind the ill-fated Millennium Villages Project. Olopade refers to the project respectfully, although the available evidence points to the effort as a dismal failure. (The full story is told beautifully and authoritatively by Nina Munk in *The Idealist*, a biography of Dr. Sachs that focuses on the village project.) In researching this book, Olopade, a journalist, spent many months traveling across the continent to observe the promising changes underway and interview the bright, resourceful, and usually young innovators who are creating change in one of the worlds most tradition-bound areas. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Dayo Olopade, Global Citizen Journalist - a Writer to Watch! By Betsy Platkin Teutsch Dayo Olopade is a fascinating tour guide on a trip through 17 African countries. Her recent book *The Bright Continent: Breaking Rules Making Change in Modern Africa* is not just a great read, but she writes from the inside out as a 21st century phenomenon - a global citizen. While reared in Chicago and wholly American (though her Ivy League credentials are not one of a "typical" American), her parents are Nigerian immigrants. Unlike children of immigrants of the past who strove to assimilate - especially if their families left because of poverty and discrimination in their countries of origin - this new 2nd generation is different. They can travel between the old country and the new, cross-fertilizing and understanding more about their cultural DNA. They also serve as change agents, bringing ideas and skills back and forth between Africa and the USA. This is increasingly common in the form of tech transfer, but in Olopade's case, she is transferring her observations and insights, useful to anyone interested in global development and travel to Africa. Thus did Olopade spend three years in Nigeria, embedded in local culture. While American, with American experience, insights, and an topnotch education, she also was able to interpret what she saw with the help of family, language skills, and the ability

to blend in - and experience wholly unavailable to non-black Americans hanging out in Africa. I found her own story as fascinating as those she describes. For those living in, as the writer describes it, fat countries as opposed to lean ones, infrastructure is taken for granted. We turn on faucets to run potable water, we flip switches to turn on appliances. We drive cars on highways, count on public transit functioning. Farmers use reliable transportation networks to ship their produce (unless the live in North Dakota and the fracking boom has commandeered freight cars, leaving soy beans rotting in the fields.) Schools might be good, or they may be lousy, but we do have school buildings, school busing, books, teacher salaries... We have regulatory bodies serving as watchdogs; when they do it poorly, it is a news story. We have health systems that may be inequitable, but kids are immunized and rarely malnourished. Not so in most countries in the developing world. As Olopade describes, this leaves large chasms, gaps to be filled by innovative entrepreneurs. Her chapters are filled with great stories of alternative ways of delivering what people want and need, creatively and often surprisingly effectively. Unhampered by sclerotic bureaucracies, kanju - the slang term she introduces us to, for getting things done without benefit of supply chains or reliable systems -- is remarkably effective. Kenyans shoot money anywhere and everywhere by early stage cell phones, just using texts; light years ahead of fat America. Olopade is descriptive without being preachy, and helps us appreciate not just what Africans are up against, but also the resilience and cleverness many bring to the table. We will hopefully be shaking off our image of Africa as a basket case/ebola incubator, and see its billion people moving up out of extreme poverty and creating new ways of doing things, hopefully better. Can't wait to see what Olopade - just in her early career - will do with her insights and talent! Stay tuned. More brilliant work is coming from this impressive young woman.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Dark continent no more. By Gil Cabrera Enjoyed it even though the first couple long chapters were setup. They were filled with catchphrases and rants on the pros and cons of NGOs (for one thing) The subsequent stories and events made all the more sense because of them. Being a volunteer with Engineers Without Borders, we have reviewed this book in our quarterly book club. Mainly because it is pertinent with a couple of our ongoing projects, in many countries including Africa. The books read are mainly to educate our members who would travel to remote sites on how the culture evolves in those locations, this book provides excellent examples of that. And the feedback on how NGOs can improve the evaluations on how aid is to be developed and distributed is instructive speaks greatly to our ongoing agenda. Admittedly our organization already follow some of the advice of the book, community involvement etc, but some others are a great suggestions and worth exploring. Those of us who have travelled to these communities already discovered what this book suggests, the community thrives and contain intelligent and proud people who appreciate the lending hand in their water reclamation or sanitation projects but continue to run with the upkeep and maintenance of those projects when we depart. The keyword here being 'Their'. The projects are what they request and the implementation is conducted with their involvement. This guarantees project success and longevity.

A hopeful narrative about a continent on the rise. New York Times Book Review "For anyone who wants to understand how the African economy really works, The Bright Continent is a good place to start." Reuters Dayo Olopade knew from personal experience that Western news reports on conflict, disease, and poverty obscure the true story of modern Africa. And so she crossed sub-Saharan Africa to document how ordinary people deal with their daily challenges. She found what cable news ignores: a continent of ambitious reformers and young social entrepreneurs, driven by kanju creativity born of African difficulty. Its a trait found in pioneers like Kenneth Nnebue, who turned cheap VHS tapes into the multimillion-dollar film industry Nollywood. Or Ushahidi, a technology collective that crowdsources citizen activism and disaster relief. A shining counterpoint to the conventional wisdom, The Bright Continent rewrites Africa's challenges as opportunities to innovate, and celebrates a history of doing more with less as a powerful model for the rest of the world." [An] upbeat study of development in Africa... The book is written more in wonder at African ingenuity than in anger at foreign incomprehension." The New Yorker

A corrective to Africa's image as a dark, hopeless place. A hopeful narrative about a continent on the rise. New York Times Book [An] upbeat study of development in Africa. Despite evident exasperation at Western interventions that fail to adapt to local systems, the book is written more in wonder at African ingenuity than in anger at foreign incomprehension. The New Yorker [A] sweeping new work. A very ambitious book. Michel Martin, Tell Me More An excellent introduction to contemporary sub-Saharan African society and the region's economy. Olopade's optimism is refreshing. Foreign Affairs [Olopade] invites her readers to peer past the biases that inform western stereotypes of Africa and Africans. Its time for the West to start looking for smart investments in the continent's abundant pool of intelligence and energy. Boston Globe [Olopade] seamlessly traverses the continent, threading a narrative that shows how African innovation is playing a vital role in its own development. Pittsburgh Post-Gazette [Olopade gives] a face to African entrepreneurship, and her suggestion that Africa can be the guidepost for how the world should tighten its fiscal belt and aim for the notch marked Africa is exciting. The Root Olopade has a slew of insights that will feel spot-on to anyone familiar with Africa or, for that matter, with almost any developing economy. [The Bright Continent] is an optimistic vision, and one that's steadily gaining traction in policy debates. Bookforum An ode to the virtues of the

small in economics [Olopade] gives a multitude of examples and a huge mass of fascinating detail. Her case is persuasive. For anyone who wants to understand how the African economy really works, *The Bright Continent* is a good place to start. Reuters Bright Continent will change your view of Africa. It's that simple. Dayo Olopade looks with the eyes of a first-generation Nigerian-American and sees a landscape of ingenuity, technological innovation, and grit. A lively and enjoyable read. Anne-Marie Slaughter, President and CEO of the New America Foundation and Professor Emerita of Politics and International Affairs at Princeton University "Dayo Olopade has written a book that bracingly lives up to its title. In it, an Africa we are all too unaccustomed to seeing comes vividly to life thanks to her restless eye and keen curiosity. It is one of local solutions born of necessity and local heroes who arise from even the most fragile soil." Howard French, Associate Professor at the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism and author of *A Continent for the Taking* This book captures the complex thoughts of a whole generation of young Africans. Olopade shows Africa as it is, a complicated space occupied by real people with the desire and the power to shape our futures. Uzodinma Iweala, author of *Beasts of No Nation* *The Bright Continent* is a long overdue and much needed corrective to the dominant perception of Africa. It is a book loaded with revelations of heroic, and often ingenious lives, all of which are eloquently and poignantly brought to life through Dayo's brilliant observations. Dinaw Mengestu, author of *All Our Names* "The Bright Continent is an absolute brightness. Sidestepping dead-end debates, the indefatigable Olopade maps out a contemporary Africa which is vital and self-reliant. Her definition of the Yoruba term *kanju* as 'specific creativity born from African difficulty' will enter the English language. Through strong reporting and clear thinking, Olopade demonstrates how to improve the lives of African youth stuck in a purgatory of 'waithood.' This is essential reading." J.M. Ledgard, longtime Africa correspondent, *The Economist* A new mental and strategic landscape, one based on possibilities, not merely perils. We should be grateful to Olopade. *The Plain Dealer* A painstakingly researched and lively tour of the people, institutions, and ideas currently at work on the continent. *The Africa Report* An exhilarating book. [Olopade's] style is refreshingly breezy, and displays an inherent confidence that belies her youth. As this book successfully illustrates, the continent is following a trajectory that, despite all the ongoing challenges, is steadily in ascendance. *African Business Magazine* A refreshingly hopeful argument, well-grounded in data and observation. Kirkus