

## The Odd Connections Taking Place

November 6, 2025

When this project became more substantial in its early days and was something that was really making a difference in the villages, I imagined its potential outcomes. I made a silent projection that in ten years I wanted to be able to present the Dignity Toilet project to the United Nations. It looks like it will take eleven.

If my brother had not strongly encouraged me to move to Vancouver, Washington, I would not have ever considered it. At his suggestion, I arrived and started over from scratch.

Before I had a car I walked all over the neighborhood and the adjacent downtown areas looking at apartments. On the very edge of the area, just before the entry ramps to the Interstate 5 freeway, sat a real estate company. I did a bit of research and got an appointment with the owner and designated broker, Nathan Cano. He agreed to let me have an office and support staff for my business.

Nathan and I had many talks as we got to know each other. In one of them I told him about the Dignity Toilet project. When I finished he said, "My sister wrote a book you need to read," He gave me the title and I bought a copy. It told of studies by philanthropic endeavors using various technologies for increased sustainability.

I told Nathan when I had finished the book and he called his sister, who happens to be a college professor at Pacific Lutheran University, a highly-rated, private university just south of Tacoma. He gave her a brief synopsis of the project and passed my information to her and hers to me.

Shelly and I had a couple conversations and emails. She told me about a seminar she was working on that was happening last Wednesday in Seattle. She encouraged me to come and to bring some kind of material

that I could share with philanthropists and others who could support the project. Kinda like a job fair but in reverse.

On the 12th, dressed in one of my ceremonial chieftain cloaks (with hat) and armed with 22 copies of a 55 page, four colour process presentation, spiral bound at Office Depot, Seattle traffic being what it is, I arrived late and tried to quietly become part of the audience in this casual gathering.

The speakers finished their discussion and the area was rest for the next group of authorities. Shelly walked to the center of the area and began to talk about the speakers to be featured throughout the morning. Then she said, "And when it comes to starting a project with virtually nothing, talk to Doc Reiss (motioning to me). He knows THE SHITS of how to do it. Talk to him." And she went on.

In the next break I was approached by one of the speakers I had seen earlier. She asked to see a copy of the presentation. At the next break it was evident that she had taken some time to at least scan it. He asked several questions and then said, "Melinda needs to see this!" (The Melinda in question may finance a professional video crew going to Togo to document the project in a way that it can be a fundraising tool with foundations).

Other philanthropic people engaged me about Dignity Toilets including a woman whose family is extensively in real estate and enjoy sponsoring humanitarian works. When we started talking about the rco-brick construction her eyes lit up. "You're talking carbon sequestration!" She said she would study the presentation and see what she could do. During her time on stage she had talked about the power of determination in creating success and quoted her uncle, Quincy Jones.

As the conference wrapped up I had completed the challenge we were each given, to meet eight people. As she was saying goodbye to the folks leaving she asked me to stay back a bit. As the congregation thinned the time between goodbyes lengthened. Shelly looked at me as she was

stacking up materials. "My students have been looking for a project so we are going to do some fundraising for the toilet project. I will get with you on that. Oh, ever been to the United Nations?" I shook my head no figuring the highschool trip would not count. "Well, there is a General Assembly meeting coming up in September I think you should be at. I will get you a ticket."

I recently had an MRI done at a local hospital clinic. Just part of a check up to make sure things are okay. The technician who was doing the procedure was a friendly guy with a distinct, not quite British accent. I asked where his accent was from. He smiled and said "West Africa." I asked where and he said it was a little country I had probably never heard of; Togo. I exclaimed that I had a project going on in Togo in both the villages of Zogbedji and Klobatem.

His family is from Klobatem. And he and his wife have a boutique hotel just outside of the capital, Lome; Just the right size to accommodate a film crew. The family also owns a small medical clinic designed to help poor people who need medical care. If they can help with the toilet project, they want to.

Hang with me, the wrap up is coming.

Among the other things I am still involved in in Ghana is three piggery related groups on Whatsapp. I got involved when I was selling organic products to piggery owners. The founders of the groups wanted me as an admin and for the past few years I have been passing along information.

As a chief in Nandom in the Upper West region, I had traveled and met different civic and social authorities including a couple senior folk at the area university. I started with a couple department heads and ended up working with the Vice Chancellor through them. I proposed the idea of them taking on the Dignity Toilet project for their area. It could become for them like the Cougar Gold cheese project at WSU, where profits (in this case

from fertilizer in stead of cheese) goes back to the university. The university will alsoo be able to make money by selling off surplus eco-blocks.

The university and the Nor'Wester Rotary Foundation have just established an agreement to start the project. One of the next steps I had planned was to try and get the block press and molds from a company I found in Kenya.I mentioned it to the other admins of the piggery groups. One of them said he can have the oress manufactured in Ghana at a great savings.

From a series of what would seem unrelated sources, things are starting to weave together a future that could benefit thousands.

Life is good.

Keep Smilin'