

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH  CAUSECAST

February 18, 2011



[Like](#)  
228K

[This is the print preview: Back to normal view »](#)

## [Jonathan Lewis](#)

Founder/CEO, Opportunity Collaboration

Posted: December 20, 2010 10:40 AM

## [The Logic of EcoLogic](#)

In the middle of a snow storm, there are a number of reasons to not visit Detroit. On one particular day, it was nine degrees. My gloves were wearing gloves.

In any weather, the city feels like an economic wasteland. According to city officials, unemployment is nearing [50 percent!](#) Empty buildings, abandoned lots, shuttered retail stores and streets devoid of shoppers disfigure this once-grand American city which still supports great art museums, cultural performance centers and grand mansions. Everyone, it seems, wants you to know that Detroit's city center was once so busy that America's first electric stop light was installed.

Detroit also has bragging rights to the [Motown Museum](#), a jewelbox devoted to the music that got this teenager onto a dance floor. In 1960, with a micro-enterprise loan of \$800 from a lending circle of family and friends, founder and micro-entrepreneur [Berry Gordy](#) (until then, a high school dropout, soldier, featherweight boxer, and assembly line worker) launched "Hitsville, USA." 13,000 songs and three decades later, he sold Motown Records to MCA for \$61 million.

The main purpose of my Detroit trip was to lecture at the University of Michigan's Erb Institute and the Ross School of Business. The topic: social entrepreneurship and, in particular, microfinance. Thank you, Mr. Gordy, for the inspiring model for micro-financing and for the great music.

In the middle of one lecture, a probing student challenged me to discuss the interstices of my economic justice work and the pressing problem of environmental despoliation. If that student is reading this blog, you know that I fumbled the answer to your question.

Let me answer you now. The answer is [Ecologic](#).

For nearly two decades, EcoLogic has been working with poor, rural communities in the poorest regions in the world to conserve and restore local natural resources by empowering local people by providing them with the tools they need to become environmental stewards and improve their living conditions. Here, in practical, everyday, on-the-ground terms, is the nexus of pollution and poverty.

"I believe that we cannot protect the rich diversity of life on this planet without addressing the needs and interests of people. We also cannot help people improve their lives without solving environmental challenges," eloquently explains Executive Director Shaun Paul.

In a single year, Ecologic's community-level work has planted 263,351 trees (fancy word: reforestation) and developed 1,239 clean water sources (fancy word: watershed management), benefiting 230 poor communities. Today, it is in Latin America. Tomorrow, with our support, the entire world could benefit from the logic of Ecologic.