

Warning Words of Anne Williamson

Anne Williamson is a prominent American journalist who has written for the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times*. She originally specialized in Soviet and Russian affairs, and has investigated the role of the World Bank and of U.S. advisers after the collapse of Soviet socialism. When I emailed her asking for suggestions and materials related to the higher education debate in Vietnam, she responded as follows in an email to me on 19 November 2009:

You are engaged in a worthy project/debate, i.e. opposing Vietnam taking World Bank loans... Though I am in no way deeply informed about Vietnam today, my first reaction is to say that taking the loans will undermine, slowly and subtly over time, the very strengths the country has manifested in its economic transformation to date, while simultaneously introducing a vast number of platforms for corruption of both the political and well-positioned civic classes. There is no "free money" in this life... When all costs of World Bank lending are tallied, the price paid in economic growth, worker development, national culture, political sovereignty and interest due make World Bank loans the most expensive money on the planet.

And on 15 December she wrote:

Hello Neal, I just finished the first of your 2-part analysis of the Vallely Report, and am sitting here stunned....similar methods, the same type of inappropriate, self-serving and ultimately ruinous advice Harvard handed out in Russia. I'm not surprised really, but it's heartbreaking to think the Vietnamese might absorb these poisons into their educational system. And go into debt to do it! I will read the second part tomorrow - I'm learning lots! Truly, I am both saddened and amazed that after all the messes the "aid crowd" has engineered in the world they are still able to find fertile fields to plow.

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[Back to main webpage](#)