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Media and Mobilization: The Effects of Western Media in Post-Conflict Uganda

Victoria Anne Delaney

vdelaney@vols.utk.edu

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Victoria Delaney

Advisor: Dr. William Jennings

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Stories, by nature, shape us. They change the way in which we think and mold our opinions. Stories excite us, give us hope. With the age of mass media, though, how far are these stories filtering our sense of the world as a whole? Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, a Nigerian author of notable works such as *Half a Yellow Sun*, gave a TED talk in 2009, entitled "The Danger of a Single Story." This single story refers to the one-sided account of people and concepts that forms the entirety of one's opinion of that thing. For example, Adichie recounts her formative years, saying that she remembers a servant boy that worked in her house and how shocked she was to learn that his family were excellent craftsman. Because she had only seen them as poor, she could not see them as anything but poor. For Adichie, poverty became the single story of this family. The idea is if you show people over and over as only one thing, it becomes impossible to know them by anything other than that thing and they will inevitably become that thing. Adichie goes on to say that "the danger of stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete." The idea that Adichie is discussing transcends out of the realm of literature and into the world of media. In 2009, a new story appeared and took the world by storm. That story is the Kony 2012 campaign, the epitome of the single story.

The Lord's Resistant Army, LRA, is an armed rebel group known primarily for its brutal use and mutilation of child soldiers in northern Uganda since the late 1980's. Invisible Children is an organization that when they became aware of the situation, chose to focus their works in Uganda primarily providing scholarships to survivors of the LRA, establishing schools, etc. While the LRA has since spread to other parts of Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of Congo, in 2012 there was a viral campaign sponsored by Invisible Children that intended to shed light on the atrocities. The goal of this video was to make "Joseph Kony a

household name, not to celebrate him, but to bring his crimes to the light," (Invisible Children, 2012). Critics say that it did not address other and arguably more crucial issues facing the people of Uganda such as education and post-conflict rehabilitation (Nathias 124). While the campaign, KONY 2012, captured the hearts of many Americans, it left Ugandans outraged at the misrepresentation of facts and unintended ramifications for the economy. There is no question that the media shapes the viewer's opinion on any given topic; the question lies in how much power do they have to shape a multifaceted conflict in Uganda into a single story of American liberation for the helpless victims? Nothing condensed and reduced the conflict of the LRA in Uganda as much as the Kony 2012 campaign.

With this brief summary in mind, it is important to focus on the effects of western media on post-conflict Uganda. By first examining the realities of the LRA and current media strategies, it will be revealed how the American media portrayal of post-conflict Uganda has contributed to human rights mediation and cross-cultural mobilization. By taking into consideration the way in which Invisible Children and the emergence of viral campaigns like KONY 2012 been a source of empowerment or hindrance to the Ugandan people, how western campaigns compare to Ugandan-led campaigns, how the western approach to post-conflict Uganda effected the way in which Ugandans as a whole are perceived, the dangers lie with an incomplete view of post-conflict-societies, the ways in which western initiatives could be modified to better suit the need of Ugandans, we will not only highlight the mistakes of western media in this case-study, but will also show the successes and the importance of media in human rights mediation as a whole. Overall, the importance of empowering Ugandan people and restoring the voice that has been silenced by the use of western media mobilization will be proven.

If Adichie had any point to the idea of a single story, it is that it robs people of their dignity. The Kony 2012 video was so harshly criticized because it did just that. By perpetuating stereotypes of Ugandans, Invisible Children engrained a one-sided and misrepresentative account of the people there. Media has already created a single story of Africa, long before 2012. We are interpellated to believe that Africa is in dire need of saving and that the west is the sole source of that. These recurrent stereotypes are reinforced throughout the video and "have pervaded Western representations of Africa: the good, willing Westerner, the helpless African, and the cruel warlord," (Nathias 125). That is to say that this situation is black and white, everyone has clear-cut roles on the crisis, and westerners must swoop in and save the day.

By calling on us as the solution to the violence of the LRA in Uganda, Invisible Children are continuing the ideas that "violent crises are part of the African condition… Africa is all the same, and… Africans have little capacity to solve problems," (Metzler 3-4). The fact of the matter is that violent crises are not endemic to Uganda alone, Africa as a continent could not be more diverse, and the Ugandans lack the credit they deserve in combating the LRA on their own. Furthermore, the video presents misleading information what actually was and is going on in Uganda.

Media and Politics

The mediazation of politics is a sociocultural process. Media is not only influencing the everyday citizen but is also being influenced by them. Furthermore, the entire political system is now becoming just as much shaped by the media as the general public. Swedish media researcher Kent Asp said "… a political system to a high degree is influenced by and adjusted to the demands of the mass media in their coverage of politics," (Karlin, Matthew 255). The video did indeed make a splash in the political sphere.

While at first it may seem unnecessary to have the support of the public, after all politicians make international decisions daily that go seemingly unnoticed by the masses, but if this was to be a true social movement, one that stopped at nothing until Joseph Kony was captured, the support of the people was actually crucial. This collaboration between the general public and political leaders had to take place if there was to be any hope for human rights mediation. Theo White once said, 'No major act… foreign adventure, no act of diplomacy, no great social reforms, can succeed unless the press prepares the public mind'," (Audette 53). A type of political and social priming needs to take place before any major international endeavor takes place. The Kony 2012 video, with its heart-wrenching statistics and pictures, provided such priming. And although this priming was rooted in stereotypical beliefs and misleading information, it did get people on board. So much support was poured out by everyday citizens for the United States to do whatever was politically necessary to stop Joseph Kony.

UN Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs actually called the LRA conflict "the biggest forgotten, neglected humanitarian emergency in the world." So we could really argue that the conflict didn't have as much global attention as it deserved. Moreover, the video "prompted 100 million people and prominent US politicians to engage with an issue that had been crowded off the policy agenda and television screens," (Waldorf 469). However, this is two-fold. While the video did bring to light pressing issues but to say that politicians only engaged with this issue because of the video prompt, when in reality the United States was already engaged with the issue, just not on the global scale under a human rights campaign.

If Kony 2012 proved anything, it was the potential for media to spread rapidly. Not only from the standpoint of a viral video, but also "from a public relations and public diplomacy standpoint… the public was activated in a way unseen before. The sheer volume of activity

demonstrates the power," (Audette 57). The video showed that getting the message out is not the problem. The problem then becomes how to harness that power to convince policy makers that the video is more than just white noise (Waldorf 469).

Ugandan Realities

Despite what media has led us to believe, it is important to be aware of the realities of both conflict and post-conflict Uganda. Uganda is no longer engaged in a physical war, and Kony is no longer in Uganda. However that does not mean that they are in a time of peace. Positive peace is extremely different than negative peace. Kony and the civil war— these are all just the surface issues, and for Uganda to truly know peace we have to eliminate structural violence. People like Kony, groups like the LRA, they are just symptoms of the underlying disease. There will always be more dictators and more rebel groups willing to step in, so the thought that Uganda is in a state of peace is concerning. What will truly bring Uganda peace is better education, sanitary health facilities, etc. These are the real combatants in Uganda's war against violence; that, coupled with our own awareness of the graphic nature of others lived reality.

What is this lived reality though? It is almost impossible to say what went on within the LRA, as every story is different. If the video is so misleading though, it is important to gain some sort of grasp on the human rights violations that we are trying so hard to reconcile. "It goes without saying that the first step in removing obstacles to… protection is identifying what they are" (*Rehn, Sirleaf 2002:v*).

First, we should focus on the gender roles of the LRA. The LRA was responsible for kidnapping so many children, and that does not exclude girls. But just what was the LRA life like for these girls that were kidnapped and how does it differ from the life the boys had? According to a report entitled *Women and Girls at War: "Wives", Mothers, and Fighters in the*

Lord's Resistance Army, the main role that the girls play is that they are forced into marriage with not only the rebel commanders, but the kidnapped soldiers as well (Annan 2009: 4). While they sometimes played a role in combat, their main job was to serve as a wife. According to this report, "females served in a variety of roles in the rebel group, often starting in a servile capacity. Over time they took on fighting roles and, ultimately, were forced to marry and bear children. Females abducted for longer than two weeks reported that their main role was either as a porter (27%) or cook/water collector (37%). Together, 69% reported a supportive role, including farming, childcare, water collection, cook, or porter" (Annan 2009: 12) It is true that a lot of girls were brutally raped, but to say that every abductee was raped is overgeneralizing the problem. The same report goes on to say that "not all accounts are so pessimistic, however. Several scholars challenge the view that all females involved in armed groups are sexually abused (Brett 2002, Keairns 2003, McKay and Mazurana 2004). Indeed, in some cases women's and girls' roles in armed groups are seen as paths to gender equality (Alison 2003, Mazurana 2004)" (Anan 2009: 12).

To make it clear, this is not trying to belittle the horror that these girls experienced, but rather to correct any misconceptions about their roles. The fact that they were not all sexually abused does not change the fact that they are survivors. Furthermore, not only by participation, but also on the homefront women are making huge strides for gender equality and women's rights. "Without the active participation of women in peacemaking every step of the way, the Security Council concluded, no just and durable peace could be achieved anywhere" (Jones 2011:1). That is to say that when talking about human rights mediation, whether in the context of media campaigns or not, it is imperative to acknowledge the ways in which the people have overcome their circumstances, not to discredit the problem but to elevate the accomplishments of

individuals that culminate to a larger-scale movement. The subject at hand is not merely women's rights, because women's rights are human rights. (Jones 2011:4). In some cases, girls were brutally raped and forced to stay in marriages with rebel commanders. In other cases, women were involved in talks with the government in order to restore peace. Both are equally important in the task of going forward in human rights.

It would be naïve to think that rape was only taking place with the girls the LRA had kidnapped. If a group of people is sick enough to cut off the limbs of a boy and force him to fight against his own family, then we have no reason not to believe they would not also abuse them sexually. Just because we do not have access to the numbers does not mean these events did not occur. The documentary *Gender Against Men* shows just a glimpse of the reality of male sexual violence. It points out that in Uganda all the legal definitions of rape have the word woman in it so they can't claim rape (Gender Against Men: 2009).The fact that in Uganda there are no laws that would constitute a male rape makes it hard to track the numbers. By definition in Uganda, rape can only happen to women, which means that men have no reason to even attempt to report any kind of sexual abuse. Furthermore, the way society would treat a man that claimed sexual abuse is almost as bad as the act itself. Not only would the victim be called a liar, but if they were able to prove it they would be deemed less of a man than before (Gender Against Men 2011). To add to the problem, there is a growing homophobia in Uganda, and the thought of a male being a victim of sexual violence would also mean that there is a case of homosexuality. An article in *The Guardian* talks about this very issue:

> In Uganda, survivors are at risk of arrest by police, as they are likely to assume that they're gay – a crime in this country and in 38 of the 53 African nations. They will probably be ostracized by friends, rejected by family and turned away by the UN and the myriad international NGOs that are equipped, trained and ready to help women (Storr 2011.)

It is necessary to then point out that violence perpetuates violence, so in the case of these young boys living through such violence, it gives them more reason to continue that violence at home. Moreover, much of male sexual violence is aimed to emasculate a male. If one experiences this, they would be more likely to do everything in their power to reestablish their role as a male in charge. This could lead to more sexual violence against women. Furthermore, the men who refuse to fight in a rebel group can face even more ostracism and emasculation because they are seen as weak. It is a stereotype that real men fight, and going against that stereotype can actually put them at a higher risk for violence. (Moran 2010: 268).

That being said, men have immeasurable power in ending gender inequality, gender violence, and violence altogether. We often hear outrage over excluding women from the conversation, but to do so would also "betray the men who stand behind them, men who are by self-definition committed to the dream of a more egalitarian and democratic future for their country" (Jones 2011: 4). It is this group of peaceful men that have the potential to make huge strides for human rights, not just the women. If women's rights are fundamentally human rights then we should not overlook the other gender's rights either. So you can see, it is not as simple as the media tends to portray it. Men suffered just as much if not more so than the women due to the LRA, but they also have the power to continue that violence at home. It fundamentally comes down to a choice on how they want to continue. At the end of the day, violence does not focus on one gender, and because of that heroism does not either.

Post-Conflict Uganda

While the open conflict was traumatic enough itself, the struggle to survive does not end after being released to go home. Returning home for children does not always mean a warm welcome. Even though they were children and can only partially be held accountable for their

actions, people who do not understand the complexity of the situation often place blame on them for taking part in such action. Child soldiers in this scenario are actually responsible for killing their own people, not just those who are deemed the enemy. This makes recovery even more difficult. How is a child supposed to reintegrate into a society that deems him a murderer?

Victims lose a sense of trust in the world in which the belief that surely basic integrity of a person would be protected is now lost, (Amery 2007:81). It is important to note here that is not that a victims loses that faith in just the person who tortured them, but in the world as a whole which just goes to show how the nation itself is responsible, as it is the nation that people place their faith. Additionally, "it is a pity that blood had to raise the consciousness of people," (Afflitto 2000:121). While state terror and structural violence are at the roots of the rest of the violence in the world, we should not sit idly by while more and more human rights are being violated. Ultimately I believe that Sluka was right is saying that "indifference is the worst enemy of human rights." (Sluka, ICIHI 1986:93) It is not enough for us to rise up after the fact, but it is important to take preventative measures and therefore reshape the structures that create torturers themselves. In that sense, we are all implicated within state terror and all share a responsibility.

Despite this, evidence persists which suggests that children have been involved in both forces, and in anti-governmental forces. Just because legally there is no reason that children should be taking part neither direct nor indirect combat does not mean that it is upheld. War bypasses legalities and does what is necessary to win. In this case, child soldiers were necessary not only for direct combat but they were equally important as propaganda/blackmail. The use of children sends a profound message to the rest of the country.

Taking Responsibilty

Still, critics of Invisible Children argue that the calling for US military intervention is taking a step too far. While it is undeniable the human rights violations that took place in Uganda and surrounding regions, but is that enough to warrant military intervention? More so, "what third party (if any) has the authority to intervene in order to force the government to respect those rights?" (Kymlicka 1996:26). Various arguments can be made as to whose responsibility it is to act as the enforcer. Current views even go as far as to say it is the corporations and NGO's who hold said responsibility as they now have more economic power than some international political entities. Some would argue that it begins with the individual. Jason Russell states in the video: "Who are you to end a war? I am here to tell you – who are you not to?" This places the idea in the viewer's mind that they themselves have the power to stop this warlord themselves, and therefore having the public demand a military intervention is justified. However, this leads to lack of actual progress because the scope is much too broad to hold each individual responsible for enforcing all human rights across the globe. In antiquity, this responsibility has been left to other nation states.

States tend to only get involved when their motivations are fueled by self-interest. These motives are revealed when you take into consideration the human rights abuses in our own western society. What does it say that one of the biggest international players refuses to ratify major human rights documents? What does it say that the top intervening power looks homelessness and poverty in the face every day and chooses to turn a blind eye? At what point will we address the problems in our own society instead of only on others? One could argue that the severity of human rights abuses does not even compare to those in other countries. However, there is danger within our complacency and our blindness within our own country. This is not to say that as a part in a global world we should not remain passionate about the abolition of child

soldiers, of government torture, of the lack of clean water, but rather be willing to apply our global ethics to our own system of governance. This is further shown in that our own culture remains unexamined while imposing our belief system. The Chinese Ambassador critiques the United States foreign policy for this very issue. He goes on to say that if the United States does not look internally, "it will end up lifting a rock only to drop it at its own feet," (Clapham 2007:68). The United States is trying so hard to advocate for human rights and yet some of the biggest injustices remain on our own soil. Laura Nadar describes our sense of separation between our own culture and the culture of all others as a type of normative blindness. She says that in order to move past the imperialistic tendencies we must first get rid of this that blindness that "allows us to see others in black and white while not seeing ourselves at all," (Nadar 2006:6). Phrased differently, the United States must overcome the single story of the third world by acknowledging and addressing our own shortcomings. Self-interest in some cases can look a lot like a selfless act, but at the end of the day, it is still self-interest. The problem with this is that as soon as a project is no longer profitable in some sense, then the aid stops.

Think about this in the context of Uganda. The advocating of US sending troops to find Joseph Kony is not the solution here. Not only do Ugandans not want military intervention because it was unnecessary when Kony was no longer in Uganda, but according to an International Affairs Review:

> "Many Ugandans fear that the United States has used the hunt for Kony as a pretext for sending military advisors, whose real job is to secure a stake in Uganda's emerging oil industry" (Su and Besilu 2012).

Some people would just cringe at the thought that the US would be doing anything but wonderful things for this poor helpless country. However Uganda is not helpless and the US is not only very capable of taking economic advantage over the situation, but in antiquity, that is what it is best known for doing. As far as media campaigns go then, we must take into

account "how far accuracy can be stretched for a good cause, how to harness the power of social media, and what the role of the United States in ending conflicts far away from home should be," (Allen, Schomerus, and Vlassenroot 2).

Further Complicating Our Analysis

It is easy to say that Uganda should remove every remaining allegiance to the LRA or any terrorist groups that branched out (although they did formally recall their allegiance) but the economic effects of that would be devastating to the country. Anthropologist of Peace Studies Carolyn Nordstrom makes a great point when she says that "no matter who shoots whom, certain power elites make a profit" (33). All lives are dependent, whether it is clear or not, on the profits of war and its existence which can be seen when one takes into consideration soldiers' salaries, gun factories, etc. When evaluating any military or personal choice, this fact must be fully realized. While the effects of the rebel groups were devastating, it also provided a means for people to get jobs and feed their families. In a campaign that was supposed to be based on human rights, how then do you take into account the unintended effects of eradicating the LRA?

This is why films like Kony 2012 are dangerous, because they precondition us to think a certain way before given the true information. Especially in western cultures where the belief we have all the answers is widespread, eliminating bias is crucial. To account for this, historical context is crucial. Just think about former Uganda leader Idi Amin, a ruthless dictator that left the economy in shambles. Perhaps it was his lack of education, or his preference for tribalism rule, but under Amin over 50,000 South Asians were forced to evacuate the country. In addition, anyone seen as a threat to his power was immediately killed. The corpses were so numerous that they had to be dumped in the Nile truckloads at a time. One of Amin's former wives "was found with her limbs dismembered in the boot of a car" (Meredith 2005:178). Although he was not in

power during the regime of the LRA, he served as a precursor. Without this contextual information, it is hard to understand how Uganda was primed for the horror that was the LRA. This evolution of the country and does not see anything as mutually exclusive from another. Past violence is equally as important as recent or current violence. In almost all situations war is to some extent it good for the economy. The truth is that because Uganda is not technically in a time of war they receive less foreign aid; more people go hungry every day. There is controversy over whether or not the Ugandan government allowed Kony to stay in Uganda for economic gain. However, if one of the intentions of the Kony 2012 video was to attract foreign investment, it might not have been as successful as it hoped.

> "Furthermore, World Bank statistics indicate that foreign direct investment in Uganda has been steadily increasing for the past decade. Investor and consumer confidence is integral to the continued development of Uganda's tourism industry and ensuring that foreign direct investment continues to grow. The Stop Kony campaign has the potential to derail this and the Ugandan government's concern is evident in Prime Minister Mbabazi's address." (Donations or Development 2012)

It is difficult to be able to decipher the truth about what is truly going in post-conflict Uganda, due in part to the way in which the media presents information. There are many techniques that media uses to create compelling stories.

Framing, Newsworthiness, and Shock Media

One technique the Kony 2012 video uses is the technique of framing. Framing refers to the modes through which you communicate or represent your human rights argument. Frames attempt to mediate atrocity by engaging us with others' suffering, (Chong 124). It makes the issue resonate within a different group of people. It is not the activists that need to become aware of the human rights violations- they know them all too well. This video was framed to reach the community of people who do not see the treatment of the children of Uganda as a human rights

violation. Human rights artists use different framing methods to make an issue more personal. We are unable to understand the plight of people like Paul Rasusabagina, a hotel manager determined to protect refugees during the Rwandan genocide, but because of framing used in *Hotel Rwanda* "we witness the genocide next to him… sharing what he knows and does not know," (Gakchinsky 72). Viewers gain empathy not otherwise possible without this framework.

However, framing is not necessarily always a positive thing, because framing almost always means that the creator's own biases are what is being shown. The problem is that means that only one side of the human rights argument is being represented. That means that views encouraging human rights violations can also be represented. Take into consideration the difference between how blacks and whites were shown in the media after Hurricane Katrina. The blacks that were caught looting from stores or abandoned homes were portrayed as thieves and menaces to society. However, whites that were caught looting were portrayed as tragic victims just doing what they need to do to survive (Galchinsky 73). This shows though that we need to be aware that framing is always at work and that while it can allow for human rights to be taken more seriously, it can also perpetuate current human rights violations.

Typically, framing is based on newsworthiness, which literally just refers to what is worthy to be reported as news. So how are the headlines chosen? You have to take into account numerous factors, including whether the news meets economic aims, political aims, democratic journalist aims, and also have to take into consideration what information is even available in the first place based on the journalist's own pool of resources, (McPherson 99-100). A case study was done during the times surrounding the first presidential election of Mexico. Instead of reporting both sides political stance without bias, the newspapers were involved in "payment for commissioned articles, the criminalization of libel and slander, and the very real threat of

physical intimidation," (McPherson 98). It then becomes more about what violations were committed under rule of the president in order to promote the opposing candidate rather than to form a dialogue on how stop human rights abuses altogether. As seen with Mexican newspapers, but can also certainly apply to other cultures, news regarding human rights "must usually be about a violation rather than a protection to be considered newsworthy," (McPherson 118). As audiences, we tend to appreciate the shock factor of violations, rather than preventative measures we can take to avoid that shock in the first place. Journalists themselves have a decision to make regarding how far they are willing to cross the line from objective journalism to human rights activism. What you have to realize as a viewer or reader is that there a not only infinite human rights issues that demand our attention that are not being reported, but there are also different ways to view the news that we are being told. News is almost never unbiased and therefore should never be taken at face value. We must form our own opinions about what is worthy of our own attention and then act accordingly. The question we have to ask though, is are these news stories challenging injustice or reinforcing current power relations?

Shock media plays into newsworthiness because at the end of the day, people need to make a profit, and shocking headlines sell. However, that is not the only reason that shock media is used. In actuality, a great deal of shock media is not run because it is controversial. So why use shock media at all? The justification for shock media is to "break the clutter" meaning in a time when thousands of news stories are competing for our attention, the shock factor allows for things to be remembered, (Borer 153). In a time when thousands of videos come across the Facebook timeline a day, Invisible Children had the task of creating a video that would stir the American population in a way that could not be glossed over. And because the information was presented in a way that insinuated that the LRA was essentially unheard of, of course viewers

were shocked. It is no surprise that shock media has permeated into the realm of human rights. Like with the newspapers discussed earlier, the violations tend to be more memorable. However, that does not mean that shocking human rights violations are the most effective form of activism. When used in conjunction with other campaigns though, human rights activism is not only remembered but also acted upon, (Borer 156).

The Spectacle of Suffering

There needs to be a line though because we do not need to make suffering a spectacle, like animals in a zoo. There is a difference between using human rights violations as a means to promote change and as a use for entertainment. After World War II, the theory arose that if the world was only exposed to the mass suffering, the world would have acted sooner. It is thought that witnesses raise the cost of human rights abuse. However, does the exposing of suffering create political change or is it merely a type of poverty porn that we look at but do not act upon? These shock factors need to challenge our human rights concepts and not just reinforcing what we have already known. Lastly, we need to take into consideration the commodification of suffering, because "the more graphic [the images] are, the more money they help to raise," (Borer 171). The spectacle of suffering presents a series of fine lines in which we must combine imagery to action.

In many pictures of the children abducted by the LRA, they have their noses cut off, along with their hands, ears, lips. They have nothing that resembles the innocence of a child. For that matter, people do not wish to look upon images of children holding guns or engaging in violence because it goes against what we think children should be. Because we cannot do anything to take back what these children have suffered, we chose to not look at the picture, and pretend it does not exist. However, these pictures have the power to promote radical change.

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Susan Sontag discusses the issue of what is appropriate in media representations of violence, (2003:90). Although she speaks about the fact that the US tends to be viewed as less violent because we do not display as graphic images during wartime as other countries, she brings up important questions. Do we owe it to the people of Uganda to show the reality of their lives? Is self-censorship skewing our view of global conflict? At what point does it become pornographic? There is no black and white answer to any of these questions, but she does prove that the viewing of graphic images has a direct effect on our mindset of the conflict itself.

Not all violence is pornographic though, at least in the common sense of the word. Structural violence plays a huge role in perpetuating past physical violence. In his piece "On Structural Violence," Paul Farmer attempts to explain the horrors of structural violence such as violence exercised through institutions such as gender inequality, sexual exploitation, and poverty. Structural violence is difficult because "while certain kinds of suffering are readily observable and the subject of countless films, novels, and poems, structural violence all too often defeats those who would describe it" (Farmer 2009:19). It is the very reason that it is so hard to describe that making people aware of structural violence is equally important as making people aware of physical violence. The LRA may not be in Uganda any longer, but the structural violence in Uganda most certainly is.

While these images depicting war may be hard to look at, Americans have more and more become drawn to the romanticized version of war. That may be because "war itself is seductive, but that is only because the element of fear is removed," (Hedges 83). If even for a second we had to live through war, all of the seduction would be lost. Only when art through the lived experience of people is made the focus does war become less seductive. Bringing to light these pictures, videos, and testimonies from those who experienced the LRA first hand makes a

person feel what he or she cannot otherwise have experienced. It is able to conjure up almost the smell of rotting flesh as one walks across the battlefield. It is able to make a person feel the warm of the blood of his or her friend that was just shot. Those who lived through violence have the power to make people want to turn away out of discomfort. It is then that it is most imperative that we not turn away.

Despite the urgency in the voices of these testimonies, they are overlooked on a daily basis. The news is saturated with stories both nationally and internationally of terrible atrocities and it has become easy to become complacent. The media is framed in a way that it not only tells the audience what subjects to think about, or what the news stations deem newsworthy, but they also imply (directly or indirectly) what to think. Additionally, anthropologist Paul Famer said it best when he wrote that "a wall between the rich and poor is being built, so that poverty does not annoy the powerful and the poor are obliged to die in the silence of history" (25). Westerners are constantly being bombarded with news stories with tragic statistic of the number of deaths that happened across seas and we have become complacent. It has become easy to ignore the cries of victims when they are presented to us as news headlines rather than real people. It is time that we give these victims their voices back.

Social Media

Suffering is now shown more and more frequently through the use of social media, and has been linked to significant action. It is able to "empower a collection of individuals to carry out activist tasks that have historically been accomplished through centralized organizations," (Kessler 213). In this way, individuals are able to assume personal responsibility for human rights violations and can act themselves instead of feeling the need to go through an organization. It changes the feeling from a helpless individual to an empowered one. Social

media also allows for boundary crossing in that we are able to "publicly align with an issue" and therefore "transfer from private to public discourse with actions that are coordinated by a central organizer," (Kessler 207). Organizations may be the ones creating the message but it is the media that acts as its mobilizing force. If the Kony 2012 has shown us anything, it is the power of initiative on human rights mediation. If we change the question from "Is Kony 2012 inherently right or wrong?" to rather "Was Kony 2012 part of the solution in human rights mediation?" then with all the evidence of their media campaign, it actually is. The reason for this is because of the initiative they took. Malcolm X once said "If you give people a thorough understanding of what confronts them and the basic causes that produce it, they'll create their own program, and…you get action." This is the premise behind the video itself: if people only knew about Joseph Kony then they would be compelled to take action against the injustice taking place.

The Kony 2012 video is one of the main examples of how media was used in the arena of public diplomacy. Public diplomacy can be defined as a mediation that fosters the power of the everyday person with the power of the state itself. It tears down the (quite arbitrary) divide between those in power and the lay people. Through this collaboration, a new type of policy change can be achieved, one fueled by the people (Audette 49). Public diplomacy is nothing new, but the way in which media acts as a catalyst for this diplomacy is in fact a recent phenomenon. Where sit-ins, boycotts, and public marches used to serve as ways to send a message to the government, now online petitions and even viral videos such as Kony 2012 are taking their place. This age of technology can be used "not only to support social causes, but also foster collaboration, co-creation, and participatory community involvement," (Bresciani, Schmeil 2). This is made possible because not only was the video aimed at American youth, but it also called out specific political leaders themselves.

However, although social media allowed for awareness that does not mean American youth were the only ones to hear the message. Social media just by nature is considered to act on global level (Bresciani, Schmeil 4). Social media campaigns offer unprecedented potential for global impact. In a world that is increasingly connected by the internet, media campaigns by nature, no matter whom the target audience might be, are able to cross borders. It is because of this, that cross-cultural implications have to be taken into consideration. If the aim was American youth, that does not counter the fact that one key ingredient is missing: the voices of the Ugandans themselves. With all the work of collaboration and plans of action created amongst the American people, Invisible Children fell short on including the very people they were working so hard to protect. They may have been able to prove that media campaigns can foster successful change and initiatives, but they did not prove that these initiatives are truly focused across borders.

Celebrity Involvement

Social media movements are often spurred on by a celebrity figure-head. From people like George Clooney's Save Darfur campaign or the work that Bono has done, it is evident that in recent decades celebrities have taken on a prominent role in advocating for human rights. "Through their mix of star power, attraction, and attachment, celebrities are able to generate public attention in ways that traditional actors in activist and international circles cannot," (Cooper, Turcotte 188). The Kony 2012 campaign called on certain celebrities to participate in the campaign, like Ellen DeGeneres, Bill Gates, Jay-Z, Lady Gaga, Taylor Swift, the list goes on. While not all the celebrities answered Invisible Children's call to action, some like Oprah and Justin Bieber called on their Twitter followers to take action. While these celebrities can be effective, we need to think critically of what is not being said. What about the structural violence

that is the root cause of these things celebrities are advocating for? For this reason, celebrities are twofold. First of all, they need to take on greater responsibility in addressing the causes instead of just the symptoms in order to create a more accurate awareness platform. But the second part is that we need to stop caring only about the "coolness" that goes along with celebrities. Is it the celebrities fault for drawing our attention in to their advocacies or is it our fault that it is only when it comes from the mouth of a celebrity that it begins to resonate with us? We need to recondition our culture to care more about human rights than the celebrities who advocate for them.

Propaganda

The LRA's violence was real in Uganda for many years- but the Kony 2012 video itself is propaganda at the end of the day. There are several reasons the video can be considered propaganda. First of all, think of the way that director Jason Russell explained who Joseph Kony is through the use of his son. This is no doubt a tactic to gain support. If a four year old can see that Kony is a villain, the viewer should be able to draw the same conclusion. Consider also the way Russell left out information and skewed our view such as the fact that the LRA is now almost solely in the countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan, and in some cases in the Central African Republic and that the war is no longer hot in Uganda. Propaganda is intentional about what information is put forward and what is withheld.

Propaganda takes over the media, and creates iconic pictures. Take for example one of the iconic posters from the Kony 2012 campaign, featuring e meshing of a democratic donkey and a republican elephant with the phrase "One thing we can all agree on." This leads us to believe that there is no controversy here, that the answer is simple. The use of political symbols leads us to believe it is our political duty as American citizens to take action and that it is an

initiative that can bring together two polarized and dysfunctional parties, thereby repairing political conflict in the US via common "enemy" and that it is an initiative that can bring together two polarized and dysfunctional parties, thereby repairing political conflict in the US via common "enemy."

The problem with agitation propaganda such as this poster and the entire Kony campaign as a whole is that while it provokes a crisis, it is usually short lived because it is goal oriented. (Ellul 1965) We are only about three years post Kony 2012 campaign and the only people still talking about the horrors of violence in Uganda are mostly those who were not fooled by the video in the first place- the people who chose to dig deeper and engage in research. However, the people that jumped on the bandwagon in most cases will not give Uganda a second thought now. After flaws within the video were revealed, it seemed that the crisis was over, and the campaign was indeed short lived. Herein lays the problem: if we are presented with only one side of the debate then our choices then we will later question their legitimacy simply because of the way in which the information was given to us. At its core the creators of Kony 2012 most likely had good intentions. However, the outrage that this video caused simply by the way that the information was presented caused the truths actually found in the video to be ignored. In a sense the video created bitterness: the Ugandan people were bitter at the video for false portrayal of their current situation, and as westerners there was a sense of bitterness when people discovered that they were being deceived. Bitterness such as this has never been the root of creating positive social change.

Too often we are presented with only propaganda and the ability to discern the truth is stripped away. The power of propaganda is limitless, but so is the power of unbiased information. In the piece "Making War at Home," (2002) author Catherine Lutz discusses

militarism, militarization, US hegemony, the role of social structures in relation to the fact that while war is not on our soil, the United States is involved in warfare nonetheless. Lutz attempts to shed light to the immense amount of militarism of the US. Although not the main objective to address the role of information, it is clear that information is an element in understanding the militarization of our society.

> Yet too few were shown the tortured bodies and burned landscapes visible behind a Potemkin multicultural village. Too few were confronted with the idea of the U.S. imperium, of global militarization, and of the cultural politics that make its wars seem either required of moral persons or simply to be waited out, like bad weather. These missing pieces of anthropological knowledge have only now come home to roost with great urgency. Would that they had not, but because they have, we now are called to address the realistic and unrealistic fears of our students, neighbors and colleagues, and work tirelessly to ensure those fears are redirected to the irrationalities and hidden purposes behind the glittering face of power and its moral claims. (Lutz 2002:732)

Perhaps it is because war is not on our soil that we have such a hard time understanding militarism and the role of violence, that does not mean people do not want to understand. In a post *The Guardian* news article, statistics were shown that most of the views and responses to the Kony 2012 campaign were from young adults. Young people want to change the world. They want to jump up when they see a human rights violation. That is arguably why Invisible Children has intentionally focused on youth from its beginning, (Karlin, Matthew 257). However, if all the media is feeding them is propaganda then their actions are continuously going to be fueled by short lived passion. Factual, unbiased information could very well be the key to unlocking this generation's potential.

Participants of Kony 2012

The racial background and socioeconomic status is that of white, middle/upper class, and typically female "which one informant termed 'pretty Wonder Bread,'" (Finnegan 147). Because of this, the Kony 2012 campaign has been criticized for focusing on a certain type of

demographic. Critics say that the privileged audience creates a complex separating the haves from the have nots, and leading these participants to believe they have savior like qualities. To have prevented this criticism, "if these privileged young people had chosen to reach out to others in their communities, perhaps immigrants or poor people of color, for example, the related issues would be much more intimately intertwined with their own politics and that of their families," (Finnegan 149). Whether the participants of Kony 2012 are overly criticized for carrying out the idea of the White Savior or not, the demographics of participants do need to be taken into consideration, or at least recognized. The fact of the matter is that "the participants in Invisible Children activism are uniquely privileged," (Finnegan 146). Some scholars even argue that all of Invisible Children's work is much more about the American participants, the pretty Wonder Bread, than it is about creating true and sustainable change in Uganda, (Finnegan 159).

Age of Slacktivism

The problem arises when these individuals feel empowered when in actuality they are doing very little. The Kony 2012 campaign by Invisible Children is a perfect example of "slacktivism." Slacktivism refers to the "participation in obviously pointless activates as an expedient alternative to actually expending effort to fix a problem," (Kessler 205). The one problem with this definition is the phrase obviously pointless because most slacktivists truly believe they are contributing to preserving human rights. Mass amounts of people felt that they were making huge stride for victims of the LRA by sharing a video link or buying an action kit with posters. Making Kony famous is all people thought they had to do in order to change the world. This specific case points out another common problem with social media movements: the fact that action is based primarily on emotional responses rather than factual evidence, and therefore have problems with long term sustainability. As soon as the social media movement

passes, so does the large group of "activists" and in a lot of cases, the ones that were supposedly being helped are left to clean up the mess left by careless activism. In today's world that is increasingly dependent on smartphones and other technology, "it would be feasible to argue that a click of the mouse is becoming the equivalent to using one's voice," (Audette 57). Nothing led people believe that they were contributing to human rights with more leisure than clicking "share" on Facebook of the KONY 2012 video.

Many scholars believe that this slacktivism is centered on the white man's burden, or the idea that white westerners owe it to impoverished nations of Africa to save them. Still, despite the glaring imperialistic nature of this media coverage, there are other scholars that believe we do not care enough and claim that westerners "should be less worried about the white man's burden and more worried about his indifference," (Waldorf 469). So which is it? Going back to the root of slacktivism, it seems that westerners tend to care about the immediate justification that it brings themselves, coupled with, of course, the racial and economic superiority. Therefore, we are not indifferent at all, but merely our concerns are misdirected.

To combat slacktivism, we must realize what Kony 2012 intended to be, a video as a compliment to other forms of activism. The film was never intended to act alone, but rather to be supplemented by other forms of human right advocacy. It was meant to be a spark, not the entire fire. South of the Border by Oliver Stone was a documentary that depicts what the US is so familiar with Latin American "dictators" like Hugo Chavez, painted in a different light. Is this account biased and framed in a way to get a point across? Absolutely. It is also missing factual context that would shape the way these leaders came to power. However, it has been praised for showing the other viewpoint that Americans are not shown. So are videos such as these problematic because of the shock factor, framing, lack of facts, etc? Or is it exactly what

Americans need to grab our attention? Used alone, videos such as South of the Broder, and also

Kony 2012, are dangerous. However, when used in conjunction with other types of education,

has potential power. It was these types of education that was missing from Kony 2012. Instead of

these films being the final word, they should rather just be the start of our research. Our

ignorance allows things such as the LRA to continue. Relying only on biased videos will not

eradicate that ignorance, contrary to popular belief.

With the video being audience oriented, it is important to know the difference between a

few key words to differentiate: spreadable and drillable. Spreadability refers to how engaging a

campaign is, and consequently how motivating it is for the audience to share it, (Archer-Brown,

Bal, Hall, Robson 204). Drillable refers to how easily it is to understand the main message and

be able to retain and apply it," (Gregory 466). The Kony 2012 video proved to be spreadable, as

it reached over a hundred million views. However, it was lacking in being drillable. To have a

successful campaign, there must be both. At any given time, there are an infinite number of

things to be passionate and compassionate about. "compassion is an unstable emotion. It needs

to be translated into action, or it withers," (Sontag, 2003: 90). The Kony 2012 video provided an

immediate source of action: share the video. It was the long-term actions that fell short. Today

there is just as little concern for post-conflict Uganda as when there was just weeks before the

video aired. Despite going viral, the majority of the compassion felt for the LRA victims did in

fact wither.

At the end of the day, while it is important to be critical about all of the information that

we are taking in, it is equally important to simple seek out this information. While misinformed

or biased information is what seems to permeate the news, it is still important to be informed of

what is going on around the world in terms of human rights. This only touched the surface of the

way human rights is now inextricably linked with media. The hope that "Americans will be stirred… if they can see the consequences of their complacency," may be a long shot at this point when you take into consideration our numbing and compassion fatigue (Borer 143). However, that does not mean that the media, although not void of its flaws, should give up in trying to advocate for human rights. We should care about things like the post-conflict conditions in Uganda, not because it was framed well or advocated by our favorite celebrity, but because at the end of the day, famine and poverty is a global human rights concern, and that in itself should warrant our attention.

Culturally Relevant Media Initiatives

By expanding our view from more than just a western lens, which is habitually done, and incorporating nonwestern societies we can gain not only a broader view of what warfare and peace look like, but more importantly, a more accurate view. Simultaneously, we have to remain conscious of the culture of which we are studying and how it relates on the greater scale in order to be able to apply what we learn globally. The devastation in Uganda is not the problem of just Uganda, it is a global issue. A sense of "global thinking" is what can make the difference in overall relevance (Sponsel 1994:7). It is key to have a much broader sense than political and military security perspectives, but also take into consideration environment and long term effects in justice generally, racism, malnutrition, illiteracy, etc. This type of global thinking shifts the perspective from the effects of one society for the future, but also how that society is going to affect the global well-being as a whole. More so, "without understanding the worldview and historical context of a particular people, it is difficult to understand the impact that a particular form of self-expression has or will have on healing and reconciliation of the community and of individuals," (Mclain 7). That is to say that any group that intends on advocating for post-

conflict areas should only do so after thorough cultural research and should continue with the willingness to revise any practice in order to comply with cultural desires.

NGO's and non-profits other than Invisible Children will inevitably also be at work in places like Uganda. If all organizations work together, then the goal of rehabilitation will be realized sooner. However, foreign workers could potentially play a role in imperialism and effect long term sustainability of these rehabilitation programs. The key part in long term sustainability is that media initiatives are constructed in a culturally relative context. To be constructed in a cultural context, two possible approaches can be taken. The first is that of replication, in that one cultures beliefs is exactly replicated in another society without regard to context (Merry 46). Although easier in a sense, because finding ways to incorporate new ideas is time consuming and tedious, at the end of the day it remains ineffective because the reason for change is not internalized, as proven with the way Chinese women adopted the relationship between masculinity and rape. When western NGO's tried to teach Chinese women that men do not have the right to live out their sexual desires without the women's consent, it just did not make sense to the women because of the submissive role women play in China. On the other hand there is hybridization, which blends these transnational models with the cultural practices already in place. It was only when these ideas were blended with cultural norms that women began to gain a sense of empowerment, (Merry 46). When the NGO made the idea of personal autonomy and sexual health rather than trying to get these women to disobey their husbands, it gave the women an actual platform they were comfortable with using. Overall, the use of cultural translators, whether it be a social worker, an NGO worker, or an anthropologist becomes a crucial key in building these organizations in a way that mean something to the local people, rather than mean something in the western context solely.

Working with local initiatives is one way to ensure cultural resonance. While the local initiatives may lack the large financial-backing of the foreign projects, their programs often have the highest degree of ownership and resonance within the communities. (Mclain 7). The local initiatives will not be stopped so easily. Furthermore, transplanted initiatives sometimes lack necessary sensitivity to societal norms of coping with trauma and war. For example, in the West, a drawing of a violent encounter in war, or perhaps life as a child soldier, quickly and effectively resonates with an audience otherwise unfamiliar with such circumstances. The drawing also holds added emotional appeal having been created by a child. However, in most countries of the east or global south, it is "highly insensitive to expect a person to immediately share a traumatic experience, just because a pen or pencil is in front of him or her," (Mclain, 4). In regards to the Kony 2012 video, Invisible Children did not take into account these cultural differences and therefore represents transplanted initiatives and the problems that come along with them. To say that something like Invisible Children is inherently evil is to misunderstand the entire context of the situation. If we are waiting for a human rights organization to be perfect then we will be waiting forever. However, to think uncritically of human rights organizations is to ensure that more violations are actually going to occur.

Ugandan Agency

When analyzing media campaigns it is important to do a few things, some of which include providing accurate historical context of the situation, complicating your analysis so there is no one black and white answer, acknowledge the difference between the cause and effects and also the importance of a response that is both timely and appropriate, seeking out the perspectives of the Ugandan people themselves, and remain critical about social justice organizations. (Metzler 3-4). The power of western media is being able not just to construct a

single story but to make it their only story. As mentioned briefly before, Ugandan voices were notoriously absent from the Kony 2012 video. By taking into account Uganda voices with these campaigns, we can expand on that single story. Social media was filled not only with the Kony 2012 video, but on a lesser scale, also #UgandaSpeaks campaign which allowed for people to see the point of view from the Ugandan people themselves (Gregory 466). While not as effective as the original media campaign simply due to the fact that Ugandans do not have access to internet as readily as the West, it is still equally if not more important as its counterpart. The argument from critics of Invisible Children as a whole is that "if young American listened better to, and engaged with, indigenous sectors in northern Uganda, the groundwork for comprehensive and synergistic social change would be laid," (Finnegan 158). That is to say that Ugandan voices are the key to true social change. Invisible Children did react to that backlash of lack of African voices in their campaign and consequently reworked their framework as a result. Because of these changes, Invisible Children represents how public criticisms are able to "force media organizations to be reflexive," (Nathias 127).

By taking into account the context outlined by the Ugandan people, we can realize that the end of war does not mean that its long term ramifications stop instantaneously. The effects of living in a country with open conflict go beyond that of physical harm and enter the realm of the unseen. It is impossible to rectify the damage done by living in a post-conflict country without first taking into consideration all of the factors that caused the conflict initially, what was taking place during the conflict, and the ramifications of the conflict ending. Under the Convention of the Rights of the Child there is a separate section specifically for rules regarding children and armed conflict. Not only does the convention forbids any government or rebel group form drafting children under the age of fifteen, but any child soldiers reported are granted

rehabilitation. The State has an obligation to ensure that child victims of armed conflicts, torture, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation receive appropriate treatment for their recovery and social reintegration. "Particular attention should be paid to restoring the health, self-respect and dignity of the child," (Cohen 1). It is important to provide children with a sense of agency as part of their rehabilitation.

> Articulating the capacity for children to demonstrate agency in conflict can be difficult. It would be incorrect, however, to assume that because children are so routinely victims of conflict, they cannot also act independently. Children living in conflict zones frequently demonstrate the capacity to effect changes in their own lives, the lives of those around them and, in some cases, even elements of the conflict itself. (Lee-Koo 488)

Children especially were not given another choice than how to handle the LRA regime. This does not mean that children do not deserve a sense of agency afterwards. By allowing them to voice their stories themselves, the children are gaining a sense of this personal power. They are the ones in charge of changing their destiny, which is so important in any form of rehabilitation.

Agency of language is also important within the context of "constituting the relationships between the experiences of Afghan children and internationalized understandings of the conflict itself," (Hansen 16). Adults are often the ones that advocate for children who are victims of a militarized society. While that is of course necessary, this advocacy should not be done in place of allowing children to speak for themselves. "Recognizing that 'language is social and political, an inherently unstable system of signs that generate meaning through a simultaneous construction of identity and difference,'" (Hansen 16). This means that Uganda's children are key players in determining future moral frameworks within conflict. (Lee-Koo 477). They are the ones that suffered the most, and therefore their voices should matter.

More so, unless a person has lived through something as terrible as war, they cannot fully begin to feel its effects. Suffering itself "is not effectively conveyed by statistics or graphs. The "texture" of dire affliction is perhaps best felt in the gritty details of biography, (Farmer 12). Media campaigns are best made by those who have directly felt the devastation of the war. It is their voices that matter, and their voices that can evoke change. If those voices are heard, then it "changes the way in which social activists choose to approach their movement," (Borer 213). Before, it is through centralized organizations. While there are numerous problems with leaving change to centralized organizations, the main problem here is it is continuing to take away power from the individuals. Media campaigns can therefore become an empowering agent through which people can reclaim their agency. When people succeed with any organization to back them up it legitimizes their sense of self and instills hope.

With all of this in mind, it is crucial to reassess what our participation in media campaigns means to the Ugandan people themselves, rather than what our participation means to us personally, (Mahmood 86). By only focusing on ourselves "we will be forced to stand by as the rights and dignity of the poor and marginalized undergo further sustained and deadly assault," (Farmer and Gastineau 2002:665).So while we are out posting those red and white KONY 2012 posters, trying to defeat Joseph Kony, we don't realize that in some cases, we are the undermining the local initiatives that have already made strides in doing so. We need to take into consideration the true concerns of the people we are claiming to help, and adjust our actions accordingly. We need to reevaluate how western NGO's, non-profits, and individuals for that matter tackle human rights mediation in order to prevent causing more bad than good (Dupay, Ron, Prakash 2012).

Where Do We Go from Here?

Adichie concludes her TED talk on a positive note by saying that stories have to power to repair broken dignity, despite its tendency to create it in the first place. Cynthia Mahmood, a Senior Fellow in Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, is a great example of the recovery regaining her own voice can have. After being brutally gang-raped and returning home she said:

> I believe that a future of healing and peace is possible because I know that human beings are more resilient than we can ever imagine. I have bones that have been broken and have healed. I have wounds that have bled, have scarred over, and are barely visible now. I have memories that have haunted me but have faded and new, better memories that have replaced them… [I] believe in the possibilities, find all human beings "of interest," and will not turn away. (Mahmood 10)

She believes in the potential of victims to turn into victors and fundamentally change the world we live in. Humans are very much capable of torture, rape, murder, and every activity of warfare. If we accept that fact though, we must also accept that humans "also have a strong capacity for getting along peacefully. The view that warfare is an ancient, natural and intrinsic part of human nature wilts under the light of fresh scrutiny," (Fry 211). Humans can create peace just as easily as they can create war. Humanizing any member of the LRA is problematic for those countries who have militaristic or economic interests in eastern Africa because "a soldier able to see the humanity of the enemy makes a troubled and ineffective killer," (Hedges 36). We can never know what someone experienced but art brings to light the realities of what actually happened during a time of conflict. Media campaigns then become not whether or not the images in the news from Uganda are graphic enough to warrant our attention. It is not about the opinions of news networks.

The movie Bouncing Cats portrays what is called Breakdance Project Uganda, which is a break-dancing movement designed to help survivors of the Lord's resistance Army and children

of the slums either recover or keep out of trouble. Crazy Legs, a famous beat boy from South Bronx went to Uganda to teach classes. They meet at least three times a week and there are over 300 kids involved at the time the movie first came out. Hip hop is the source of these children's empowerment, and it's the one thing they have that cannot be taken away from them. Crazy Legs explained the reward of being a part of this rehabilitation: "You see a child dancing and you see all the life that's in them," (Bouncing Cats). That is the entire point-- life. There is no point in rehabilitation if it is only bringing up reminders of the parts of their lives that tried to destroy them. It is only when that information is taken into account and turned into something that brings out the life in those people that art is actually worthwhile.

It is easy to watch this film and walk away devastated. It is a glimpse of the everyday reality that they cannot escape and these conditions are heartbreaking. But that is not the point of this film. This is a film of overcoming and it is disrespectful to these people to walk away with anything less than pride and anything less than hope. Just as the film points out, these children "are not in a position of victimhood. They are hopeful and that's where art is born." (Bouncing Cats). The circumstances that brings the need for rehabilitative and psychotherapeutic art centers may be horrific, but that does not mean that the outlook has to remain that way. The beauty of therapeutic art as opposed to traditional personal art is that is combines a tragedy with optimism, and allows a child not only to move on from their experience but emerge triumphant. While the point was made earlier that it is not as effective to attack the political root of the problem directly and overnight because of the way that it is integrated within society, that does not mean that it should not be an ultimate goal. Media campaigns may not be "a practical solution, but it is what ignites practical solutions," (Bouncing Cats).

The video is not void of flaws, but the root of the intentions of the video is to be a part of igniting these practical solutions.

> "It's hard to look back on some parts of human history because when we heard about injustice we cared, but we didn't know what to do. Too often we did nothing. But if we're going to change that we have to start somewhere, so we are starting her, with Joseph Kony, because now we know what to do. (Invisible Children, 2012)

So whether the actions of Invisible Children are more harmful than helpful, the point is that we no longer can use the excuse, "I never knew what was going on." Viewers are forced out of their complacency. And instead of sitting idly by, groups like Invisible Children have chosen to act on that information.

Cynthia Mahmood, mentioned earlier, concludes her article by posing the question "How will you pursue, teach and write the truth in a world intent on masking it?" (Mahmood 10). How will the world respond now? It is time that Uganda and surrounding countries move into a post-conflict era and into a state of peace. That peace will not be realized until we erase the single story of post-conflict Uganda that the Kony 2012 media campaign created, and harness the power of media campaigns in human rights mediation that the Kony 2012 campaign attempted.

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