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Celebrity humanitarianism and international development an analysis of Oprah, Bono, and Angelina Jolie in Africa

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**CELEBRITY HUMANITARIANISM
AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

AN ANALYSIS OF OPRAH, BONO, AND ANGELINA JOLIE IN AFRICA

by

Chantal Petrie

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A thesis

presented to Ryerson and York Universities

in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Program of
Communication and Culture

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CELEBRITY HUMANITARIANISM AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

Sub-Saharan Africa has become a popular destination for Hollywood celebrities to embark on humanitarian missions, in attempt to combat the problems of poverty, AIDS, and underdevelopment in Africa. However, celebrity humanitarians take for granted that development giving is an altruistic enterprise that can only bring about positive results for the communities and peoples involved. Using three celebrity case studies, I will show how humanitarian giving can result in unforeseen consequences, even when the gift of development is given with altruistic intentions. The celebrities analyzed in this thesis including Oprah Winfrey, Paul (Bono) Hewson, and Angelina Jolie, each adopt Western consumerist strategies that are incompatible with the diverse values and worldviews found in Africa. In addition, development giving provides an unsustainable solution for a collective global future, and is not exempt from forms of inequality, dependency, domination, and exploitation that privilege the Western subject through dehumanizing others.

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INTRODUCTION

CELEBRITY HUMANITARIANISM AND THE COMMODIFICATION OF DEVELOPMENT

The devout Christian Bono is in many ways a modern version of the starry-eyed missionaries that went to Africa to save souls alongside the imperialists who strived for riches. Unlike his forbearers, Bono is not out to spread the cross, but its modern equivalent, liberal capitalism...

The thread that links all of these cases is that Africa is being used as a blank space on which these celebrities can project their own fantasies of "saving" Africans.¹

Over the last decade, Hollywood celebrities have become ever more involved in humanitarian affairs, donating their money and time while bringing attention to poverty, AIDS and other epidemics, disasters, and conflicts around the world, especially in developing countries. Although celebrities may bring heightened attention to important causes around the world, what are the consequences behind such seemingly altruistic actions? In recent years, sub-Saharan Africa has overwhelmingly caught the attention of Hollywood celebrities who, in an effort to improve awareness of and take action against the calamities that face Africa today, have taken it upon themselves to become the new spokespeople for Africa and its development. Last year, for example, Oprah Winfrey opened the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy to provide impoverished girls living in South Africa a privileged education; Paul (Bono) Hewson created Product (RED), a cause-related marketing campaign, to raise money for the Global Fund to help people living with HIV/AIDS in Ghana, Rwanda, Swaziland, and Lesotho; and Angelina Jolie has visited African refugee camps and AIDS orphanages in Chad, Sierra Leone, Tanzania,

¹ Adam Elkus, "Celebrity Colonialism in Africa," *Counter Punch*, ed. Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair, 4 November 2006. <http://www.counterpunch.org/elkus11042006.html> (accessed 1 July 2008).

Kenya, Ethiopia, and Namibia, as a United Nations Goodwill Ambassador and as a private citizen.

Celebrity activism in Africa has captured the attention of news and entertainment media across the Western world. While there is no question that these humanitarian missions benefit celebrities like Lindsay Lohan and Britney Spears who, after a crippling year of media attacks, have both traveled to Africa to campaign against poverty and AIDS in hope of salvaging their less-than-pristine reputations, there is less assurance that Africa will prosper from this media parade. Celebrities do bring ever-increasing attention to some of the poorest countries in the world. However, celebrities treat Africa as a place in need of their saving; that without their intervention the continent is doomed. Treating Africa as a blank template, celebrities fill in whatever meanings and representations they wish. As a result, "saving Africa" has become a new celebrity trend, a fad that will be replaced tomorrow by the next new campaign, like the stands for environmental awareness, gay and lesbian liberation, and animal rights that came before. Celebrities, like Madonna, argue that any attention for Africa is beneficial if it gets people to donate money or volunteer their time. I will argue, however, that celebrity humanitarianism does violence to these sub-Saharan African countries and their people, by pursuing Western consumer-capitalist solutions as a means to end global inequities.

Through their humanitarian work, Hollywood celebrities reaffirm international development as the necessary and inevitable answer to the ills of poverty, disease, and conflict that continue to ravish many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. There is no doubt that poverty, HIV/AIDS, and internal conflict remain a real crisis for many African countries. The concern is, however, that celebrity humanitarianism reaffirms a particular discourse of development that has

surfaced post World War II (PWWII). PWWII development is premised on the idea that certain parts of the world are “underdeveloped” and should, therefore, go about attaining development. Questioning the legitimacy of this Westernized way of thinking, post-development theorists have deconstructed and problematized some of the core ideas that PWWII development rests its logic upon, dismantling the myths of development thinking from within. In addition, post-development theorists have highlighted the relations of power and forms of domination that have emerged as a result of PWWII development thinking, and have highlighted the failure of PWWII development strategies to have effected any significant change over the last fifty years. According to Vincent Tucker:

Development is the process whereby other peoples are dominated and their destinies are shaped according to an essentially Western way of conceiving and perceiving the world...It is an essential part of the process whereby the ‘developed’ countries manage, control and even create the Third World economically, politically, sociologically and culturally. It is a process whereby the lives of some peoples, their plans, their hopes, their imaginations, are shaped by others who frequently share neither their lifestyles, nor their hopes, nor their values. The real nature of this process is disguised by a discourse that portrays development as a necessary and desirable process, as human destiny itself.²

While post-development theorists do agree that all societies undergo a natural process of development, they disagree with PWWII development for its reliance on Western Enlightenment values of modernity, progress, science, and reason. In addition, PWWII development is implemented by people in the West, who are often unaware of the values and worldviews of the

² Vincent Tucker, “The Myth of Development: A Critique of a Eurocentric Discourse,” in *Critical Development Theory: Contributions to a New Paradigm*, ed. Ronaldo Munck and Denis O’Hearn (New York: Zed Books, 1999), 1.

people living in the Third World. Development experts, which now include Hollywood celebrities trying to convince the world of their worth, are often ignorant of the people and places in which they implement their ideas and ignore the implications that their work has, not only for developing countries, but for the world.

The celebrity's relation to development is a significant one. In fact, the discourse of "celebrity" and the discourse of "development" actually have a lot of similarities, and it is not incidental that this articulation has emerged. In fact, they represent one and the same thing: both are products and myths that symbolize progress, rationality, and success in a modern capitalist world. Modernity, in this sense, represents a particular attitude toward the world, where industrial production, capitalism, the market economy, mass democracy, and individualism are regarded as the necessary and progressive qualities for a "developed" world. The Hollywood celebrity encompasses all of these qualities and promotes these modern values as the way forward for development.

The Hollywood celebrities examined in this thesis rely on consumer capitalist development solutions and Western ways of thinking that ignore the lifestyles, hopes, and values of the people living in sub-Saharan Africa. Their humanitarian efforts are, therefore, a misguided response to the problems of "underdevelopment" in Africa. Western consumerism, and its individualistic, short-term, and abstracted ideals, severely encroaches on celebrity humanitarian work. As a result, celebrity humanitarianism is not a grand new approach to development, but only further perpetuates the systems of inequality, exclusion, and underdevelopment that post-development has criticized for over two decades. Each chapter will highlight the problems inherent of the consumerist approaches to development employed by each celebrity. Throughout

this thesis, I will show how the gifts offered and the promises made by celebrities to developing countries in Africa further impede the wellbeing of the people living there, damaging their communities (chapter two), their environments (chapter three), and their image (chapter four), while enhancing the celebrity's own persona and benefiting the Western world.

Methodology: The Case Study

In this thesis, I will deconstruct three case studies of celebrity humanitarianism: Oprah Winfrey and the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for girls in South Africa; Bono and Product (RED), a campaign that donates corporate profits through consumer purchasing power to the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS in Africa; and Angelina Jolie and her missions to Africa as a Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Using the case study as method provides a way to examine how development giving, in specific circumstances, can bring about negative consequences for developing countries. Using focused case studies, I will highlight the forms of inequality that may otherwise go unnoticed in a more general analysis. Therefore, I analyze the specific circumstances of each case. However, comparing the three cases studied shows similarities and general trends among them. Therefore, using the case study provides a deeper understanding of the celebrity phenomenon under investigation and brings to light invaluable information for further theorizing, as will be described.

The case study is a method employed to research a real-life phenomenon using multiple sources of evidence including both qualitative and quantitative data collection. Usually, the case study involves an in depth analysis of a single instance or event over time. The case should be a small, selective, and bounded unit. Case studies are most appropriate when the inquirer has little control over the events being studied; when the object is a contemporary phenomenon within a

real life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are unclear; and when multiple sources of evidence are desirable.³ A particular case is chosen for multiple reasons and each type is not mutually exclusive. An *extreme case* is chosen to convey a specific point, while a *critical case* is chosen for strategic importance (as in least likely and most likely cases). A case chosen for *maximum variation* reveals the significance of various circumstances and a *paradigmatic case* is an exemplar or prototypical case that highlights general characteristics of a given phenomenon.⁴ Single cases are useful when focusing on one particular case of interest or to provide secondary and supportive insights into the understanding of something else. In addition, multiple cases are useful to uncover common trends and increase validity, but each case must still be analyzed as a single unit.⁵

Bent Flyvbjerg deconstructs some common misunderstandings of case study research including concerns about producing generalizability, generating and testing hypotheses, and researcher biases.⁶ In attempt to increase the validity and reliability of the case study as a research method, Flyvbjerg shows how these “misunderstanding” are oversimplified by critics. He shows how a single case study can easily be generalized through falsification and “black swan” examples. As a result, the case study is useful for both generating and testing hypothesis, as well. However, Flyvbjerg states that generalizability is overrated as a research tool, whereas “the force of example” is underrated. In fact, “when the objective is to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given problem or phenomenon, a representative case or a random sample may not be the most appropriate strategy.”⁷ While this may be true, greater

³ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, 2nd ed. (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publishing, 1994).

⁴ Bent Flyvbjerg, “Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 12 (2006): 219-245.

⁵ Robert E. Stake, “Case Studies,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln, (Sage Publications, 1994), 236-247.

⁶ Flyvbjerg.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 229.

generalizability is increased by the strategic selection of cases. The benefit of critically selecting a case is that it can clarify the deeper causes behind a problem and its consequences. Finally, Flyvbjerg claims that research bias is no more present in case study research than in any other type of research method. In fact, “experience indicates that the case study contains a greater bias toward falsification of preconceived notions than toward verification.”⁸

Clarifying these misunderstandings reveals why the case study is useful for this study in particular. Each of the three celebrity humanitarian cases analyzed in this project was chosen strategically as paradigmatic case to highlight the general characteristics of the celebrity humanitarianism phenomenon. The single cases examined generate a greater theoretical understanding of the problems of international development, humanitarian assistance, and development giving, in general.

For each case study, I use multiple sources of data collection. Since it was impossible to talk to the celebrity subjects directly or to observe the event in question, I rely on transcripts of interviews undertaken by media personalities, media footage of celebrities in the field, personal memoirs, press releases, biographies, and personal messages accessed through celebrity websites. I also carried out a discourse analysis of World newspapers, magazines, and entertainment television programs surrounding each event using a lexis nexus search. Using keywords including “Oprah” and “Leadership Academy,” “Bono” and “Product (RED),” and “Angelina Jolie” and “Africa,” I was able to narrow my search to news surrounding the specific event in question within the appropriate time period. When analyzing the returned documents, I asked the following questions. How, in each case, was the event depicted by popular media including newspapers, magazines, and television entertainment programs, in relation to how the celebrities describe their own intentions in official press releases and interviews? What

⁸ Ibid., 237.

discourses are most prevalent? Are the celebrities described as altruistic humanitarians? Were the celebrity's humanitarian actions criticized and by who? How are humanitarian and development practices normalized in the discourse? What negative depictions and representations of Africa surface, as a result? Therefore, for each case study, I examine how each act of celebrity humanitarianism contributes to the celebrity's constructed persona, altruistic discourses of humanitarianism, the discourses of development, and negative discourses of developing countries. To compliment my media findings, I apply already established theoretical paradigms to my arguments including post-development, post-structuralist, post-humanist, and post-modern theories, as well as literature surrounding the culture of consumption, the culture of celebrity, and philosophies of the gift.

Chapter Outline

The first chapter reviews the literature on "the gift," "post-development," and the "modern celebrity." Reviewing philosophies of the gift reveals the fundamental and basic difficulties inherent of giving and receiving gifts in the first place. Ralph Waldo Emerson, Friedrich Nietzsche, Marcel Mauss, Georges Bataille, Jacques Derrida, and Pierre Bourdieu have all contributed to the modern literature on the gift, exposing the inequality, dependency, forms of domination and exploitation that result from the "altruistic" practice of giving. Post-development theorists reveal how "development giving" is not exempt from these problems inherent of the gift. In fact, "development" is an even more dangerous gift to give, since the benefactor and beneficiary are already on uneven grounds. These philosophers of the gift all agree that a gift given must be reciprocated in time. It is the lag of time that sets up conditions of inequality and domination, which can only be rectified by reciprocating the gift given. In development giving, like charity, the gift is given knowing in advance that there is no possibility of reciprocity. This

impossibility of reciprocity sets up conditions of everlasting asymmetry and a condition for violence.

The Hollywood celebrity complicates development giving further, by promoting consumer capitalist solutions as the answer to development. These solutions ignore African difference and diversity, as described by Sally Matthews.⁹ In addition, celebrities ignore how consumer capitalism is destructive for developing countries and the rest of the world. Post-development theorists like Arturo Escobar, Majid Rahnema, and Sally Matthews attack PWWII development for these reasons among others. As a result, post-development theorists have demanded that we discard PWWII development and look for alternatives to development *in kind*, instead.

Chapter two demonstrates the ways that celebrities neglect the different worldviews, values, and beliefs of cultures other than their own. Without consulting the needs of local people, celebrities implement their pre-packaged development solutions onto developing countries. By examining the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for girls, I will uncover the unforeseen consequences of Winfrey's consumerist approach to education that, too, neglects the needs and values of the learners, their families, and the local community. Winfrey not only presents education as a Western commodity, but commodifies education, encouraging the girls to adopt consumerist values and behaviours both through her own example and by means of the Leadership Academy's over-commodified surroundings. What impact will this consumer-driven environment have on the girls' futures? How will these girls return to and identify the problems of their local communities after they graduate from the Leadership Academy? Winfrey's

⁹ Sally Matthews, "Post-Development Theory and the Question of Alternatives: A View from Africa," *Third World Quarterly* 25 (2004): 373-384.

endorsement of consumerism is irresponsible. It is precisely these Western values which will lead to further devastation in sub-Saharan Africa now and in the future. Moreover, the impacts of global climate change, environmental disasters, and resource depletion, each a by-product of over-consumption in the West, will impede Africa's development long before it has any positive effects for its future.

The theme of consumerism continues through chapter three, where I examine the effects of (RED), a business model for development created by Bono. Through (RED), Bono calls on the purchasing power of consumers and the marketing power of giant corporations to raise money for the Global Fund to fight AIDS in Africa. In this chapter, I look at how consumerist values including individualism, short term gratification, and the abstraction of social crises are incompatible with the collective ideals necessary to combat poverty and AIDS in Africa. Instead, consumerism diverts attention away from the role corporations and we as consumers play in global crises. I will show how (RED) is as much of a way for self-gratified consumers to feel that they are "saving" Africa and a way for consumer brands to increase their profits and image, as it is a strategy to help combat the AIDS epidemic in Africa.

In chapter four, I assess Jolie's role as UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador. As a Goodwill Ambassador, Jolie's role is to bring awareness to refugees in developing countries. However, the people and places of Jolie's travels become objects to be consumed by Western media audiences. Two representations of Africa result. In these representations, African people are depicted either as uncivilized and primitive or as dependent and helpless victims in need of development. As a result, the African subject becomes dehumanized as "other." The goal of this chapter is to explore how we can be for an(other) without the forms of domination, exploitation, and

dehumanization that result from our representations of and our contact with the other. To explore this relationship, I analyze a less conventional way of thinking through our relation with the other, by addressing the institution of speciesism at work in most humanist thinking. The institution of speciesism, an idea put forth by Cary Wolfe, makes possible the “non criminal putting to death” of the other, by marking them as animal.¹⁰ The institution of speciesism, also at work in PWWII development discourses, too, makes it possible for the forms of domination, exploitation, and dehumanization to persist unchallenged.

I conclude with a cautionary tale, exploring the promises celebrities make to developing countries that they cannot fulfill. While celebrities are congratulated for their work in Africa, this work is often left unfinished. Celebrities travel to developing countries, they see a mud hut and a child with AIDS, and they make promises to these people and never return. Oprah has made a promise to the mothers of the girls at the Leadership Academy that she will take care of their children as if they were her own. Bono has promised AIDS relief in Africa, but forgot to tell the people living there that the (RED) computer sold to bring this relief will be dumped at their doorstep in the future. Jolie promises to tell the world of the stories of the people she meets on her travels, but these images are construed by Western media, whose interests are different from Jolie’s own. Sometimes the best thing we can do for an(other) is to take a step back and reconsider whether the gift is really a gift, or just a poison in disguise.

¹⁰ Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003).

CHAPTER ONE: COMMODYING DEVELOPMENT

THE GIFT, POST-DEVELOPMENT THEORY, AND THE MODERN CELEBRITY

Giving transforms itself—from giving arose the practice of forcing
someone to receive¹

Friedrich Nietzsche

According to Bill Clinton in his recent book, *Giving*, each and every one of us can give in some way or another to change the world.² Giving comes in different forms. We can give our money, our time, our skills, or we can give to “good ideas.” But who decides which ideas are good to give to? Does this mean that there are “bad ideas” to give to? And, if so, does this suggest that, in those circumstances, giving would produce negative results? Criticizing charitable giving is neither easy nor popular. If celebrities want to donate their multi-million dollar yearly earnings to charity, what is to criticize? It would make more sense to condemn celebrities if they did not give away some of their excess income to poor children around the world. However, the culture of giving is taken for granted as an altruistic enterprise that can only bring about positive results, regardless of one’s intention. While this may be true in many circumstances, giving also creates often unforeseen and negative consequences for the recipients of even altruistically given gifts. Since celebrities have become increasingly involved in international development and humanitarian affairs over the last decade, giving their money, time, resources, skills, and support to help solve and bring awareness to the problems many developing countries face, it seems appropriate to extend the critique of giving, especially development giving, to this recent outpour of celebrity humanitarianism, in turn.

¹ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippen, trans. Adrian Del Caro (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 10: 516.

² Bill Clinton, *Giving: How Each of Us Can Change the World* (New York: Knopf, 2007).

Philosophies of the gift and post-development theory both demonstrate why charitable giving is an ambiguous, if not dangerous, practice for celebrities to partake. Through commodifying giving, celebrity humanitarianism perpetuates the inequalities inherent of international development. While post-development theories expose the implications of international development since the 1950s specifically, the consequences of charitable giving in general have been a matter of debate for centuries. Analyses of “the gift” and gift-giving are akin to post-development critique in many ways. Both critiques comment on the self-interested intentions of givers, the degradation of receivers, and the asymmetrical power relations that place the beneficiary in a position of dependency and domination, only intensified through the celebrity’s commodification of the gift, as will later be shown.

The asymmetrical condition of power produced through development giving is one reason why development has failed. Unlike traditional forms of gift-giving, development is implemented knowing in advance that the generous gift offered will not bring about an equivalent return over time. This lasting asymmetry over time is significant. Taking cue from Jacques Derrida and Pierre Bourdieu, time cannot be separated from the gift. The possibility and the impossibility of the gift are both contingent on time. According to Derrida, the circular nature of both time and the economy, and the unavoidable logic of reciprocity, give rise to the impossibility of the gift.³ Bourdieu, on the other hand, views time, more precisely the lag of time between gift and counter-gift, as the condition that makes possible the gift to be seen as such.⁴ This has several implications for international development. Through a lasting lag of time, development, too, is masked as a generous and altruistic gift. However, through an eternal time

³ Jacques Derrida, *Given Time* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, “Selections from The Logic of Practice,” in *The Logic of the Gift*, ed. Alan Shrift (New York: Routledge, 1997), 190-230.

lag between gift and counter-gift, development sets up a condition of everlasting asymmetry. The degradation of the gift is most apparent in conditions of everlasting asymmetry that lead to ongoing dependency and violence, according to Bourdieu. Post-development scholars have, too, recognized this condition of asymmetry brought about by development practices. Arturo Escobar, for example, views development as “an extremely efficient apparatus for producing knowledge about, and the exercise of power over, the Third World.”⁵ Theories of the gift are, therefore, insightful to analyze humanitarian development practices, which have become as ambiguous as the gift itself. After reviewing philosophies of the gift and post-development theory, I will show how the celebrity, through their relationship to consumer capitalism is, too, complicit in the discourses of development through their commodification of the gift.

The Logic of the Gift and Reciprocity

The logic of the gift has confounded scholars throughout history. Although the uncertainty of the gift has been addressed in philosophical thought since antiquity, a renewed interest in understanding relations of giving, receiving, and reciprocating has incited scholars including Ralph Waldo Emerson, Friedrich Nietzsche, Marcel Mauss, Georges Bataille, Jacques Derrida, and Pierre Bourdieu to delve more deeply into the logic of the gift. As a result, what has emerged is an exploration of the gift economy that deconstructs the unspoken rules that govern gift exchange, the logic behind giving as squandering, and the ramifications of unreciprocated gifts.

⁵ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 9.

One of the earliest writer's in this lineage of thought is Ralph Waldo Emerson, who in 1844 wrote a short essay entitled "Gifts."⁶ Through his reservations about the appropriateness of giving, the reluctance to receive, and the expectations between givers and receivers, Emerson highlights some of the fundamental themes that have preoccupied a number of scholars in the 20th century. According to Emerson, while giving is never an easy task, receiving is even more painful to endure:

We are either glad or sorry at a gift, and both emotions are unbecoming. Some violence, I think, is done, some degradation borne, when I rejoice or grieve at a gift. I am sorry when my independence is invaded, or when a gift come from such that do not know my spirit, and so the act not supported; and if the gift pleases me overmuch, then I should be ashamed that the donor should read my heart, and see that I love the commodity, and not him.⁷

According to Emerson, "it is not in the office of man to receive gifts. How dare you give them?"⁸ The gift degrades and humiliates a person's will to self-sustain. It seems that the gift, which is supposed to be a generous and kind act in intent, is never quite received as such. As a result, it is not the donor's intentions per se that are violent, but the effect that these intentions have for the recipient's self-worth. How does the gift actually disgrace and bring shame upon the recipient?

Friedrich Nietzsche ponders this question throughout his writings. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, originally written in 1883-1885, the discourses of giving and receiving are

⁶ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Gifts," in *The Logic of the Gift*, ed. Alan Shrift (New York: Routledge, 1997), 25-27.

⁷ Ibid., 25.

⁸ Ibid., 25.

problematized throughout the text.⁹ Nietzsche, who was familiar with the work of Emerson, shows his debt to him in *Zarathustra*. In this passage from *Zarathustra*, the ambiguity of giving is evident:

Now I love God: human beings I do not love. Human beings are too imperfect a thing for me. Love for human beings would kill me.”

Zarathustra replied. “Why did I speak of love? I bring mankind a gift.”

“Give them nothing,” said the saint. “Rather take something of them and help them to carry it—that will do them the most good, if only it does you good!

And if you want to give to them, then give nothing more than alms, and make them beg for that too!”

“No,” answered Zarathustra. “I do not give alms. For that I am not poor enough.”

The saint laughed at Zarathustra and spoke thus: “Then see to it that they accept your treasures! They are mistrustful of hermits and do not believe that we come to give gifts.”¹⁰

Multiple themes are already evident in these first pages of *Zarathustra*. Nietzsche distinction between love and gift-giving is one implication of the ambiguousness of the gift itself, but he also shows that the gift’s ambiguity lies within the asymmetrical relations of giving, as described. Zarathustra is not poor enough to give alms; to give alms highlights the recipient’s helplessness and incapability. Giving alms, like development assistance, is itself a form of charity that humiliates the recipient. For these reasons among others, a person’s wariness toward the gift is often based on their mistrust of the gift-giver, the outsider, who is perceived more than often as a thief rather than as a benefactor.

This reluctance to receive a gift is associated with the word “gift” itself, according to Marcel Mauss in “Gift, gift,” a short essay written in 1924.¹¹ The word “gift” in Germanic

⁹ Nietzsche.

¹⁰ Ibid., 4.

languages has a double meaning: “gift” means both a present and a poison. This double meaning of “gift,” Mauss suggests, is derived from “the gift of drink, of beer; in German, the present par excellence is what one pours.”¹² The gift of drink represents both the good and bad nature of presents, since “the drink-present can be a poison.”¹³ Here, the recipient of the drink never knows whether they are about to receive a drink-present or a drink-poison. The ambiguity rooted in the word “gift” still persists in modern practices of gift-giving.

As shown, giving and receiving is always ambiguous. However, the unwritten logic behind *gift-exchange* and *reciprocity* is even more puzzling. More specifically, why does the gift imply the obligation of return and what implications does this have for the gift? This question preoccupied scholars like Mauss, Bataille, Derrida, and Bourdieu in the latter half of the 20th century. These scholars address the underlying rules and expectations of giving, receiving, and reciprocating in traditional potlatch and gift-economies. There are, in fact, two practices of gift-giving highlighted in Mauss’ pivotal text *The Gift* from 1966.¹⁴ First, during a potlatch there is a series of regular exchanges where certain expectations of reciprocity are produced and legitimated. However, there is also another moment of giving; that of valorizing waste through destruction and expenditure, giving as squandering. Mauss describes the “logic of gift exchange,” while Bataille shows how squandering is essential to the functioning of the general economy.

In *The Gift*, Mauss attempts to uncover the social rules that govern gift-giving in archaic societies, as well as the force that compels recipients to make a return. In the societies described

¹¹ Marcel Mauss, “Gift, gift,” in *The Logic of the Gift*, ed. Alan Shrift (New York: Routledge, 1997), 28-32.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*, trans. W. D. Halls (New York: Norton, 1990).

by Mauss, giving, receiving, and reciprocating, while perceived as voluntary and disinterested practices, are actually quite obligatory; that “to refuse to give, or to fail to invite, is—like refusing to accept—the equivalent of a declaration of war.”¹⁵ Obligatory gift exchange is guided by both “spiritual mechanisms” and the desire for social rank. Throughout a potlatch, men rival each other in generosity through the objects they transmit and destroy, in attempt to outdo one another and achieve social prestige, honour, and rank.

The *obligation to give* is the essence of the potlatch. To maintain authority in a society, a person must “demonstrate his fortune by expending it to the humiliation of others.”¹⁶ If the obligation to give is violated, then social rank is diminished. However, the *obligation to receive* is no less constraining. A person cannot refuse a gift or potlatch; to refuse shows fear of having to repay. To fail to repay is to lose one’s dignity. In addition, the *obligation to repay* requires that the recipient *return with interest*. The burden of repaying is placed, therefore, on the recipient who always gives more than what they received. Not only is social rank diminished through the failure to repay, but one’s status as a free person is at risk. Therefore, “the gift is thus something that must be given, that must be received and that is, at the same time, dangerous to accept.”¹⁷ The gift that remains unpaid debases the man who accepted it. Even though the traditional gift-economy is a dying practice today, the obligation to reciprocate a gift is still evident in modern economic economies.

Giving through squandering has similar effects and is similar to development giving. Georges Bataille speaks to the practice of squandering in *The Accursed Share*, originally written

¹⁵ Ibid., 11.

¹⁶ Ibid., 37.

¹⁷ Ibid., 58.

in 1967.¹⁸ Bataille states that the expenditure of wealth without return is necessary for continued economic growth. Since wealth “is doomed to destruction or at least unproductive use without any possible profit, it is logical, even *inescapable*, to surrender commodities without return.”¹⁹ Bataille founds his theory on the unreciprocated expenditure of solar energy: “the origin and essence of our wealth are given in the radiation of the sun, which dispenses energy—wealth—without any return. The sun gives without ever receiving.”²⁰ Like Nietzsche, Bataille highlights the overflowing expenditure of the sun as necessary squandering.

However, the act of squandering is neither disinterested nor unprofitable, since the destruction or disposal of an object is never carried out in silence. Instead, squandering occurs in public and, as a result, “the one who gives has actually acquired, in the other’s eyes, the power of giving or destroying.”²¹ Following from Mauss, Bataille describes how it is always the beneficiary who profits through the acquisition of power: “to give is obviously to lose, but the loss apparently brings profit to the one who sustains it.”²² Therefore, squandering one’s *surplus* of resources (which Bataille claims that all societies have at their disposal) becomes an act of appropriation, of prestige, of rank and, ultimately, a source of profit. However, “the individuals who carry out this destruction do not truly possess this wealth, *this rank*,” according to Bataille.²³ But since “the weak are fleeced, exploited by the strong, who pay them with flagrant lies...this cannot change the overall results, where individual interest is mocked, and where *the lies of the rich are changed into truth*.”²⁴ In line with post-development and foucaultian thought, this

¹⁸ Georges Bataille, *The Accursed Share: An Essay on General Economy*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1991).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 28.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 69.

²² *Ibid.*, 70.

²³ *Ibid.*, 75.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

relationship among power, truth, and discourse highlighted by Bataille, perhaps unknowingly, will remain an essential theme throughout this analysis.

Through squandering, then, the gift is reciprocated through moral gratuity or self-recognition. Based on this always present and inescapable reciprocity, Jacques Derrida questions the possibility of the gift itself in *Given Time*.²⁵ According to Derrida, the possibility of the gift is contingent on its relation of foreignness to the economy. As a result, the possibility of the gift requires an absence of reciprocity, exchange, counter-gift, or debt. If the gift is reciprocated, it cancels out the gift as gift. The gift is thereby annulled if any restitution for the gift is ever given. The gift must not only remain unpaid, but cannot even be recognized as a gift by either the donor or recipient. Acknowledgment of the gift gives rise to gratuity, self-recognition, and other symbolic forms of reciprocity. Therefore, if the gift is recognized as such, the gift is annulled, and if there is no gift, then there is no gift. The possibility of the gift is its impossibility.²⁶

As described, Derrida recognizes that the relationship among time, the economy, and the gift is an important one. In time, all gifts are reciprocated and, therefore, part of the economic. Not only does the impossibility of the gift highlight that the gift is, in fact, always a part of the economy (through the logic of exchange), but that the gift finds its legitimation in its defiance to the economy; a defiance that, according to Derrida, does not in fact exist. According to Derrida, there is no "logic of the gift" because the discourse of the gift is always speaking of something other than the gift itself.

Derrida is not the only one to speak of the gift in relation to time and the economy. But unlike Derrida, in *The Logic of Practice* and "Marginalia," Pierre Bourdieu speaks to the

²⁵ Derrida.

²⁶ Ibid.

possibility of the gift in time.²⁷ According to Bourdieu, the lapse of time between gift and counter-gift is the condition of possibility for the gift. The lapse of time between gift and counter gift allows the gift to be seen as a gift, as a discontinuous, free, and generous act. This time lag masks the truth of gift-exchange, the truth that Derrida confronted. However, this truth is obscured by collective self-deception. The dual truth of the gift, experienced as both “a refusal of self-interest and egoistical calculation, and exultation of generosity—a gratuitous and unrequited gift,” but also that which “never entirely excludes the awareness of the logic of exchange,” makes it possible to mask the contradictions between the actual truth of the gift and its “common miscognition.”²⁸ According to Bourdieu, common miscognition is “this game in which everyone knows—and does not want to know—that everyone knows—and does not want to know—the true nature of the [gift] exchange.”²⁹ While every giver is aware that their generous act may be recognized as such and reciprocated, the lapse of time between gift and counter-gift makes possible the appearance of uncalculated disinterestedness.

Through the lapse of time and the refusal to recognize the objective truth of gift exchange (naked self-interest and egoistic calculation), economic capital is denied in gift-economies. What results is an economy of symbolic capital (recognition, honour, nobility) “that is brought about in particular through the transmutation of economic capital achieved through the alchemy of symbolic exchanges and only available to agents endowed with dispositions adjusted to the logic of ‘disinterestedness.’”³⁰ The gift is transformed into a rational investment for accumulating symbolic capital and, as a result, the gift becomes a means of domination. Domination is

²⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, “Marginalia,” in *The Logic of Practice*, ed. Alan Shrift (New York: Routledge, 1997), 231-244.

²⁸ Bourdieu, “Selections,” 231.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 232.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 234-235.

produced through the obligatory nature of the gift. Consequently, the gift becomes a form of symbolic power and violence:

Here we are at the heart of the alchemical transmutation that is the basis of symbolic power, a power that is created, accumulated, and perpetuated through communication, symbolic exchange...communication converts brute power relations...into durable relations of symbolic power through which a person is bound and feels bound. It transfigures economic capital into symbolic capital, economic domination (of the rich over the poor, master over servant, man over woman, adults over children, etc.) into personal dependence...Generosity is possessive, and perhaps all the more so when, as in affectionate exchanges...it is and appears most sincerely generous.³¹

According to Bourdieu, symbolic violence occurs when overt violence is disapproved of, as a gentler and more invisible violence, unrecognized as such. Symbolic violence is generated through giving. Symbolic violence is even more acute when the gift cannot be repaid, as in charity. In the case of charity, a condition of everlasting asymmetry is created because no equivalent exchange is possible. This asymmetry creates a lasting relation of dependency and an enslavement of debt.³² It is precisely these forms of symbolic violence inherent of the gift that post-development scholars see as the driving force behind the PWWII development project. Bourdieu, therefore, provides the necessary link between the gift and post-development theory.

Post-Development Theory: Perspectives, Limitations, and Future Directions

³¹ Ibid., 237-238.

³² Ibid.

Post-development theory echo's many of the same critiques described by philosophers of the gift. According to post-development scholars, the PWWII development project, often contrasted with colonization, uses *symbolic violence* through the *form of giving*, as described by Bourdieu. Unlike colonization, whose brute violence is now disapproved, development is seen by some as a revised and gentler form of domination of the West over the South.³³ While this direct association to colonization is now denounced, it is appropriate to stress the different operations of power at work within these two practices. Unlike colonization that operated through *deduction* and sovereign power, development is driven by the logic of *giving*. Through the power of giving, development is perceived as productive, genuine, and sincere. Like other forms of charity, however, it is based on asymmetrical gift-exchange and is no less ambiguous than the gift itself, and neither are the very constructs that development rests its logic upon.

One of the first major compilations on post-development, *The Development Dictionary*, fleshes out the ambiguous constructs that development is founded on including equality, helping, needs, poverty, progress and such.³⁴ Wolfgang Sachs, the editor of this anthology, describes the ambiguity and failure of development in which "for almost half a century, good neighborliness on the planet was conceived in the light of development," but through a mixture of "generosity, bribery, and oppression...Today, the lighthouse shows cracks and is starting to crumble."³⁵

Analogous to the concept of gift-giving described by Bourdieu, in this same volume Marianne Gronemeyer discusses the misconstrued concept of "helping."³⁶ Like Bourdieu, she

³³ Morgan Brigg, "Post-Development, Foucault and the Colonization Metaphor," *Third World Quarterly* 23 (2002): 421-436.

³⁴ Wolfgang Sachs, ed., *The Development Dictionary* (New York: Zed Books, 1992).

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 1.

³⁶ Marianne Gronemeyer, "Helping," in *The Development Dictionary*, ed. Wolfgang Sachs (New York: Zed Books, 1992).

understands development help as an instrument of elegant power. In contrast to brute violence, “elegant power does not force, it does not resort to either the cudgel or to chains; it helps...it is a means of keeping the bit in the mouths of subordinates without letting them feel the power that is guiding them.”³⁷ One problem with the PWWII development project is that the need for development help is diagnosed from without. According to Gronemeyer, there is a marked difference between a person of need and a needy person. While the person suffering need decides when a call for help is necessary, thereby in control and the master of one’s own need, the person who is needy is not the master of his or her neediness. As described by Gronemeyer, “one becomes needy on account of a diagnosis—I decide when you are needy,” namely resulting in the shame of the receiver and the arrogance of the giver.³⁸

As a result of this external diagnosis of need, many authors in this volume see development as an invention and “underdevelopment” as the product of this invention. The invention of underdevelopment was produced over time through various sets of actors, institutions, and discourses, including President Truman’s call for a new program for development in the late 1940s. According to Gustavo Esteva and others, President Truman’s presidential address on January 20, 1949, was primarily responsible for creating two-thirds of the world’s population as underdeveloped.³⁹ In his inaugural speech, Truman introduced “a bold new program for making the benefits of our scientific advances and industrial progress available for the improvement and growth of underdeveloped areas.”⁴⁰ The concept of “underdevelopment,” never before used in this context, initiated a new era of development that commenced after the Second World War. While humanity is always in the process of “developing,” this new program

³⁷ Ibid., 35.

³⁸ Ibid., 65-66.

³⁹ Sachs.

⁴⁰ Sachs, 6.

for development, initiated by Truman, is remarkably different than the process of natural development that came before. Although Truman's speech is well cited in post-development thought as that which marks the origin of the "era of development" as we know it, it was only thorough a set of relations among many elements that PWWII development became what it is today.

In *Encountering Development*, Arturo Escobar describes how this space for development emerged through a relation among many elements and was not the result of only one moment in history:

Development was not merely the result of the combination, study, or gradual elaboration of these elements (some of these topics had existed for some time); nor the product of the introduction of new ideas (some of which were already appearing or perhaps were bound to appear); nor the effect of the new international organizations or financial institutions (which had some predecessors, such as the League of Nations). It was rather the result of the establishment of a set of relations among these elements, institution, and practices and of the systemization of these relations to form a whole.⁴¹

According to Escobar, development is a historically produced discourse that arose through a set of relations among various elements. By managing what can be said and thought, the discourses of development have effectually produced, created, and shaped the Third World. It has become very difficult to imagine the Third World, its people, and its situations, in any other terms than those provided by development discourses. The Third World is depicted as a place of poverty, famine, overpopulation, illiteracy, disease and such. According to Escobar, development is very

⁴¹ Escobar, 40.

efficient in creating these types of “abnormalities” that it then attempts to treat and reform.⁴² For example, the modern economic concept of “poverty” has become a problem for development to “fix,” as are illiteracy and malnourishment possible to “cure” through Western education, science, and medicine.

In fact, education, science, and medicine, are perceived as vehicles for development. In *The Post Development Reader*, Majid Rahnema states that the school system “became one of the most important vehicles of development strategy, being presented to the excluded as the answer to all the problems of their ‘underdevelopment,’ the redeeming genie which could henceforth save their children from misery and shame. In reality, schools served other purposes.”⁴³ The school system actually produces a system of exclusion where education, like health care and food, are created as a scarcity reserved for few. In addition, local systems of learning and other forms of knowledge become discredited, students are separated from their parents and culture, and a cultural gap between the educated and uneducated is formed.⁴⁴

While the school system is only one example, “most contributors to this Reader have come to the conclusion that development was indeed a *poisonous gift* to the populations it set out to help.”⁴⁵ Sachs, Escobar, and Rahnema’s view of development is comparable to the discussed philosophies of the gift. Development has become a gift-poison. Like traditional gift-giving, the benefactors of development have profited greater than the beneficiaries. Through its expenditure of resources and knowledge, the West has secured its dominance over the South. As described by Bataille, squandering is never disinterested. Through development giving, the West can control

⁴² Ibid., 41.

⁴³ Majid Rahnema with Victoria Bawtree, eds., *The Post-Development Reader* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997), 158.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 159.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 381 (my emphasis).

the discourses about, and exercise its power over, the Third World. In exchange for debt, developed countries are repaid through gratuity. But, everlasting debt gives rise to eternal gratuity that, according to Bourdieu, turns into symbolic violence. This violence produces relations of ongoing dependency and dominance. Like the gift, development is difficult to criticize; its dual truth masks the experience of giving as an uninterested and uncalculated act of generosity. Through common miscognition, development is that game which we do not want to know, that we know, that everyone knows, its logic. Masked by its “humanitarian” exterior, development is perceived as the furthest thing from a calculated attempt to secure dependency and domination in the Third World. Humanitarian development does not directly result in an increase of economic capital for the benefactor, but symbolic capital is accumulated and can be turned into symbolic power and violence when called upon.

Even academics sceptical of post-development theory agree on many of the critiques that it offers. The distinctive difference between post-development and other critical development theories is that post-development rejects the idea of development in its entirety. Instead of searching for an alternative development (participatory development, grass-roots development, sustainable development, human development, etc), post-development thinkers demand locating *alternatives to development*. It is this complete rejection of development that is disapproved of by critics, along with the theoretical basis of post-development thought, which relies heavily on Michel Foucault and discourse analysis.

Jan Nederveen Pieterse, though still critical of development, is a leading critic of the post-development school.⁴⁶ While he is sympathetic to the critiques made by post-development,

⁴⁶ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, “My Paradigm or Yours: Alternative Development, Post-Development, Reflexive Development,” *Development and Change* 29 (1998): 343-373.

he claims that post-development is a misnomer: while arguing for alternative to development, no alternatives are constructed in its place. Nederveen Pieterse holds that the only alternative to development *is* alternative development. In complete disagreement, post-development theorists perceive alternative development as a shrouded form of the same practice. Serge Latouche describes that “the most dangerous solicitations, the sirens with the most insidious song, are not those of the ‘true blue’ and ‘hard’ development, but rather those of what is called ‘alternative’ development...The fact that it presents a friendly exterior makes ‘alternative’ development all the more dangerous.”⁴⁷ Gustavo Esteva makes a similar claim “fulminating against those who ‘want to cover the stench of ‘Development’ with ‘Alternative Development’ as a deodorant.”⁴⁸ While Nederveen Pieterse asserts that post-development ignores the discontinuities in development practices over time, like the changing practices of the World Bank, Escobar claims that, in spite of the variations, the stories are all the same.⁴⁹ This is a disagreement in perspective: Nederveen Pieterse views alternative development as a difference in kind, while Escobar only sees a difference in degree. Knut G. Nustad describes how “from the point of view of post-development, with its focus on the discursive formation of development, what appears to the practitioner as ground-breaking revolutions is instead seen as a different constellation of the same elements.”⁵⁰

However, Nederveen Pieterse’s reaction is not entirely unfounded. He is responding to a neo-populist variant of post-development thought, which is criticized for its romantic and nostalgic view of history, for its reification of local culture and people, for its rejection of all

⁴⁷ Serge Latouche, *In the Wake of an Affluent Society: Explorations in Post-Development* (London: Zed Books, 1993), 161.

⁴⁸ As cited in Nederveen Pieterse, 365.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 363.

⁵⁰ Knut G. Nustad, “Development: The Devil we know?” *Third World Quarterly* 22 (2001): 481.

things modern including progress, science, and technology, and for its amalgamation of development with Westernization.⁵¹ On the other hand, sceptical post-development is careful not to resort to a romanticization of poverty and underscores both the setbacks and benefits of modern ways of living. Rather than dismissing post-development's potential, addressing the gaps in post-development thought shows that it has more to offer.

Attending to the weaknesses of post-development theory rather than rejecting the whole of its critique, Knut Nustad argues that the insights from post-development provide one explanation of why fifty years of development has produced so little effect.⁵² Likewise, Morgan Brigg demonstrates that it is more productive to address post-development's limitations than to dismiss its potential.⁵³ One weakness of post-development is its often impoverished and selective use of Foucault. For Brigg, a revised application of Foucault is necessary for post-development to move forward. According to Brigg, post-development must steer away from colonization metaphors; colonization relies on sovereign power, whereas development relies on bio-power. According to Foucault, sovereign power is that power associated with the King and operates through deduction, through taking something away. This was the case during colonization, in which colonies were taken over by the monarch and ruled over. Bio-power, on the other hand, is a modern form of power that operates through self-mobilization. As described by Foucault, bio-power is productive and promotes the welfare and benefits of an acting subject: "it is a way of acting upon an acting subject or subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of acting."⁵⁴ In some instances, post-development wrongfully implies that power operates from a singular

⁵¹ Aram Ziai, "The Ambivalence of Post-Development: Between Reactionary Populism and Radical Democracy," *Third World Quarterly* 25 (2004): 1045-1060.

⁵² Nustad, 480.

⁵³ Brigg.

⁵⁴ As cited in Brigg, 423.

historical force, such as the West, and ascribes agency to an individual (Truman) or individuals (the Americans) when, in fact, there are multiple actors within the development project that have agency, including the people of developing nations. Therefore, using the colonization metaphor and equating development with the Westernization of the world undermines how development and bio-power operates. As described by Escobar, power is relational and contingent and operates through sets of relations to form a whole.⁵⁵ It is never a singular element within the development dispositif (the apparatuses, material elements, institutions, laws, etc. and relations among them), but it is this apparatus as a whole that produces power. More important still, is that “without the continual reproduction of the desire for development within human subjects on a widespread scale in the dispositif, this power could not function.”⁵⁶ Through Foucault’s concept of dispositif and normalization, Brigg shows how “development can have the effect of directing people’s lives in a particular way without totalising the force relations involved.”⁵⁷ Therefore, since development is enabled through bio-power, which is productive and relational rather than deductive and singular, it cannot be equated with any singular historical force or used as a metaphor for colonization where power operates in a very different way.

Sally Matthews, too, defends post-development.⁵⁸ Those who attack post-development often ignore that post-development is not rejecting “development,” but “Development.” In attempt to clarify this misconception, Matthews highlights two important distinctions that post-development critics tend to confuse. First, what post-development is rejecting is a certain form of development that arose after World War II. Therefore, post-development is not rejecting

⁵⁵ Escobar, 40.

⁵⁶ Brigg, 433.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 433.

⁵⁸ Sally Matthews, “Post-Development Theory and the Question of Alternatives: A View from Africa,” *Third World Quarterly* 25 (2004): 373-384.

“development,” but what Matthews calls Post World War II development. Accordingly, it was not that PWWII development was poorly implemented, but that it was the wrong answer to the needs and aspirations of the people, as suggested by Rahnema.⁵⁹ Therefore, any development strategies and projects built on the misguided and problematic assumption—that some areas of the world are more developed than others and that those underdeveloped areas should therefore set about achieving development—are going to fail. It is the PWWII development project founded on this principle that is being rejected, but not the idea of development itself. Post-development is not rejecting “that it is possible for a society to undergo some process of transformation which will result in a better life for its inhabitants” when they call an end to development.⁶⁰ Similarly, this is not a nostalgic call for returning to earlier ways of life, either.

Matthews suggests that alternatives to development might be found in Africa, in African diversity and difference.⁶¹ Africa has a rich variation of ways of understanding and being that thus far have been ignored by PWWII development. As in other places, development has largely failed in Africa because PWWII development has implemented a system of knowledge incompatible with the values African’s hold dear. Development values must be shared in the community in which they are implemented: “A project premised upon a set of values cannot succeed in the absence of those values.”⁶² While many development practitioners conclude that “African values are incompatible with PWWII development projects and therefore these values must go,” Matthews highlights, alternatively, that “perhaps the values ought to remain and the PWWII development project should go.”⁶³ Matthews eloquently underscores the faulty logic of

⁵⁹ Rahnema, 379.

⁶⁰ Matthews, 375.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 379.

⁶² *Ibid.*, 380.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 380.

PWWII development and, without rejecting the concept of “development,” makes clear that any alternatives to development must consider the different values, world-views, lifestyles, and diversities of the people involved.

Likewise, Erik Berg, too, believes that alternatives to development will come from the host countries themselves.⁶⁴ Like Matthews, Berg suggests that Africa’s diversity of lifestyles and worldviews already consists of the necessary elements needed to inspire working solutions to developments shortcomings. In fact, some post-development theorists trust “that many African countries, if left to their own devices, could have and can resolve their own problems within the framework of their existing worldview.”⁶⁵ What Berg highlights is the necessity for people to develop themselves; that development is not something you do to others, but is something you do to yourself. As mentioned earlier, the need for development was initially diagnosed from without. This need has now become internalized within the Global South. But, development as perceived from without will never succeed and nor will development premised on a set of values that are incompatible with people’s needs and aspirations. The celebrity humanitarian has fallen into the same trap as other development practitioners. Instead of pursuing alternatives to development in kind, celebrities have only engaged in differences in degree. While celebrity humanitarian initiatives have been idealized as a ground-breaking for development, their actions are none other than a different constellation of the same elements. However, the celebrity’s relationship to development is not inconsequential. The relationship between the celebrity and capitalist consumerism only furthers perpetuates the discourses of development and encourages “giving” through consumption as a means to development.

⁶⁴ Erik Berg, “Post-Development Theory in Africa,” *Peace Review* 19 (2007): 541-554.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 546.

Celebrity Humanitarianism: The Commodification of the Gift

The relationship between celebrities and humanitarian development is neither incidental nor inconsequential. This alliance, while at first might seem like an innocent endeavour, has unforeseen consequences for the future welfare of developing countries. Post-development theorists have criticized development as a Western construct, rationalized and disguised as the necessary and inevitable process of modernity. Moreover, while development represents the process of necessarily becoming modern, the celebrity epitomizes the potential of the individual living in a modern, democratic, and capitalist world. Therefore, it is not coincidental that the celebrity, a symbol of modernity, becomes the new spokesperson for development in the 21st century.

The modern celebrity is unlike the celebrated individuals, heroes, and leaders of the past. As a completely modern phenomenon, the celebrity is a celebration of democratic capitalism par excellence, and epitomizes the potential achievement of individual success in the modern social world. The celebrity *is* a symbol of modernity. In *The Image*, Daniel Boorstin saw an important distinction between the celebrated heroes of the past and today's celebrities.⁶⁶ While the traditional hero was self-made, the celebrity is a manufactured product of our society created to replace the lost heroes of the past and to satisfy our exaggerated expectations of human greatness. Unlike traditional heroes, "we revere [the celebrity], not because they possess charisma, divine favor, a grace or talent granted them by God, but because they *embody popular virtues*. We admire them, not because they reveal God, but because they *reveal and elevate ourselves*."⁶⁷ As our own creation, the celebrity becomes a more-publicized version of ourselves,

⁶⁶ Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo Events in America* (New York: Athenaeum, 1961).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 50 (my emphasis).

personifying those popular virtues that we already embody. Unlike the heroes of the past, the celebrity represents the universal qualities found in everyone, yet the universal is disguised as individual and, therefore, as unique. We can readily identify with celebrities because of this appeal to both the universal and the individual, something also characteristic of democratic capitalism.

For these reasons, the celebrity represents the possibility of a democratic age. While traditional heroes are anti-democratic, the celebrity, alternatively, represents the triumph of the masses. The celebrity is attainable, shared, and “touchable by the magnitude,” rather than distant and unidentifiable.⁶⁸ The celebrity is an embodiment of both the collective (popular virtues) and the individual (to reveal and elevate ourselves). Because the celebrity sign is never fully fixed or naturalized, the celebrity represents the empowerment of the people to shape the public sphere symbolically. The celebrity is a powerful symbol of modern *democratic* capitalism.

The modern celebrity exists through its relationship to democratic capitalism. The superficial meaning of the celebrity, the inter-exchangeability of any particular celebrity, and the ephemeral quality of the celebrity sign all reveal the celebrity as a product, or rather a *commodity*, of capitalism itself. The celebrity, like the commodity, lacks any real material basis, represents pure exchange value, and is based on false cultural value. The celebrity commodity is dependent on a culture based in consumption. David Marshall explains that “the celebrity exists above the real world, in the realm of symbols that gain and lose value like commodities on the stock market.”⁶⁹ However, this value is authenticated by housing a “real” person within the sign construction. At the same time, this material reality—the real person housed in the celebrity

⁶⁸ David Marshall, ed., *The Celebrity Culture Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 6.

⁶⁹ David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 6.

sign—disappears into a cultural formation of meaning.⁷⁰ The actual person is of little significance, since any particular celebrity is easily replaceable. Instead, Marshall suggests that the “celebrity-function,” like Foucault’s “author-function,” acts to “legitimate the illegitimate domains of the personal and individual within the social.”⁷¹ If the celebrity is, as Boorstin suggests, an embodiment of ourselves, then the celebrity becomes a site where we can rationalize those irrational aspects of our identity into specific categories that we can identify with, making the individual a legitimate formation within the social. Therefore, the celebrity not only rationalizes capitalism by becoming a commodity itself, but also legitimates the individual’s participation in consumer capitalism.

Like consumer capitalism, the celebrity promotes the myth of individualism and success within a world of mass production and sameness. Richard Dyer explains that “that star is universally individualized, for the star is the representation of the potential of the individual.”⁷² The celebrity’s endorsement of individualism makes consumer capitalism desirable, appealing, and attractive. Richard Dyer describes how individualism is promoted by both the celebrity and capitalism:

From the time of the Enlightenment, Western thought has concentrated on affirming the concept of the individual. Despite evidence to the contrary—the disintegration of individual power through the establishment of mass society—the individual continues to represent the ideological center of capitalist culture. The freedom of the individual is articulated through the freedom to choose what one consumes, or, alternatively, the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 57.

⁷¹ Ibid., 57.

⁷² Ibid., 17.

freedom to make money. Thus, the star is an ideological shoring up of this triumphant individuality.⁷³

That it is possible to achieve individualism and success through consumer capitalism is demonstrated by the celebrity, even if everything about capitalism suggests the contrary. As Marshall states, “the celebrity as a public individual who participates openly as a marketable commodity serves as a powerful type of legitimization of the political economic model of exchange value—the basis of capitalism—and extends that model to include the individual.”⁷⁴ This relationship, among the celebrity, capitalism, and individualism, when aligned with development, is dangerous; it presents a false promise of global success attainable through further consumerism.

Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the star system is meant to epitomize the potential of everyone in American society, but “the dialectical reality is that the star is part of a system of false promise in the system of capital, which offers the reward of stardom to a random few in order to perpetuate the myth of potential universal success.”⁷⁵ Although Adorno and Horkheimer provide a crude analysis of the star system and capitalism generally, presenting “the masses” as “cultural dupes” open and susceptible to these forms of manipulation, their analysis is not entirely misguided. While Adorno and Horkheimer ignore the agency of the audience, they correctly identify the star system as a symbol for universal and celebrated success. However, history has shown that universal success is not inevitable of consumer capitalism, either.

⁷³ As cited in Marshall, 17-18.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, x.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

Development presents a similar story. Based on mainstream development ideals, it is presumed that the whole world can and wants to become part of the modernizing race to, too, achieve the benefits of an industrial world. However, in like-mind to Adorno and Horkheimer, Serge Latouche remarks quite lucidly that “after having invited everyone, willing or unwilling, to participate in the Olympic Games of social life, the machine abandons the losers to their fate.”⁷⁶ Development has proved that attaining a middle class lifestyle for the majority of the world’s population is impossible if not undesirable. The celebrity, therefore, symbolizes an impossible ideal. Presenting consumer capitalism, embodied by the celebrity, as the answer to world poverty largely ignores the inequalities and discriminations that have manifested from this system of capital in the so called “developed” world today, and ignores the effects that this economic model will have for the development of the rest of the world. In addition, consumerist ideals are, for most parts of the world, incompatible with long-standing cultural worldviews. Consumerism promotes individual rather than collective well-being; equates happiness and success with commodities rather than personal relations and community; and presents unnecessary wants as necessary needs and consumer rights. While collective over-consumption has been identified as an international problem, responsible for global climate change, environmental destruction, toxic waste, and the depletion of the world’s resources, it continues to be presented as the answer to development, rather than as a major inhibitor to development.

The celebrity is highly invested in consumer capitalism, as both a commodity to be consumed and to promote further consumption. Through celebrity humanitarianism, consumption and consumerist ideals are presented as the way toward development both implicitly and explicitly, as will be shown in the following celebrity case studies. Drawing on

⁷⁶ Latouche, 118.

themes of the gift and post-development theory, I will show that celebrity humanitarianism is the wrong answer to the problems of “underdevelopment” and only further perpetuates the forms of inequality, domination, and dependency already present in the Global South. The impact and influence of celebrity humanitarianism is immense. The celebrity, as the new endorser for international development, has become a symbol of modernity and represents the potential of the individual in this new modern and “developed” world. Who better, then, than the celebrity to endorse development practices that are built on the same modern ideals of progress, rationality, individualism, and success that the celebrity itself embodies. Unfortunately, alternatives to development cannot and will not be found in a culture based in consumption.

CHAPTER TWO: OPRAH WINFREY'S 'O'CADEMY

COMMODIFIED EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR DEVELOPMENT

Education is the path to the future. I believe that education is indeed freedom. With God's help, these girls will be the future leaders on the path to peace in South Africa and the world.¹

Oprah Winfrey

The school system...became one of the most important vehicles of development strategy, being presented to the excluded as the answer to all the problems of their 'underdevelopment,' the redeeming genie which could henceforth save their children from misery and shame. In reality, schools served other purposes.²

Majid Rahnema

Oprah Winfrey is a world renowned American television host, media mogul, and philanthropist. According to *Forbes* magazine, Winfrey is the most powerful and influential woman in the world, worth an estimated \$1.5 billion.³ As arguably the most influential woman in America, Winfrey is not shy to share her visions, beliefs, and ideals with the world through her multiple media outlets including *The Oprah Show* and *O Magazine* among other. Over the last year, Winfrey created and produced *The Big Give*, a reality television show that aired in winter 2008; taught a first-of-a-kind world-wide online class with Eckhart Tolle, author of the new age spiritual novel, *A New Awakening*; and is now making plans for the Oprah Winfrey Network (OWN) that is scheduled to debut in 2009. However, her most praised project in recent years has

¹ Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy Foundation, "Fact Sheet," Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls, 2 January 2007. http://oprahwinfreyleadershipacademy.ophilanthropy.org/site/DocServer/fact_sheet_200710.pdf (accessed 15 January 2008).

² Majid Rahnema with Victoria Bawtree, ed., *The Post-Development Reader* (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997), 158.

³ Matthew Miller, ed., "The Celebrity 100," *Forbes*, 11 June 2008. http://www.forbes.com/2008/06/11/most-powerful-celebrities-lists-celebrities08-cx_mn_0611c_land.html (accessed 30 June 2006); "#1 Oprah," *Forbes*, 14 June 2007. http://www.forbes.com/lists/2007/53/07celebrities_Oprah-Winfrey_O0ZT.html (accessed 30 June 2006).

been the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for girls in South Africa, which opened last year on January 2, 2007.

The proposal to build Winfrey's dream school began in 2000, during a visit with Nelson Mandela, where Winfrey pledged \$10 million dollars to build a school for girls in South Africa. Two years later, on December 6, 2002, Nelson Mandela and then Minister of Education Professor Kadar Asmal joined Winfrey to break ground on the new site in Henley-on-Klip, South Africa.⁴ The school is dedicated to providing a privileged education for young girls who are economically disadvantaged but not poor in mind or spirit and who have shown academic and leadership qualities in their previous studies despite their disadvantaged backgrounds. Of 5,500 applications distributed amongst nine provinces, 3,500 girls applied. For consideration, the girls had to be the appropriate age and education level to enter grades seven or eight, with a total household income of no more than R5000 per month (US \$650 dollars).⁵ The Leadership Academy has no tuition or boarding fees. After interviewing 484 candidates, 152 girls were accepted. Currently the school has 148 enrolled learners and will expand each year until it reaches its full capacity in 2011 with approximately 450 girls in grades seven through twelve.⁶

Over the course of construction, Winfrey's original \$10 million dollar pledge grew to \$40 million dollars after the size and scope of her vision increased.⁷ As a result, the initial public-private partnership with the Gauteng Department of Education collapsed and the Leadership Academy was signed over to Winfrey in August 2006 as an independent school.⁸ Set on 52 acres

⁴ Harpo Productions, Inc., "Press Release: Oprah Winfrey, Nelson Mandela and South Africa's Ministry of Education Break Ground for the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls—South Africa," Oprah.com, 6 December 2006. http://www.Oprah.com/about/press/about_press_academy.jhtml (accessed 12 January 2008).

⁵ Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy Foundation, "Fact Sheet."

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

of land in Henley-on-Klip, the 28 building campus includes state-of-the-art classrooms, computer and science laboratories, modern dormitory facilities, a 10,000-volume library, a 600-seat theatre, an outdoor amphitheatre, a gymnasium, a wellness center, a dining hall, and sports fields.⁹ The buildings are designed with learners in mind and built with natural materials to maintain the architectural integrity of the surrounding community. When possible, the school materials and goods are bought locally to benefit the economic development of local communities. The curriculum, based on South Africa's national standards, offers classes in mathematics, natural science, and technology; arts and culture; social, economic, and management sciences; life orientation and leadership; and languages.¹⁰ The classes are geared toward preparation for international university education, in which Winfrey has agreed to pay.¹¹ Based on a fifteen-to-one student to teacher ratio, the faculty includes eighteen South African educators.¹²

The Leadership Academy is dedicated to the future development of women African leaders. In an official press release, Winfrey states that "one of the world's most important resources is its young people, and I believe education gives young people a greater voice in their own lives, and helps them to create a brighter future for themselves and their communities."¹³ Winfrey claims that this school will provide a future for these girls that they could never have dreamed. In a *CNN* interview, Winfrey remarked: "I can't even imagine what is going to happen

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Jonathan Clayton, "Oprah Plays Fairy Godmother So Her 'It Girls' Can Rise From Poverty," *The Times London*, 3 January 2007, 31.

¹² Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy Foundation, "Fact Sheet."

¹³ Harpo Productions, Inc.

to them. Their future is so bright, it burns my eyes.”¹⁴ Winfrey does not doubt that these girls will succeed. By giving a few lucky girls this special opportunity, Winfrey is hopeful to show that “where you come from, your circumstances, your situation, doesn’t define you, because I have been a living example, based on all of the blessings I have been able to receive, blessings and opportunities, to—to change my situation, my poverty situation, and what poverty told me I was.”¹⁵ Likewise, Nelson Mandela is optimistic of the Leadership Academy’s potential:

This school will provide opportunities to some of our young people they could never imagine, had it not been for Oprah...The key to any country’s future is in educating its youth. Oprah is therefore not only investing in a few young individuals, but in the future of our country. We are indebted to her for her selfless efforts. This is a lady that has, despite her own disadvantaged background, become one of the benefactors of the disadvantaged throughout the world and we should congratulate her for that.¹⁶

By educating just one girl, the belief is that you can educate and change a family, a community, and a nation. While the vision and goals of the Leadership Academy are commendable, it has been criticized for numerous reasons from both inside and outside Africa. Both the lavishness and the location of the school have been leading targets of popular criticism, while Winfrey’s uninformed understanding and lack of knowledge about the local community she is working within, its people’s values, worldviews, needs, and desires, result in the same

¹⁴ Oprah Winfrey, interview by Anderson Cooper, “Oprah’s Promise: Building Hope in South Africa,” *Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees*, CNN, 7 January 2007. <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0701/08/acd.01.html> (accessed 15 January 2008).

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy Foundation, “Press Release: Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls—South Africa Celebrates its Official Opening,” Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls, 2 January 2007. http://OprahwinfreyLeadershipacademy.o-philanthropy.org/academy_opening_200701.pdf (accessed 12 January 2008).

development problems and setbacks that post-development theorists have addressed for the last two decades. One major setback of the PWWII development project is that development projects “cannot succeed unless the values which inform them are shared by the community in which they are implemented,” as described by Sally Matthews.¹⁷ The celebrity humanitarian is no better able to succeed in development than other activists who come from outside a community and attempt to implement their pre-packaged solutions without the consultation of local people.

While commendable in its ideal, Winfrey’s Leadership Academy is nothing more than another misguided response to “problems” of “underdevelopment” in Africa. For one, Winfrey’s consumerist and individualistic ideals have encroached on all aspects of the Leadership Academy from its planning to policies to principles. While Winfrey presents education as that redeeming genie which will empower a new generation of youth in South Africa, she fails to understand the negative effects of universal education and consumption. Winfrey is optimistic that through education, the girls of the Leadership Academy will transform South Africa and beyond, becoming leaders for world peace. However, at a closer analysis, commodified education can do as much harm as good for South Africa.

Education is as emancipating as it is discriminatory. Presented as available and accessible to all, the gift of education easily becomes an instrument of inequality, superiority, and exclusivity. The benefits of general education and learning are not at question here, but commodified education, exemplified by Winfrey’s Leadership Academy, as the way to achieve development is debated for three reasons. First, as an example of outsider arrogance, the school provides the wrong answer to the community’s needs and aspirations. Second, education is

¹⁷ Sally Matthews, “Post-Development Theory and the Question of Alternatives: A View from Africa,” *Third World Quarterly* 25 (2004): 373-84.

presented as a scarce commodity reserved for the privileged few. And third, the Leadership Academy promotes consumerist ideals that benefit Winfrey's celebrity rather than the development of Africa. Through presenting education as a commodity and by commodifying education, Winfrey has produced a system of exclusion at her school resulting in further inequality, domination, and humiliation for the learners at the Leadership Academy, their local communities, and South Africa. While few question Winfrey's sincerity, I will show how Winfrey's gift of education, while beneficial to Winfrey and her celebrity, has harmful effects for both its beneficiaries and the surrounding community of South Africa.

Education, Community, and the Gifts of Outsiders

From the very beginning, Winfrey ignored local input and criticism relying on her own outsider's view of what the Leadership Academy should look like and how it should function, creating local contention among Winfrey and the South African community. The press, the South African government, the school officials, and even the local architects, who all believed that the school was too excessive and extravagant for impoverished girls in Africa, criticized Winfrey's materialism. According to Winfrey, developers kept sending her "plans for a school that resembled a chicken coop."¹⁸ In actuality, the developers sent Winfrey plans for a school that they felt were appropriate, given the number of girls admitted. However, in Winfrey's opinion, they did not understand her vision. As a result, the developers criticized Winfrey, suggesting that these girls do not need all of this excess space. In response, Winfrey states that the beautiful surroundings are necessary to inspire greatness in the future leaders of South Africa. In line with post-development thought, one news reporter, John Donnelly, states that "Winfrey's gift ignored

¹⁸ Allison Samuels, "Oprah Goes to School," *Newsweek*, 8 January 2007. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/56724> * (accessed 12 January 2008).

a time-tested path to succeeding with development aid: Communities themselves must identify ways outsiders can help, not vice versa.”¹⁹ Likewise, a local African activist, interviewed by Donnelly, states that “the initiative of individual Americans like Winfrey are very welcome, but they need to do much more research locally to be able to see the most effective way of reaching out to many.”²⁰ Due to the size and money spent on the Leadership Academy, Oprah was criticized for not accommodating many more children. Many activists and community members from within South Africa and the United States were appalled that Winfrey spent so much money on one school. On budgets of less than \$100,000 dollars, African charities are helping thousands of children by providing meals, uniforms, after-school activities and such. Like the developers, many groups in the community were very active in suggesting alternative ways forward for Winfrey, including how to stretch her money further to accommodate more students. Unwilling to acknowledge the community’s appeals, Winfrey simply states that “I understand that many in the [South African] school system and out feel that I’m going overboard, and that’s fine,” she told reporters. “This is what I want to do.”²¹ While Winfrey can choose to spend her money as she wishes, she fails to understand that most development projects fail when outsiders attempt to implement their own projects without local guidance.

Winfrey’s misguided understanding of the community’s needs, values, and worldviews was manifested in complaints by the students’ parents about visitation policies and personal phone calls. The Leadership Academy is a boarding school and, as a result, the students are already isolated from their families, friends, and local communities. In addition, the Leadership Academy’s visitation policies are strict. The girls are allegedly allowed visits with family for two

¹⁹ John Donnelly, “Outside Oprah’s School, A Growing Frustration: Critics in Africa Urge Wider Impact,” *Boston Globe*, 20 January 2007.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

hours once a month, four visitors per student, and approved two weeks in advance to limit disruption on campus. Regardless of the actual policy, some critics saw this disconnect from the community as an early warning sign for the abuse that took place on campus in the fall of 2007. Last fall, a dorm matron was charged with thirteen cases of indecent assault and assault and criminal injury against six students at the Leadership Academy between the ages of thirteen and fifteen and a fellow twenty-three year old dorm matron. It is unlikely that the abuse was a direct result of the students' isolation from their community. South Africa has high statistics of abuse. Abuse among minors accounted for 40% of the 55,000 cases of abuse reported in 2006.²² Therefore, this is only one instance of abuse among an ongoing and often underrepresented national problem. However, this incident received unprecedented media attention and created much controversy, especially since Winfrey herself was molested as child. Winfrey is very adamant about communicating one's abuse and making publically known criminally charged child abusers. In fact, Winfrey helped initiate the National Child Protection Act in 1991, a national database of convicted child abusers, and she initiated "Winfrey's Child Protector Watch List" to help track down accused child molesters through her website.²³ It is not surprising then, that when a case of child abuse took place on her campus, Winfrey was beyond devastated.

A Case of Abuse at the Academy

Winfrey envisioned the Leadership Academy as a safe and nurturing environment that would foster the development and education of young girls. However, due to the miscommunication between Winfrey and the faculty at the Leadership Academy, as well as the girls' disconnect from their local community, the Leadership Academy became a place fear and

²² Innocent Madawo, "Lots to Learn About Education in Africa," *Toronto Sun*, 7 November 2007, 20.

²³ Time Inc., "Oprah Winfrey Biography," *People*, 2008. http://www.people.com/people/oprah_winfrey/biography (accessed 15 July 2008).

repression in the months leading up to the arrest of the abusive dorm matron. In response to the abuse, Winfrey has provided full disclosure of the press conference proceedings that took place on November 5, 2007, which can be found on the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy Foundation website.²⁴ Allegedly, when students first brought their complaints of abuse to authorities within the school, including the head mistress, they were told “not to bother Ms. Winfrey” with their grievances. Since the girls felt that their voices were not being heard by other adults on the campus, greater communication and visitation with their families and friends would have perhaps helped to identify the abuse sooner. Once the allegations did reach Winfrey, the head mistress was put on a leave of absence and her contract was not renewed, while all dorm matrons were removed from the school. Winfrey acknowledged that “[the girls] had apparently been living in an atmosphere that repressed their voices.”²⁵ Clearly, Winfrey’s vision of the Leadership Academy was not shared by the faculty and staff responsible for the day-to-day operations of the school. In a country like South Africa, where the stigma of abuse still looms large and can have devastating consequences for those affected, communicating abuse is not always an easy option.

Winfrey, who was raped by a cousin by the age of nine and later molested by an uncle and a family friend, was devastated by the abuse claims. She took immediate action by hiring professional investigators from both South Africa and the United States to conduct an inquiry into the alleged abuse in cooperation with the South African Police Services. Winfrey has stated, looking back, that the screening process for dorm matrons was inadequate, even though she required criminal background checks and she is now rehiring the staff at the Leadership

²⁴ Oprah Winfrey et al., “Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls Press Conference,” Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy Foundation, 5 November 2007. http://OprahwinfreyLeadershipacademy.org-philanthropy.org/site/DocServer/transcript_20071105.pdf?docID=681 (accessed 20 January 2008).

²⁵ Ibid.

Academy. She is going to do whatever is necessary “to make sure that the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls becomes the safe, the nurturing, and enriched setting that [she] had envisioned.”²⁶ Winfrey stated at the press conference: “What I know is, is that no one, not the accused, nor any persons can destroy the dream that I have held and the dream that each girl continues to hold for herself at this school.”²⁷ Unfortunately, hiring new staff may not keep this type of incident from occurring in the future. Oprah cannot expect the staff and teachers at the Leadership Academy to share the same values and beliefs about communicating abuse, as she does. Different communities and cultures have different ways of handling such a situation.

This event of abuse highlights one instance in which Winfrey did not have all the information she needed to know about running a school in South Africa where, for one, background checks are difficult because there is no long standing identification system from birth to school to work, and where students have been taught that the authority of the head mistress is indisputable, as one critic, Innocent Madawo, highlights.²⁸ While Winfrey claims that the buck stops with her, in fact, the buck stops with the head of the institution who can take the law onto him or herself in Winfrey’s absence. In addition, aware of the high rates of abuse in South Africa, Winfrey claimed that she and others spent a lot of time and money building walls and keeping predators out, including the community. But, like most cases of abuse, child abuse most often occurs within the home or by people well known to the victim. By secluding the girls and keeping them from talking and visiting with family, in which the abuse may have been identified sooner, instead, the staff told the girls to keep quite within the Academy, contradicting

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Madawo.

Winfrey's own moral principles. Winfrey has now given the girls a personal cell phone with her private number to get in touch with her in a future emergency.

While Winfrey was clearly devastated by these events, having been molested herself, abuse was able to fester on campus as a result of the miscommunication and conflicting values between Winfrey and the people she hired to manage the school. Winfrey also underestimated and minimized the role of community in connection with education and what effects this has for the nourishment and well-being of students. I use this example not to suggest that this one incident is indicative of why Winfrey's development project will fail. Of course abuse can happen anywhere, but this event does reveal some of the unsuspected and less obvious problems that can manifest as a result of different ways of knowing and understanding based on different values and ideals.

While this event is easy to identify and critique, the long-standing effects of separating students from their community are more insidious. It has worried many parents from the start that the students will become disconnected from their families and friends as a result of living in a sheltered and privileged environment. According to one critic, Mary Balikungeri, "community is the foundation of everything and education must go beyond books and academic learning, it has to be connected with communities."²⁹ One fear is that these students will become part of the elite that do not value the masses. Majid Rahnema made a similar argument in the *Post-Development Reader*.³⁰ He claims that importing Western school systems into developing countries instils students "with homeopathic doses of new alienating values, attitudes and goals,

²⁹ Donnelly.

³⁰ Rahnema.

[and] drives them gradually to reject or even despise their own cultural and personal identity.”³¹ Acquiring a false sense of superiority, the schooled “elites” turn away “from manual work, from real life and from all unschooled people, whom they perceive as ignorant and underdeveloped.”³² This concern was also addressed by the students’ parents and the press, who questioned how students will adjust back to their communities after living in an atmosphere of privilege, as well as how they will identify the real problems of their communities when they are no longer part of them.³³ The fear is that the students of the Leadership Academy will end up leaving their communities for the big cities or foreign lands, abandoning the poor and the excluded of their rural communities without effecting any change for their future. When the educated, privileged, or wealthy leave Africa for “the better life” they leave behind the problems instead of becoming actors for change. In like mind, Rahnema cautions that the cultural gap created by education deprives the poor and excluded not only “of any possibility of educating themselves but also severs them forever from some of the most potentially valuable elements of their community, from people who could have been their best teachers and friends in all matters concerning their liberation.”³⁴ Retaining African values and beliefs and remaining rooted to the community will play a decisive role in whether these girls will effect change for South Africa in the future. However, Winfrey’s commodified approach to education leaves open the possibility of any or all of these outcomes, which would impede rather than facilitate the prosperity of Africa.

³¹ Ibid., 159.

³² Ibid., 159.

³³ Donnelly.

³⁴ Rahnema, 159.

Education as a Commodity: Processes of Exclusivity, Inferiority, and Superiority

According to Molefi Kete Asante, whether or not these girls will have a serious effect on the development of their local communities and the future of South Africa will depend, not on the extravagance of the school, but on the curriculum. Asante writes:

The concern I have is about the curriculum. Don't tell me we have an innovative new school built by the best architects but filled with the same old colonial, racist and white-dominated textbooks, anti-African concepts and lessons as in other schools...that will produce self-hatred and anti-African attitudes in them....Don't tell me the Greeks will be honoured as the fathers of science, art, philosophy and mathematics.

If I could offer a suggestion, let me offer this: provide the students with an Afrocentric curriculum that will prepare them to tackle the world. The first lessons for these girls should be about themselves as Africans, South Africans, related to other Africans...

Education that distances people from their culture is poison, it creates individuals who learn by rote and return to dislike their parents, despise their culture, imitate the worst habits of Europe and fail to see value in their own history...I ask these questions because I do not want to see these girls presented with lessons about African pygmies, Bushmen, primitive civilisations, black Africa or African huts. These are creations of Europeans.

They do not constitute any reality about Africa; they are the imaginations of white people...there are no primitive civilisations in Africa.³⁵

³⁵ Molefi Kete Asante, "Africa; Girls in Oprah Winfrey's Academy Must be Taught Lessons of Africa," *Africa News*, 17 January 2007.

In these paragraphs, Asante highlights a distinction between being “trained” and being “educated.” More reminiscent of educational “training,” what development has provided are pre-packaged solutions to education often based on Western ways of knowing and seeing the world through science, reason, and universal truths. As a result, other local forms of education, ways of knowing and seeing, are discredited. In addition, only those certified in the Western school-system are given the right to teach, and only those recognized by its educational criteria are admitted to learn.³⁶ One of the consequences of a universal school system is that education becomes synonymous with being schooled, and those without the educational credentials acquired through the “school system” are discriminated against.

Presented as a commodity, the school system was imposed on Africa as both a need that everyone should aspire to and as a scarcity that only few can benefit from. This commodified need, in turn, has created a system of inequality separating the schooled “elites” from the unschooled “masses.” The schooled elites are provided with social and economic privileges recognized by the social world as an indicator of development. Those unable to go to school are further humiliated by becoming marked and marking themselves as inadequate and underdeveloped. Rahnema states that:

Schooling is first offered as a scarce commodity reserved for the few. On the other hand, development does everything to give the school graduates social prestige and economic rewards. As a result, the commodity creates a need, one which responds less to the urge to learn than to a craving to be recognized by the system, and, for some, to beat the

³⁶ Rahnema, 158.

system on its own grounds. They are led to consider it as a means for gaining personal achievement and social acceptance.³⁷

As a result, the school system is exclusionary: “perceived as a source of upward social mobility, it is desired by everyone, but it actually serves people who are already “educated,” thus becoming the preserve of a small minority.”³⁸ This mode of exclusion is present at the Leadership Academy, too. Only a minute few students were given the opportunity of a privileged education at the Leadership Academy, excluding those students unable to meet the requirements of the system. The Leadership Academy facilitates to the already academically gifted and to those who have continued in school without disruption. As mentioned, the girls chosen were required to be both the appropriate age and education level to enter grades seven and eight and, in addition, the students chosen could not have a household income of more than R5000. Remaining in school without disruption is a challenge for some students depending on where they live and their life’s circumstances, especially for economically disadvantaged families like the ones targeted by the school. Of the 3,500 applicants that did measure up to these qualifications, still only 152 were admitted. Those chosen were selected by Winfrey herself, who was looking for students that demonstrated an “it” quality, unexplainable by Winfrey herself.

On the one hand, the Leadership Academy provides an incentive to be acknowledged by the system. On the other, it creates feelings of inferiority and inadequacy for the ineligible or unchosen applicants only reaffirming their underdevelopment. Neither results in desirable outcomes. Even those chosen to attend the Academy are pushed toward gaining social recognition rather than a desire for learning. The students chosen were from among the top of

³⁷ Ibid., 120.

³⁸ Joseph Ki-Zerbo et al., “Education as an Instrument of Cultural Defoliation: A Multi-Voice Report,” in *The Post Development Reader*, ed. Majid Rahnema (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997), 152-67.

their classes and now have to deal with the pressure of competing against other students as academically gifted as themselves. This pressure creates a yearning to be recognized and, if unable to maintain their previous academic positions, promotes feelings of inadequacy and inferiority for them, too.

Ivan Illich states that one problem with the school system is that it creates a system of inferiority. He describes how the only thing that students are taught by the school system is that the minority who continue in school earn the right to social recognition and greater achievement. Illich states that schooling, as best, "increases the number of those who, before dropping out, have been taught that those who stay longer have earned the right to more power, wealth and prestige. *What schooling does is teach the schooled the superiority of the better schooled.*"³⁹ Like other development strategies then, education was created as a need and was provided as an answer to underdevelopment. In reality, education has done little except remind those unable to participate of their status as underdeveloped, inferior, and inadequate. I am confident that some students will benefit from Winfrey's gift of education and use it for liberating ends. But, the failure of education to liberate the majority represents its inability to act as an impartial vehicle for development, instead serving as an instrument of further inequality and exclusion.

In the end, those who graduate from the Leadership Academy will have the commodified educational package and credentials sought after by the world's leading industries and businesses. But this will have few effects for the well-being of Africa. When education becomes synonymous with being schooled, we lose the benefits of different ways of knowing and seeing the world, different worldviews that may just turn out to be Africa's own answer to its

³⁹ Ivan Illich, "Development as Planned Poverty," in *The Post-Development Reader*, ed. Majid Rahnema (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997), 96.

development. So while I do not doubt that these girls' lives will be forever changed by Winfrey's gift, I am less confident that the development of Africa will benefit as a result of the arrogance of outsider's help.

Development for most sub-Saharan African countries has thus far produced few results. Not all development strategies have failed, but ultimately it has not produced the results that it promised over forty years ago. In defence of development, people cite the improvement of literacy rates and decreased infant mortality rates. However, poverty and inequality continues to plague Africa. One reason is that most fail to understand that some of the basic values that underlie development projects are not universal, including the values that inform universal education. Emmanuel Seni N'Dione et al describe how development models all share certain characteristics including an economic conception of time; competition between individuals; universalizing claims; individual success as perceived as a value; the commodification of people and things; compartmentalization of life; and the hegemony of international languages.⁴⁰ It should be clear by now that Winfrey's Leadership Academy follows these same development assumptions. When development projects are implemented by people with the illusion that as an outsider they can view the reality of the situation objectively, they fail to understand that their vision, which seems so natural to them, is a product of their own culture and worldview; that needs and rights as diagnosed from without are not universally accepted.

In communities where Western, individual, and abstract rights are inconceivable since collective well-being, legitimate hierarchies of elders, and long-standing customs takes precedent, "development needs" fail to address a community's real desires and can invade the

⁴⁰ Emmanuel Seni N'Dione et al., "Reinventing the Present: The Chodak Experience in Senegal," in *The Post-Development Reader*, ed. Majid Rahnama (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997), 364-76.

lives and environments of the people living in these places. In development, basic needs are first attached to food, water, and shelter, and then to health care and education, well-being and justice, want and desire. Those “wants” once thought unnecessary, soon become presented as essential “needs” in development. The greater number of needs created, including education, the more underdeveloped a country becomes, knowing in advance that those needs cannot be met.

Marketers have long sold us commodities advertised as necessities. However, while it is easy to condemn the marketing of foreign products on developing countries, why is it then, as Illich remarks, that “the same man that feels indignation at the sight of a coca-cola plant in a Latin American slum often feels pride at the sight of a new normal school growing up alongside...the same man is willing to impose schooling—at all costs—on his fellow citizens, and is unaware of the invisible licence by which this institution is deeply enmeshed in the world market.”⁴¹

Education is nothing more than a “patent” product reified from a real need to a mass produced commodity; “once they have monopolized demand in this way, they can never satisfy majority needs,” according to Illich.⁴²

The Socio-Environmental Consequences of Consumption for the Global South

The relationship between education and consumption is twofold. Not only is education offered as a commodity as described, but education has become commodified. The commodification of education leads to the deepening and widening of a consumer culture and the ideals that propel it to all areas of social life and throughout the developing world. Consumerism, as a result, has become an indicator of development. Winfrey promotes commodities as both a sign of development and as a means to development. First, through her own example, Winfrey

⁴¹ Illich, 97.

⁴² Ibid., 97.

shows that commodities can define one's identity and success. During the opening ceremonies of the Leadership Academy, and with numerous celebrities in attendance, Winfrey was dressed to impress in a long pink gown and drop-diamond earrings. Winfrey claims that she dressed to inspire, to show the girls what they can become if given the opportunity. Winfrey tends to confuse success with commodities and wealth. In addition, the commodified surroundings of the Leadership Academy surpass the basic comforts necessary to attain a high-quality education. Winfrey has been insistent that the Leadership Academy have the best of everything. She personally sat on every mattress, felt every sheet set, and tested every light to make sure that they were up to her standards. When the trees she ordered were too small she returned them promptly, insistent that they would not produce adequate shade around the campus. When asked why she built one extravagant school rather than ten modest schools, she responded "these girls deserve to be surrounded by beauty, and beauty does inspire."⁴³ In addition, Winfrey has also provided the girls with empty closets and drawers that they will now have the opportunity to fill. Her reasoning: "They have nothing. And my idea was to understand that, yes, you come from nothing, but, oh, what a something you will become if given the opportunity."⁴⁴ Winfrey's vision is consistent with consumer capitalist ideals; that success is defined by what one can consume. One day, these girls' success will, too, be defined by what they have put in their "drawers."

Access to such a privileged, excessive, and indulgent environment confuses needs with wants in a time when the world is being cautioned to cut-back on excessive consumption. Winfrey's consumerist habits and ideals contribute toward many of the obstacles developing countries face. Due to anthropogenic factors, climate change is affecting Africa's ability to

⁴³ Samuels.

⁴⁴ Oprah Winfrey, interview by Diane Sawyer, "Oprah in South Africa; Meet 'Oprah's Girls,'" *Good Morning America*, 3 January 2007.

flourish and develop. In fact, as a by-product of Western detrimental consumption habits, climate change will affect “the poorest countries and most vulnerable citizens [who] will suffer the earliest and most damaging setbacks, even though they have contributed least to the problem.”⁴⁵

Winfrey’s Leadership Academy further encourages consumerist values, deepening and widening the consumer culture already responsible for so much abuse on earth. If the whole Global South were to consume what the richest countries consume we would require more planets. Limiting consumption in the richest countries would have a greater effect on the “development” of developing countries than will building a school that further promotes consumer ideals.

Celebrities, like Winfrey, profit from their relationship to both consumption and humanitarianism. In fact, these themes tend to reinforce one another for Winfrey. However, the self-interested nature of consumerism contradicts the altruistic character of humanitarianism. Besides the Leadership Academy, Winfrey has dedicated much time and effort to charitable foundations and programs. Through the Oprah Winfrey Scholars Program, Winfrey gives scholarship to students determined to give back to their community within the United States and abroad; through her private charity, the Oprah Winfrey Foundation, Winfrey provides grants to organizations to support the education and empowerment of women and children around the world; and through her public charity, Oprah’s Angel Network, Winfrey sends 100% of audiences donations to non-profit organizations across the globe.⁴⁶ As a result, she has acquired a “humanitarian” persona that compliments her already familiar celebrity personality. Building a school for impoverished black girls in South Africa is the ultimate example, bringing together all

⁴⁵ United Nations Development Program, “Fighting Climate Change: Human Solidarity in a Divided World,” *Human Development Report*, 2007/2008. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2007-2008/> (accessed 20 April 2008).

⁴⁶ Harpo Productions Inc., “About Oprah: Philanthropist,” Oprah.com, http://www.oprah.com/about/press/about_press_bio.jhtml (accessed 1 July 2008).

of the identifiers that make up her social and cultural milieu: the empowerment of women, especially black women from disadvantaged backgrounds who have experienced abuse and poverty. Winfrey's humanitarian work curtails public attention away from her own over-commodified life and her relationship to the commodity.

In fact, Winfrey's celebrity is the product of a consumer-capitalist culture. The celebrity is not only a product of, but also *a commodity* of capitalism, as described in chapter two. We should remember then that the celebrity commodity is dependent on a culture based in consumption. If the existence of the celebrity depends on a culture of consumption it is, therefore, only practical for the celebrity to continue to promote this culture. Winfrey excels at the marketing of consumerism. The yearly show dedicated to "Oprah's Favorite Things" is an excellent example of how Winfrey markets particular brands and products on her show. More effective still, is Winfrey's daily endorsement of her favourite new commodity that America should not live without. For Winfrey, it is not so much about endorsing a certain product or brand, but about encouraging consumption in general. Winfrey's humanitarianism works to balance this obsession with the commodity. As a result, Winfrey has been very successful in playing with and transforming the social, cultural, and economic resources at her disposal. To this end, she excels at familiarizing herself with her diverse audiences. At any point during her TV show, Winfrey can play the black woman, the rich woman, or the poor woman; she can be African, American, or African-American; she is both a woman who was abused and a woman who has overcome abuse; she is both a single, independent woman and a committed woman; she is a woman who has no children because her dogs are her children, but now the girls of Africa are her children.

Winfrey has stated:

I never had children, never even thought I would have children. Now I have 152 daughters; expecting 75 more next year. That is some type of gestation period!...I said to the mothers, the family members, the aunts, the grannies—because most of these girls have lost their families, their parents—I said to them, ‘Your daughters are now my daughters and I promise you I’m going to take care of your daughters. I promise you.’⁴⁷

As the newly adoptive mother of these girls, Winfrey tends to paint a picture about Africa that without her intervention, the continent is doomed. Africa is portrayed as a place in need of “our” saving, and Winfrey perceives herself as the all encompassing mother who is going to save these children from their misery and shame. This type of representation not only misrepresents Africa, but humiliates its inhabitants will to self-sustain. African communities become dependent on the gifts of outsiders, who are unaware of their true needs and desires. Trusting her own vision rather than that of the local school board, local government, local architects, and parents is not only an arrogant, but a misguided approach to development. As a result, the Leadership Academy has created a divide between the community and the school that is only further exacerbated by offering up education as a commodity and through the commodification of education. While Winfrey continues to benefit from her humanitarian work socially and economically, people fail to understand the processes of inequality and exclusivity that manifest from charitable giving, especially in places where worldviews and ways of life are different from our own. People also fail to understand how our ways of life, including Western consumer habits, infringe on the lives of others, as will be elaborated on in the following chapter. For

⁴⁷ Associated Press, “Oprah Talks About Her South African ‘Dreamgirls,’” *ABC*, 3 January 2007. <http://abclocal.go.com/kgo/story?section=news/entertainment&id=4901853> (accessed 15 July 2008).

communities and places where other ways of being, different ways of knowing, and diverse ways of acting are different from our own Western lifestyles, commodified education is not always a gift and is not necessarily a marker of success. Violence is done when education becomes commodified, particularly, when that commodity is disguised as a gift.

CHAPTER THREE: CELEB(RED)TY ACTIVISM

BONO, PRODUCT (RED), AND SHOPPING FOR A CAUSE

As first world consumers, we have tremendous power. What we collectively choose to buy or not to buy, can change the course of a life and history on this planet.¹

Paul (Bono) Hewson

20th century advertising is the most powerful and sustained system of propaganda in human history and its cumulative cultural effects, unless quickly checked, will be responsible for destroying the world as we know it. As it achieves this it will be responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of non-Western peoples and will prevent the peoples of the world from achieving true happiness. **Simply stated, our survival as a species is dependent upon minimizing the threat from advertising and the commercial culture that has spawned it.**²

Sut Jhally

Paul David Hewson, known by his stage name Bono, is the lead singer of the Irish rebellious rock band U2. Aside from his music, Bono is also well known for his political activism in Africa. Bono has been active in development politics for over a decade, fighting for Third World debt relief and the plight against poverty and HIV/AIDS in Africa. He is the co-founder of DATA (Debt, Aids, Trade, Africa), EDUN, a socially conscious clothing company, and the ONE campaign to make poverty history.³ With his band U2, Bono has participated in numerous benefit concerts for Africa including Band Aid in 1984 and LIVE AID in 1985, which were organized by Bob Geldof, a fellow Irish singer and political activist. In 2005, Bono collaborated with Geldof and organized Live 8 to petition G8 leaders to help make poverty

¹ Product (RED), "The (RED) Manifesto," 2008. <http://www.joinred.com/manifesto/> (accessed June 12 2008).

² Sut Jhally, "Advertising at the Edge of the Apocalypse." <http://www.sutjhally.com/articles/advertisingattheedge/> (accessed 12 February 2008).

³ Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa, 2007. <http://www.data.org/> (accessed 1 July 2008); EDUN, 2005. <http://www.edunonline.com/collection.aspx> (accessed 1 July 2008); ONE, <http://www.one.org/international/> (accessed, 1 July 2008).

history by 2010. Bono has been nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize and was granted an honorary knighthood by the United Kingdom for his humanitarian work and political activism.

In 2006, Bono and Bobby Shriver, a friend, business partner, and member of the Kennedy family, proposed a new global agenda to fight against poverty and AIDS in Africa, using the private sector and good corporate citizenship. This new business model for development is called Product (RED). According to Bono, (RED) is a different approach to development that relies not on politicians and policy, but on corporations and consumers. (RED) has teamed up with global empires including American Express, Apple, Converse, Hallmark, Motorola, Microsoft, Dell, Gap, and Emporio Armani to help to raise money for the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The brand (RED) is licensed to partner companies, who then create a (RED) product; a portion of the profits from this product will go to the Global Fund. For example, every time an American Express card holder uses their credit card, American Express will donate 1% of their total spending to the Global Fund, Gap will donate 50% of profits from its (RED) products, and Dell/Microsoft will donate \$50-\$80 depending on the (RED) computer sold.⁴ As a business model, (RED) was created to encourage the private sector to become more active in global politics and use its marketing power and profits to address AIDS in Africa. Through moral consumerism, (RED) advocates that we as consumers can each be responsible for saving a life in Africa by buying a new t-shirt, cell phone, or iPod.

According to the statistics cited by (RED), 33.2 million people are living with HIV/AIDS throughout the world and 22.5 million (68%) of those people live in Africa.⁵ With approximately

⁴ Product (RED), "Products," 2008. <http://www.joinred.com/products/> (accessed 11 May 2008).

⁵ Product (RED), "Fact Sheet," 2008. <http://www.joinred.com/red/factsheet.asp> (accessed 11 May 2008).

4,400 people dying in Africa every day from AIDS, this disease is a leading cause of death. While HIV/AIDS is a preventable and treatable disease, many people living in Africa do not have the means to buy and administer the medicine necessary. According to Bono, it costs forty cents a day to fund the two pills needed to keep someone with HIV in Africa alive. However, 70% of the people living in sub-Saharan Africa live on less than two dollars a day and cannot afford the medicine. Through the Global Fund, (RED) money is used to finance AIDS programs in Africa. Money so far raised from (RED) is providing antiretroviral treatment for HIV positive individuals, funding HIV prevention programs, helping feed and educate children orphaned by AIDS, and providing low-cost treatments that reduce the risk of transmitting HIV during childbirth. To date, over \$60 million dollars has been generated from (RED) partners which is being put to use in Ghana, Swaziland, Rwanda and now Lesotho, who have received AIDS grants from the Global Fund.⁶ According to Bono and Shriver, (RED) is not a charity but a business model aimed at delivering a sustainable flow of private sector money into the Global Fund, which was receiving less than 1% from private businesses prior to (RED). Bono's logic is simple: "You buy the jeans, phones, iPods, shoes, sunglasses, and someone—somebody's mother, father, daughter or son—will live instead of dying in the poorest part of the world. It's a different kind of fashion statement."⁷

Through consumerism, Bono believes that (RED) will, as a result of saving individual lives in Africa, promote the social and economic development of African communities. By teaming up with iconic brands, Bono wants to change the way people see Africa. According to

⁶ Product (RED), "Global Fund," 2008. <http://www.joinred.com/globalfund/> (accessed 11 May 2008).

⁷ Product (RED), "Note from Bono," 12 October 2006. <http://www.joinred.com/red/bono.asp> (accessed 11 May 2008).

Bono, "Africa is sexy and people need to know that."⁸ As a result, Africa has become a marketable commodity, in which poverty, famine, disease, and underdevelopment are used to sell a certain image of Africa that corresponds with consumers' phantasms and desires. What (RED) is selling is another commodified image of Africa that, in the words of bell hooks, are "offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate...[to] be eaten, consumed, and forgotten."⁹ While Africa has become a new fashion statement that marketers, like celebrities, have capitalized on through appealing to the morality of consumers, like all fashion trends, its novelty will wear off long before the world's evils are solved.

Bono describes (RED) as a mutually beneficial alliance among companies, consumers, and Africa. The appeal of (RED) is attractive for both participating companies and consumers. (RED) speaks to the economic objectives of participating companies and the humanitarian self-indulgence of consumers. According to Bono, appealing to consumer corporate self-interestedness is exactly the power of (RED): "Using the strength of your opponent to overthrow him."¹⁰ I will show, on the other hand, how (RED) is a misguided, unsustainable, and ineffective answer to development in Africa. Creative consumerism perpetuates as many problems as solutions for developing countries. Consumerism promotes individual, short term, and abstract values incompatible with the collective ideals necessary to combat global social crises. Through its reliance on short-term individualistic values, I will first show that (RED) neglects the long-term costs of consumption for the environment and developing countries. Moreover, (RED) abstracts the true causes of poverty and underdevelopment, relying instead on after-the-fact

⁸ David Carr, "Citizen Bono Brings Africa to Idle Rich," *New York Times*, 5 March 2007. http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/05/business/media/05carr.html?_r=1&oref=slogin (accessed 14 April 2008).

⁹ bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," in *Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. Meenakshi. G. Durham and Douglas. M. Kellner, rev. ed. (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 366-380.

¹⁰ Alex Schoumatoff, "The Lazarus Effect," *Vanity Fair*, July 2007, 156.

remedies rather than preventative measures that take into consideration African differences. Second, abstracting the true nature of poverty and HIV/AIDS, cause-related marketing campaigns like (RED) divert attention away from the role that corporations and consumers play in perpetuating these social crises. Third, (RED) commodifies the intrinsic value of life by converting use values into exchange values, putting a price on life itself. Through (RED), consumers can momentarily feel good about their short-lived ethical choices. However, (RED) is nothing other than a strategy for consumer brands to increase profits and advance their image, and will have few effects on the well-being of Africa. Consumerism will not be responsible for ending AIDS and poverty in Africa.

Creative Capitalism and Consumerism

(RED) could be described as a model of “creative capitalism” that works to both generate profits and solve the world’s inequities by using the “two great forces of human nature—self-interest and caring for others.”¹¹ Bill Gates coined the term “creative capitalism” at the 2008 World Economic Forum. By using innovative business strategies, it is thought the world’s corporations can solve the major problems for the world’s poorest people. However, creative capitalism, as a strategy to end global inequity, will fail for the same reasons that consumer capitalism fails to fulfill the most basic of human needs. As suggested over three decades ago by Stuart Ewen, the history of consumerism “has provided a mode of perception that has both *confronted the question of human need and at the same time restricted its possibilities*”¹² Let us reflect on this statement. The true needs of a society can be defined as those physiological and

¹¹ Bill Gates, “World Economic Forum: Prepared Remarks by Bill Gates,” Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, 24 January 2008. <http://www.gatesfoundation.org/MediaCenter/Speeches/Co-ChairSpeeches/BillgSpeeches/BGSpeechWEF-080124.htm> (accessed 1 May 2008).

¹² Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness* (New York: Basic Books, 1976; reprint, New York: Basic Books, 2001), 220.

psychological needs necessary to achieve self-actualization. At a basic level, this includes physiological needs like health, food, water, and shelter, and social-psychological needs like love and belonging, family, friendship, and community. What marketers do is fill commodities with fantastical qualities associated with the social-psychological aspects of life, sought after by consumers who are looking to fill the void that these basic social needs provided in the past. However, consumerism actually drives us further away from ever attaining these social needs because consumerism promotes short-term, individualistic, and abstract ideals inconsistent with the collective values of love, friendship, and community that provide the real identity and meaning in our lives.

When advertisers offer commodities as a means of pursuing those social-psychological aspects of life (love, friendship, community, identity, and meaning) they actually highlight that it is these intrinsic values that are important and not the commodities being sold. Commodities cannot actually fulfil our social needs and desires. If commodities could do what they claimed, people would be happy and would no longer need to buy any more things. Capitalist consumerism is reliant on this inability to provide us with what really matters. However, through this appeal to non-commodified relations and intrinsic values, our consumer culture constantly reminds us that it is these things that are important and not the commodities being sold. Therefore, consumerism confronts the question of human needs, promotes these social-psychological needs as that which are important, but can never actually fulfil these needs for if it did consumers would not come back for more. However, people do not unwillingly participate in consumption, accepting any meaning associated with a product. Rather, consumers are agents in our consumer culture and embrace the ongoing construction of this dream world. Despite this

basic contradiction inherent in consumerism, people continue to look to commodities to find identity and meaning in this ongoing cycle of dissatisfaction.

For the same reasons consumerism cannot fulfil individual needs, it cannot fulfil collective needs, especially those needs associated with global injustices like poverty and AIDS. According to Sut Jhally:

[Advertising] addresses us not as members of society talking about collective issues, but as individuals. It talks about our individual needs and desires. It does not talk about those things we have to negotiate collectively, such as poverty, healthcare, housing and the homeless, the environment, etc...The market appeals to the worst in us (greed, selfishness) and discourages what is best about us (compassion, caring, generosity).¹³

According to Jhally, "the values of a collective social future is one that does not, and will not, find expression within our commercially dominated culture."¹⁴ Creative capitalist strategies like (RED) reinforce what actually matters in the world, like AIDS and global poverty, but since these social issues are addressed through consumerism, which only further instils individualistic, short-term, and abstract values inconsistent with the ideals necessary for a collective global future, consumerism only further restricts any possibility of confronting the real question of human need. Creative capitalist strategies like (RED), while appealing to the morality of the individual, are restricted by the constraints of capitalist consumerism. Three trends of our consumer culture reveal how (RED) will not lead to the collective realization of global needs, either. First, our consumer culture is premised on individualism and short-term interests. Second, consumerism further profits from abstracting and distorting social crises. Third, use-values are

¹³ Jhally.

¹⁴ Ibid.

determined by exchange values and the worth of life itself is quantified in economic terms. Exploring these basic characteristics of capitalist consumerism will show how (RED), as a “creative capitalist” strategy for development, is a misguided approach to deal with global injustice.

Individualism and Short-Term Rewards

(RED) is not a collective but an individualistic response to AIDS in Africa. Concerned with short-term gratification, (RED) depends on the self-interested nature of individual consumers. (RED) advocates that by buying a t-shirt you can save a life now. As a result, consumers feel instant gratification that they are helping end AIDS in Africa. Appealing to the morally conscious consumer, (RED) is selling an identity. According to Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, “people buy what makes them feel superior, whether by showing that they are cooler (Nike shoes), better connected (Cuban cigars), better informed (single-malt Scotch), more discerning (Starbucks espresso), morally superior (Body Shop cosmetics) or just plain richer (Lois Vuitton bags).”¹⁵ By sporting (RED), consumers can feel morally superior and momentarily lesson their guilt about AIDS and poverty in Africa. By selling socially-conscious products like fair-trade coffee and sugar, or by selling products that claim to save the environment, dolphins, rainforests and such, marketers can exploit our crude desires to save the world. In fact:

Advertising doesn’t mirror how people are acting but how they are dreaming. It taps into our real emotions and repackages them back to us connected to the world of things. What advertising really reflects is the dreamlife of the culture. Even saying this however

¹⁵ Joseph Heath and Andrew Potter, *The Rebel Sell* (Toronto: Harper Collins, 2004), 103.

simplifies a deeper process because advertisers do more than mirror our dreamlife—they create it.¹⁶

With humanitarianism as the new buzzword of the 21st century, advertisers can capitalize on the world's desire to give. Consumers can momentarily feel self-satisfied with their “ethical” purchases, while Gap, Apple, and Motorola can advance a moral image of their brand that not only benefits their (RED) product lines but the company as a whole and their future practices. But this is a short-term solution. A few people with HIV are receiving the medicine necessary for them to stay alive through (RED) *if* someone buys an iPod, but unfortunately the actual effects of consumerism are left unquestioned as a result. Instead of looking for long-term collective solutions that might *prevent* the problems of poverty, underdevelopment, and disease from happening in the first place, consumerism promotes after-the-fact remedies distracting people from the role that excessive consumption itself plays in these global affairs.

(RED) neglects the long-term costs of consumption, especially for the environment and the developing world. Through consuming more things the global problems we face today are only going to escalate. The continued consumption in the developed nations can only result in further catastrophes for our planet earth. As a result of the over-consumption of a few privileged countries, deforestation continues at unprecedented rates, the effects of global warming are becoming evident, global resources are being squandered by a small number of countries, and industrial pollution continues to devastate the soils and waters of the world. Eduardo Galeano states that “the American way of life, based on the privilege of waste, can only be practiced by the dominant minorities of the dominating countries. If it were generalized, it would mean the

¹⁶ As cited in Jhally.

collective suicide of humanity.”¹⁷ It is evident that if the whole world’s population consumed at the same rate as America, our planet could not sustain the damages. Therefore, “the deprivation of the majority is necessary so that the waste of a few is possible. In order that the few may consume still more, many must continue to consume still less.”¹⁸ (RED) as a business model for development is not asking the developed countries of the world to consume fewer things. It is asking Western consumers, when presented with the choice, to choose (RED) products over other products. However, consumerism is not the answer to global poverty. In fact, consumerism contributes to the injustices and inequalities that face the Third World today.

The Abstraction and Distortion of Global Crises

Consumerism has distorted our ways of thinking about environmental issues, disease, cancer, poverty and such. Always looking to sell more products, advertisers and marketers benefit from sickness and crisis, which is more profitable than prevention i.e. changing consumer habits that contribute to global inequities. Buying products “for a cure” diverts attention away from what actually caused the problem in the first place. It is well known, for example, that our culture of consumption is environmentally unsustainable. But, money can be made profiting off this awareness. Instead of addressing how consumption is responsible for pollution, the depletion of resources, bad air quality, etc for the world’s poorest people, consumer capitalism responds to such ecological damaging aspects of consumer society by focusing on “environmentally friendly” or “cause-related products.”

¹⁷ Eduardo Galeano, “To Be Like Them,” in *The Post-Development Reader*, ed. Majid Rahnema (Halifax: Fernwood Publishing, 1997), 214-22.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 215.

Cause-related marketing (CRM) can be defined as a mutually beneficial relationship between a for-profit company and a non-profit or social cause organization, intended to both promote the company's product or service and raise money for the non-profit.¹⁹ In 1983, American Express was one of the first companies to execute a CRM campaign and trademarked the term.²⁰ Companies participate in CRM in various ways. Most commonly, companies agree to donate a portion of every sale to the non-profit. Also gaining popularity in CRM is the practice of licensing, in which a non-profit licenses its name or logo to a company, who will then give a percentage of every transaction to the non-profit like (RED).²¹ These small acts of consumption, choosing more ethical and socially conscious products, may delay the inevitable environmental crisis, but the overall effects are unlikely to have a reversal effect. Instead, profiting from consumer awareness of environmental issues, poverty, cancer, etc has become another marketing tool. Therefore, AIDS and poverty in Africa have become yet another crisis and opportunity for businesses to exploit. The real social problems are abstracted by advertisers and marketers, who are more interested in finding a cure for poverty, AIDS and other diseases, environmental destruction, and pollution, which allows them to continue business as usual. Simplifying the problem by "shopping for a cure" keeps much needed attention away from the complex interactions that cause and perpetuate social crises.

Cause Related Marketing: The Example of Breast Cancer

The marketing of breast cancer provides an interesting example for comparison. Breast cancer became the "darling of corporate America" in the 90s and continues to be one of the most

¹⁹ Matthew Berglind and Cheryl Nakata, "Cause Related Marketing: More Bang than Buck," *Business Horizons* 48 (2005): 443-453.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

prominent CRM campaigns to date.²² The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation has a long history of CRM, aligning itself with leading American brands. Two well cited alliances include Yoplait's "Save Lids to Save Lives" and "BMW's Ultimate Drive" campaign. Since 1997, once a year Yoplait donates ten cents for every pink yogurt lid mailed back to the company for up to \$1.5 million; BMW, now in its 12th participating year, donates \$1 dollar for every mile you test-drive one of their vehicles. In both cases, the money is donated to Susan G. Komen for the Cure. While both companies have benefited from their affiliation with the Komen Foundation, they have also been heavily criticized for manufacturing products responsible for breast cancer while appearing to care about the disease. BMW has been attacked for urging customers to test-drive cars even though there is an established link between car-exhaust chemicals and cancer. Similarly, Yoplait yogurt is made from cows treated with rBGH (recombinant bovine growth hormone), which has been linked to an increased risk of breast, colon, and prostate cancer.²³

These companies have been labelled "pinkwashers," defined as "a person or company that purports to care about breast cancer by promoting a pink ribbon campaign, but manufactures products that are linked to the disease."²⁴ It is not surprising then that these companies have focused little attention on breast cancer prevention, campaigning to find a cure for breast cancer, instead. To prevent breast cancer, women are advised to have regular mammograms to detect the cancer early and, therefore, have a better chance of fighting the disease. Mammograms do not, however, prevent the disease from occurring in the first place. This strategy, however, does divert attention away from the environmental, work place, and industrial causes of cancer. For

²² Ibid.

²³ Breast Cancer Action, "Think Before You Pink," 2007. <http://www.thinkbeforeyoupink.org> (accessed 15 April 2008).

²⁴ Ibid.

companies who are more interested in making the disease less deadly than in preventing it altogether, CRM has provided a beneficial marketing plan.

For example, AstraZeneca has a particular interest in promoting early detection rather than prevention. AstraZeneca, founder of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, is a multinational pharmaceutical corporation and manufactures the best selling cancer drug tamoxifen. In addition, “until corporate reorganization in 2000 [AstraZeneca] was under the auspices of Imperial Chemical, a leading producer of the carcinogenic herbicide alachlor, as well as numerous chlorine and petroleum-based products that have been linked to breast cancer.”²⁵ Diverting attention away from their own practices, corporations can align themselves with non-profit groups who depend on their large donations. Once in alliance, corporations can direct research agendas away from prevention, which would highlight their own role in the cause of many diseases like cancer, and instead toward early detection and finding a cure, research areas they can further profit from.

Product (RED): More Bang than Buck?

(RED) is now the leading cause-related marketing campaign to date, given the number and size of the companies involved and their worldwide reach. The alliance between (RED) and its partners follows a similar formula to that described above. Private businesses can divert attention away from their past shady and unethical practices in developing countries, using their new found conscience to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and poverty in the developing world. For example, (RED) partners, Gap and Converse (owned by Nike), have been attacked for their past use of sweatshops, their unethical treatment of workers in foreign factories, and their use of

²⁵ Samantha King, *Pink Ribbons, Inc.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2006), xxi.

underage labour throughout the world. While both companies have some of the strongest and strictest codes of conduct on ethical workplace conditions, investigative journalists continue to find unethical practices occurring at factories that produce Nike and Gap clothing and apparel.

In 2000, *BBC* reporter Paul Kenyon investigated a factory used by Nike and Gap in Cambodia where a number of the companies' codes of conduct and anti-sweatshop rules were being violated.²⁶ In 2003, Gap was involved in a class action lawsuit filed by sweatshop workers in Saipan and, while no liability was admitted, a settlement of \$20 million dollars was reached by Gap.²⁷ Again in 2007, *BBC* showed footage of child labour being used in Gap factories in India.²⁸ In response, Gap destroyed the blouses made by the underage children, which would have sold in US stores for \$40.00 apiece. Nike and Gap continue to stand behind their code of conduct policies, facing intense public criticism when factories violate their codes and, as a result of these and other incidences, their public image has suffered over the past decade.

In its code of conduct, Nike states that it will not use forced labour, will not employ a person under the age of 18 to make shoes and under the age of 16 to make apparel, and although they will keep persons of 15 years or older if they already worked at the factory prior to the production of Nike, they will not hire any new persons under Nike's legal age limit. In addition, the contractor must provide at least the local minimum wage or the prevailing industry wage, whichever is higher; must inform employees at the time of hiring if mandatory overtime is

²⁶Paul Kenyon, "GAP Nike—No Sweat?" *BBC*, 15 October 2000. http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/audio_video/programmes/panorama/transcripts/transcript_15_10_00.txt (accessed May 5 2008).

²⁷Nikki F. Bas, Medea Benjamin, and Joannie C. Chang, "Saipan Sweatshop Lawsuit Ends with Important Gains for Workers and Lessons for Activists," Business and Human Rights Resource Centre, 8 January 2004. <http://www.business-humanrights.org/Categories/Individualcompanies/B/BananaRepublicpartofGap> (accessed 14 May 2008).

²⁸"Gap: Report of Kids' Sweatshop 'Deeply Disturbing,'" *CNN*, 29 October 2007.

<http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/asiapcf/10/29/gap.labor/index.html><http://www.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/asiapcf/10/29/gap.labor/index.html> (accessed 5 May 2008).

required, which must still be fully compensated; and must give employees one day off in seven to a maximum of 60 hours a week.²⁹ Similarly, Gap prohibits child labour (age limit minimum of 14 or in accordance with local laws, whichever is greater), prohibits forced labour, enforces wage and labour laws (one in seven days off, total of 60 hours), and also gives workers the right to refuse overtime without penalty or punishment.³⁰ While both companies have a strict code of conduct as shown, in practice many of these standards are broken by factories where Gap and Nike apparel is made. (RED) gives these companies an opportunity to change their public image and give back to developing countries. In attempt to give back, Gap is manufacturing a (RED) t-shirt in Lesotho made of African cotton and Converse is selling (RED) shoes made from African mud cloth. Allegedly, (RED) is keeping a close watch on these companies' labour practices.

Partners of (RED), American Express and Hallmark know firsthand the benefits of cause-related marketing. In 1983, American Express donated one cent for every credit card transaction and one dollar for every new credit card activated to assist in the renovations of the Statue of Liberty, which was in significant need of private financial funding. American Express spent over \$6 million dollars advertising the Statue of Liberty campaign and fundraised over \$1 million dollars for the cause. As a result, American Express card usage grew by 28% and new card applications increased by 17%.³¹ Realizing the benefits of this campaign, American Express coined the effort "cause-related marketing" and trademarked the term, as earlier indicted. American Express has also been an avid sponsor of the Komen Foundation through its "Charge for the Cure" campaign, in which the company donates a penny for every transaction to the

²⁹ Nike, "Code of Conduct," 1991. http://www.nikebiz.com/nikeresponsibility/tools/Nike_Code_of_Conduct.pdf (accessed May 5 2008).

³⁰ The Gap, "The Gap Inc. Code of Vendor Conduct." http://www.gapinc.com/public/documents/code_vendor_conduct.pdf (accessed 5 May 2008).

³¹ Berglind and Nakata, 445.

Komen Foundation. However, this campaign would require a customer to use his or her credit card over 100 times in a 31 day period to raise just one dollar for the cause. Hallmark, also aligned with the Komen Foundation, has fundraised over \$2.5 million dollars in donations for a cure since 1999.³²

Not only have companies been attacked for unethical alliances with cause-related organizations, but their actual contributions to the cause are often miniscule, especially compared to their advertising budgets. While some (RED) partners are transparent about their donations (Microsoft/Windows gives \$50.00 for each computer sold), others are more secretive. Gap, for example, donates up to 50% of profits. However, profits are calculated in a variety of ways and Gap will not publically disclose its profits from (RED) items for competitive reasons. With advertising budgets of millions of dollars, donations often fail to measure up. *Adverting Age* magazine attacked (RED) and partners for spending over \$100 million dollars on advertising budgets while only contributing a meagre \$18 million dollars in a year to the Global Fund.³³ As a result, this statistic became heavily cited by other magazines and newspapers. In response, Shriver stated that these figures were falsely contrived with no evidence. In fact, Shriver testified that the largest advertiser at \$7.8 million dollars was Gap, and even the combined total advertising spent by all companies was one-third the \$100 million dollars cited.³⁴ In addition, Shriver claimed that (RED) partners actually raised \$25 million dollars in six months; this amount is five times the total given to the Global Fund by the private sector in the last four

³² Hallmark, "Hallmark Breast Cancer Awareness Products 2007," 2008.

<http://corporate.hallmark.com/Product/Hallmark-Breast-Cancer-Awareness-Products-2007> (accessed 5 May 2008).

³³ Paul Vallely, "The Big Question: Does the RED Campaign Help Big Western Brands More than Africa," *The Independent*, 9 March 2007. <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/politics/the-big-question-does-the-red-campaign-help-big-western-brands-more-than-africa-439425.html> (accessed 15 June 2008).

³⁴ Ibid.

years.³⁵ Moreover, advertising funds are diverted from partners' existing marketing budgets. (RED) does not, therefore, spend any money on advertising. According to (RED), the money spent on advertising by partner companies would have been spent on other marketing campaigns in its absence. Bono and Shriver believe that "raising \$25m in just under 8 months on an investment of \$50m is a pretty damn good rate of return"³⁶ However, when you have to spend \$500 dollars on your credit card to raise only \$5.00 for the Global Fund, it seems more and more clear that (RED) benefits the for-profit partners much more than the charitable causes, regardless of the actual figures.

In addition, sending money to Africa has not proved helpful in the past. Celebrities continue to advocate for the "more money" platform; that Africa needs more impressive projects, donors, and debt relief. If developing countries are worse off than they were forty years ago, it is not for lack of outsider help or donor money. Donor money has been dumped into Africa for decades, sidling into the wrong hands and feeding the wrong mouths. However, if people do want to donate money to a cause, it is still more effective for them to donate directly to the non-profit organization than to eat three containers of yogurt a day or use their credit card one hundred times in a month.

CRM has proved effective for companies looking to increase sales and gain consumers. According to the Cone Corporate Citizenship Study conducted in 2002, 78% of Americans feel that it is the responsibility of companies to help support causes. In addition, statistics show that

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Krishna Lalbiharie, "(RED): Can Bono, Cause-Marketing and Shopping Save the World?" *Canadian Dimension* 41 (2007): 30.

consumers will reward companies who are good corporate citizens.³⁷ The study shows that when a product or company supports a cause that a person cares about, 92% of Americans will have a more positive image of that product or company; 84% of Americans would switch brands or companies if a product was associated with a good cause within the same price range and level of quality; and 87% are more likely to remember a company if that company is supporting a cause.³⁸ The advantage for companies participating in CRM is clear. Not only does shopping for a cure divert attention away from these companies own unethical practices, but abstracting the crisis at hand drives us further from understanding the contributing causes and complexity of the problem.

Poverty and HIV/AIDS in Africa: A Complex Affair

The money raised through (RED) will help some people receive the medicine that will help them cope with HIV. However, to significantly reduce AIDS in Africa requires that we address the complexity of the problem and the socio-economic factors that contribute to the transmission of HIV in the first place. (RED) fails to address these and other factors by simplifying the solution in economic terms. HIV transmission is effected by social, economic and political factors of poverty, oppression, and discrimination.³⁹ Poverty, gender inequalities, mobility, and conflict all significantly increase the risk of HIV infection. The HIV prevention programs that have emerged across sub-Saharan Africa fail to address the social environment and life in Africa. Educating people about the risk factors for HIV transmission is not proving to

³⁷ Breast Cancer Action, "Cone Corporate Citizenship Study Fact Sheet 2002," Think Before You Pink, 2007. <http://www.thinkbeforeyoupink.org/PDF/ConeCorpCitizen.pdf> (accessed 18 April 2008).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ United Nations, *Population, Development and HIV/AIDS with a Particular Focus on Poverty: The Concise Report*, Dept. of Economic and Social Affairs (New York: United Nations Publications, 1995), 12. <http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/concise2005/PopdevHIVAIDS.pdf> (accessed 14 May 2008).

have any effect. Even when aware of the risk-factors, African women and men continue to engage in practices that put them at risk for HIV. One reason people continue to engage in risky behaviours is because the messages advocated by Western constructed HIV prevention programs are irrelevant given the social and economic reality of many African lives. A report from the United Nations Development Program states that “HIV-specific programmes are neglectful of the interests of the poor and are rarely if ever related to their needs, and also unfortunately are other non-HIV related programme activities—such as those relating to agriculture and credit.”⁴⁰ Survival strategies are often incompatible with HIV prevention strategies. Women are especially vulnerable to HIV infection. Women are at a higher risk for sexual assault and abuse. In addition, women are often left destitute by divorce or death unable to find work in formal or informal sectors of society. With fewer legal, social, and economic opportunities than their male counterpart, some women participate in sexual transactions for survival.⁴¹ Condom use is also difficult for women to negotiate in male dominated societies. Women also risk infecting their baby with HIV at birth and through breast milk. Many women in Africa cannot afford clean water and baby formula. Dependent on their breast milk to keep their babies alive, women often put their children at risk for contracting HIV.⁴² Increased labour mobility to urban centres, where HIV prevalence and risky behaviours are more frequent, has also contributed to an increased vulnerability to HIV.⁴³ Because of these and other socio-economic factors, many women in Africa are unable to adopt the preventative strategies advocated by HIV prevention programs which neglect the reality of life in some areas of Africa.

⁴⁰ Desmond Cohen, “Poverty and HIV/AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa,” United Nations Development Program: HIV Development Programme, 27. <http://www.undp.org/hiv/publications/issues/english/issue27e.html> (accessed 10 May 2008).

⁴¹ United Nations, 13.

⁴² Desmond Cohen.

⁴³ Ibid.

Again, development programs are implemented with the assumption that the cause of HIV/AIDS in African countries is the same as in America. Addressing unsafe and risky sexual behaviours in the United States was an effective way to reduce HIV/AIDS populations, but using this same strategy neglects the African difference and other social factors that contribute to becoming infected with HIV in Africa. Poverty plays a decisive role in the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Africa:

The HIV epidemic has its origins in African poverty and unless and until poverty is reduced there will be little progress either with reducing transmission of the virus or an enhanced capacity to cope with its socio-economic consequences.⁴⁴

The “buy a t-shirt—save a life” mentality simplifies and abstracts the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa and neglects the true causes and complexities of poverty and AIDS. More attention must be paid to how poverty contributes to HIV/AIDS and, similarly, how Western consumer habits and ideals continue to encroach on the lives and poverty of people across the world (see section one). Corporations continue to solve these problems backwards by addressing poverty and AIDS with after-the-fact remedies, and consumers are all too eager to respond to social crises in this way.

The Commodification of Life

Finally, consumer capitalism, through this process of abstraction, transforms use-value into exchange value. In our culture of consumption, everything has a price including life itself. The intrinsic value of nature and people no longer has any worth. Instead, the price of life is measured, compared, and quantified. According to (RED), the cost of one life is comparable to

⁴⁴ Ibid.

the cost of a t-shirt. In fact, a person can visit the (RED) website and calculate just how many lives they saved with their (RED) purchases. Purchasing a Gap (RED) t-shirt will provide 42 single dose (nevirapine) treatments to prevent the transmission of HIV from mother to child. A new Dell/Windows desktop will provide antiretroviral (ARV) treatment for six months to a person living with HIV. Actually, in order to provide AVR treatment to a person living with HIV for one year, a person would have to buy a (RED) t-shirt and bracelet from the Gap, a Motorola Razr cell phone, an Apple iPod and an iTunes music video, an Armani watch and a pair of Bono's famous sunglasses, a Hallmark card and purse, and a Dell/Windows desktop computer. At forty cents a day, it would cost \$146.00 to provide HIV treatment to one person for a year. By a logical deduction, this would mean that the total sent by (RED) partner companies to the Global Fund from these purchases would total \$146.00. Now, for one person to continue to support a person living with HIV in Africa, they would have to buy these purchases again next year.

This solution is unsustainable. Bono states that "good business is more sustainable than philanthropy, because next year there could be a tsunami and the support you were counting on would go there."⁴⁵ I would argue that (RED) is just as unsustainable, if not more so, than other philanthropic endeavours. Associating poverty/AIDS with consumerism is flawed. Consumer brands and fashion trends go out of style sooner than they arrive on the shelf. In addition, consumption is based on the three trends described: individualism and short-term gratification, abstracted and distorted social ideals, and use-values determined through exchange-values. These characteristics of our consumer culture deny any possibility of a sustained effort to combat social issues like poverty and AIDS. As shown, a global social future requires long-term and collective

⁴⁵ Schoumatoff.

action, in addition to a complex understanding of both the direct and the indirect causes of poverty and AIDS. More important still, solutions to social crises of this sort should be determined by the people affected, and should be compatible with their worldviews and ways of life. Any approach to combating poverty and AIDS must appreciate the intrinsic value of life and provide a way of looking at the people affected by poverty and AIDS in terms other than their economic worth. Finding solutions to global injustices will not be found in a world market that turns people and places into commodities.

While Bono and (RED) innovators may be passionate about finding a solution to end AIDS in Africa, using the private sector and consumers is not the best way to achieve these desired results. Using examples from other social issues like the environment and cancer show that the exploitation of global crises by advertisers and marketers is not new. By painting their products (RED), corporations can win over ethically conscious consumers. But, anyone who is informed about the true causes and state of global poverty and disease will realize that “shopping for a cause” is not going to solve these intricate, complex, and complicated circumstances. Finding a solution to poverty and AIDS is not going to be as simple as buying a t-shirt, as Bono suggests. Bono’s effort and dedication to poverty and AIDS in Africa is admirable. He believes that he can save the world. However, the marketing of Africa and its people as a brand or a fashion statement that overzealous and self-interested consumers can sport is itself a form of objectification and exploitation, an issue addressed in the following chapter. As for the future promise of (RED), Bono really does see the world through rose-tinted glasses.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANGELINA JOLIE

REPRESENTATION AND THE CONSUMPTION OF PLACE

Regimes of representation can be analyzed as places of encounter where identities are constructed and also where violence is originated, symbolized, and managed.¹

Arturo Escobar

Africa is a lovely place - much lovelier, more peaceful and more resilient and, if not prosperous, innately more self-sufficient than it is usually portrayed. But because Africa seems unfinished and so different from the rest of the world, a landscape on which a person can sketch a new personality, it attracts mythomaniacs, people who wish to convince the world of their worth. Such people come in all forms and they loom large. White celebrities busy-bodying in Africa loom especially large. Watching Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie recently in Ethiopia, cuddling African children and lecturing the world on charity, the image that immediately sprang to my mind was Tarzan and Jane.²

Paul Theroux

Angelina Jolie's over-night transformation from a promiscuous and troubled wild-child to a global humanitarian, United Nations Goodwill Ambassador, and mother of six caught the attention of news media, paparazzi, and gossip magazines across North America. I purpose we start from the beginning, to understand Jolie's humanitarian transformation and ultimately what effects her highly publicized humanitarian work has for sub-Saharan Africa. Jolie had a troubled childhood. Her parents divorced when she was only one year's old, she was often teased in high school, and Jolie had an absent relationship with her father, Jon Voight, growing up.³ Jolie began experimenting with sex, drugs, and other sexual and excessive behaviours at an early age. As a young teenager, Jolie and her live-in boyfriend at the time often engaged in sadomasochistic sex-

¹ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995).

² Paul Theroux, "The Rock Star's Burden," *The New York Times*, 15 December 2005.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/15/opinion/15theroux.html?pagewanted=1&r=1> (accessed 15 June 2008).

³ Tiscali.film&TV, "Angelina Jolie Biography," 2008.

http://www.tiscali.co.uk/entertainment/film/biographies/angelina_jolie_biog.html (accessed 1 July 2008).

acts involving self-mutilation and knives. Jolie describes how her and her boyfriend “got knives out and had a night where we attacked each other...it felt so primitive and it felt so honest.”⁴ She was only 14. By the age of 30, Jolie was already twice married and divorced from actors Johnny Lee Miller and Billy Bob Thornton. Often misunderstood, Jolie shocked Hollywood on numerous occasions with her over-indulgent behaviours. After winning a Best Supporting Actress Academy Award for *Girl Interrupted*, she stunned the audience by kissing her brother on the lips. In her acceptance speech, she stated she was “so in love” with him, provoking the media to speculate about a possible incestuous relationship between the two that was later confirmed untrue.⁵ In 2000, Jolie married Billy Bob Thornton. They signed their nuptials with each other’s blood. Soon after, Jolie tattooed Thornton’s name on her shoulder and the couple wore each other’s blood vials around their neck.⁶ In her films from this period, including *Gia* and *Girl Interrupted*, Jolie portrayed deeply disturbed and emotional characters for which she won two consecutive Golden Globes, two Screen Actors Guild Awards, and an Academy Award.⁷ It seems that Jolie’s early life was an emotional and turbulent rollercoaster.

However, in 2001, Jolie experienced a pivotal shift of character while filming *Lara Croft* in Cambodia that changed the direction of her life thereafter. Channelling her energies toward a healthier interest, Jolie became a humanitarian and citizen of the world. While many questioned the legitimacy of Jolie’s new life interest, this twist of occupation is not as surprising as one might assume. By visiting refugee camps and orphanages around the world, Jolie was able to

⁴ Stephen M. Silverman, “Angelina Jolie Airs Colourful Past of TV,” *People*, 9 July 2003.

<http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,626414,00.html> (accessed 15 June 2008).

⁵ Time Inc., “Angelina Jolie Biography,” *People*, 2008. http://www.people.com/people/angelina_jolie/biography (accessed 15 June 2008).

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ The Internet Movie Database “Angelina Jolie,” 2008. <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0001401/awards> (accessed 15 June 2008).

see the rawness of life firsthand; something it seems that she has always sought after from the time she began to cut herself as a young teenager. The honest and out-spoken Jolie, who once carried Thornton's blood around her neck, now lectures the world about charity, refugees, and AIDS orphans.

Jolie's Globe-Trotting and Motherhood

Jolie has travelled to some of the poorest places in the world as a United Nations Ambassador and private citizen. Her globe-trotting began in Cambodia, where she was shooting *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* in 2001. Personally affected by poverty-stricken and widely mined Cambodia, Jolie discovered a passion for humanitarian work. After contacting the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to attain more information about humanitarian crises, Jolie agreed to travel with UNHCR to refugee camps around the world.⁸ Her first field visits were to Sierra Leone and Tanzania in 2001. Shortly after, she returned to the Thai-Cambodian border where refugees have been living since the end of the Cambodian war in 1998.⁹ Her next trip was to Pakistan, where she met with and donated \$1 million dollars for Afghan refugees.¹⁰ On August 27, 2001, the UNHCR named Jolie a Goodwill Ambassador for her commitment and dedication to refugees around the world.¹¹ In 2002, she continued to travel to refugee camps in Thailand, Ecuador, and to UNHCR facilities in Kosovo and Kenya. Jolie recounts these trips to Africa, Cambodia, Pakistan, and Ecuador in her published travel

⁸ United Nations, "Angelina Jolie Named UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador for Refugees," UNHCR Press Releases, 23 August 2001. <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&id=3b85044b10> (accessed 17 June 2008).

⁹ Buck Wolf, "Can Angelina Jolie Save Lives While Making a Fashion Statement," *ABC News*, 2 February 2006. <http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/story?id=1569752> (accessed 17 June 2008).

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ United Nations

diary, *Notes from My Travels*.¹² From 2003 to 2005, Jolie traveled to Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Chad, Thailand, Lebanon, and Pakistan, to see the impact of the Kashmir earthquake.¹³ While taping *Beyond Borders*, Jolie met with Angolan refugees in Namibia and pledged to give one-third of her earnings a year to charity because in Jolie's words, "I have a stupid income for what I do for a living."¹⁴ In 2003, Jolie was the first recipient of the Citizen of the World Award and in 2005 she was awarded a Global Humanitarian Award and a Cambodian citizenship.¹⁵

In March 2002, Jolie adopted her first child, Maddox Chivan, from a Cambodian orphanage while visiting the country on a UN field visit. Soon after, Jolie divorced Thornton and began a new relationship with *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* co-star, Brad Pitt. Together in 2005, Jolie and Pitt adopted another child from Ethiopia, Zahara Marley, to give Maddox an African sister. Jolie decided to adopt from Ethiopia because "[her] son is in love with Africa, so he has been asking for an African brother or sister."¹⁶ Shortly after returning to the United States, Zahara was hospitalized for dehydration and malnutrition. Zahara was an AIDS orphan but was fortunate not to have contracted HIV at birth. There was also media speculation that Zahara's biological mother was still alive and wanted her child back. However, the woman later denied these reports and stated that Zahara was a "very fortunate human being to be adopted by a world famous lady."¹⁷ By 2006, Pitt had legally adopted both Maddox and Zahara. Returning to Africa

¹² Angelina Jolie, *Notes from My Travels* (New York: Pocket Books, 2003).

¹³ Tim Nudd, "Brad and Angelina's Thanksgiving in Vietnam," *People*, 24 November 2006.

<http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,1562864,00.html> (accessed 25 May 2008).

¹⁴ Angelina Jolie, interview by Anderson Cooper, "Angelina Jolie: Her Mission and Motherhood," *Anderson Cooper 360 Degrees*, CNN, 20 June 2006.

¹⁵ "Jolie Given Cambodian Citizenship," *BBC News*, 12 August 2005.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4144518.stm> (accessed 25 May 2008); "Jolie Honoured for Refugee Role," *BBC News*, 12 October 2005. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/4333544.stm> (accessed 25 May 2008).

¹⁶ Stephen M. Silverman, "Brad, Angelia Pick up Adopted Baby," *People*, July 7 2005.

<http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,1080452,00.html> (accessed 25 May 2008).

¹⁷ Mike Pflanz, "Angelina Jolie's Adopted Baby 'Result of Rape,'" *Telegraph*, 21 November 2007.

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1569961/Angelina-Jolie%27s-adopted-baby-%27result-of-rape%27.html> (accessed 25 May 2008).

once again in 2006, Jolie gave birth to her and Pitt's first biological child in a small hospital in Namibia.¹⁸ They named her Shiloh Nouvel and sold the rights of the first pictures taken of their new family for a total of \$10 million dollars.¹⁹ They donated the proceeds to an undisclosed charity. In 2007, Jolie and Pitt adopted a fourth child from Pakistan, Pax Thein, who was three-years old at the time. Pregnant again in 2008, Jolie recently gave birth to twins, Knox Leon and Vivienne Marcheline, in France this summer. In fact, it was Jolie's *Kung-Fu Panda* co-star, Jack Black, who confirmed she was expecting twins when, during an interview, he slipped that Jolie will "now have as many as the Brady Bunch."²⁰ According to Jolie, "there's something about making a choice, waking up and travelling somewhere and finding your family."²¹ She states, "I've always felt that my kids are around the world."²² Jolie's new found family including Maddox, 6, Pax, 4, Zahara, 3, Shiloh, 2, and newborn twins Knox and Vivienne, continue to travel together around the globe making media headlines wherever their plane lands.

Between filming Hollywood movies and building a new family, Jolie still finds time for her humanitarian commitments, traveling to refugee camps around the world. News and gossip about Jolie's almost daily affairs are documented by celebrity blogs, entertainment television shows, celebrity magazines, and even 24-hour news networks like *CNN*. It seems inescapable for Jolie that the most private and intimate details of her life are broadcast for the world to see, including her humanitarian efforts. Jolie may bring attention to a number of underrepresented developing countries and humanitarian emergencies around the world that might not be

¹⁸ Stephen M. Silverman, "Angie and Baby are Fantastic," *People*, 27 May 2006.

<http://www.people.com/people/article/0,,1184497,00.html> (accessed 27 May 2008).

¹⁹ "Picture This: \$10m—Record for Rights for Brangelina Baby Snaps," *New York Post*, <http://www.nypost.com/business/69707.htm> (accessed 14 April 2008).

²⁰ "Angelina Jolie Confirms She's Having Twins," *Access Hollywood*, *NBC*, 14 May 2008. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/24618746/> (accessed 14 May 2008).

²¹ Silverman, "Angie and Baby are Fantastic."

²² Jolie, "Mission and Motherhood."

documented otherwise but, in effect, the places that she travels to and the people that she meets, too, become objects to be gazed upon by the Western world. In spite of Jolie's best efforts to represent refugees and bring attention to their struggles, it seems inevitable that certain discourses of developing countries are privileged, while others are excluded as a result.

Following some unconventional post-development, post-structuralist, and post-humanist thinkers including Arturo Escobar, Judith Butler, bell hooks, and Cary Wolfe, whose critiques of racism, (hetero)sexism, classism, and even speciesism highlight how regimes of visibility act as a means of dehumanization and violence, I will show how Jolie, too, bears this burden of representation. Celebrity acts of humanitarianism both reaffirm and perpetuate negative discourses and representations of developing countries as places of poverty, dependency, underdevelopment, and helplessness. Following bell hooks, I will first analyze the West's fascination with and need for contact with the Other. A few questions come to mind. How does this contact result in a humanitarian desire to help and bring awareness to others around the world believed less developed than ourselves? Is this response one of ethics? What constitutes an ethical response to the suffering of other people around the world? Following Emanuel Levinas, I will examine how the "face" commands the ethical response "thou shall not kill." However, when the "face" of the other is lost to representation, then this image leads to the others dehumanization and further violence instead, as Butler demonstrates.

This violence is performed through the representations and discourses surrounding Jolie's own travels to refugee camps and developing countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Two opposing representations of Africa result. On the one hand, Africa is represented as a land of plenty with inspiring individuals who, despite their poverty and hardship, desire to live. These people are

depicted as victims in development discourses. On the other hand, Africa is represented as a primitive place where tribal rebels run rampant, committing the most horrific atrocities and crimes against their own people. Both representations support the discourse of development that, in the name of progress, modernity, and development, calls on the Western world to intervene in and support Africa's "need" for "development." As a result, the West continues to have dominance over the Third World and its people, who are placed in the field of vision as helpless objects, dehumanized spectacles, and others in need of "our" assistance. Once dehumanized, the discourse of speciesism, an idea put forth by Cary Wolfe, can be used to justify the exploitation of people in the Global South. The discourse of speciesism, also prevalent in development discourses, is used to determine who is and who is not considered human. As a result, PWWII development is not an ethical response to suffering, but is a way of controlling the lives of others, by marking them as less than human and, therefore, outside the realm of humanist ethics, as will be shown.

The Other, (An)other, and the "Face"

In concluding the previous chapter, I alluding to the objectification and exploitation of the other, achieved through branding Africa and its people as a fashion trend for (white) Western consumers to sport. According to bell hooks, mass culture, particularly, the world of fashion has "come to understand that selling products is heightened by the exploitation of Otherness."²³ According to hooks, this desire for the other is depicted by advertising as a place to inhabit, if only for a while, the world of the other; to consume "a bit of the Other" as a way

²³ bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," in *Media and Cultural Studies*, ed. Meenakshi. G. Durham and Douglas. M. Kellner, rev. ed. (USA: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 371.

“to enhance the blank landscape of whiteness.”²⁴ hooks notes, however, that in these advertising images “it is almost always the white hand doing the touching.”²⁵ Therefore, these seemingly inclusionary images are not resistant to the forms of racist domination and exploitation “that renders problematic the desire of white people to have contact with the Other.”²⁶ She notes that even when desire for contact with the other is enacted with no apparent will to dominate, this does not eradicate the politics of racial domination. In addition, hooks notes that the desire for the other stems from an identity crisis in the west that has sparked a new interest in the primitive, rooted in a belief that the spirit of the primitive resides in the bodies of dark others; encounters with these others are marked as more exciting, more intense, and more threatening, providing “life sustaining alternatives” for the masses of young people dissatisfied with modern life.²⁷ hooks writes:

The point is to be changed by this convergence of pleasure and Otherness. One dares—acts—on the assumption that this exploration into the world of difference, into the body of the Other, will provide a greater, more intense pleasure than any that exists in the ordinary world of one’s familiar racial group. And even though the conviction is that the familiar world will remain intact even as one ventures outside it, the hope is that they will reenter that world no longer the same.²⁸

Accordingly, “it is precisely that longing for *the* pleasure that has led the white west to sustain a romantic fantasy of the ‘primitive’ and the concrete search for a real primitive paradise, whether

²⁴ Ibid., 372.

²⁵ Ibid., 371.

²⁶ Ibid., 371.

²⁷ Ibid., 371.

²⁸ Ibid., 369.

that location be a country or a body, a dark continent or dark flesh.”²⁹ Jolie’s past highlights her own desire for the primitive; a desire to feel something truer and more meaningful, like described by hooks. As a young adult, Jolie could never quite feel *this* pleasure and, in attempt to do so, turned to excessive behaviours that she felt were more primitive and honest, like cutting herself with knives or carrying the blood of her husband around her neck. However, after her first trip to South East Asia, Jolie describes how she was for the first time “undone” by an(other). She writes, “By the time I—I got on the plane and on the way home, I knew that I would somehow commit to doing something with these people in my life. And I knew that that would be the only way to settle it in myself.”³⁰ Since that trip, Jolie’s obligation and commitment to help others around the world has been astounding. Entering the world of others, Jolie claims she was forever changed. For Jolie, her humanitarian work has literally become a “life sustaining alternative” to her dreary past existence. But, what is interesting is that Jolie, who used to cut herself to feel the vulnerability of life itself, now experiences that vulnerability through the lives of others on a daily basis.

However, how does this desire for contact with the other translate into a deeper desire to help others believed more vulnerable than ourselves, as it did for Jolie? According to Butler, contact with the other exposes our interdependence with one another and the ways in which our lives are implicated in the lives of others. Contact with the other makes recognizable one’s own mortality, one’s own vulnerability and, more demanding still, recognition of a common human vulnerability.³¹ It is through this common vulnerable condition that we can find the trace of the

²⁹ Ibid., 370.

³⁰ Jolie, “Mission and Motherhood.”

³¹ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 27.

other there, inside us, if as Joseph Conrad writes in *Heart of Darkness*, we are “man” enough to admit it. In 1902, Conrad writes:

The earth seemed unearthly. We are accustomed to look upon the shackled form of a conquered monster, but there—there you could look at a thing monstrous and free. It was unearthly, and the men were—No, they were not inhuman. Well, you know, that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one. They howled and leaped, and spun, and made horrid faces; but what thrilled you was just the thought of their humanity—like yours—the thought of your remote kinship with this wild and passionate uproar. Ugly. Yes, it was ugly enough; but if you were man enough you would admit to yourself that there was in you the faintest trace of a response to the terrible frankness of that noise, a dim suspicion of there being meaning in it which you – you so remote from the night of first ages—could comprehend.³²

Heart of Darkness has been criticized by post-colonial thought as dehumanizing and fraught with racist representations of Africa as a dark continent and its people as dark masses.³³ While agreeing with criticisms of this sort, I think that this passage from *Heart of Darkness* highlights a moment of recognition, of a shared humanity and vulnerability that we share with the other. And, the recognition of this vulnerability demands a call for ethics, as described by Butler. Following Emmanuel Levinas, Butler states that it is through the “face” that the other makes “moral demands to us, ones that we do not ask for, ones that we are not free to refuse.”³⁴

³² Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 50.

³³ Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's ‘Heart of Darkness,’” *Massachusetts Review* 18 (1977). <http://social.chass.ncsu.edu/wyrick/debclass/achcon.htm> (accessed 2 July 2008).

³⁴ Butler, 131.

Butler is referring to the Levinasian face. Levinas describes how the “face” is of ethics. He writes that:

The approach to the face is the most basic mode of responsibility...The face is not in front of me (*en face de moi*), but above me; it is the other before death, looking through and exposing death. Secondly, the face is the other who asks me not to let him die alone, as if to do so were to become an accomplice in his death. Thus the face says to me: you shall not kill...Accordingly, my duty to respond to the other suspends my natural right to self-survival, *le droit vitale*. My ethical relation of love for the other stems from the fact that the self cannot survive by itself alone, cannot find meaning within its own being-in-the-world.³⁵

For Levinas, however, this ethical call is dependent on the fact that the other in question is human and that they, in fact, have a “face.” Butler highlights, however, that by placing the other into the field of vision can, alternatively, act as a means de-humanizing the “face.” According to Butler, the “face” that acts as the ethical call “thou shall not kill,” as described by Levinas, can be “defaced” through media representation and, alternatively, can act as a call for violence, instead. Butler asks, How is the face defaced? How is the precariousness of life suspended through certain images of the face?³⁶ According to Butler, this occurs because

Something altogether different happens, however, when the face operates in the service of personification that claims to “capture” the human being in question. For Levinas, the

³⁵ As cited in Butler, 131.

³⁶ Butler, 141.

human cannot be captured through the representation, and we can see that some loss of the human takes place when it is “captured” by the image³⁷

Since the people and places of Jolie’s travels are inescapably captured through representation, it is unavoidable that their precariousness is, too, suspended or lost through the lens of the camera.

Regimes of Visuality and Discourses of Development

Jolie’s contact with others around the world does not, therefore, come without the politics of domination, exploitation, and dehumanization, regardless of her intention. Through consigning others to “regimes of visibility,” Jolie is complicit in the representations and discourses of the people and places of her travels. According to Escobar, “to bring people into discourse—as in the case of development—is similarly to consign them to fields of vision.”³⁸

Two distinct images of refugees emerge from Jolie’s travel diary and the interviews surrounding her travels that expose both the humanity and the inhumanity of African others described, living in Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Chad, Congo, and Namibia. First, representations of the will-power of African people and their ability to survive are highlighted by Jolie’s comments. Jolie writes:

The Congo is lush, and it’s amazing, and...all the people, and they’re so different. And they’re—and they’re passionate. And they’re tough. And they’re—and they’re vibrant. And they’re—and they’re ready to—to live.³⁹

These comments are quickly overpowered by Jolie’s descriptions of the horror, cruelty, and primitiveness of the rebel tribes. Jolie writes a few lines down:

³⁷ Butler, 145.

³⁸ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 156.

³⁹ Jolie, “Mission and Motherhood”

I saw a 3-year-old who had her arms cut off. And you think, what kind of human being? And the rapes in the Congo are so brutal...They talk so much about Congo and having to sew kids back together. Because they've been just ripped completely open...How do you make any sense of that? It doesn't make any sense. It's disgusting and it's horrible.⁴⁰

Each representation results in a different effect. While the first representation seems to emphasize the "humanity" of African people, the second effectually dehumanizes the African as other. The media discourses documenting Jolie's travels tend to portray the second stereotypical image of Africa, often omitting the positive images of Africans as strong and lively people. When the Western media choose to ignore positive images of Africa and its people, it casts it/them outside the realm of the "human." According to Butler, it is in these cases that "discourse effects violence through omission."⁴¹ As a result, certain lives are not only poorly marked but are unmarkable, ungreivable, and unrealizable. While certain lives are never imagined at all in the media, others are dehumanized through their personification. The second type of representation tends to personify certain faces *as evil*. This personified evil is extended to all Africans, as a result. According to Butler, "the evil that the face *is* extends to the evil that belongs to humans in general—generalized evil."⁴² In this case, this face is dehumanized because "the 'I' who sees that face is not identified with it."⁴³ The unidentifiable face is an "accomplishment of dehumanization and a condition for violence."⁴⁴ A call for ethics is unimaginable when the face is dehumanized, when we can no longer identify with the face. Butler describes how

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Butler, 34.

⁴² Ibid., 145.

⁴³ Ibid., 145.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 145.

These are two distinct forms of normative power: one operates through producing a symbolic identification of the face with the inhuman, foreclosing our apprehension of the human in the scene; the other works through radical effacement, so that there never was a human, there never was a life, and no murder has, therefore, ever taken place.⁴⁵

The problem with representations of Africa is that “if only the wars and the worst of the people here are being reported, then people hesitate to invest in building up Africa,” as Jolie recognizes.⁴⁶ While this may be true, Jolie cannot avoid describing the atrocities herself. Jolie writes of the horrors of the places she visits on numerous occasions throughout her text. These representations tend to overwrite the images of humanity that Jolie describes elsewhere. In Sierra Leone, she explains how

Many refugees were forced to cut people. A gun is put to their head or a knife is put in their side. They are handed rusted swords or sharp glass. They are forced to cut hands, feet, or complete arms and legs off people they know—quite often family members.

These people are going mad. They are no longer able to function.⁴⁷

Such images of Africa have become *the* images of Africa. And, these are the images that have come to define the development discourse, too. As a result, it has become difficult to imagine the Third World, its people, and its places, in any other way than that provided by the discourses of development. Images of war, famine, overpopulation, poverty, disease, and such are images of Africa that do not go away. As a result of these stereotypical representations, the discourses of development remain unquestioned; the need for development remains unquestioned.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 146.

⁴⁶ Jolie, “Notes,” 21.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 31.

Even when the humanity of African people is imagined in the media, and even when we are asked to identify with the face of the other, these images follow a predictable formula. Representations of African humanity tend to focus on the vulnerability of Africa and its people. For example, Jolie describes how

The borders were drawn in Africa not that long ago. These are tribal people. We have—we colonized them...there's a lot we need to—to understand and be tolerant of, and help them to—they have just recently learned to govern themselves. But there are also pockets where they're really trying to pull themselves together. And we need to be there to really support them at that time, to help them to understand how to better govern.⁴⁸

Here, African people are imagined as victims of colonialism and that what they need is development help from the West. By proclaiming that “we” did this to them and that “we” need to help them develop presupposes that Africa cannot help itself. Escobar claims that these images of the Third World, of people imagined as victims in need of development help, must be avoided at all costs. These types of representations highlight Africa's helplessness and dependency.⁴⁹ Escobar claims that, while we must not forget the suffering described, we must resist the conclusion that people in the Third World, especially women, are helpless and cannot develop themselves.

Another popular image is of African people *asking* for help. Here, the need for development has become internalized by the people living in developing countries themselves, reaffirming their own helplessness and dependency. Jolie asks one woman in Sierra Leone what she would want people in America to know. The lady answers:

⁴⁸ Jolie, “Mission and Motherhood.”

⁴⁹ Escobar, 177.

“We continue to live in fear. We are scared of more girls being abducted and raped. We are scared of our young boys being taken off to war. We need this war to end.”

A UNHCR worker asked, “Do you think America can help?”

The young women quickly responded, “Yes, they are a superpower!”

“If only America were the place they think it is.”⁵⁰

Waiting for the help of others, the need for development assistance has become internalized by many people living in developing countries in Africa. When helplessness and dependency become internalized, people lose the desire to try and help themselves. As Sally Mathews and Erik Brigg explain, Africa has the necessary elements needed to bring about its own development, if left to its own means and resources.⁵¹

Media Coverage of Celebrity Humanitarianism

As a result of stereotypical images, representations of Africa are often incomplete and often ignore the complex histories and situations of the places and people captured by the image. The recent outpour of celebrity humanitarianism in Africa has not changed these facts or produced different representations. In fact, due the competitive world of news media, legitimate news coverage of Africa must now compete with stories of celebrity-trotting in Africa. Since the media is always looking to cover a cause with a celebrity endorser, and because media coverage of Africa is so rare to begin with, most African coverage is now likely to have a celebrity story attached. These stories rarely delve deeper into the past to try to understand the conflicts and situations being presented.

⁵⁰ Jolie, “Notes,” 25.

⁵¹ Erik Berg, “Post-Development Theory in Africa,” *Peace Review* 19 (2007): 541-554.

Take Madonna as an example. When Madonna adopted baby David from Malawi in 2005, few people in North America had ever heard of the country. The adoption sparked news media interest, especially after Malawian civil rights groups challenged the adoption. The three top networks in the United States returned to the story 38 times that year.⁵² In fact, the coverage of Madonna's adoption constituted the only mention of Malawi in the news that year and two-thirds of the coverage in the past six years.⁵³ What few people in North America were aware of was that Malawi suffered from two devastating famines during this time. The two famines combined only received a total of six mentions in these years.⁵⁴ While Madonna called the criticisms a blessing "because now people know about Malawi, and now people know of the orphanage there," what really was learned about Malawi through Madonna's adoption?⁵⁵ Newscasts rarely strayed far from generalizations and stereotypical images of the African country; of its "poverty, hunger, and disease." Accordingly,

Not one of the stories on Madonna's adoption even mentioned the recent famines, which, combined with the AIDS crisis, have been a major cause of the swelling orphanages; an exploration of the deeper roots, like exploitative Western trade and aid policies, was completely off the media agenda. While the networks turned five different times to entertainment reporters from *People*, *US Weekly* and *Sky News*, only once was a Malawian civil rights leader heard from.⁵⁶

⁵² Julie Hollar, "Bono, I Presume: Covering Africa through Celebrities," *FAIR*, May/June 2007. <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=3119> (accessed 20 June 2008).

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

These images of Malawi only reinforce North American perceptions of Africa, as a helpless and dependent continent with children in need of charity. As a result, images of Africa become blurred:

Somalia. Angola. Rwanda. Sierra Leone. The country names alone evoke images of war and deprivation. The Africa constructed from these stories becomes a place where cultures and countries blur together, where the only settings are deserts or pestilential jungles, scabrous villages or urban slums.⁵⁷

Likewise, Jolie's trips to Africa produce similar media responses. Jolie decided to give birth to her child in a Namibian hospital to bring awareness to this often unknown African country. However, the Western media only focused on what the country was lacking. The media focused on the fact that the hospitals in the area did not even have an ultrasound, that a number of babies die every year in Namibia due to preventable causes and a lack of medical equipment, and that Jolie brought her own doctor and medical equipment from the United States, just in case something went wrong.⁵⁸ While Jolie intended to show the potential of this developing country, the Western media focused on the country's failures instead. Instead of knowing nothing about Namibia, now the Western world knows of its "underdevelopment."

It is unfortunate that as "networks under corporate profit demands squeeze their news departments tighter and tighter, viewers can in all likelihood expect more and more clips of Madonna videos and Bono sales pitches substituting for real Africa coverage on TV."⁵⁹ Celebrity

⁵⁷ Chris Tenove, "Celebrities above Africa," *The Walrus*, December/January 2007.
<http://www.walrusmagazine.com/articles/2007.01-international-affairs-africa-celebrity-cause/> (accessed 30 June 2008)

⁵⁸ Silverman, "Angie and Baby are Fantastic."

⁵⁹ Hollar.

involvement in Africa has not altered the images available for Western media consumption. Since Africa has a difficult time making it into media headlines in the first place, now it must fight even harder to over-power the attention celebrities receive, compared to the actual cause they are supposedly endorsing. Even then, images are construed, and problems and people are simplified into predictable made-for-TV formulas.

Rethinking the Other: A Post-humanist Approach as an Alternative to Development?

The Discourse of Speciesism and Cary Wolfe

“Contrary to our image of [Africa], its people are civilized, strong, proud, stunning people. There is no time for casual or lazy behavior.” As I wrote that, I realized I am writing as if I am studying people in a zoo.⁶⁰

How then can we be for an(other) without the forms of domination, exploitation, and dehumanization that result from placing the other into the field of vision? The problems with PWWII development—and the discourse and representations that contain it—is that the development of the other comes at the cost of their perpetual state of underdevelopment. Images of underdevelopment are, in fact, necessary for development discourses to continue unchallenged. Judith Butler describes how

it [is] as important to think about how and to what end bodies are constructed as it will be to think about how and to what end bodies are *not* constructed and, further, to ask after

⁶⁰ Jolie, “Notes,” 11.

how bodies which fail to materialize provide the necessary “outside,” if not the necessary support, for the bodies which, in materializing the norm, qualify as bodies that matter.⁶¹

If a discourse is always constituted by what it excludes, then it is precisely these exclusions that are necessary for certain articulations and meanings to appear as fixed, normalized, and natural. This is true of the human subject, too, whose meaning becomes naturalized by producing, in contrast, the “less human, the inhuman and the humanly unthinkable,” as that which acts as the supporting condition for those bodies which do materialize as “human.”⁶² The African subject is often dehumanized as other through representation. Depictions of the African other often focus on its less than human status; as more primitive and less developed than its Western counterpart. Consequently, these discourses act to legitimate the Western subject as developed, rational, and modern. As a result, the Western subject is called upon to intervene in the development of others believed less human than themselves. The Western subject is legitimated as more knowledgeable and better informed to deal with the development of others. In fact, this intervention is depicted as the moral and ethical response to the suffering in Africa. However, it should be clear by now that a so-called ethical response to the other can also lead to the “annihilation of the Other, to domination and oppression.”⁶³

The white man’s control over the lives of others has been well documented in history. Slavery, Christianization, and Colonialism have all been justified based on the belief “that these

⁶¹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 16.

⁶² Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 8.

⁶³ Cary Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 194.

people had not graduated into humanhood, as it were.”⁶⁴ By casting the underdeveloped as a less than human being through representation, development discourses remain bound to the problems inherent of humanistic thinking in general, in which humans discriminate against other humans by marking them as inhuman or, rather, as animal, as Cary Wolfe highlights. Wolfe describes how the animal other provides a privileged site of exploring the philosophical challenges of difference and otherness generally. Therefore, an alternative way of thinking about the other comes from the most unlikely of sources—Animal Rights. The animal is the ultimate other in humanist thinking. Wolfe describes how we have to move beyond the humanist model of subjectivity because “as long as it is institutionally taken for granted that it is right to systematically exploit and kill nonhuman animals simply because of their species, then the humanist discourse of species will always be available for use by some humans against other humans as well, to countenance violence against some social other of *whatever* species—or gender, or race, or class, or sexual difference.”⁶⁵

I will briefly explore this less conventional way of thinking about our relationship with the other by exploring the institution of speciesism outlined by Wolfe in his recent book *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory*. While primarily concerned with “animal rites,” Wolfe also engages with a deeper problem at the heart of humanist thought: the discourse of speciesism. According to Wolfe, it is through the institution of speciesism that humans can relegate other humans to the status of animal or animalistic. The discourse of speciesism authorizes this discrimination against any social other, based on their status of not-yet human. As long as the discourse of speciesism remains, it will be available for humans to use against other humans, too, by marking them as animal. Wolfe writes:

⁶⁴ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 8.

The pervasiveness of the discourse of species has made the institution of speciesism fundamental to the formation of Western subjectivity—an institution that relies on the tacit agreement that the full transcendence of the human requires the sacrifice of the animal and the animalistic, which in turn makes possible a symbolic economy in which we can engage in what Derrida will call a “non criminal putting to death” of other humans as well by marking *them* as animal.⁶⁶

And he continues:

And because the discourse of speciesism, once anchored in this material, institutional base, can be used to mark *any* social other, we need to understand that the ethical and philosophical urgency of confronting the institution of speciesism and crafting a posthumanist theory of the subject *has nothing to do with whether or not you like animals*.⁶⁷

Post-development theory could, too, explore a post-humanist response to the suffering of others, as perhaps, an alternative to development. Since, an ethical response to the other, troped in the ethics of humanism, is indeed not an ethical response at all, as development has shown. Development is premised on Enlightenment modernity and a certain reasoning of ethics, which is unable to deal with the non-human other. Enlightenment ethics requires that the other have a “face,” as it were. But, it has been shown that the face of the human other can, too, be lost to an inhuman or less than human status through representation. According to Wolfe, there can be no science of ethics, no calculation of the subject if we are to move toward an ethical relation with the other that denies domination, oppression, and the “non criminal putting to death” of the non-

⁶⁶ Ibid., 6.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 7.

human other.⁶⁸ Wolfe believes that through repressing the question of non-human subjectivity and by taking for granted that the subject is always already human, humanism remains locked in an unexamined framework of speciesism which, if left unexamined, has deep consequences for all social others—of whatever race, or class, or sex, or gender, or nation.

Development is premised on an ethical code inconsistent with questions of morality and suffering in the world. Development is calculated and based on scientific reasoning. But, as Wolfe describes, moral phenomenon are “non-rational” and, therefore, cannot be “rule guided.” Morality is “non-universalizable.” As a result, “moral responsibility—being *for* the Other before one can be *with* the Other—is the first reality of the self, a starting point rather than a product of society.”⁶⁹ For Wolfe, to move into a post-humanist paradigm requires letting go of our control over the other; something also necessary in development thinking, too.

Wolfe asks, “Are *we* ready...to ‘understand’ the [other]—‘underknow’ her and thereby stand ‘under,’ not above her—by surrendering the dream of mastery troped as vision? Can we handle the skeptical terror of ‘letting our knowledge come to an end’?”⁷⁰ Next time, before we rush toward the other, as Jolie did, to cure our own “existential malaise” or to seek out “life sustaining alternatives,” we must rethink what constitutes an ethical response to suffering. How can we be *for* an(other) without being *with* the Other? And, it is here, in a post-humanist ethic of the other, that we might just find, after all, what we are looking for in an alternative to development.

⁶⁸ Ibid. 190.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 195.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 17.

CONCLUSION

FINAL THOUGHTS ON CELEBRITY HUMANITARIANISM

In 2005, Bob Geldof, Irish singer, political activist, and organizer of the Live Aid (1985) and Live 8 (2005) benefit concerts, travelled to Africa to film a TV series called “Geldof in Africa.” During his visit to Ghana, Geldof travelled to a small town called Bisease where he was crowned “Chief of Development.” In the short documentary, *A Letter to Geldof*, a film crew assesses the impact of Geldof’s crowning and the promises he made to Bisease.¹ The people in the town of Bisease had high expectations of Geldof and his role in their development. During his visit, Geldof promised the people of Bisease that he would help them build a market, a hospital, and a plantation. One town resident states, “Yes, he assured us.” The chief of Bisease, Nana Okofo Kwakora Gyan III, convinced the community that Geldof would make an excellent chief of development because he is a very influential man and has done a lot for Africa; it is not common for a white man to be named a chief in Bisease. After Geldof accepted the position, the town had a large festival where Geldof gave his acceptance speech. In anticipation of the promised money to come, the community cleared land for the prospective market and even hired and paid for tractors to move the land. Since Geldof’s visit, no money, no investments, and no grants have come to Bisease and the land cleared is becoming overgrown once again. While the town people told the film crew that Geldof did not specify when the help would arrive, they did expect to see him at their last festival. He never came. When asked if he thought Geldof would deliver on his word, one man states that “Yes, we know. We know he will fulfill the promise.”

¹ Ceri Dingle, *A Letter to Geldof*, (United Kingdom: Chew On it Productions and WORLDwrite, 2007).

The film crew returned to the United Kingdom in hopes of contacting Geldof to ask of his intentions and, after multiple calls, they were given “no comment.”

The chief of Bisease describes that the position of development chief is a very serious one. If you accept it, you carry through with your promises. The chief tells how, if Geldof never wanted the position, he should not have accepted; they would have found someone else more suitable, instead. On a trip to London, the Chief of Bisease hoped to contact Geldof to discuss his role as development chief. Geldof said he would give a ride to the chief to come to his place to see the video that he made of his trip to Africa. Geldof never did pick up the chief and the chief has not heard from him since. While in London, the chief did find a book about Geldof in Africa. At first, he was excited. But, when he looked through the book, he saw a picture of himself and the others taken with Geldof during his visit. The chief states, “But he didn’t send us anything of this nature. We didn’t even know we were going to be booked, to be sold in London for 16 pounds a copy.” Another man states, “He is using our image in London to get money for himself.”

This short film demonstrates what is at stake when celebrities travel around Africa making promises they never intend to fulfil. When you tell a community that you will help them to set up a market or a hospital, this promise is taken very seriously. These communities become dependent on the promises made by outsiders. The community is left waiting and believing that the help will arrive, eventually. What is even more distressing is that this community is dependent on the word of Geldof, whom they have no contact with. The chief explains that he just wants to talk to Geldof personally to ask him if he still wants this position of development

chief or not. He is left waiting, still. While Geldof sits on a panel to monitor G8 pledges, what about his own promise that he made to this town in Ghana?

While celebrities like Geldof are being praised by Western media and fans for their work in Africa, their actions rarely produce the results that they promise. The Live 8 concerts and G8 summit provide another example of Geldof's false promises to Africa. The Live 8 concert and G8 summit in 2005 were declared a huge success for Africa by Bono and Geldof, but others saw the outcome of the G8 as a "game of smoke and mirrors, and a near complete failure."²

According to one report, "within weeks of the summit, it was revealed that most of the promises made—which hadn't fulfilled the demands of activists in the first place—were quickly being dismantled or were false to begin with."³ For example, the 100 percent debt relief promised to a number of countries was only committed for the following three years. Debt money and aid money turned out to be one and the same. Before the G8, African countries owed a combined total of \$15 billion. After the summit, \$14 billion was still owed. Only a quarter of African countries were eligible for debt relief and, in exchange, they were required to adopt neo-liberal economic stipulations including the privatization of vital services and unequal trade rules.⁴

Africa Action called the G8 a "stunning failure."⁵ The World Development Movement called it a "disaster for the world's poor."⁶ America declared it a huge victory. In the end, it was celebrities, rather than Africa, that stole the limelight of the G8 summit.

² Julie Hollar, "Bono, I Presume: Covering Africa through Celebrities," *FAIR*, May/June 2007. <http://www.fair.org/index.php?page=3119> (accessed 20 June 2008).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

Each case study has shown that celebrity humanitarian efforts rarely address the underlying causes of poverty and injustice in Africa. Instead, celebrities provide a quick fix that creates as many problems as solutions. Celebrities provide these simple solutions as the answer to complex social, political, and economic affairs. Bono believes the answer is simple: "Buy a t-shirt, save a life." Through messages of this sort, the real issues of African poverty, disease, and conflict are obscured, like the images used to sell the "underdevelopment" of Africa onto the rest of the world. Perhaps it is not Africa's "underdevelopment" that should be at issue here. Perhaps it is our own practices in the West that should be scrutinized. If we focused more attention on our own consumerist practices, we would realize that global poverty is not a condition brought about by African ways of being, but has as much to do with our own neo-economic, capitalist, and consumerist ways of being in the West. It was the Western world that diagnosed the "underdevelopment" of developing countries in the first place. We should, therefore, pay more attention to the problems of "over-development" in the West, before we suggest these same strategies as the way forward for other countries, too.

In chapter one, I explored the dangers of giving gifts, particularly the gift of development, which can bring about unforeseen consequences for the recipient of that gift. We explored, in general, how unreciprocated gifts create a condition of violence that, if acted upon, can lead to forms of inequality, domination, and dependency. It is from this assumption that the following cases are based. I also introduced how the celebrity's relation to development is dangerous because of their participation in consumer capitalism. Providing consumer-capitalist solutions to solve the problems of underdevelopment is misguided because, as each case study reveals, consumerist ideals bring about further destruction and devastation for the Third World.

In chapter two, I discuss how consumerist-driven development strategies, such as implementing a commodified educational system and creating a commodified schooling environment, can disrupt a local community by ignoring the values, worldviews, and local forms of knowing present there. Chapter three reveals how consumerism in the West can destroy the environments of people living in developing countries. Consumerism as a solution to end AIDS and poverty in Africa is misguided. The money raised through (RED) for AIDS in Africa is insubstantial compared to what (RED) has provided consumers and corporations with in the West. Finally, in chapter four, we addressed the consequences of representation. Our desire to consume a certain media image of Africa has lead to the dehumanization of its people and places. Even Western media consumption has effects for the development of Africa, just not the effects Jolie anticipated. Images are skewed, landscaped are blurred, people become masses, who must now compete with images of celebrities sketched onto the African backdrop in a competitive consumer-driven news market. When celebrities come to Africa, news and entertainment seem to blur. With celebrities on its side, Africa has become more entertaining than ever. But, really, who is to be blamed: celebrities who are trying to convince the world of their worth or the skewed concept of development that the Western world has in the first place?

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