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Settling the Table: Northern Food Subsidy Programs and the (Re)Colonisation of Indigenous Bodies

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In the post-World War Two period, the federal government of Canada initiated a series of food subsidy programs (the Food Mail Program and Nutrition North Canada) and nutrition and health education initiatives that were officially intended to address hunger and malnourishment in Northern Indigenous communities by imposing settler foodways on Indigenous people. Interrogating food subsidy programs and nutrition and health education initiatives as part of a broader settler colonial project of Indigenous elimination, this paper reveals the ways in which the Canadian federal state employs contemporary discourses of development and humanitarianism to legitimise and normalise its presence and actions in Northern Indigenous territories.

Keywords: Indigenous people, settler colonialism, Food Mail Program, Nutrition North Canada, northern development, foodways

In the post-World War Two period, the federal government of Canada initiated a series of food subsidy programs and nutrition and health education initiatives that were officially intended to address hunger and malnourishment in Northern Indigenous communities by imposing settler foodways on First Nations and Inuit people.¹ The historical conditions that made such state interventions appear

¹ The Canadian Far North refers to the geographical regions located above the 60th parallel that are currently divided into Nunavut, the Northwest Territories, and the Yukon. The provincial Norths are part of the subarctic regions of Canada, which stretch

necessary were the product of a long history of settler colonialism that witnessed the destruction of Indigenous foodways. Deeply troubling is the fact that many of the same strategies of settler colonial statecraft employed by the federal state in the nineteenth century—such as the confinement of Indigenous people to reserves removed from land and water based resources—persist in various iterations today. Moreover, the federal government discourses that accompany such policies inscribe a distinctly Canadian historicity of humanitarianism and ‘northern development’ onto Indigenous experiences of settler colonialism. Interrogating food subsidy programs and nutrition and health education initiatives as part of a broader settler colonial project of Indigenous elimination, this paper reveals the ways in which the Canadian federal state employs contemporary discourses of development and humanitarianism to legitimise and normalise its presence and actions in Northern Indigenous territories. As this paper demonstrates, the origins of food insecurity for Indigenous people derive from a settler governmentality and its control of foodways. Unfortunately, the solution proposed by the federal government to deal with food insecurity is further state interference and control, and these regulatory projects are inevitably structured for the purposes of making Indigenous people less ‘Indian’.

Since the federal government publicly supports Indigenous self-government in order to allow “aboriginal communities to contribute to, and participate in, the decisions that affect their lives and carry out effective relationships with other governments,” the state must justify its settler governmentality and interventionist approach to Indian policy (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2010). We argue that the state manufactures so-called crises of community wellness in Northern Indigenous communities, or perpetual ‘states of emergency’, to harness the uncritical support of non-Indigenous people in Canada and justify the state’s ‘humanitarian’ interventions into Indigenous peoples’ lives. Thus, Indigenous communities and people are separated from their historical contexts and experiences and endlessly identified as sites of disorder through their failure to be more like the dominant society, to make the correct lifestyle choices, or to put healthy food into their bodies (in other words: to be white). In this manner, the liberal federal state makes itself appear “obligated” to assist so-called dysfunctional Indigenous communities into becoming “cooperative, representative, and especially stable entities” so that proper development can occur (Duffield, 2007, p. 11). As a result, the Canadian state is transformed in the eyes of its white citizens and the western world from a violent settler colonial entity into a liberal humanitarian government that is obligated to help, save, and make secure the lives of First Nations and Inuit people. As Didier Fassin and Mariella Pandolfi (2010) write, the “humanitarianization of intervention implies the neutralization of conflict situations. Now it is as if the only issue were to aid victims, as if the local context presented no historical particularities” (pp. 10-12). Of course, Canadian settler governmentality is historically particular, and to ignore its context obscures the broader “western nationalist discourse, which normalizes its own history of colonial expansion and exploitation by inscribing the history of the other in a fixed hierarchy of civil progress” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 136).

across Canada from east to the west and are divided by the Canadian Shield and the Northern Arctic (Far North) regions.

The myth of Canadian humanitarianism and benevolence that crystallises through state discourses of development in the North is particularly powerful. Through these discourses, Indigenous people can simultaneously (and contradictorily) be cast as part of the problem by standing in the way of 'development' as well as being desperately in need of 'progress', to which government-directed development is the solution. Thereby, the goal of humanitarianism, much like in other colonial locales, is carried out with the goal of complete societal reconstruction (Duffield, 2001). Literature that looks at the relationship between humanitarianism and development suggests that those practices that inform imperialism through the operation of global capitalism rely on the existence of a perpetual "state of emergency" wherein crisis is the rule rather than the exception (Agamben, 2008). Mark Duffield argues that development has become the western world's way of dealing with what he identifies as surplus populations through trusteeship that is "educative tutelage over an otherwise superfluous and possibly dangerous population that needs help in adapting to the potential that progress brings" (2007, p. 9). While very important, much of this work overlooks how these relationships operate inside western democracies that are also settler states and how discourses of development and humanitarianism function within those spaces.

Newer practices and policies of elimination in the twenty-first century have been couched in the language of development, opportunity, and incorporation, which is characterised by a preoccupation with inclusion rather than a logic of separation. According to Scott Morgensen, "settler colonialism produces settler societies by pursuing the elimination of Indigenous peoples via amalgamation" (2011, pp. 52-76). Thus, the violent efforts of the state to eliminate or transform Indigenous people are part and parcel of a broader ideology of multicultural, neoliberal individualism that reconstitutes the old colonial trope of the 'white man's burden,' *la mission civilisatrice*, or the "save-the-savages-argument" (MacPherson & Rabb, 2011). As Himani Bannerji and Sunera Thobani have correctly observed in Canada, multiculturalism, as an official government policy, always serves to constitute difference in contrast to the "core of the nation [which is always] defined as bilingual and bicultural" and thus white (Thobani, 2007, p. 145 and Bannerji, 2000, p. 88). As a consequence, humanitarian efforts that seek to fold Indigenous peoples into a liberal and multicultural Canadian polity are necessarily sidled with assimilatory logics that try to bridge the gap between white and Indigenous peoples. In this frame, Indigenous peoples are asked to relinquish everything that makes them Indigenous and gleefully accept the 'complete societal reconstruction' that is accomplished by 'northern development.'

In order to unpack the connections between humanitarianism and development we must look at how racial identities have been constructed and secured in North America in general and Canada in particular. It is therefore not irrelevant to recall that, at the turn of the nineteenth century, theories of scientific racism predicated on universalist notions of man confirmed that Indigenous people were racially inferior and that white North Americans were superior by virtue of being more evolved. Such beliefs were articulated through characterisations of Indigenous peoples as sickly, helpless, and lacking in basic bodily knowledge, which corresponded to constructions of Canada and its white citizenry as healthy, powerful individuals endowed with a modern scientific understanding of the body (LaRoque, 2010, p. 4; Memmi, 1991, p. 79). This narrative was fundamental to

the broader logic of settler colonialism in Canada wherein Indigenous peoples were discursively displaced from their lands as “Indians” and a white settler presence in North America was naturalised as ‘native’ to the continent (Veracini, 2010, p. 22). Through the fabrication of settler origin myths

it is believed that white people came first and that it is they who principally developed the land; [Indigenous] peoples are presumed to be mostly dead or assimilated. European settlers thus become the original inhabitants and the group most entitled to the fruits of citizenship. (Razack, 2002, p. 2)

Thus constituting the “exalted subject” (Thobani, 2007) of the national imaginary, the white settler is the proper national subject situated teleologically between original inhabitants (read: “Indians”) and racialised minorities. The national subject, moreover, is understood “as the embodiment of the qualities said to characterize nationality”, and, as we shall see, the “exaltation” of this essential white Canadian settler “has been key to the constitution of the national subject as a particular kind of human being” (p. 5).

The processes of settler colonialism and racialisation whose continuity we track through food and government policy were much more visible as explicitly racist at the turn of the nineteenth century. The forced settlement of Indigenous people on reserves, the consolidation of the *Indian Act* in 1876, the creation of the pass system, and the establishment of the Residential School system, to name but a few, have all been widely accepted as functions of colonial violence, racism, and assimilationist modes of colonial statecraft. However, the formation of a supposedly post-racial, multicultural, and neoliberal democratic society in the latter half of the twentieth century has made the operation of racism and settler colonialism more difficult to “identify, track, and dismantle” (Preston, 2013, p. 43). Thus, in order to see these processes through the myth complexes of multiculturalism or, to borrow from Jodi Byrd (2002), “colonialism’s cacophony”, we must work harder to name the ongoing processes and logics of Indigenous elimination as settler colonialism and racism. Reviewing federal Indian policies and food subsidy programs that have operated in Northern First Nations communities since World War II demonstrates the extent to which a colonial and genocidal assault against Indigenous peoples persists in Northern Canada, despite the spin provided by contemporary federal governments. Focusing on the material history of food in Northern Indigenous communities, as well as analysing the discursive modes of subject formation in Canada, we suggest that federal policies related to nutrition and health in First Nations and Inuit communities are predicated on the colonial assumption that Indigenous peoples in Canada suffer from a lack of whiteness that can be ‘cured’ through western-style education and development.

Whiteness as the Logic of Assimilatory Nutrition Initiatives

Central to our formulation and reading of Canadian colonial history is the notion that whiteness operates as a fundamentally discursive category and not simply as a biological constitution of a population or phenotypic expression of an individual. In addition to its genetic or phenotypic context, whiteness is constituted by a set of state-sanctioned practices, behaviours, and performances that are associated with achieving individual as well as collective health,

independence, and well-being in a white industrial-capitalist society. Recalling Thobani's critique, whiteness is understood to be a manifestation or embodiment of certain qualities that correspond to a sense of the national character. It is in this precise context that we claim the federal government has imagined Indigenous communities and their food-practices as requiring a kind of whitening accomplished by and through the coercive implementation of market-based and settler-controlled systems of food production and consumption.

To be sure, the efforts of the federal government to assimilate Indigenous people in the pre-World War II period have been well examined. For instance, Ottawa's attempts to enforce an individual western agricultural model on Indigenous communities and the resultant erosion of communities' access to traditional hunting, fishing, and harvesting, have been well documented (Carter, 1993; Ray, 1974; Krech III, 1986; Innis, 1999). Even so, a sustained examination of the state's introduction of commercial based-foods and programs to replace Northern Indigenous foodways has not been undertaken. Instead, the language and politics of benevolence, social welfare, and humanitarianism employed to help 'less fortunate' populations has obscured ongoing racist and colonial efforts to reproduce European-Canadian visions of domesticity and home-life in Indigenous communities. In the latter half of the twentieth century, 'racial' problems are redefined as 'moral/social' problems and seemingly benign and benevolent programs intended to benefit populations considered to be in crisis help to build the epistemological foundations that

racisms have relied [upon because] racisms are not only visual ideologies. They are based on how allegedly visual signs of race are tied to their non-tangible markers ... cultural competencies, moral dispositions, mothering or sexual instincts, inclinations to delinquency or to voracious sexual desires. It is in these fungible assessments of cultural distinctions that the power of racisms thrive. (Stoler, 2002, p. 4)

Indeed, this cultural/ moral obfuscation becomes particularly clear when we look at the ways in which the settler state has sought to impose a European-Canadian version of how nutritious foods are procured, produced, and consumed in Indigenous communities.

Framing the Historical Narrative of Northern Health and Diets

Since their inception in 1942, the Canadian Official Food Rules have served as a central component of state-sponsored efforts to ensure a particular physical and cultural vision of Canadian citizenship (Mosby, 2012, p. 410). A vision that "prioritized middle-class food customs and efficiency regimes derived from capitalist time-management principles" (Iacovetta & Korinek, 2004, p. 198). As they related to Indigenous people and nutrition, these practices of whiteness and citizenship included eating certain types of foods that had been certified as scientifically 'healthy' by 'experts,' participating in a commercial food economy, as well as making responsible choices about what one chooses to put into one's body. Ongoing federal Indian policies, food subsidy programs, and nutrition education initiatives have been and continue to be predicated on the assumption that ill-health in Northern Indigenous communities has nothing to do with poverty, the exorbitant cost of healthy food, nor a history of colonialism. Instead,

this violence is discursively encoded as signifying a failure of Indigenous populations to effectively perform the public and private practices of a modern, healthy citizenship prescribed by the Canadian government. According to Ottawa, high rates of nutrition-related diseases in Northern Indigenous communities (most notably, type-II diabetes) and the failure of Indigenous people to attain a 'modern, healthy citizenship' can be explained away as a vestigial complication of their ancestral history and a profound inability to 'acculturate' to a modern, civilised, neoliberal, and democratic society. As a result, Indigenous peoples are understood by the dominant society as possessing a fundamental and ultimately fatal alterity to whiteness (Byrd, 2011, p. 228).

Complicating the supposedly benevolent intentions of the state to improve the diets and health of Northern Indigenous people through food subsidy programs and nutrition educational initiatives are the high rates of chronic illness currently experienced in many Northern Indigenous communities. Recent studies show that Northern Indigenous peoples suffer from certain nutrition-related diseases that non-Indigenous peoples do not, such as scurvy (Dialogos Education Consultants Inc., 2004a, 2004b; Duhaime, Myers & Powell, 2004). The failure of 'scientific and modern' (read: white and European-Canadian) solutions to ameliorate ill-health in Northern Indigenous communities has forced the federal government to find an alternative explanation for the failure of almost a century of Indian policy (see Perry, 2001; Carter, 1997). Consequently, the Canadian government and *Health Canada*² have resorted to blaming Indigenous peoples' fundamental nature as harbouring natural predispositions to nutrition-related diseases. This contemporary discourse is a repackaging of nineteenth century scientific racism that locates high rates of morbidity and mortality in the supposed failure of Indigenous peoples to adapt to modernity and civilisation (Kelm, 2005, p. 375). At the same time, it discursively reconstructs Canadian citizenship as a performance of certain state-sanctioned behaviours in one's public and private life. This governmentality imagines Indianness as an essence that needs to be translated or transferred into whiteness through federal policies (see Veracini, 2010; Wolfe, 2006, p. 388). Bianca Isaki's (2011) notion of 'settler home-making' as a technology of colonial power is extremely relevant here. She writes that "settler home-making constellates property regimes, investments in single family-homes, *jus sanguinis* doctrines of citizenship that create family ties to the settler state, and personal things, such as bodies, feelings, and family" (p. 83). What follows from Isaki's formulation is the idea that the deeply interconnected imaginaries of race and nation work within the same discourse as white settler citizenship. These knowledge-producing practices understand Canadian citizenship as fixed within white, modern, healthy, and consumptive family units. In this schema, foodways are "a particular handle whereby we may announce [or fail to announce] our fitness as a political settler subject that is keyed to our historical moment" (Isaki, 2011, p. 84).

We see this racialisation process most clearly when we look to how Indigenous domestic space has been cast as alien and in desperate need of reform from without. Not only has the predominance of diet-related illness in Northern Indigenous communities been used to preclude Indigenous people from the category of whiteness, it has also been used as an opportunity to transform the

² Health Canada is the federal department that is responsible for the health and welfare of Canadian citizens.

form and function of Indigenous domestic space in deeply gendered and sexualised fashions. Health care professionals and researchers in particular have picked up and perpetuated this discourse. For instance, the First Nation's version of a set of clinical guidelines distributed by the Canadian Diabetes Association and intended to help practitioners address and improve patient care for Indigenous people, instructed health workers to explain how and where First Nations should eat their meals:

Eat meals with your family: why: eating together is important. This makes mealtimes enjoyable and sets a good example for your children. It is a way to show respect and thanksgiving for the gifts of life and food that you have been given ... Eat three meals a day. Space them no more than six hours apart. Why: Eating the right amount at the right time helps keep your blood glucose in balance. This is the way that the Creator made the body to work. (Canadian Diabetes Association, 2011)

On overt display in this paragraph are the kinds of sterile, sanitised, multicultural sentiments that characterise the broader discourse of Canadian neoliberalism. In this view, all that is required to construct solutions for racialised and marginalised populations is to put an 'ethnic' spin on what works for white people. Cherokee scholar Andrea Smith critiques multiculturalism and racism from an Indigenous perspective when she discusses the "politics of inclusion" that seek to incorporate Indigenous people in white settler projects of civil progress by engaging in gestural activities such as "slapping a medicine wheel" on the "white" normative solution and transplanting it into Indigenous communities as an authentically "Indian model" (2011). Consequently, these crises of supposed disorder also justify and demand further state interventions. In the pages that follow, we show how Family Allowances, the Food Mail Program (FMP), and Nutrition North Canada (NNC) are settler colonial technologies intended to produce a particular version of Canadian citizenship, rather than healthy, modern, Northern communities of Indigenous peoples. We theorise that these programs were structured and informed by a settler colonial logic of Indigenous elimination that tries—always unsuccessfully—to 'develop' or 'civilise' Indianness into whiteness.

Canadian State and Food Subsidy Programs

The decline of fur prices in the late 1940s and 1950s coincided with significant transformations in the social, political, and economic lives of Northern Indigenous people. Provincial hunting laws, resource development, and environmental pollution drastically reduced the ability of Northern First Nations to continue to feed their families solely through hunting, fishing, and the harvesting of non-timber forest products (Gulig, 2003, p. 82; Tough, 1995). Significantly, these events also aided the government's imposition of an industrial capitalist economy based on resource extraction. These events forced Northern Indigenous people to increasingly rely on commercial foods shipped in from southern locales at grossly inflated prices. The first program used by the state to envelope Northern Indigenous people into the commercial food economy and direct their commercial food purchases was the Family Allowance program,

which was introduced in 1944.³ Under this program, all Canadian mothers, regardless of income, received a monthly payment from the federal government based on the age and number of their children (Blake, 2009). While Family Allowances were the first universal social welfare measure passed in Canada, they represented something entirely different for Northern Indigenous peoples. Indian Affairs determined that Family Allowances could only be spent on an “approved list [of food and goods] prepared on the advice of medical officials of the Branch and dietary authorities of the Sick Children’s Hospital, Toronto” (Department of Mines and Resources, 1946, p. 212). To ensure that the list was adhered to, the department enlisted the cooperation of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) as well as non-Indigenous traders in the region. The department instituted these surveillance measures because they were convinced that Indigenous people lacked “any sense” and had proven unable “when work is plentiful and wages high, to provide for their future needs or to spend their earnings on worthwhile projects” (Department of Mines and Resources, 1942, p. 136). Thus, according to the government, even though First Nations were partaking in a commercial economy, they would be forever unable to fully realise the European-Canadian domestic ideal of the white protestant nuclear family. On the basis of this racist assumption, the state saw a need to carefully control and monitor how that spending took place.

Foods were restricted to items considered to be of “high nutritive value” such as “canned tomatoes (or grapefruit juice), rolled oats, Pablum, pork luncheon meat (such as Spork, Klick or Prem), dried prunes or apricots, and cheese or canned butter” (Moore, 1945; Mosby, 2013, p. 156). The food list allowed for Family Allowances was informed by nutritional tests undertaken at Norway House in 1942, as well as broader assimilatory logics that demanded Indigenous peoples adopt white European-Canadian foodways. The list of allowable food was generated by Dr Percy Moore (head of Indian Affairs’ Medical Services Branch) and was based on the advice of nutrition experts Frederick Tisdall, Theodore Drake, and Alan Brown—each of them Canadian paediatricians who performed nutritional experiments on Indigenous children attending residential schools (see Tester & Kulchyski, 1994, pp. 114-19; Shewell, 2001, pp. 146-50; Shewell, 2004, p. 208; Mosby, 2013). Family Allowances were not entirely about improving household incomes to ensure better health outcomes for Indigenous children. When combined with the list of permissible foods, Family Allowances were about symbolically transforming Indigenous people from an unhealthy Indianness to healthy white citizenship through the consumption of certain types of food and the performance of European-Canadian domesticity.

A major example of this mid-twentieth century settler colonial governmentality of changing Indianness into whiteness was the invention and introduction of Pablum and powdered milk into First Nations and Inuit diets, especially in the provincial and far Norths. Pablum was a creation of post-WWII efforts to resolve child malnutrition and vitamin deficiencies through the invention of a fortified cereal. Its originators were Canadian paediatricians Tisdall, Drake, and Brown from Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children. The 1930s and ‘40s witnessed the convergence of “commercial, public health, and medical and scientific interests

³ After the federal government passed the *Family Allowance Act* in 1944, mothers were entitled to monthly payments based on the age of their children (\$5 for children under the age of six and \$8 for children from thirteen to sixteen years of age).

[which] strongly encouraged mothers to modernize their infant feeding practices” (Nathoo & Ostry, 2009, p. 87). Pablum symbolised the ability of ‘modern science’ to fix social and economic inequity, as well as overcome the imaginary defects of Indigenous peoples seen as stuck in an evolutionary stasis. More importantly, for our purposes, the history of Pablum also illuminates how racial logics of settler colonialism are regularly operationalised through gender, as Indigenous women and their infants were singled out as being of particular nutritional concern (Johnson, 1957).

Indigenous women have been and continue to be scapegoated as the cause of their children’s ill-health. In part, this maternal condemnation was a function of the larger burden placed on mothers generally by the medical profession at the turn of the nineteenth century (Comachio, 1998, p. 92). Indigenous women, however, faced a much higher degree of surveillance and criticism than their European-Canadian counterparts because they did not conform to European-Canadian domestic norms. Reports from the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) and the work of its agents constantly sought to reshape the domestic skills of Indigenous women through public health nurses, field matrons, and residential schools, as well as the establishment of mother’s meetings, well-baby clinics, and homemaker’s clubs. At the root of all of these initiatives lay the assumption that Indigenous modes of domesticity and food production were purely pathological and provoked the potential destruction of the Canadian Nation.

Under the Family Allowance program, “such foods as milk, tomatoes and Pablum, largely unknown prior to Family Allowances, are now familiar in the far North [and came to] constitute a large percentage of Family Allowances expenditures” (Department of Mines and Resources, 1949, p. 203). Notices for Pablum and milk posted at HBC forts expressed thinly veiled warnings and open claims of paternal ownership of Indigenous children by an imperial monarch: “Our King has made a law that all mothers of children will get help in seeing that his children grow up to be strong and healthy” (Moore, 1947). This aggressive program concentrated on introducing strict daily feeding routines, altering what kinds and when supplementary foods were to be introduced to infants in addition to changing the time-period when breast-feeding should be terminated (Tisdall, 1945; Bartlett, n.d). These instructions were distributed at HBC posts, nursing stations, at treaty payment time, and by medical officers. Instructions for ‘feeding Indian babies’ were also circulated by the Indian agent, which gave the guidelines an unstated authority. These “Health Rules for Feeding Indian Babies” outlined strict instructions regarding the appropriate length of time to breast feed infants and when and how to bottle feed (Tisdall, 1945; Bartlett, n.d).

In a particularly poignant example of the settler colonial governmentality of whiteness, government officials insisted that the prolonged breastfeeding of children practiced by Indigenous mothers, and *not* the disruption of traditional hunting and fishing practices due to the growing militarism of the North or increasing contact with non-Indigenous people and government policy, was to blame for high infant mortality rates (Lewis, 1947). As a survey of foods on the allowable items on the family allowance list from 1948 to 1955 showed, the purchase of Pablum and powdered milk by the Inuit had gone from 60 to over 1400 units in less than eight years, and presumably corresponded to a sharp decline in breastfeeding (Native Welfare, n.d.). By 1955, letters between company post managers and the head office revealed that the Family Allowance

had a severe impact on the manner in which mother's fed their children. It is also worth referencing the fact that, according to the International Diabetes Federation, "the prevalence of obesity is 50% higher among never-breastfed children compared with breastfed children, and the duration of breastfeeding is inversely correlated with the risk of development of obesity." Moreover, diabetic ketoacidosis (DKA) "is the leading cause of mortality, and morbidity in children with type-I diabetes" (2007).

The Foodmail Program

By 1960, it quickly became clear that Family Allowances were inadequate to resolve the malnutrition and poverty in Northern Indigenous communities in the face of declining access to traditional foodways and rising costs of commercial food. As a result, the federal government initiated a food subsidy program that ran through Canada Post called the Air Stage Subsidy, popularly known as the Food Mail Program (FMP). The FMP was designed to help offset the high cost of shipping market-based foods into Northern communities, especially those communities that were (and are) only accessible by air or briefly by winter roads. The state used the FMP to change the dietary habits of Indigenous people by shifting them away from traditional harvesting, hunting, and fishing practices to relying heavily on commercial foods that were much less nutritious and much more expensive (Grier & Majid, 2010).

Logistically, the program was meant to enable the Northern Store, individual consumers, and any other potential (but mostly non-existent) grocers to order fresh foods and essential products at a subsidised rate from bulk or wholesale retailers in the south. The conditions that had to be satisfied for one to receive this humanitarian relief was that the individual or business in question had to be located in a reserve or community that did not have year-round access to: "road, rails, and marine service" (Health Canada, 2000). 135 communities were eligible for the program. The Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (an umbrella organisation representing 49 First Nations communities in Northwestern Ontario that are mainly fly-in or winter road access only) commissioned its own study in 2000, which determined that "the monthly cost of feeding a family of four in Fort Severn, located on the shores of Hudson's Bay, is \$1,397.09 compared to \$589.09 in Burlington" (Verma, 2000).⁴

In 2008, Graeme Dargo, partner of Dargo and Associates Consulting Firm, conducted an investigation and recommended that the program be eliminated so that a free market system could operate properly in the region and thus 'naturally' lower the cost of food through competition. In 2011, the federal government officially replaced FMP with Nutrition North Canada (NNC). However, due to enormous protest by community stakeholders, NNC was not formally implemented until October 2012. Officially, the FMP was terminated because it failed to improve Northern Indigenous peoples' access to healthy foods and had become too costly. Under NNC, subsidies are now paid directly to the retailers who are then expected to pass on savings to consumers at the point of purchase.

⁴ Burlington is a city located in southern Ontario roughly in the geographic centre of the urban corridor known as the Golden Horseshoe. It has a population of 175,779 people as per the 2011 census (Burlington, 2013).

NNC services fewer communities and subsidises less food and other essential goods than did the Food Mail Program. In an alleged effort to target subsidies towards healthy foods under the assumption that ill-health in Indigenous communities is a function of bad food choices, NNC only subsidises a select list of foods deemed healthy according to 'scientific knowledge.' NNC dropped necessities such as diapers, dental hygiene products, toilet paper, shampoo, fishing nets, boat motor parts, ammunition, gas (things necessary to pursue hunting and fishing activities) and the rather large and ambiguous category of "medical devices" (Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2010). Most significantly, bottled water is no longer subsidised, whereas of October 31st, 2013, 118 reserves were under boil water advisories (Health Canada, 2013). Currently, the cost of food remains prohibitively high in Northern communities and the Northern Store operates under a virtual monopoly.

Who Is to Blame When Intervention Fails?: Race-Based Explanation for Nutritional Failure

Over the last decade or so, nutrition and health literature from government departments such as *Health Canada* or Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) (particularly in reference to the prevalence of type-II diabetes in Indigenous communities) has increasingly drawn on the notion that nutrition-related diseases can be directly correlated to the natural frailty of Northern Indigenous people. According to this state literature, the real diagnosis for diet-induced illnesses is not actually the lack of affordable fresh food, but rather, the corrosion of a pre-contact version of Indianness—a romanticised vision of an authentically 'traditional' lifestyle. Such discourses of evolutionary stasis suggest that not only are Indigenous people excluded from the possibility of ever fully attaining whiteness and modernity, but also demonstrates that the settler colonial logic of Indigenous transfer does not believe in its own feasibility. This self-contradictory logic fixes Indigenous peoples firmly within the "shifting boundaries of barbarity and civility" and speaks to the ambivalence inscribed at the very basis of colonial authority (Bhabha, 1994, p. 115). Significantly, however, this colonial logic ignores the actions and policies of the federal government over the past century which have: confined Indigenous people to static reserves often without access to sufficient land and water based resources to support themselves; eroded the ability of Indigenous people to pursue hunting, fishing, and gathering activities through provincial hunting laws and resource development; and the destruction of Indigenous people's environmental knowledge through the internment of thousands of children in residential schools.

Literature from various government departments and the federal and provincial iterations of *Health Canada* identifies 'Aboriginal' as the first and primary risk category for developing diabetes. In 2008, an information pamphlet issued by *Health Canada* under the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative reported that "Aboriginal people have a higher chance of getting type-II diabetes. Before, older people used to get diabetes, but now, Aboriginal people are getting it a lot younger because their traditional lifestyle has changed so fast." This pamphlet echoed earlier *Health Canada* literature that reported in 2000 for example, that

Due to the nomadic lifestyles and feast/famine cycles of their ancestors, Aboriginal peoples in Canada are likely to be genetically predisposed to store energy very efficiently. The adoption of a market diet high in energy, saturated fat and simple sugars, along with an increased tendency towards sedentary lifestyles and reduced physical activity, leads to a rise in the prevalence of obesity and subsequently diabetes.

Structurally, the phrase “adoption of a market diet” refers to Indigenous peoples as the active subjects who have wilfully abandoned their foodways (*Health Canada*, 2000). The claim that “their traditional lifestyle has changed so fast” creates an absent referent of colonial violence and the racial power at play in the destruction of traditional Indigenous social relations (Adams, 1990; Smith, 2005). In other words, rather than blaming the contemporary reality and ongoing histories of Canadian settler colonialism and resource development for community wellness crises in First Nations and Inuit communities, the Canadian government blames the ancestors of Indigenous peoples. Because colonialism functions as an absent referent, such rhetoric paves the way for a reimagining of interventionist and colonialist projects (such as the FMP and NNC) as neoliberal and humanitarian projects of northern development.

A provincial restatement of this theme can be found on the *EatRight Ontario* website (2013) which outlined the following two reasons why First Nations people are more susceptible to diabetes:

1. Extra weight around the belly area. This is where Aboriginal people tend to put on extra weight and it is a risk factor for developing diabetes.
2. Drastically changing lifestyles. Traditional diets with foods such as wild game and seasonal vegetables and fruit are healthier than the higher calorie and less nutritious diets of today. People are not as active as they used to be when they used to walk everywhere, hunt, fish, trap, gather fire wood and haul water.

What becomes clear through this literature is that the ‘experts’ have determined that the supposedly rapid transition from a hunter/gatherer lifestyle is the root cause of diabetes in First Nations communities. The desire to find an evolutionary rationale for high rates of diet-related disease morbidity in Indigenous communities has led federally-funded researchers to try and identify diet-induced illnesses in Indigenous peoples as a function of an ‘Indian’ prehistory that undoes the otherwise scientifically-formulated and rationally-conceived projects of humanitarian development. As one government report claimed in 2009:

There is a growing concern among health authorities over the rapid emergence of lifestyle diseases, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, colorectal and breast cancer, as well as hypertension to which lifestyle is a contributing factor. All of these diseases appear to be directly related to the degree of acculturation or adaptation to a southern diet and lifestyle. (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2009, p. 16)

In the context of the historical relationship between the Canadian federal government and Northern Indigenous people, insisting that nutrition-related diseases such as diabetes are “lifestyle disease directly related to [the] adaption to a southern diet” locates Indigenous peoples as victims of an inability to adapt. Not only does this passage make invisible the many factors that structure food

'choices' in Northern communities, it also locates genuine understanding and concern for the nature and scale of diseases such as diabetes firmly within "health authorities" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2009, p. 16). Scientific rhetoric and evolutionary terminology are evoked in terms such as "acculturation or adaptation," although no references are made and no studies are cited. Rather, the case rests entirely upon the assumed epistemic authority of scientifically sounding language.

This focus on the evolutionary and the anthropologic makes community-based accounts of these relations or Indigenous perspectives appear unnecessary if one wishes to understand the true source of ill-health in the North. The narrative told of ill-health in the North thus becomes an evolutionary tale in which Northern Indigenous peoples do not have the ability to adapt to the modern world (read: whiteness), and are therefore inherently fragile and prone to sickness (read: because of their Indianness). Reinforcing a wider ideological narrative, this kind of storytelling further de-historicises the issue of First Nations' health and reifies nutrition-related illnesses as a problem rooted in evolution, adaptation, and science rather than in history, colonialism, and capitalism. Speaking of 'Indians' not as having health problems *but as constituting the health problem* is the primary way in which crises of community wellness can be discussed without any critical analysis of power, and allows settlers to absolve themselves of any guilt associated with further and deeper interventionist and colonialist projects in Indigenous communities.

Not only do these examples of the dominant discourse preclude the historical context of Indigenous peoples' health in the North, they locate the pathology of the problem within an assumed 'feast-or-famine' pre-history of Indigenous peoples. Such total claims of knowledge over Indigenous health are not scientific arguments. Rather, they constitute a wider ideological process and system of belief whereby colonial meanings are made and popular consent is manufactured. Still further, this obfuscation of Canadian colonial realities fosters the racist and racialising assumption that Indigenous peoples are fundamentally different from and lesser than white people. More prone to disease and less capable of living in the modern world, Indigenous people are constructed in this dominant discourse as especially frail beings—inevitably and always in reference to their European-Canadian counterparts. Ultimately, health crises in remote-access First Nations communities become reimagined as a series of irresponsible lifestyle decisions made by an ignorant people who are naturally predisposed to diseases and ill-fitted to survive in the modern world alongside their white settler counterparts. Seen as a risk category as well as an embodied evolutionary pathology, Indianness can never truly be transferred into whiteness. Indianness, in this schema, is that which confounds the settler colonial mission of civilising savagery through projects of humanitarianism and development, and 'Indians' are those "others who threaten the fiscal well-being or social security of the nation" and stand in the way of western civil progress" (Goldberg, 2009, p. 332).

Conclusion

*Take up the White Man's burden--
The savage wars of peace--
Fill full the mouth of Famine*

*And bid the sickness cease;
And when your goal is nearest
The end for others sought,
Watch sloth and heathen Folly
Bring all your hopes to nought.*
(Rudyard Kipling, 1899)

Reading the above stanza of Kipling's infamous "White Man's Burden" not only demonstrates the disturbing continuity of a western mythology surrounding colonialism and hunger, but also the way in which the colonised have always been blamed for the violence of their colonisers. Terms such as 'adaption' and 'acculturation' are used to construct Indianness as a pathological and uncivilised social category in an age when scientists can no longer use explicitly racially-based explanations to rationalise the morbidity and mortality of disease in a certain segment of the population (Duster, 1995; Montoya, 2011). The idea that Indigenous people are fundamentally and inescapably sick is clearly what characterises this wider relational discourse wherein Canadian citizens and state institutions are seen as vectors of health and well-being in Northern First Nations communities and Indigenous peoples are seen as impediments to progress.

As the history of the Family Allowance program, FMP, and NNC demonstrates, however, this colonial mythology hides the fact that illness and nutrition-related diseases in Indigenous spaces are largely a function of development schemas such as food subsidy programs and education initiatives. Already dispossessed of land and relocated to static reserves, Indigenous peoples were either criminalised for pursuing land-based hunting practices, or prevented from doing so as a consequence of resource 'development' and industrial pollution (Duhaime et al., 2004). What is worse, the poverty that characterises many First Nations' lives in reserve communities is effaced by a dominant government discourse of poor lifestyle choices and unlucky evolutionary histories. This ensures that Indigenous people are made to suffer the additional insult of being told by the federal state that the source of their suffering is their Indianness. Correspondingly, this nation-making narrative also encourages Canadian citizens to understand their own well-being (or whiteness) as a product of their evolutionary superiority, or non-Indianness. Important for our purposes is the way in which this relational discourse functions to reinscribe a settler colonial relationship of dependence and benevolence while at the same time suggesting that the 'save the savage' discourse of a residential school era has long since faded into Canadian history as a "sad chapter" (Harper, 2008).

We believe that this reproduction by the federal government of a desire to educate, civilise, and modernise Indigenous peoples is sharply critiqued and neatly defined by Byrd when she writes that "'Indianness starts, stops, and reboots the colonialist discourses" of settler states (2011, p. 228). In this manner, we can come to see the attempted transfer of Indianness into whiteness through food subsidy programs and education initiatives as manifestations of a very violent and deeply ambivalent logic of settler colonialism in Canada that endlessly wages 'savage wars of peace.' Of course, when these 'savage wars of peace' (such as the FMP and NNC) fail to produce civil progress in colonised spaces, the settler state readily blames the 'sloth and heathen folly' (read: 'lifestyle choices' and 'poor dietary decisions') of Indians. Significantly, these violent contradictions and colonial relationships persist at the time writing—as

widely circulated and free-floating ideas, as contemporary institutional structures, *and* as ongoing experiences or events of genocide.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN 'AFTER RACE'

'Africa is a national cause': Race and nation in development aid communication—A Danish case study

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This article analyses the intersection of race and nation in development aid communication by way of a case study of the annual Danish aid telethon Danmarks Indsamling (Denmark's Collection, hereafter DI). The article reads the media campaign which surrounds DI in order to understand the specific local cultural and political function of celebrities who have 'African roots.' The reading focuses on how and when they are mobilised within a particular version of a Danish national narrative. These celebrity figures contribute to two interconnected local understandings of the nation. The first envisages the nation as a diverse, inclusive and outwardly caring community. The second links the Danish nation with a one-dimensionally depicted innocent and childlike 'African Other' in an affective economy of aid. The article concludes that these two intersecting versions of national community are held together through the performance of the celebrity Wafande Pierre Jolivel Zahor (a singer) via representations of his 'Africanness'. By foregrounding 'Africanness' and simultaneously including him in the diversity of the nation he becomes located as 'African in the past' and 'Danish now'. As such he functions as metonym for the promise of progress, which the development aid narrative prescribes for the 'African Other'.

Keywords: development communication, race, celebrity, nationalism, Denmark

Introduction

Research into development aid communication has become a growing field of study in recent years (Chouliaraki, 2006, 2012; Höijer, 2004; Jefferess, 2013; Moeller, 1999), with particular attention paid to the increasing power of celebrities in this field (Brockington, 2008; Clarke, 2009; Kapoor, 2012; Richey & Ponte, 2011). The intersection of celebrity and race in the context of development and global humanitarianism has predominantly been analysed via

the imperialist narrative of 'white men saving black women from black men' (Kapoor, 2004; van den Bulck, 2009; Mahrouse, 2012). While insights from these studies are important to this study, because they situate the intersection of race and celebrity in the historical political economy of race and empire (McClintock, 1995), they also run the risk of oversimplifying the complex cultural and political processes that occur in the intersection of racialised imagery and local cultural imaginaries outside the mainstream United States/United Kingdom development industries. Studies that draw out the complexities involved in celebrity and race, point towards new discourses of race in global humanitarianism, where Whiteness is a fluid and somewhat inclusive category, demarcating progress and modernity, into which certain selected individuals are invited, either via adoption (Repo & Yrjölä, 2011), celebrity status and a 'cultural insider' position (Christiansen & Richey, forthcoming) or by transcending national 'cultural borders' (Bolognani, 2011). However, Blackness in the context of global humanitarianism, as these studies point out, remains a cultural signifier of 'backwardness and deprivation', from which African individuals who enter into identification with cultural Whiteness can 'progress' (Repo & Yrjölä, 2011, p. 58).

The article at hand explores the interstice between these two categories. Through a case study of a Danish telethon, this article will focus on the ways in which an imagined affective community between a local western public and 'Africa' is being shaped via a complex play on race as a liminal cultural/visual category, in which celebrities with 'African roots' function as cultural figures that can embody the desired affective relation between a western public and 'Africa'. The case study looks at the specific cultural and political function of these celebrity figures in the context of an annual aid promotion telethon called Danmarks Indsamling (Denmark's Collection, hereafter DI). The article focuses on the intersection between two articulations of Danish national identity, which can be read from the media campaign of DI. Firstly, the program articulates a plural nation which comes together in *fællesskab*¹ as a product of 'the good cause'. Secondly, Danish celebrities with 'African roots' who feature prominently in the telethon, will be read as embodying a narrative of Danish exceptionalism in relation to postcolonial critiques of the neo-imperialism of development aid (Kapoor, 2008; Kothari, 2006), and as embodying an affective relation between Denmark and Africa predicated on an unequal distribution of power and responsibilities.

The article thus interrogates the way in which development aid has been integrated into Danish constructions of national identity and local understandings of Denmark's role in a global world. I cross-read discourses of Danish development aid in DI with their imbeddedness in constructions of 'Denmark in the world' in order to understand how they connect Denmark with an imaginary 'Africa' in an affective economy of aid (Ahmed, 2004a). The analysis will demonstrate the function of race within this imaginary. I ask: how does the telethon DI form an affective economy of aid, in which the nation becomes narrated as a collective body—the *fællesskab*—acting in unison on an imaginary 'Africa' onto which notions of anti-racism, postcolonial exceptionalism and global caring are mirrored?

¹ The Danish concept *fællesskab* roughly translates to 'communality'. However, *fællesskab* resembles the German concept *Gemeinschaft* in key elements, such as a connotation of a shared value system and an idealised notion of the community.

Imagining the nation as a global actor

The article is based in the specificities of the Danish political and cultural context which must be read against the backdrop of political struggles over a re-articulation of Denmark's global image in the aftermath of the so-called 'Muhammad cartoon crisis' of 2005-6 where local debates over the role of Muslims in Denmark via the cartoons sparked an international crisis for the Danish state. The local debates which led up to the international crisis revolved around right wing attempts to vilify and/or assimilate the middle eastern Muslim minorities in Denmark, under the guise of 'immigration policies' and cultural debate (Linde-Laursen, 2007; Rydgren, 2004). In the aftermath of the crisis, a search for new ways of imagining Denmark's role in the global political community has been sought as a re-boosting of national pride, but also as a way in which to understand Danish society as a multi-ethnic community with global ties (see Hervik, 2012; Linde-Laursen, 2007). These local debates over the nature of the multi-ethnic community have shaped the local Danish political landscape in important ways over the last 15 years and prior to the cartoon controversy (see Andreassen, 2007; Lawler, 2007; Wren, 2001). There are (at least) two sides to this development. Firstly, political debates over the place of immigrants in society in general and successive right wing calls for cultural assimilation of immigrants, which has become a more and more mainstream view. Secondly, an institutionalisation of cultural assimilation has occurred in relation both to immigrants, refugees and prospective new citizens (Hvenegård-Lassen & Maurer, 2012; Larsen, 2009). It is in the context of this political climate that a new articulation of Denmark's global role—a re-articulation of global caring via development aid—is being forged in relation to DI.

Like its Scandinavian neighbors, Denmark supported liberation struggles in Southern Africa in the 1960s-1970s, efforts which intersected with the budding development aid industry (Morgenstjerne, 2003, p. 13). As a result, a Danish self-image as 'the defenders of Human Rights and global equality' has traditionally been attached to development aid (Christensen, 2002, pp. 9-10). As such, an idealised relation with 'Africa' has over time been connected with Danish notions of exceptionalism *vis a vis* postcolonial critiques—a discourse in which solidarity politics relating to these anti-colonial struggles were held as 'proof' of Danish anti-racism (Kvale Svenbalrud, 2012; Lawler, 2007). In his reading of the intersection between the Nordic tradition for internationalism and the 'cartoon crisis', Peter Lawler goes so far as to argue that:

... it is in the relationship between contemporary Danish internationalism and the present trajectory of the Danish *folkhem* that we can detect an emergent challenge to Scandinavia's internationalist reputation. If the Nordic welfare state becomes increasingly associated with the preservation of a monocultural haven for only certain classes of person, and internationalism becomes increasingly seen as a means for legitimizing a highly restrictive immigration and refugee policy, this could arguably pose a challenge to the plausibility and legitimacy of Nordic internationalism traditionally understood. (2007, p. 121; original emphasis)

In this political context, a version of national identity as celebrating diversity, displaces the constitutive 'menacing immigrant/Muslim Other' with a one-

dimensional representation of the 'African Other', via the liminal character of the 'African Dane'.

A national event—a national *fællesskab*

The telethon and media event DI supports the 12 leading humanitarian organisations in Denmark under a broad common theme related to African development projects. This article analyses selected materials from the campaigns of 2012 and 2013. The telethon is aired on the main television-channel DR1 of the national broadcaster *Danmarks Radio* (DR) and is preceded by a week of constant coverage on DR's two leading Radio stations P3 & P4, in TV talk shows, documentaries and news coverage. As such DI is a widespread multi-platform media event (see Compton, 2004), and by far the largest single development aid promotion scheme in Denmark.

The Danish notion of *fællesskab* community is important to the function of the overall media strategy of DI and to the way in which DI shapes the narrative of an affective relationship between Danes and 'Africans'. In the Danish construction of national identity, *fællesskab* and particularly its cultural connotations of unity and popularity, play an important role (Koefoed, 2006; Korsgaard, 2004). Firstly, *fællesskab* resembles what Benedict Anderson terms "the beauty of *gemeinschaft*", that is, a political love associated with the idea of the community (1991, p. 143). It is associated with a shared value system, which is locally understood as underscoring the ideals of the welfare state. The welfare state is, in turn, seen as a political manifestation of the values associated with the *fællesskab* of the Danes (Østergård, 2003). Secondly, *fællesskab* is connected with the sense of belonging to the community that is naturalised as a cultural/visual fact. The community that *fællesskab* here connotes is made up by the *folk* (Volk or 'the people'), the protestant state church *Folkekirken*, and the welfare state. This version of community is one in which the nation is becoming increasingly viewed as a simultaneously cultural and biological 'family' (Østergård, 2003; Rytter, 2007).

The concept of *fællesskab*, which is being promoted via DI, thus links the event to debates over national identity. The way in which DI is framed by DR is that of a 'national event.' In respect to this framing, the introduction to the documentary '*Danmarks Indsamling—det nytter*' (Denmark's Collection—it is beneficial),² which in 2013 aired a week before the telethon itself on DR1, is instructive. The intro of this documentary featured the Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt who depicted DI in the following way:

Voiceover: February 8th it will be the seventh time we will have Danmarks Indsamling here at DR—And the collection has become a national event.

Helle Thorning-Schmidt: In times of crisis we have actually given more than we normally do. That says something about who we are, and whom we want to help. We are not unconcerned about people in other countries. We want to get involved, and that is what we are showing via Danmarks Indsamling. And what one needs to be aware of is that the money is going towards some very good causes. We are helping actual, living people out there. And that is what we can

² All translations from Danish to English are by the author.

do, when we create events like Danmarks Indsamling, and we all give what we can. (Danmarks Radio, 2013a)³

DI is “a national event” in which the collective “we”—the nation—is depicted as the active agent. The national “we” is portrayed as involved and caring in relation to global suffering—as such, the national discourse around DI performs a re-articulation of the role of “Denmark in the world” and simultaneously constructs ideas about what and who Danes are and what holds the nation together. The Prime Minister’s statement about the relation between DI and Danish national identity articulates an interconnectedness between the characterisation that “we are extraordinarily generous in times of crisis” and the claim that “Denmark is a nation of caring”. What is important here is not only the proclamation of the “nation as caring,” but also, the way in which this “caring” is depicted as a *communal* action-oriented characteristic. What is articulated is not individual agency, it is collective agency. And collective agency is what characterises the “we” of the nation. Viewers are not only called upon to individually donate money to various projects in Africa, Denmark as a nation—a collective social body—is called upon to act in unison. The Prime Minister’s description of DI is predicated on a form of *fællesskab*, which comes into being through communal agency—that which Benedict Anderson describes as ‘unisonality’—the experience of the community as acting as one in time and space (1991, pp. 24-26, 145).

However, this version of *fællesskab* is imbued with another defining characteristic in the context of DI—Diversity. As a national event, DI seeks to encompass people from all walks of life and represent them as actively engaged in the cause. The plurality of participating agents in the media event (both on- and off-screen/air/line) speaks to an overall discursive strategy of inclusion and communal agency. To describe this plurality let me outline examples of different types of projects, organisations, persons and happenings, which the event encompassed in 2013:

- The daily evening talk show on DR1 ‘Aftenshowet,’ organised ‘collection competitions’ where two celebrities competed to see who could collect more money; for example, one event featured two politicians: left wing politician Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen and right wing politician Joachim B. Olsen.
- Crown Prince Frederic acted as spokesperson for a national running campaign organised by the Danish Gymnastics Association (DGI) and the DR radio-channel P4, where over 30,000 people participated in running events across the country.
- Day care workers organised a bake sale of cup cakes baked by children.
- School children all over the country organised various events, such as ‘car wash’ for donations.
- DR’s children’s channel RAMASJANG organised a ‘do good deeds’ campaign for children, funded by LEGO which donated an amount of money for each ‘good deed certificate’ they received from children.

³ Original quote: Voiceover: Den 8. februar bliver det 7. gang at der er Danmarks Indsamling her på DR, og indsamlingen er blevet en national begivenhed. HTS: I krisetider har vi faktisk givet mere end vi plejer. Det siger noget om hvem vi er og hvem vi gerne vil hjælpe. Vi er ikke ligeglade med mennesker i andre lande. Vi vil gerne involvere os, og det er det vi viser ved Danmarks Indsamlingen, og det man skal gøre sig klart, det er at pengene går til nogle rigtigt gode formål. Vi hjælper nogle konkrete levende mennesker derude. Og det er det vi kan, når vi laver sådan en Danmarks Indsamling, og alle sammen gir’ det vi kan.

- Local businesses (both large supermarket chains and small local businesses) featured DI-branded products.
- The association of boarding schools for youths (*efterskoler*⁴) ran a YouTube competition between schools to collect money.

So, alongside the streamlined logos, glamorous celebrities and media-savvy hosts, the show depicts DI as a popular *folkelig*⁵ cause, which is anchored in the local life of ordinary Danes. The campaign showcases the plurality of a nation that is united via this single purpose. The nation is described as caring about a particular 'global connection': DI "says something about who we are, and whom we want to help" (Thorning-Schmidt in Danmarks Radio, 2013a). This "whom" is left undepicted by the Prime Minister in the documentary airing before DI, quoted above. However, the intro to the documentary features a second character, a female schoolteacher, who describes an affective relation formed by the telethon:

Voiceover: And support has come both from Denmark's largest firms and from the viewers at home in their living rooms.

Schoolteacher: When I see Danmarks Indsamling, and when I see the segments about particularly children—particularly pictures of children touch me—when I see that they do not have a home or access to clean drinking water or food—then I get like—it's almost my duty to do something – then I feel like giving whatever I can. (Danmarks Radio, 2013a)⁶

The unifying object that touches—leaves an *impression* on—the schoolteacher and moves her into affective action (Ahmed, 2004b, pp. 27-28; 2004c, p. 6, 25) is the figure of the child in need. The connection to the cause is affective—the figure of the child in need, so frequently called upon in aid promotion, to the point of causing 'compassion fatigue' in western media audiences (Moeller, 1999, p. 36)—propels the schoolteacher into action. The call to action is a moral one, she feels duty bound by the impression these images have left on her. The Danish idiom used to express this is: 'så får jeg lyst til', which would literally translate as 'then I get the desire to'. This connotation then strips the moral imperative of its burdensome connotation. Desire to act is interconnected with the affective function of the child in need. Here the articulation of agency is stripped of rational deliberation, or political demarcation. The Prime Minister articulates the uniting values of the national 'we' and the schoolteacher provides the moral and affective imperative for these values to be activated. And so, the cause can serve to facilitate a depoliticised version of national *fællesskab*. In the

⁴ *Efterskole* is a popular institution, where teenagers between the ages of 14 to 17 can take the last years of primary school in a boarding school setting.

⁵ *Folkelig* is described by Michel de Certeau as "a Danish word that cannot be translated [literally]: it means 'what belongs to the people'" (1984, p. 131). *Folkelig* is an adjective, which depicts something as qualitatively rooted in popular appeal. It also indicates an unassuming character and is positioned in opposition to narrow elitist aesthetics and intellectuality (see Christiansen & Olwig, forthcoming).

⁶ Original Quote: Voiceover: Og støtten til Danmarks Indsamling er både kommet fra Danmarks største virksomheder og fra TV-seerne hjemme i stuerne. Skolelærer: Når jeg ser Danmarks Indsamlingen, og ser indslagene om især børn—især billeder af børn rører mig—når jeg ser at de ikke har et hjem, eller ikke har adgang til rent drikkevand eller ikke har mad. Så får jeg det sådan; jamen så, så synes jeg næsten at det er min pligt at gøre noget. Så får jeg lyst til at gi' det jeg nu kan.

absence of rational deliberation, and in the context of a unifying discourse of caring, the nation can come together across political divides to unify around a common purpose.

An instructive example of this unity discourse is a Facebook update from (then) Minister for Development Christian Friis Bach who had been staffing the phones during the show. The update depicts the plurality of the people with whom he had talked to throughout the evening:

A Kurdish refugee who wanted to show his children that one needs to help others, a kindergarten in [the village of] Tune, an elderly woman of 92, a small software company ... all of them gave handsome donations. Fantastic fine evening by the phones. And 76 mil. is a strong collection result in the middle of crisis and the winter holiday! That's it. Well done DR. Well done Denmark. (Bach, 2013)⁷

The image, which accompanied the status update, is just as important (or even more so) than the text itself. It is a seemingly random snapshot of the other celebrities who had been staffing phones alongside the Minister. The image appears to have been taken with his camera-phone and uploaded to his Facebook page instantly. The people featured in the photo are: former TV-host Camilla Miehe Redard; left wing activist, actor, artist and film director Leif Sylvester; actor and theatre director Jytte Abildstrøm; the former (and still active and influential) leader of the right wing 'Danish People's Party' (Dansk Folkeparti) Pia Kjærsgaard who has made it her political mission to safeguard Danish cultural identity by stemming the tide of immigration, particularly by Muslims (see Rydgren, 2004). And finally, Kjærsgaard is posing with the young pop-star Basim Moujahidden (stage-name 'Basim'). Basim became a popular pre-teen idol after he participated in Danish version of the TV-show *X-Factor*⁸ in 2008. He is the son of Moroccan immigrants, a fact which has been politicised on a number of occasions, most recently when he won the Danish nomination for the Eurovision Song Contest in 2014 with a stage show that prominently featured a large Danish flag (see Engmann & Nordvang, 2014; Moujahidden, 2014; Politiken, 2014; Winström, 2014).

What Bach is constructing (text and picture together) is an articulation of unity in plurality. We are shown how a plurality of different social (the text) and political (the picture) positions can be encompassed by the 'good cause'. Even the seemingly opposing positions of Basim and Pia Kjærsgaard can be united for the national cause. My argument is that a notion of *fællesskab* is being constructed here. It is a notion of national *fællesskab*, in which a plurality of political, social, ethnic and economic divides are being smoothed over or deemed irrelevant in light of the cause. The showcasing of the many different local initiatives, the range of politicians, industry leaders and celebrities from all walks of the entertainment industry come together to depict a diverse and inclusive version of the nation. This is done in a spirit of celebration—"well done Denmark!" (Bach,

⁷ Original quote: En kurdisk flygtning, der ville vise sine børn at man skulle hjælpe andre, børnehaveklasserne I Tune, en ældre kvinde på 92, et lille softwarefirma ... alle gav flotte bidrag. Fantastisk fin aften fed telefonerne. Og 76 mio. er et stærkt indsamlingsresultat midt I krise og vinterferie! Sådan. Godt gået DR. Godt gået Danmark.

⁸ The *X-Factor* show, also on DR1, is one of the highest rating entertainment shows in Denmark. It has a history of promoting participants of racial/ethnic minority backgrounds, and branding them via this background (see Andreassen, 2011).

2013). That which facilitates this moment of national unity in diversity is, as I will go on to demonstrate, a one-dimensional representation of 'the African Other' and the imagined global *fællesskab* around which the media campaign revolves.

An affective economy of global *fællesskab*

It will be my contention throughout the following analysis that the articulation of unity in action for a good cause revolves around an imagined global *fællesskab*—in contrast to the celebration of unity in diversity that characterises the 'national we'—that is laid out in a very narrow pattern of representations that draw on colonial and neo-imperialist versions of compassion and moral duty (see Duvall, 2009). In the context of DI, the imagery of 'the African Other in need' is predominantly positive—that is, smiling African children in positively angled 'before and after' storylines. However, as Keith Tester has argued, the image of smiling African children has the ability to stimulate (or call to mind) the feelings of shame and guilt associated with the cultural archive of images of death and dying (2001, p. 102). This means that even 'positive' images of smiling well-fed children have the ability to evoke what Lilie Chouliaraki terms "the spectacle of human vulnerability" (2012, p. 26) and call on the imagery of human suffering which have been associated iconically with the reporting on the Ethiopian famine/civil war in 1984-85 (Moeller, 1999, pp. 118–119).

DI relies on two interconnected representations of the 'beneficiaries' of its development aid projects. Firstly, DI uses a 'before and after' storyline. Inherent in this narrative structure is the 'before' situation. This is at times only alluded to, but the reference to a pitiful situation which has been rectified via aid, still calls on the catalogue of images of death and dying that traditionally underpin aid campaigns (Chouliaraki, 2006; Moeller, 1999). The 'before and after' storyline intersects with 'comparison narratives', often depicted via celebrities or 'ordinary Danes' who have visited projects or act as spokespersons for the participating organisations. In these narratives the images of how 'they' live are cast as relevant to 'our' own lives as cautionary tales of how spoiled 'we' are but also, how deserving the Africans in need of aid are. Their deservedness for aid thus relies on a comparison with the fortunate, spoiled and comfortable lives 'we' live in Denmark. This depicts a division of roles and responsibilities between 'us' and 'them'—we who have so much, must give to those who have not.

The following example from DI 2013 illustrates the ways in which this division of roles is integrated into the overall discourses of *fællesskab*. The example is taken from the *X-Factor* TV-show which in Denmark is the highest rated show in its genre. *X-Factor* has been the so-called 'lead in' for DI in 2012 and 2013—that is, *X-Factor* airs directly before the DI live telethon. The episode is aid-themed and SMS-donations are possible throughout the program's duration. To set the stage for the aid-theme, the cast of participants and judges perform a newly composed song which viewers can buy directly online, with proceeds going to DI. The 2013 song was entitled '*En Verden*' ('One World') and composed by the singer/songwriter Anne Linnet, who was a judge on the show. The song had a music video—featuring the performers and images from DI of the Africans who would benefit from donations.

The video starts with one of the judges, Thomas Blachman, who performs a monologue:

You have got so much love
So you say
But, who receives all this love?
The chosen few?
Or, do you have enough love for the whole world?
(Thomas Blachman in Danmarks Radio, 2013b)⁹

The articulation of a relation of love, which ideally should be able to encompass “the whole world” corresponds with the title of the song ‘One World’. The imperative here (again) is not rational but emotional—that which connects ‘us’ to the whole world is love. The video then proceeds to shots that shift between the two other judges Anne Linnet and Ida Corr who sing the verses, the rest of the cast who provide background and sing the chorus, and shots of African landscapes, a family sitting by their home which is a thatched hut with mud walls, and a group of children who are sitting on the ground singing and clapping in choreography. The *X-Factor* cast and judges are shown in full performance styling, against the black background of the set, backlit and projecting beauty, affluence and professionalism, whereas the Africans are portrayed in a poor, rural and ‘backward’ setting, casting them as ‘in need’. The visuals thus provide a stark contrast between the performers and the African ‘beneficiaries’.

The lyrics of the song start off by depicting a world that bleeds, a continent (Africa) that is burning with war and dying, but also, a world in which ‘someone’ is lighting a candle of hope. This dichotomy between despair and hope comes to full fruition in the chorus:

But who can carry those
Who cannot walk themselves
And all those who fall down,
And all of us who have
What have we got to give
When the *fællesskab* calls?

And we can carry those
Who cannot walk themselves
And all those who fall down?
And all of us who have
We have so that we can give
When the *fællesskab* calls.
(Lyrics by Anne Linnet in Danmarks Radio, 2013b)¹⁰

Here we see the dual versions of *fællesskab* being depicted as two simultaneously existing communities. The *fællesskab* is calling—it is calling on: “we who have”, “we who can carry” and “we who can give”. Importantly, the

⁹ Original quote: Du har så meget kærlighed, Si’r du, Men, hvem får al denne kærlighed? De få udvalgte? Eller har du kærlighed nok til hele verden?

¹⁰ Original quote: Men hvem kan bære dem, der ikke selv kan gå, Og alle dem, der falder, Og alle vi, der har, Hvad har vi så at gi’, Når fælleskabet kalder. Og vi ka’ bære dem, Der ikke selv kan gå, Og alle dem, der falder, Og alle vi, der har, Vi har så vi ka’ gi’, Når fælleskabet kalder.

fællesskab is the global, “one world”, in which a moral duty to help those in need falls to those who have the strongest arms, those who “can carry”. Simultaneously, the national *fællesskab* is called into being through the invocation of the “we” that acts on the global *fællesskab* in a clear division of roles. Africans are the ones that cannot walk themselves, Danes are the ones that can carry them. The video shifts between images of the *X-Factor* cast and images of the ‘Africans in need’, predominantly the happy playing children, who despite of their poverty (sitting on the ground, in a rural setting wearing ragged clothes) are joyful in play. Children in general are in need of being ‘carried’ and therefore the dichotomy perhaps at first glance appears to be natural. However, from a critical postcolonial point of view, portraying the ‘African Other’ as childlike, or via metonymic representations of ‘the African child’ is such a familiar imperialist trope as to gain immediate recognition and critique (Moeller, 1999, p. 111; Pieterse, 1994, p. 43; van den Bulck & Clarke, 2009).

Two simultaneous *fællesskab*(s) work on each other: The global *fællesskab* calls the national *fællesskab* into action, a national *fællesskab*, which comes into being by depicting a one-dimensional representation of the ‘African Other’. This plays on a dialectic between distance and closeness— “we” the Danish *fællesskab* is brought closer together via the affective imaginary distant constitutive Other—an Other, who is depicted as a child in need of being carried.

The African Dane—the symbolic embodiment of plural *fællesskab* and global caring

Celebrity studies scholars have pointed out how celebrities and celebrity logics function to stitch together disparate communities because they are “highly visible to a large number of otherwise disconnected individuals—as ‘weak ties’ binding disparate segmented individuals together” and furthermore have a “socially integrative effect, constituting significant ‘nodes’ which hold together a communicative social network” (van Krieken, 2012, p. 82). This is especially significant for national communities where sports stars, for example, have this function (Wong & Trumper, 2002). I examine here how this socially integrative role functions when enacted by celebrities who are positioned in a liminal position to the nation in relation to race. So far, we have discussed the issue of race primarily as a component of the ethnic minority ‘Other’ in the national discourse on *fællesskab*. However, the function of distance and closeness in the articulation of the global *fællesskab* is not a straight forward reading of bodily signage where the global division of roles are depicted via visual representations of ‘White’ (Danish) and ‘Black’ (African) individuals. The reason for this is the deliberate depiction of Danish celebrities ‘with African roots’ as part of DI.

The *X-Factor* show has previously been analysed as a site where “participants of colour” are represented as part of the national ‘we’ (Andreassen, 2011, p. 171). The *X-Factor* judge Ida Corr is of Gambian/Danish heritage and thus part of this overall narrative. So in the context of DI, we cannot read Corr’s performance as only linked with her part-African heritage but also as part of the overall diversity discourse associated with *X-Factor*. In this sense, DI does not stand alone in constructing the celebratory diversity discourse. However, Corr’s bodily signage (alongside *X-Factor* contestants who also have African heritage) functions as a visual rejection of a version of national *fællesskab*, in which the nation is seen as

'White'. When the national *fællesskab* is narrated by Corr, who is simultaneously a cultural insider and 'African', this visually functions to reject a straightforward 'Black/White' reading of the dichotomous representations of Denmark and 'Africa'.

The next performer, whom we will discuss in detail, is more directly depicted via his 'African roots'. The singer Wafande Pierre Jolivel Zahor (stage-name 'Wafande') who performed during the live telethon in 2012 (as well as doing live radio performances in the preceding week) was cast as the 'African Dane', a category which functions to interconnect the two versions of *fællesskab*. I will examine the way in which Wafande was introduced to the audience during the telethon. I read Wafande's engagement with the DI host Louise Wolff via Sara Ahmed's notion of 'sticky signs'. Ahmed argues that racial difference functions via 'sticky affects'—that is, racial terminology 'sticks' by employing the catalogue of historical meanings in "an economy of difference" (Ahmed, 2004c, p. 59). Ahmed draws on Frantz Fanon's distinction between the bodily experiences of being 'Black' and being 'White' in contexts of White privilege. Ahmed argues that

To be black or not white in 'the white world' is to turn back towards oneself, to become an object, which means not only not being extended by the contours of the world, but being diminished as an effect of the bodily extensions of others. (2006, p. 139)

I argue that we can read Wafande's participation in DI 2012 as a complex play on race as a liminal cultural/visual category in relation to Danish national identity. I demonstrate how Wafande depicts his 'African roots' and native mastery of Danish culture along with his celebrity status in an attempt to escape 'being called into race' (Fanon, 1967, p. 111). Wafande is placed in the DI campaign as liminal figure that can embody both the national and the global versions of *fællesskab*. This is a social position that I have elsewhere defined as 'celebrity-black' (Christiansen & Richey, forthcoming).

Before his performance of the song 'Ny Dag' (A new day), Wafande was interviewed by DI host Wolff. In this interview, Wafande was asked to depict his relation to Africa, via his family background, and through his present affective relation to the cause of DI 2012, 'Children Refugees'. I have chosen to quote the interview in its entirety:

Louise Wolff: Wafande—It is actually your father who is sitting down there playing (*cut to an onstage shot of the elderly man who is playing a Kalimba*)—and you are going to join him in a little bit—we are going to hear the song 'A new day'. What is the song really about?

Wafande: Well, it is actually very much related to the theme of Danmarks Indsamling this year—that is—Children Refugees. It is written, as—well not fully—but based on my father, but like also based on all the terrible stories you see, like, both from the Horn of Africa and all the things that have happened in—well, the last 20 years—well, the last 50 years.

Louise Wolff: So, your father, he has actually also been a refugee!?

Wafande: Yes, he was a refugee—not from war—we come from Tanzania, and there was no war there, but from poverty and in order to get out, to experience a better world. And then he ended up here in Denmark.

Louise Wolff: What does this song mean to you?

Wafande: It means that I can sort of express myself in giving something back—that I know where I'm coming from, my lineage, and that it is important to remember ones' roots and giving something back when one has the opportunity to do it.

Louise Wolff: But now that your family has experienced this situation of being a refugee, and your father has come here to Denmark, and you have grown up here, and have had a completely different upbringing—what do you think about it all on such a day as today?

Wafande: I think that it is fantastic to be able to do something—that is—firstly for myself, because now I have my music, which I can share with the people and can use that to spread a little joy. But I also think in general that it is unbelievable to think of how lucky I have been compared to some of the children that are—well—the same age as my little sister—she is eight years old, and I think that it is horrible to think of really. So, now I want to do something on my own—and with Denmark behind us (*turns to face the audience and shouts*) What do you say!? (*The audience responds with cheers*). (Danmarks Radio, 2012)¹¹

The first thing that Wafande is connected to in the interview is his father's presence on-stage, where he is seen playing the Kalimba, a performance which goes on during the interview. So he is in this context primarily depicted via his 'African roots', not his role as a musician or via his celebrity status. There is no mention of his African body markings, a point which might seem moot in light of his primary association to Africa via his father, nevertheless, Wafande is wearing a wooden pearl necklace with an Africa-shaped pendent that emphasises his association with Africa.

By actively interpreting the category of 'refugee' in his opening statement to refer to his father's migrant status, we see Wafande attempting to place himself outside the depoliticised unity discourse—that is, he describes his father as an

¹¹ Original quote: LW: Wafande—det er faktisk din far der sidder dernede og spiller—og ham skal du også ned og spille med om lidt—vi skal høre sangen 'en ny dag'. Hvad handler den egentligt om? W: Jamen, den handler faktisk utroligt meget om det som Danmarks Indsamlingen handler om i år—altså, børn på flugt. Den er skrevet, ligesom—ikke fuldt ud fra min far, men li'som også ud fra de forfærdelige historier man ser, altså både fra Afrikas Horn og alle de ting der er skert i—ja de sidste 20 år—ja 50 år. LW: Så, din far han har faktisk selv været på flugt!? W: Min far var selv på flugt—ikke fra krig—vi kommer fra Tanzania, der var ikke krig, men fra fattigdom og for at komme ud og opleve en bedre verden. Og så endte han her i Danmark. LW: Hvad betyder den her sang for dig? W: Det betyder at jeg lig'som udtrykker migselv i at gi noget videre til at jeg ved hvor jeg kommer fra, min afstamning og at det er vigtigt at huske sine rødder og gi noget tilbage hvor man har mulighed for at gøre det. LW: Men når nu din familie har oplevet der her med flugt, og din far nu er kommet her til Danmark, og du er vokset op her, og har haft en helt anden opvækst—hvad tænker du så om det hele på sådan en dag som i dag? W: Jeg tænker at det er fantastisk at kunne gøre noget—altså—for det første for mig selv, for nu har jeg jo min musik, som jeg kan dele med folket og kan bruge det til at gi lidt glæde. Men jeg synes i det helt taget også at det er utroligt at tænke på hvor heldig jeg har været i forhold til nogle af de børn der er—ja—på alder med min lillesøster ikk'—hun er 8 år gammel, så jeg synes at det er forfærdeligt at tænke på altså. Så nu vil vi gøre noget på egen hånd, og med Danmark bag os (vender sig ud mod publikum, og råber): Hvad sir' I til det!?

'economic refugee'. This is not an available category of refugee in a contemporary Danish political context. Rather economic migrants are frequently portrayed in media and political discourse as 'parasites on the welfare state' and closely associated with the earlier mentioned vilification of Muslim immigrants (see Wren, 2001). Nevertheless, Wafande attempts to steer the conversation towards this contentious political subject. He fails. The host pulls him back into the affective narrative of 'innocent' refugees = children. The host reminds him that he is there to talk about his song, and not his description of the ways in which he ended up in Denmark. Wafande does not resist the call to take up his expected role. Rather, he reverts to the 'celebrity script' of 'giving back' (see Barron, 2009; Littler, 2008).

In Wafande's version, however, he places this well-known narrative in the context of his own 'African lineage'. This gives the host the opportunity to depict him via his liminal position—the African who has grown up in Denmark.¹² She simultaneously attempts to place him in an affective narrative—a narrative that he in the first instance resists, by attempting to revert to the 'celebrity script', but which he eventually places himself in—he has been incredibly lucky to grow up in Denmark, children the age of his own sister (an affective relation) suffer horrible things, this propels him to want to act. Drawing from Ahmed, I read Wafande's performance of liminality as a careful balance between being called back into race and maintaining his critical political edge. His refuge in this attempt is to call on his celebrity status, and utilising the 'celebrity script' of giving back is an attempt to avoid the stickiness of the racial marker 'African'. Via the celebrity narrative, Wafande does escape being *just* the 'African Dane'—the go between—he has status. However, he cannot in the context of DI escape the liminal position entirely. The positioning of the celebrity Wafande as someone who can speak *of* and simultaneously *from* the experience of Africans comes out through the way in which the host attempts to 'pull him back into his lineage'. However, the narrative is not that of 'the poor African'—it is salvation through inclusion in the national *fællesskab*. Wafande's personal narrative is one of transformation because Denmark is a "nation of caring"—one in which a little African boy can grow into a celebrity who is able to "give back" to 'his African roots'.

Conclusion

At the outset of this article, I asked how DI forms an affective economy of aid in which the national *fællesskab* comes into being as connected with 'Africa' in a global *fællesskab*. As we have seen throughout the analysis, DI places the nation as *the* important referent. Viewers are not only called upon to individually donate money, Denmark as a nation—the collective social body—is called upon to act in unison. The collective body of the nation is here imagined not only in an imperialist 'White man's burden' civilizing mission, but also in terms of complex local notions of "the whiteness of Danish culture" (Andreassen, Folke Henningsen, & Petersen, 2008). Homi Bhabha has pointed out that

¹² Wafande's family history is in reality relatively complex. His mother is Danish/French, and Wafande spent a considerable part of his childhood in Provence. The 'from Africa to Denmark' narrative, is therefore, if not exactly a fiction, then tweaked for the occasion (see Christensen, 2011).

[i]n the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes a site of *writing the nation*. (1994, pp. 145-146)

My analysis points out how the Danish nation—as written—in the narrative construction of a constitutive *fællesskab* with an imaginary one-dimensional 'Africa', positions celebrity characters with 'African roots' in an ambivalent liminal position in relation to Danish national identity. The role played by these characters in the national pedagogics of the narrative is double. Ida Corr and Wafande are portrayed as both cultural insiders and visually 'African'. As such, they are seen to embody the desired affective relation between Denmark and the 'African Others', in which the national 'we' is seen as celebrating diversity in many forms (political, social, ethnic, racial, economic etc.). However, as this version of the national *fællesskab* and its relation to the global *fællesskab* with Africans relies precariously on a representation of this 'African Other' as one-dimensionally 'good, childlike and in need', Ida Corr and Wafande's 'Africanness' must be pushed out of the present and into the past in favour of their Danish cultural insider identification. In Wafande's interview, this is done by depicting his 'African experience' as tied to his father's refugee experiences and emphasising how Wafande himself is a product of a Danish upbringing. Ida Corr simply functions visually as a marker of 'non-racism' (she is included). As such, their performance adds ambivalence to both versions of *fællesskab*: they are proof of the celebration of diversity in the nation, and simultaneously embody the potential for change, which this nation's involvement in the global *fællesskab* promises. Their having 'developed' out of their 'African roots' into the plural, affluent and caring *fællesskab* of the Danish nation functions metonymically for the promise of Danish development aid of the 'African Other'. Their performances function both as signs of 'unity in diversity' and as visual manifestations of the desired global *fællesskab*.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN 'AFTER RACE'

(De)Constructing Whiteness, Power, and 'Others' with Access: International Development and Transnational Interracial Intimacies in East Africa

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In the East African countries of Kenya and Tanzania, white Western women are socially constructed as 'Others' with access, or foreign and non-normative avenues by which black East African men can access the wealth, mobility, and status of an idealised Western lifestyle. This access, both real and perceived, confirms the transnational social and economic power of whiteness. I investigate the concept of 'Other' in this context as one invested with power, inverting conventional academic understandings of racialised 'difference' as a point of marginalisation or subordination within relations of power. I examine the ways in which white Western women working in the field of international development are enmeshed within hierarchical racial divides and the operation of racialised power differentiation, processes at the core of international development and 'the white man's (or in this case, woman's) burden.' In this context, these women are understood to be hypervisible embodiments of foreign-ness, wealth, and mobility, and therefore potentially desirable intimate partners to black East African men. These conceptualisations further entrench whiteness as a transnational site of privilege and, rather than losing authority through its visibility, whiteness reasserts its power through its ability to be seen, a visual emblem of success to which local populations should aspire to become.

Keywords: whiteness, East Africa, international development, white woman's burden, hypervisibility of 'race', interracial transnational intimacies

Introduction

My social status changed, everyone was like, "Oh my God, Michael with a white woman!" ... [they] looked at me differently in a nice way ... many people in fact even women, my lady friends black Kenyans used to tell me: "Wow! Stay with

her." You know: "You're going to become rich, you're going to drive a very nice car." (Michael,¹ research participant from Kenya)

I was walking down James Gichuru [a street in Nairobi] and these little boys ... I was just talking to them as I was walking and they asked where I was from and I said America and ... they all said, "I want to marry a *mzungu* [white person or foreigner in Swahili] and go to America" ... I think that really shaped my perspective ... if little boys think that, is that so ingrained, is that why ... Kenyan men seem to have some kind of interest in white women? (Lauren, research participant from the United States)

The above commentary illustrates the ways in which, in the East African countries of Kenya and Tanzania, white Western women are socially constructed as 'Others' with access, or foreign and non-normative avenues by which black East African men can access the wealth, mobility, and status of an idealised Western lifestyle. This access, both real and perceived, confirms the social and economic power of whiteness. I investigate the concept of 'Other' in this context as one invested with power, inverting conventional academic understandings of racialised 'difference' as a point of marginalisation or subordination within relations of power. I draw from Kristin Loftsdóttir's (2009, p. 4) critical questioning of the relationship of race and whiteness to professional practices of international development and the personal lives of development workers. She asks: "How are racial identities constructed through such encounters, and how is the historical memory of race reinvented?" Ultimately, I consider: how are narratives and histories of race and whiteness in international development made meaningful and 'real' through face-to-face and intimate interactions between black East African men and white Western women working in development?

I locate the drawing of hierarchical racial divides and the operation of racialised power differentiation as the core of international development and 'the white man's (or in this case, *woman's*) burden.' I examine the ways in which white Western women are understood to be hypervisible embodiments of foreign-ness, wealth, and mobility, and therefore potentially desirable intimate partners to black East African men. These representations of Western women further entrench whiteness as a transnational site of privilege and, rather than losing authority through its visibility, whiteness reasserts its power through its ability to be seen, a visual emblem of success to which local populations should aspire to become. In deploying the concept of 'Others' with access, I am critical of the perception and embodiment of white Western female subjectivities as 'colonial continuities,' which frame intimate encounters between development workers and local populations (Gregory, 2004). Indeed, the desire for whiteness is constituted by the desire (and the very real need) for acquiring socioeconomic power and social status.

Catalyst and Primary Research

My interest in the subject of whiteness in East Africa grew from my own experiences working and living in the region. As a white Canadian woman interning near Mwanza, Tanzania in 2005 and in Nairobi, Kenya in 2010, I experienced being white as a foreign and non-normative subject positioning and

¹ All names are pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants.

felt a sense of intensified visibility and attention from black East African men. It was evident through daily interactions that white women were perceived to be desirable objects for local men to attain because whiteness was equated with wealth and a worry-free lifestyle. These experiences provoked my interest in critical race and whiteness studies outside of Western contexts in order to understand how white privilege may be understood and operate differently (see Bashkow, 2006; Goudge, 2003; Heron, 2007). Rather than conceptualizing the power of whiteness as emerging from its structural invisibility and normativity, I contend that in an East African context white privilege manifests and is confirmed through processes of hypervisibility and non-normativity.

I conducted primary research from May to August 2012. I partnered with Twaweza Communications in Nairobi and the Institute of Development Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam and conducted 19 in-depth, semi-structured interviews with participants primarily between the ages of 18 and 40. I interviewed nine local Kenyan and Tanzanian men currently living in Nairobi or Dar es Salaam, although some were born and raised in other communities, including Kenya's coastal region and Mwanza, Tanzania. These participants were in various occupations at the time, such as youth development work, music and the visual arts, tourism, and accounting, and/or pursuing university level degrees. I interviewed ten white Western women currently working in different facets of the development industry and related fields, including local and international non-governmental organisations, covering humanitarian aid stories for international news services, conducting research for think tanks, and teaching. These participants, originating from Austria, Canada, Denmark, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, each held or were pursuing university degrees, primarily in the fields of international development, international relations, political science, refugee and/or global studies.

The Production of Knowledge, Positionality, and Reflexivity

Interviewing is a useful, though constrained, methodological tool. Victoria Bromley (2002, p. 126) argues that rather than understanding the stories shared in this setting as the ultimate 'truth,' researchers must instead understand them as the expression of "social worlds" that create meaning in that individual's life. Understanding knowledge as situated, rather than 'objective,' offers a snapshot into the complexities of an individual's particular context, the ideological narratives that shape their identity, and their social relation to power (Hesse-Biber, 2012, p. 9). Indeed, it is important to acknowledge here that there are gaps and limitations within the interviews, given that the intimate partners of participants were not interviewed. Therefore, the interviews reflect an individual's perspective as mobilised through tropes that participants use to make sense of their experiences and perceptions. As Joan Scott (1992, p. 37) writes, 'experience' as it is understood, recalled, and relayed to an interviewer is "at once always already an interpretation *and* is in need of interpretation" (emphasis in original). Experiences are doubly interpreted, first by the individual and then by the interviewer, making experiences inherently political and positioned within ideological systems, whether dominant or resistant. As such, I am not searching for the 'truth' from participants, as conventionally implied. Rather, I am interested in their experiences as they understand and express them, and in what terms they view themselves and their place in the world.

My own social location 'in the field' similarly impacted my experience of conducting research and interacting with participants in Kenya and Tanzania. In particular, my position as a Western white woman undoubtedly shaped the responses I received from participants during the interview process. As a white (Jewish), middle-class, educated Canadian woman and past volunteer development worker, I was (and continue to be) in a significant position of privilege over, in particular, the male research participants. Although as a white Western woman in the context of an African patriarchal society I did experience instances of sexism, more often than not my whiteness and subject position as a foreigner seemed to supersede my gender. Indeed, while I did sometimes feel marginalised for being a *female* outsider, my outsider status as *white* consistently reinforced my status as privileged with a level of economic and personal security not as readily available to local women. In negotiating my positionality, I employed a process of self-reflexivity in order to be continuously aware and critical of the ways in which my social and economic position within an East African context may heighten pre-existing power dynamics and reproduce colonial and Orientalist knowledge (see Deutsch, 2004; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012).

Some participants also sought to examine my social location and were often curious about my personal experiences with development work and interactions with local men. In order to create open dialogue, I willingly acknowledged the reality and limitations of my social location, which often put research participants more at ease. Several of the female participants shared their appreciation at being able to speak openly with someone external to their lives, their anonymity allowing them to critically think through their experiences. Though admittedly some of the men I interacted with appeared enthusiastic at the opportunity to talk with a white woman as an end in itself, many appreciated the chance to speak about a subject they felt was taboo or difficult to broach with their peers. While the process of a formal interview can be implemented and experienced in problematic ways, it can also be a rewarding site for critical reflection.

Shifting the Gaze and 'Others' With Access

Critical whiteness scholars like Ruth Frankenberg (1997, p. 2) have critiqued the conceptualisation of whiteness as an inherently invisible, unmarked, and normalised way of being (see also Dyer, 1997; López, 2005). Within conventional Western-based processes of racialisation, whiteness is constructed as a normative and invisible subject position, which diminishes persons of colour and obscures Indigenous histories and contemporary struggles for sovereignty. Within this settler-colonial paradigm, white persons are constructed as 'native' to the settler-colony and therefore the rightful inhabitants of the land (see Byrd, 2011; Razack, 2002; Thobani, 2007). Non-white populations, therefore, are understood to be inherently different from, 'Other,' and threatening to the norm of hegemonic whiteness. In addition to the important work of studying the operation of whiteness and racial hierarchies in Western contexts, studying the shifts in white privilege in contexts outside of the Western world is an equally crucial tool in the process of dismantling transnational white privilege and white cultural and economic dominance. Indeed, while the work of those scholars who focus on the impact of the presumed universal and invisibilised subjectivity of

whiteness and settler-colonial identity is important, this perspective risks the assumption that whiteness is *actually* invisible to those around it. As Sara Ahmed (2004, para. 2) explains:

It has become commonplace for whiteness to be represented as invisible, as the unseen or the unmarked, as a non-colour, the absent presence or hidden referent, against which all other colours are measured as forms of deviance ... But of course whiteness is only invisible to those who inhabit it. For those who don't, it is hard not to see whiteness; it even seems everywhere.

The assumed invisibility of whiteness, then, is only experienced from the perspective of those who hold white privilege. The operation of whiteness and white privilege are very visible by those who are not white, just as sexism is often invisible to men but easily seen and experienced regularly by women. bell hooks (1992, p. 338) suggests that, just as whites have a long-standing fascination with the figure of the racialised 'Other,' so too have blacks studied and sought to understand the presence of whites in their lives. This knowledge garnered by persons of colour about white people—often thought of as "ghosts," "barbarians," and "strange apparitions"—comes from a cruel history of white domination, slavery, and colonisation. These views of whites as symbols of terror illustrate that contemporary understandings of whiteness as normative are not its only or 'natural' formation and also, crucially, that communities of colour have long seen, marked, and thought critically about the operation of whiteness in their lives (see Baldwin, 1984; Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1981; Moreton-Robinson, 2005; Lawrence, 2004). Increasingly, critical race and whiteness studies is meaningfully engaging with the transnational operation of whiteness and critiquing the assumed invisibility of whiteness. Suvendrini Perera (2005, p. 31), drawing from David Theo Goldberg, asserts that, rather than an invisible or unseeable presence, whiteness often manifests "as a palpable, material and eminently quantifiable category against which those to be excluded [are] measured, rather than one that function[s] as an implicit structuring presence." In other words, the workings of whiteness are deeply felt by most and it is this reality that provokes me to conceive of whiteness as always already visible, even if not immediately to whites themselves.

Inverting the white gaze—in this particular context shifting from the white gaze to the black or African gaze—has the potential to disrupt normative conceptions of whiteness and often forces white persons into an awareness of their position of power and privilege. In using the term 'Other' in this context to indicate white power and privilege, rather than processes of whites marginalising other racialised communities, I do not intend to take away or neutralise its use, or to suggest that its conventional usage is obsolete. Instead, I deploy the term 'Others' with access in order to unpack the production of white Western women's subjectivities in East Africa and to expose the continuing privileging of whiteness on a transnational scale. Ultimately, these women, their whiteness imbuing them with essentialised power and privilege, are afforded personal and professional opportunities because they are understood to have access to the benefits of an idealised Western lifestyle.

In this article I frame the experiences of participants through the theoretical concept of 'Others' with access in order to emphasise the construction of white Western women's identities from the perspective of local black East African

populations. The context that informs this article—an African majority-black setting, rather than a Western majority-white context—requires a theoretical shift in how racial encounters emerge and are conceptualised. In opposition to racialisation and 'Othering' as an affirmation of privilege, as is the case with 'Others' with access, scholars have typically critiqued processes of marking 'difference' as a source of marginalisation and subordination (see Yancy's [2008] work on the white gaze). I understand white Western women's experience and embodiment in East Africa as a way in which their social and economic privilege is (re)enacted and reinforced. In doing so I focus on two key themes: (1) the non-normative and hypervisible character of white Western women's subject positioning, and (2) the assumption that white Western women are access points to the wealth, mobility, and opportunities of an idealised Western lifestyle. Processes of Othering produce conceptions of 'difference' and are constituted through relations of power. In this case, the power and privilege of being a white Western woman in development work is conferred through a process of localised racialisation, which constructs an understanding of what that whiteness has *come to represent*: wealth, mobility, and opportunity. Although white privilege emerges differently in East Africa than it does in Western contexts, the result is comparable, as the level of material power, privilege, influence and status that *most*, if not all, white Westerners living and working in the region uphold, is only afforded to a select group of local black East Africans.

International Development and the 'White Man's (and Woman's) Burden'

Given the thousands of development and aid organisations operating on the continent, it is estimated that there are more white people in Africa today than there were during the colonial period (Heron, 2007, p. 14; Stirrant, 2000, p. 33). Nairobi, sometimes referred to as 'Africa-lite' because its Westernised character makes it an easier transition into African life for development workers, boasts the presence of a myriad of local, national, and international non-governmental organisations. Dar es Salaam is regional home to the country's finance and business sectors as well as a centre for beach tourism. Although for some East African populations white people have been concomitant with colonial exploitation and violence, for others white skin has become associated with an idealised Western lifestyle of wealth and opportunity. White Westerners are often coded within a modernised colonial paradigm as either historical dominator or contemporary saviour. Global narratives that uphold whiteness as an identity inherently associated with wealth and opportunity are often contested by localised associations of whiteness as a source of terror, destruction, and death (Dikköter, 1990; Fox, 2012; hooks, 1992). Understandings of white people are often contradictory and whiteness often comes to represent opposing experiences of colonial violence and contemporary idealisations of beauty, wealth, knowledge and a privileged lifestyle (Fox, 2012, para. 2). Many present-day views of whiteness obscure historical associations of appropriations of land and resources, death and violence, emphasizing instead the supposed 'goodness' of whites, in particular those working in development.

The perspectives of Westerners who do development work overseas are often shaped by university and organisation-based training in development theory and self-reflexive practice. Development workers are frequently caught between an altruistic ideal to 'do good' and 'make a difference' and the recognition that

development is based upon a colonial legacy of racialised and dichotomous systems of value and progress. In employing the concept of colonial continuity, Derek Gregory (2004, p. 7) states that “the capacities that inhere within the colonial past are routinely reaffirmed and reactivated in the colonial present.” In other words, discourses and practices of international development are a reactivation and continuation of colonial ideology. Today white women are the primary practitioners of international development ‘on the ground’ in Sub-Saharan Africa, ambiguously positioned through their subordinated gender and privileged racial identity. In this context ‘the white man’s burden,’ the often cited masculinist task of civilising the so-called “dark continent” is renewed as the ‘white woman’s burden,’ a tool often used to alleviate the burden of white guilt for the atrocities of colonialism (Wa’Njogu, 2009, p. 76; McEwen & Steyn, p. 3; Razack, 2004, p. 4). This ‘burden’ is a socially fabricated but deeply felt duty embodied by white Western women to govern, teach, and discipline those ‘less fortunate.’

The practice of international development, then, is both “an important site of encounter between individuals from the developing world and the West, and a source of images of certain regions of the world as displayed in the West” (Loftsdóttir, 2009, p. 4). Indeed, John Wa’Njogu (2009, p. 76) argues that “most Westerners have never visited and may never visit Africa, yet they hold an image of Africa in their minds.” These “imaginative geographies” (Gregory, 2004, p. 4) or “racialized developscape[s]” (Loftsdóttir, 2009, p. 7) rely on homogenised and inverse understandings of Africa and the West, a landscape often determined long before development workers arrive in a country. Barbara Heron (2007, p. 34) explains:

The countries of the North—home to the former metropolises of empire and their white-settler dominions such as Canada—are places of greater civilization, or order, cleanliness, and a truly good quality of life, which has an evident material basis of comfort and security, while those of the South—the former colonies—languish in anachronistic space, where chaos often reigns, disorder and disease are rampant, and life seems (from our perspective) to be hardly worth living.

These racially coded social and geographic landscapes underpin the practice of international development and reinforce a status-quo ideology that equates Western and white with progress and superiority.

For those white Western development workers who have lived and worked in the region, the popularised idea of ‘Africa’—as the quintessential representation of underdevelopment, poverty, and conflict—is often both the reason they entered the industry and a site of personal tension. Loftsdóttir (2009, p. 7) contends that individuals are “entangle[d] or ensnare[d]” within contemporary manifestations of colonial narratives, demonstrating that even the most self-aware of individuals are caught within larger racialised phenomena taking shape around them. The female research participants were very conscious of the racialised power dynamics within their work, yet, they also found it a difficult task to be fully self-reflexive of their own complicity in these processes, in particular the ways in which (neo)colonial narratives emerged in their personal histories and interest in development. Before Alice, a 22 year old Canadian exchange student interning at the University of Dar es Salaam, had lived in Africa, she was fearful of what it would involve. She recalls: “I didn’t think I used to be interested in development.

I mean, you'd always see things on the news and I was mostly afraid of the undeveloped world and didn't understand it at all, like 'Africa! That sounds like a death zone! I'll never be there.'" Similarly, Alexandra, a 21 year old Canadian student volunteering with a small local women's rights organisation in Dar es Salaam, struggled to negotiate her relationship to the continent:

I've always wanted to go to Africa ... go 'save the world,' all that good stuff [laughs] ... It's just the extremes, it's like nowhere else, it's just such poverty, what [is] really mind-blowing to me is all the wars on the continent ... everything that could be ... 'fixed' to put it loosely, all in one continent ... you want to fix it ... [but] you're not necessarily the right ... person, specifically, or the West as a whole ...

While Alexandra is questioning her purpose in the region, she is also unable to fully detach herself from more popularised negative views. Despite their knowledge of colonial history and the problematics of development, participants were constrained in their ability to resist dominant cultural discourses.

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012, p. 72) argues that, as a continent, "Africa is currently entangled within a racially hierarchized, Christian-centric, Western-centric, patriarchal, imperial, colonial and hetero-normative social order." The legacy of colonialism is undoubtedly implicated in the reinforcement of a social and cultural paradigm that romanticises the West and whiteness, as white people have become the global symbol of "Western modernity, wealth, and race privilege, personifying the legacy of imperialism, the ideal of development, and the force of globalization" (Bashkow, 2006, p. 2). Furthermore, the impact of structural adjustment programs (SAPs) in the region has significantly shaped the expectation that the West is a source of wealth, while Africa is debt-ridden and in need of financial assistance. First introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in East Africa in the 1980s, SAPs have been propagated as an avenue for which 'developing' countries are able to pay off outstanding debts and modernise their national economies as a way in which to eradicate poverty (see Rono, 2002; Vavrus, 2005). However, SAPs have actually increased the gap between the rich and the poor. A foreign-focused economy has eroded the availability of social services in the region, including health care, education, and food subsidies, and does not provide the foundation for local economies to generate full-time, permanent employment opportunities (Rono, 2002, p. 84, 88-89; Vavrus, 2005, p. 175). Widespread poverty and fewer opportunities for higher education and meaningful employment, coupled with popularised images of the West as a land of wealth and opportunity, buttress an idealised perception of the West as the answer to Africa's problems.

The male participants readily acknowledged that the Western world—sometimes seriously or jokingly referred to as '*mzungu*land'—is believed to be bursting with wealth, resources, and educational and career opportunities. The observations of Mark, a 28 year old communications student from Nairobi, are particularly apt as he explains the construction of Western superiority disseminated to Kenyans:

The way the West packages itself as, "We are the richest, we are the coolest, we're the most innovative, we make the best things ..." That has in some way made East African men to believe anyone that's white is probably rich and comes from a rich continent, which is true, because North America is the most privileged continent and probably North American women, whether you're rich, poor or

middle-class, you're probably more privileged than an average African.

This 'packaging,' originating from the West itself, operates to ensure that favourable images of a Western world of development and progress proliferate. Mark also points to the reality of the wealth and privilege of the Western world; indeed, the benefits of white privilege are not only a localised fantasy. Racial hierarchies operate to materially privilege the West and whites relative to the rest of the world. As Cheryl I. Harris (1993, p. 1758) contends, all whites are necessarily privileged more than populations of colour, in that "it does not mean that all whites will win, but simply that they will not lose, if losing is defined as being on the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy." Ultimately, then, even those whites who are not wealthy by Western standards are affluent and privileged on a global scale.

Whiteness and Hypervisibility

Invisibility, the ability to go unnoticed and to be perceived as normative, is typically understood as an advantage; thus, correspondingly, hypervisibility would be a disadvantage. However, in the case of East Africa, hypervisibility actually reflects and reinforces the privilege of white people. Indeed, in a context "where physical appearances are so powerfully juxtaposed," white people are very visible and development workers in East Africa become accustomed to the consistent call of '*Mzungu! Mzungu!*' (Fox, 2012, para. 7). The politics of who is 'looking' and the positioning of 'the gaze' are implicated in this inverted (for Westerners) racialised context. White women in East Africa are implicated in the experience of looking *at* others, people different from themselves, and also in the process of being looked *at*. E. Ann Kaplan (1997, p. 4) asks: "What happens when white people look at non-whites? What happens when the look is returned—when black peoples own the look and startle whites into knowledge of their whiteness?" For many white Western development workers, arriving in East Africa may be the first time that they feel exposed and visible as a white person, and thus, they are forced to recognise their social location and privilege and to understand *themselves* as the hypervisible racialised 'Other.'

Though increased social attention can be amusing or flattering at first, most white Western women quickly become frustrated with the constant scrutiny. Rebecca, a 25 year old Canadian working on issues of affordable housing in informal settlements, struggled to find her place in Nairobi:

I didn't like being stared at all the time, I didn't like feeling different, I didn't like people asking me for money, I didn't like the impression that people wanted to talk to me because of the colour of my skin ... I'm from a small town in Canada, most people are white, I'm used to it being the majority ... I'm used to blending in and not really being judged on colour ... when I first arrived, I did feel like it was negative, I didn't like being pointed out for that.

Rebecca laments her visible status as an outsider, the privilege of being white shifting to feelings of discomfort. Her sense that her hypervisible whiteness was met with 'negative' sentiment, as opposed to her receiving attention because her colour was associated with affirmative qualities, illustrates her difficulty in confronting her privileged position. Anna, a 32 year old German woman working

with civil society organisations in Nairobi, echoes this sentiment: "What I hate sometimes ... I often feel like I'm shining. Among all these blacks I can't just disappear in the crowd ... [you're the] one which sticks out of the crowd. Everybody sees you." These women describe a loss of a sense of self and a discomfort with how their white selves have been reinscribed in East Africa through their inability to fit in and to be the norm. This "feeling of standing out and constantly being noticed," often experienced as a source of embarrassment, of being discriminated against or stigmatised, is frequently understood as a consequence of a *perceived* reduction in authority and power (Heron, 2007, p. 62). However, in this context, the attention paid to white Western women actually *confirms* their power, rather than acting as a force of marginalisation.

Whiteness and Wealth

The wealth associated with white skin positions racialisation as an affirmative process that imbues the white 'Other' with idealised, and very real, power. As Nyanzi and Bah (2010, p. 114) contend, whites are often understood to be "the personification of wealth, prosperity and an endless solution to local lack." Whiteness as a category associated with "endless wealth and affluence" is a common subtext in sub-Saharan Africa (Loftsdóttir, 2009, p. 7; see also Heron, 2007, p. 78). For example, Matthew, a 26 year old graduate student in Dar es Salaam, states that when a white development worker visits a local community, particularly in poorer regions both rural and urban, some East Africans think "a warrior has arrived ... we are going to be out of trouble because they have arrived." Mark (Kenya) agrees, saying that white people are often viewed as "cash cows" and the "great white hope" for Africa. Implicated in unbalanced economic relationships between the West and Africa, the economic location of white development workers "seems to negate their humanness, reducing them to a big open purse" (Nyanzi & Bah, 2010, p. 114). This is well encapsulated by Michael, a 28 year old who started his own tourism company in Nairobi, who says that white people are perceived to be "a walking ATM machine."

Whiteness represents a financial freedom to which local populations aspire through a coupling of wealth and modernity, a class difference that is both naturalised and a status to which one can aspire (Bashkow, 2006, p. 9). Miriam, a 38 year old British journalist based out of Nairobi, comments on the normalised class and status separation between whites and blacks in Nairobi:

A lot of people [call] me 'Madam' and it annoys me [laughs]. But that kind of tells you everything really, in the sense of, "This woman we assume her to have power, we assume her to have wealth," and a sense of fear I think as well ... immediately you are in a different class because you're white, there's a very clear racial hierarchy ... white people equals money, equals all those opportunities in life that a lot of Africans don't have, so you have a definite sense of power.

Anna (Germany) similarly questioned the tendency of local populations to associate white people with wealth and power as she contemplated her positionality:

So I think, "Why do they think I have money?" ... This is annoying, but on the other hand in thinking about it, I think they are right, because there might be bloody rich Kenyans and the gap between Kenyans is so much bigger, but I've

never seen white people living here in the slum.

Anna struggles to disengage herself and her identity from the conflation of whiteness and prosperity and finds it difficult to confront how she is implicated in these systems. From Miriam and Anna's description, it is not that being white is *positive* in the sense that it 'feels good'. In fact, both often feel uncomfortable and 'annoyed' by the way in which they are perceived because they are white. However, their whiteness is an affirmed identity because local populations assume that they are wealthy, powerful, and elevated in the local racial hierarchy—and, in reality, they *are* in a significantly higher economic and social status than most local people. As both readily acknowledge, the privileges associated with the conflation of whiteness equals wealth equals social power automatically positions them in a 'different class.' For Miriam and Anna, their status as racial 'Other' and foreigner is an acknowledgement of their relative economic freedom, their whiteness marked as privilege and entitlement.

In addition to being independently wealthy, white development workers are assumed to have direct connections to sources of Western funding for projects and communities. Even though Rebecca (Canada) felt that she was very low in the development workers' hierarchy in terms of experience and seniority, she perceived her local coworkers treating her as if she could solve all of their financial problems. She recalls:

They [her black East African coworkers] were just still asking me for investments, or to start programs for them, do things that I just, I didn't even know how to do ... a guy even asked if I could buy him a computer and I was just like, "I am an unpaid intern, I have a big student loan" ... they just saw that I was white and ... they just assumed that I had all these answers and solutions.

Rebecca struggles to reconcile the very real economic privilege that she holds, even as an unpaid intern burdened by student loans, in comparison to most local populations. Even though she is relatively inexperienced compared to her local colleagues, and is not earning a regular salary, Rebecca felt she was treated with reverence and as an 'expert' in finances, investment, and development projects. Amenities considered basic in the West—running water, flush toilets, regular meals—and the lifestyle enjoyed by the middle to upper class—secure housing, reliable transportation, travelling on holidays, and extra spending money—are readily available to most white Westerners in Kenya and Tanzania. The perception that white Westerners can provide solutions to local financial difficulties often inflates expectations of development workers, symbolically filling the monetary funds of the development industry as a whole into the pockets of individual workers.

Whiteness and Mobility

The term *mzungu*, originally associated with colonialism, signifies those 'wondrous' white foreigners who brought with them knowledge of the rest of the world. In popular parlance, however, the term means to 'go in circles,' or to seemingly move without purpose (Edmondson, 1999, p. 30). *Mzungu* is now also often linked with the mobile lifestyle of white people and their identity as 'travellers' venturing across borders. Stephen Castles (2003, p. 16) contends

that mobility is a global “stratifying factor” and has become a privilege visually demarcated through racial difference. The ability to cross national borders—to actually fly from a Western country to Kenya or Tanzania—is a currency of sorts and a sign of power. Sarah White (2002, p. 409) reflects on the privilege attributed to the mobility of white development workers in Africa: “It seemed to me then that, as it was for currency, so it was for people: simply crossing a border radically inflated exchange values.” The ability to travel to East Africa from a Western country, even for those unpaid interns like Rebecca, is in itself a privilege not available to many.

Abdallah, a 26 year old accountant originally from Kenya’s coastal region, contends: “You can’t see a *mzungu* who says, ‘I don’t have money.’ You would be like, ‘You flew, you didn’t come here by bus, so you must have money.’” A key aspect of being white is having “great power of mobility and great spatial reach,” argues Bashkow (2006, p. 73), which is made possible through monetary wealth. This is reiterated in development worker’s presumed (and real) ability to come and go at will, their whiteness acting as a badge of privilege and convenience (Goudge, 2003, p. 11). Rebecca (Canada) is very aware of her privilege in being able to decide to travel to and work in Kenya:

There’s so many people who are white, who come here to give money, or are here to work with NGOs or businesses or invest, that it’s reasonable for them [Africans] to think that they might have a chance to get money. And if we flew all the way over here, of course we have money [laughs]. Now I’m just like, “Obviously!” ... I’m very privileged to be able to come over here and just drop myself in a different culture and immerse myself in it and have money to be secure and be happy here.

From Rebecca’s description, she holds a degree of agency in deciding where she goes and what she does as a development worker in Kenya. As a white Western woman in East Africa, Rebecca’s privilege as a white person seems to supersede her subordinate gender position, enabling her to exercise her access to the finances required to travel.

Transnational Interracial Intimate Desire and Relationships

Outside of some connections to studies in the field of female sex or ‘romance’ tourism, there has been little critical attention paid to the intimate relationships of white Western women in development work overseas. Since the 1990s scholars have been tracking an increase in white European and North American women travelling to the Caribbean and the Western and Eastern coasts of Africa in hopes of fulfilling sexual fantasies with “rent-a-dreads,” “rasta-men,” and “beach boys” (Bauer, 2014, p. 21, 24; see also Tami, 2008). The desire to engage in intimate encounters with African men is constructed through fetishised conceptions of a hyper-sexual virility that code local black men as sexual objects available for white Western consumption (Bauer, 2014, p. 23). This desire for black African men’s bodies emerges from histories of fear of black sexuality and sexual attacks by African men against white women in colonial spaces. Known historically as ‘Black Peril,’ this historical trope constructed African men as the physical embodiment of uncontrollable, primitive and animalistic sexual desire presumed to represent a threat to the ‘purity’ of white femininity and chastity

(see Heron, 2007; Nagel, 2010; Stoler, 1989). Colonial histories of relationships between white women and colonised men, then, are not non-normative in the sense that they are unusual or novel.

In a related vein, the desire for white women as 'Others' with access can be understood as non-normative because these women are often positioned outside of every day life and localised power relations. Ultimately, the desire for exoticised black bodies is socially constructed through racial and economic power structures that normalise the white gaze and white control and scrutiny of black bodies. Given that white persons are often used to taking on the role of the person *behind* the gaze, rather than the one being gazed *at*, this article demonstrates that the gaze is not one directional. This inverted (for white Westerners) gaze simultaneously (re)constructs white Western women's sense of self and, despite some personal and individual discomfort, reaffirms the privileged position of whiteness in an East African development context.

Whereas white female tourists may revel in the temporary heightened sexual attention they experience, particularly those who may not fulfil Western idealised standards of body shape and beauty (see Jordan & Aitchison, 2008; Nyanzi & Bah, 2010; Tami, 2008), the development workers interviewed for this research project tended to loathe the array of casual sexualised encounters with black East African men as they go about their daily lives. Wanting to be taken seriously in their workplace and craving affirmation as professionals, these women often found the constant attention under the male gaze—heightened through intersecting gendered and racialised power relations—to be frustrating and demeaning. Caroline, a 33 year old from Denmark who works in Dar es Salaam at a training centre for East African activists, is regularly approached by black Tanzanian men for her phone number. As a result, she has felt unable to cultivate platonic friendships with Tanzanian men because initial meetings very quickly became avenues for romantic expressions such as "I miss you" and "I love you." Lauren, a 24 year old American about to begin a position with the United Nations in Nairobi, echoes this sentiment stating that, "being white is a little strange just in that people talk to you, ask you for things, hit on you, ask to marry you, ask you to have their children."

However, rather than increasing the likelihood of building a romantic connection, such encounters tend to mark local men as insincere, suspect, and difficult to trust for the white women interviewed. Alexandra (Canada) describes the 'wall' she feels between her and local men in Tanzania because "they're constantly staring at me ... they're talking to me because they think I'm rich." Similarly, Kim, a Canadian in her fifties who teaches in special needs education, abhors constant catcalling, such as 'Hey baby, I love you!', as she runs errands in Dar es Salaam. These women wish to shed their foreign-ness, to blend in, and to have 'genuine' relationships with local populations, but instead their whiteness, and the persistent local male gaze, acts as a barrier. Although these women have likely been at the centre of the 'male gaze' in their home context, through catcalling and being approached by men in public spaces, participants perceived the male gaze in East Africa to be a different and more unsettling experience. Indeed, these women were used to being seen *as women* only, reflective of their understanding of their whiteness as a neutral subject positioning at home. The experience of being seen *as white women* specifically, however, was jarring. Their whiteness was hypervisible not only to those around them, but now also to

themselves, which profoundly shifted research participants understanding of their identities, social positioning, and racial privilege.

For some black East African men, entering into a romantic relationship with a white Western woman created a perception among their peers, and sometimes themselves, that their status 'at home,' financial stability, and potential to move to her country of origin would increase. This is because such relationships can be framed through the quintessential African "rags-to-riches" trope of migrating to the West and emerging from poverty (Edmondson, 1999, p. 36; Nyanzi & Bah, 2010, p. 115). Abdallah (Kenya) confirms this African dream:

When I was a little kid ... I used to say to myself, "My first wife will be a white woman" ... my dad used to go to Europe ... I started having this perspective, "That place must be really cool, I really want to go there, see how it is" ... when I started dating [a white woman] ... I was getting into a new world that, it made me look at this other world like, "Guys, this is the life."

Michael (Kenya) described his experience of dating a white woman from Switzerland as 'different' because of the increased attention that he received from his family, friends, co-workers, and even strangers. Although in some ways he enjoyed being seen differently by his peers, the attention was also frustrating because some assumed that he was with his girlfriend only because she was white and wealthy:

It's funny when people see you with a white woman, they respect you so much because they believe it's very hard to get one. So my social status changed, everyone was like, "Oh my God, Michael's with a white woman!" ... [they] looked at me differently, in a nice way ... My lady friends black Kenyans used to tell me: "Wow! Stay with her" ... "You're going to become rich, you're going to drive a very nice car" ... And these things used to really get me ... even now I hear people still asking me, "How come you don't date white women anymore? Why don't you, you know they have money?" ... They ask me that ... because of the money, not because of anything else.

Michael articulates how the cessation of his relationship with a white woman meant his friends viewed him as 'giving up' a prize or valued commodity. However, the assumption that those black East African men who are able to build an intimate connection with a white Western woman will necessarily revel in their 'better' life is a problematic and perhaps romanticised perspective. White Western women's identities, presumed by some local women and men to be based on their status as wealthy, free to travel, and imbued with the agency to make their own decisions, have the potential to both buttress and threaten the conventional male role of responsibility and authority. Although not all participants performed or desired traditional gender roles, within this particular context of a heteronormative and patriarchal society, the construction of normative black East African masculinity, such as dominance and being in charge of family finances, emerges alongside hegemonic expectations of femininity, including being demure and dependent on men. The "social value and respect" of men is based on their ability to financially provide for their family (Silberschmidt, 2004, p. 194). This localised construction of hegemonic masculinity in East Africa emerged after decolonisation in the 1960s as men became heads of the household and the primary economic provider for their families in an increasingly monetarised economy (Nyawalo, 2011, p. 130; Nyanzi & Bah, 2010, p. 114;

Silberschmidt, 2004, p. 192). However, high unemployment rates and crushing poverty in both rural and urban areas undermine the capacity for men to affirm and uphold conventional masculine roles as economic providers for their families. Economics, therefore, renders masculinity vulnerable to domination by others, particularly by female partners who are more financially privileged.

It is often assumed by local populations that white Western women are 'less feminine' than local black East African women because they are placed within, and tend to expect, a social and economic position of power. Indeed, Miriam (Britain) relishes her 'honorary' (read: white) social position in Nairobi, where she is released from social prescriptions of demure femininity and accepted as her outgoing and boisterous self. She recounts:

When I started going out with my ex we'd go out to some *nyama choma* [barbecued beef] joint Saturday afternoon ... And so the other [Kenyan] girl would sit and drink soda, very quiet, not say much. I would start drinking beer and arguing politics [laughs] ... you're given an honorary status, you're not a normal woman. You're kind of like a woman who is a bit liberated or masculine in terms of her behaviour, you feel that you can behave in a much freer way than a Kenyan woman could.

Because of her white privilege and 'status' as foreigner, Miriam is able to act in a way that local women are not necessarily able (or desire) to, including engaging in so-called 'masculine' behaviours. The sense of empowerment that Miriam feels in this context manifests through the understanding that her heightened white privilege supersedes her gender subordination. Miriam locates herself outside of normative Kenyan gender roles and expectations and, at least temporarily, embodies the status of 'honorary man' within a complex and intersectional gendered hierarchy (Edmondson, 1999, p. 37; Jacobs, 2009, p. 55). While this is empowering for Miriam, this perception relies on the assumption that her white privilege does not also operate at home in the United Kingdom, albeit differently manifested. Indeed, the research participants hold comparable white privilege in their countries of origin, however, it was often only once they were in East Africa that they became meaningfully aware of this privilege and how it intersects with gender subordination. While their whiteness was immediately visible to local populations, it is through entering a different context of racialisation and racial histories that enabled these women to partially acknowledge the operation of race privilege in their lives.

Similarly, Michael (Kenya) and Abdallah (Kenya) also spoke about white Western women rejecting hegemonic gender roles as they were viewed as 'controlling' and 'take charge' in romantic relationships. Abdallah considers this characteristic to be rooted in whiteness, a sense of racial superiority vis-à-vis their black Kenyan partner. He argues that interracial relationships tend to follow the pattern akin to that of master and servant, wherein the black man's masculinity is devalued and the white woman's superiority is confirmed: "The white one is always right, the white one is always above ... they become superior and we, inferior ... It's always like ... you are the queen, but I'm not the king. I'm the servant." Miriam's perception of herself as able to transcend hegemonic gender roles due to her whiteness relies on similar tropes of white privilege and superiority used by Michael and Abdallah to explain their experience of the power dynamics of intimacy in their relationships with white women. Racialised scripts

are rearticulated as problematic, while the complicity of white Western women and black East African men in localised gendered power relations is obscured. Indeed, the discussions here of the hierarchical relationships between white Western women and black East African men—both simultaneously ambiguously positioned based on gender and race oppression—ignore the reality that black East African women (and women of colour in Western contexts) are often marginalised by both white women and black men.

For some men, the (un)desirability of white Western women may change over time. Initially Miriam felt that her black Kenyan husband was attracted to the daily perks and the status boost he received through their relationship. However, as she explains, eventually he found these qualities were the same ones that resulted in the demise of their marriage: "I think one of the things that attracted him was what he came to hate in the end ... He's like, 'This is a white woman, I have status being with her. She has money' ... but then ... you go back to traditional gender roles, he's supposed to be the man, he's supposed to be the provider." In this case, that which was once desirable was ultimately a quality deemed undesirable, even threatening, according to Miriam. Her self-described failure to conform to patriarchal notions of femininity, which presumes male superiority, fostered her husband's feelings of resentment. Associating with whiteness, then, can both enhance black East African men's wealth and privilege as well as threaten their masculinity.

Conclusion

This article argued that, in an East African context, white Western women are understood to be homogenised racialised 'Others' with access to wealth, resources and mobility. In engaging (or attempting to engage) in intimate relationships with these women, black East African men hope to enhance their social status locally and to be provided with access to finances and perhaps transnational mobility. This conceptualisation of white Western women as 'Others' with access is, in itself, a colonial continuity, a rearticulation of racial hierarchies of value and privilege. A key purpose of critical whiteness studies as it intersects with anti-racist movements is to demystify naturalised conceptualisations of whiteness as a normative, neutralised, and apolitical identity and social position. In shifting the gaze from black bodies to white bodies, I aim to reconsider transnational narratives of whiteness and white privilege from a non-Western context. While many of the participants in this study felt that the more 'innocent' or romanticised idealisation of white people and their whiteness has diminished over time and with increased exposure, whiteness still retains a numinous quality in popularised East African cultural contexts. Indeed, participants often struggled between ascribing to and resisting hegemonic understandings of the heightened value of whiteness.

This article contributes to research within whiteness and critical race studies, studies of transnational interracial intimacies and sexualities, as well as critical studies of development. In particular, this article troubles continuing resistance to the inclusion of more politicised issues of race and sexuality within both the academic and practical realms of international development. The willingness of development practices and policies to mainstream gender, but to stay "determinedly 'colour-blind'"—and, I argue, defiant to more complex questions of

sexuality—is indicative of a continuing failure on the part of the development industry to meaningfully engage with and address with the uncomfortable tensions of race and colonialism in the private lives of development workers (White, 2002, p. 416). It is crucial to turn our attention to the patterns emerging within the personal lives of Western development workers as they engage with local populations while overseas. The lives of individual development workers inform, and are informed by, broader discourses and practices of racialised power and privilege in a transnational context.

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SPECIAL ISSUE: THE WHITE MAN'S BURDEN 'AFTER RACE'

Remixing the Burden: *Kony 2012* and the wages of whiteness¹

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This paper examines the centrality of whiteness to the Kony 2012 campaign, arguing that both Kony 2012 and the broader saviour-industrial complex are predicated on a benign and unchallenged whiteness. Kony 2012 is predicated on a geo-political virtual reality of unmarked whiteness. This occurs because Facebook communities are relatively socially isolated, enabling the whiteness of these communities to remain invisible and unchallenged. A focus on injustice 'elsewhere' contributes to an unscrutinised notion of white privilege as likewise existing 'elsewhere'. It contributes to the formation of an imagined community of 'us' that is defined by a shared belief in doing good, and in doing good 'we' are showing that we are not driven by prejudice and racial animus. 'We' care ... just look at 'my status update'. "Remixing the Burden," thus, argues Kony 2012 needed the technologies of Facebook and social media as a whole, and likewise online activism for white America requires campaign such as Kony, which put the performance of white charity and post-privilege along side of a fulfilled desire to help without threatening social standing with peers, communal power, and lived privilege. Kony 2012 cannot exist without social media because of the ways that social media activism allows whiteness off the hook.

Keywords: Kony 2012, social media activism, Facebook, whiteness, saviour-industrial complex, Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown

Introduction

This paper examines the centrality of whiteness to the *Kony 2012* campaign, arguing that both *Kony* and the broader saviour-industrial complex are predicated on a benign and unchallenged whiteness. *Kony 2012* is predicated on

¹ This essay includes and builds on three written essays and a presentation from the author; see Leonard (2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2014).

a geo-political virtual reality of unmarked whiteness. It needs and reflects the power of a new media technology that allows for activism at a distance. This distance produces a culture of unchecked privileges and limited accountability. This occurs because Facebook communities are relatively socially isolated, enabling the whiteness of these communities to remain invisible and unchallenged. A focus on injustice 'elsewhere' contributes to an unscrutinised notion of white privilege as likewise existing 'elsewhere'. It contributes to the formation of an imagined community of 'us' that is defined by a shared belief in doing good, and in doing good 'we' are showing that we are not driven by prejudice and racial animus. 'We' care ... just look at 'my status update.'

Social media activism exemplified in the *Kony 2012* campaign puts an emphasis on the performance of outrage (Ahmed, 2004) or alerting the world to events that occasion outrage, as opposed to fostering action to address social injustice, which results in unexamined privilege and unchecked whiteness. In other words, the performative outrage, especially within homogenous Facebook communities, becomes the end goal, leaving little room or need to participate outside of these Facebook communities. These performances provide evidence of the care and concern of today's white youth but do not foster action, accountability, or involvement in struggles for justice.

As an effort that neither threatens whiteness nor undermines the hegemonic racial schemata that structure geo-political alignments of wealth, technology and capital, the *Kony* campaign is reflective of the power of neoliberalism and white paternalism within contemporary culture. In a sense, *Kony 2012* defined whiteness not only as benevolence but also as the ability to help others through consumption. Despite claims of post-racialness, and arguments that *Kony 2012* proves that race doesn't matter, the methods and message tell a different story. "Remixing the Burden," thus, argues *Kony 2012* needed the technologies of Facebook and social media as a whole, and likewise online activism for white America requires campaigns such as *Kony*, which put the performance of white charity and post-privilege along side of a desire to help without threatening social standing with peers, communal power, and lived privilege. *Kony 2012* cannot exist without social media because of the ways that social media activism allows whiteness off the hook. It needed social media because the campaign reaffirmed the power of white middle-class Western identity. The absence of connection between these online communities and activists on the ground, the lack of critical interrogation of positionality and privilege, and the focus outward highlight the limitations of this movement.

The focus here is not simply about the technology or Facebook activism but rather how whiteness and privilege are empowered through these spaces, how segregated online communities that are neither accountable nor indebted to long-term participation in social justice or anti-racism campaigns, contributed to the success of *Kony 2012*, and that there is an absence of a comparable movement involving white participation for racial justice in the United States.

Kony 2012 refers to a video created in 2012 with the hopes of fostering a global movement to capture Joseph Kony, the leader of the rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA). Invisible Children, the organisation that conceived and produced the video, capitalised on the distribution power of social media, and retained news and media salience throughout much of 2012. The campaign

included an initial video distributed through YouTube and Vimeo, but relied on Facebook and Twitter for mass distribution.

As the focus is on the dialectics between whiteness, Facebook activism, and *Kony 2012*, there will be limited discussion of the video itself. This paper is not concerned with the history chronicled in the video, Invisible Children's politics or the widely critiqued failure of the campaign to arrest Joseph Kony or significantly alter United States' foreign policy. My focus instead is on the mobilisation of historically troubling narratives and stereotypes of African 'dysfunction' in the context of 'white saviour' narratives. According to Connor Cavanagh, "Commentators bemoaned the recurrence of a familiar narrative—that of middle-class and predominately white young Americans saving Africans 'from their own self-imposed miseries'" (as cited in Butagira, 2012; see also Fisher, 2012; Pflanz, 2012). What was striking with *Kony 2012* was not simply the recycling of "white saviors" (Danielle, 2012) and the pathologising of Africans as either helpless/invisible victims or evil murderers (Mnthai, 2012), but how this sort of new media 'activism' fostered apolitical consumption. In many ways, such activism fit perfectly with the nature of whiteness in the United States, especially in a purportedly post-racial, post-civil rights, and post-Obama moment. As individuals deployed their consumptive power in the *Kony* campaign, whiteness would be visible and invisible, marked as absent and present as instigating global change. In fact, participation in such campaigns rarely brings whiteness and the role of white people in propagating violence and inequality into the spotlight, whereupon privilege, power, and the white body might be subject to questions and challenges. I argue that the privileges and power of whiteness are not questioned in these forms of apolitical media activism but instead used to reinforce the discursive, ideological and moral associations between whiteness and 'goodness' from inside a protected digital bubble engineered by racial segregation inside and outside of social media.

***Kony 2012*—Background to the campaign**

In 2012, (white) America came together in the name of justice. Demonstrating unity and purpose, white college and high school students banded together to demand accountability. The cause was not marijuana legalisation, or fighting for their right to party (as those things have already been won for white youth), but finding Joseph Kony. Invisible Children, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) founded in 2003, released a video as a purported experiment: "Could an online video make an obscure war criminal famous? And if he was famous, would the world work together to stop him?" (Invisible Children, 2012). Hoping to shine a national spotlight on Kony and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), *Kony 2012* worked to convert consciousness into action, knowledge into power.

Within six days, the video had been viewed 100 million times across the Internet (to date, it has been viewed almost 101 million times on YouTube alone with another 18.5 million on Vimeo). At its height, it attracted 1 million hits per hour (Invisible Children, 2012b). During this initial period, 3.7 million people committed to joining the *Kony 2012* struggle. Although unsuccessful in "ending war," or the goal of "stopping the LRA and their leader," *Kony 2012* was effective in galvanising support from white youth throughout the nation (Invisible Children, 2012). White college students revealed extensive commitment to the

Kony cause. Many gave money to Invisible Children, purchasing the “tool kit,” which included bumper stickers, t-shirts, and additional commodities of justice. Others embraced *Kony 2012*, designing their own clothing and posters, in an effort to raise “consciousness” (Invisible Children, 2012b) and cash for their cause. They wanted the world to know that they were outraged by the atrocities going on in Uganda or at least the atrocities said to be occurring at some point in recent history.

The popularity and success of *Kony 2012* is not surprising. Invisible Children used social media in important ways by firstly deploying a narrative of good versus evil through which to anchor its campaign information, creating an affective appeal for young consumers to invest in a movement to stop a man intent on turning young males into soldiers and young women into sex slaves. Secondly, the organisation embraced new media technology that allowed participation with a click of a button where consumers could instantaneously share the video on social media, make a donation, or order some *Kony* apparel. One could purchase penance and buy peace.

Invisible Children was effective in selling the idea that a credit card and 5 minutes made one part of the solution in combating child soldiers. The video and the campaign played upon longstanding ideas of the white man’s burden—that white America has a responsibility and a duty to help the oppressed elsewhere. In its initial video, Invisible Children called upon participants to join their ‘experiment’ where they would come together to disseminate knowledge about these known atrocities. It was their hope that this spotlight and the growing world consciousness would compel action. The video seemingly imagines social media and the spread of the video as a wave. Each share and like across online communities added to the power of the wave, which ultimately would crash onto the shores of Uganda. Imagining change and justice as inevitable and participants in the *Kony 2012* as agents of change, the campaign was successful in generating online and news media attention because, I argue, it tapped into ideas of white benevolence, American exceptionalism, and the outward movement of justice, freedom, and equality. That is, the wave of American exceptionalism evident in the care for the people of Uganda and the determination to foster justice would be spread from one Facebook community to the next, coalescing around a shared vision and commitment to arresting Kony.

The video itself, and the subsequent discourse surrounding Uganda, Sudan, the Congo, and Africa as a whole, construct Kony as ‘evil’, as the source of all pain and suffering for the people in the region. (white) Westerners by contrast are imagined as saviours and beacons of hope, change, and peace.

***Kony 2012*—The White Saviour Complex**

In one of the *Kony 2012* video’s most disturbing scenes, Jason Russell, the film’s director shows a picture of Kony to his son so that he can see “evil” and what a “bad guy” looks like. The scene feels like a postmodern twist of Kenneth Clark’s famous doll test in which black children were asked to describe black and white dolls (bad versus good) as evidence of the consequences of white supremacy. In this case, a white child and his father locate evil in the body of an African man with whiteness remaining as goodness since we are saving the many African

children suffering because of Kony. Can you imagine such a video in the aftermath of Trayvon Martin's killing with a picture of the unarmed Florida boy who was shot while walking home from the store, and George Zimmerman juxtaposed? What sort of response might that elicit? How might it shine a critical spotlight on whiteness and its power within the dominant imagination?

The difficulty in imagining a similar video inside a US context highlights the ways *Kony 2012* relies upon "white saviour narratives." With "the Soft Bigotry of Kony 2012," Max Fisher (2012) highlights the racially comforting narrative offered by the documentary.

The much-circulated campaign subtly reinforces an idea that has been one of Africa's biggest disasters: that well-meaning Westerners need to come in and fix it. Africans, in this telling, are helpless victims, and Westerners are the heroes. It's part of a long tradition of Western advocacy that has, for centuries, adopted some form of white man's burden, treating African people as cared for only to the extent that Westerners care, their problems solvable only to the extent that Westerners solve them, and surely damned unless we can save them. First it was with missionaries, then "civilizing" missions, and finally the ultimate end of white paternalism, which was placing Africans under the direct Western control of imperialism. And while imperialism may have collapsed 50 years ago, that mentality persists, because it is rewarding and ennobling to feel needed and to believe you are doing something good.

Similarly, Natasha Jackson (@NatashaTheory) focuses on benevolent racism with her discussion of *Kony 2012*:

White liberals who have dedicated their lives to 'helping' people of color have a hard time seeing, let alone addressing, the benevolent racism that can undermine even their best intentions. How can they be racist when they want to help so badly? (2013)

Campaigns that emphasise helping others, technologies that limit accountability and critical responses, and issues that don't implicate whiteness have elicited far greater support that cuts across race, class, and gender lines. From fundraising efforts in the aftermath of the Tsunami in Thailand to the Haitian earthquake, from mobilizing efforts surrounding famine in Africa or *Kony 2012*, a pattern is clear: campaigns that respond to 'natural' disasters or those seen as resulting from organic evil compel action. Compare this to the lack of attention and support for anti-racist campaigns surrounding police violence in the United States, or the deaths of immigrants crossing the Southern border in the United States.

Akin to a *Rambo: First Blood Part 2* (1985), a film in which the protagonist John Rambo returns to Vietnam to not only free any remaining POWs but to bring Communism to it's knees, *Invisible Children/the West* is re-imagined as white saviour, as a source of peace and tranquillity for the despair facing Uganda. As with *Rambo*, the potential violence directed at Joseph Kony or others is justifiable in the eradication of evil. As noted by Susan Jeffords (1997) and by Richard Manson, in his dissertation on white masculinity, the white saviour has been central to a North American national reconstructive project since the 1980s:

Led by the Ronald Reagan cowboy image, the decade saw the appearance of He-Man, Rambo, and the Terminator, one powerfully over-muscled white male image after another which relocate the white male at the center of power in the imagined American community. To this day, the 'normative body that enveloped strength, labor, determination' which is 'like Reagan's own, male and white' body has retained if not increased its potency, likely as a result of 'winning' the Cold War. (Jeffords, as cited in 2004, pp. 224-225)

In a Twitter conversation about *Rambo* and ultimately *Kony 2012*, Sarah Jackson (@sjjphd) rightfully identified the film as an example of how "white violence is framed as necessary to save humanity, but the black violence ... [is Uganda, Sudan, and Democratic Republic of Congo's] downfall" (Jackson, as cited in Son of Baldwin 2012). The representation of blackness as evil, as a threat to humanity and peace, as unredeemable and perpetually dangerous, especially in comparison to a kind, gentle and benevolent white body, not only justifies the mythical Rambo figure or the *Kony* campaign, but mass incarceration and daily forms of violence against African Americans and people of colour in the US. The white saviour complex imagines black violence as a threat to civilisation. Thus, any form of state violence, whether international war or the prison industrial complex, is repositioned as 'saving' and 'civilising'.

The merging of longstanding technologies—white supremacy, white man's burden, white paternalism—with the new technologies associated with Facebook and social media demonstrates that not only did these methods of organising not change the racial dynamics anchored by white paternalism and the privilege to be unaccountable but in a sense these technologies, which perpetuate isolation and segregated individualism, contribute to more of the same. It was the embodiment of twenty-first century paternalism all while protecting and rendering whiteness as invisible. As an embodiment, as an interlocutor with technology and consumerism, *Kony 2012* allowed for the white man's burden to manifest without having to confront the ideological and real-life tensions that manifest within face-to-face contact between whiteness and its others.

In this sense, *Kony 2012* represented a remixing of the burden that utilised virtual reality to not only 'touch' racial others across the globe but do so in the absence of a critical interrogation of whiteness. Teju Cole persuasively argues that an erased whiteness is central to "White-Saviour Industrial Complex."

There is an expectation that we can talk about sins but no one must be identified as a sinner: newspapers love to describe words or deeds as 'racially charged' even in those cases when it would be more honest to say 'racist'; we agree that there is rampant misogyny, but misogynists are nowhere to be found; homophobia is a problem but no one is homophobic. One cumulative effect of this policed language is that when someone dares to point out something as obvious as white privilege, it is seen as unduly provocative. Marginalized voices in America have fewer and fewer avenues to speak plainly about what they suffer; the effect of this enforced civility is that those voices are falsified or blocked entirely from the discourse. (2012)

Kony 2012 not only remixes the long-standing tradition of whites saving the racial other unable to save him/herself but does so through both marking and unmarking whiteness.

Invisible Whiteness (rather than invisible children)

Ruth Frankenberg (2001) defines whiteness as a “location of structural advantage” (p. 76). At both an individual and collective level, within culture and institutional arrangements, whiteness represents “standpoint, a location from which to see selves, others and national and global orders” (p. 76). Despite the hegemony of an invisible and erased whiteness, it constitutes “a site of elaboration or a range of cultural practices and identities, often unmarked and unnamed or named as natural or ‘normative’ rather than specifically racial” (p. 76). Complementing those who have focused on the dialectics between power, whiteness, and the imagination of a racial other (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997; hooks, 1997; Morrison, 1993), Frankenberg highlights the ways that whiteness exists as invisible and hyper visible, as an unnoticed but cashed-in commodity of privilege and power. In other words, the cultural meaning, social existence, political positioning, and structural advantages of whiteness tend to remain overlooked as “if it is the natural, inevitable, ordinary way of being” (Dyer, as cited in Kusz, 2001, p. 393; see also Roediger, 1999; Lipsitz, 1998). Better said, laws, institutions, dominant discourses, and representations render whiteness as “a privileged place of racial normativity” (Wray & Newitz, 1997, p. 3). Joe Feagin, Hernan Vera and Andrew Gordon further argue that,

One difficulty in studying the white self is that until recently, it was an invisible and non-regarded category, even difficult to name and not perceived as a distinctive racial identity. Even today, most white Americans either do not think about whiteness at all or else think of it as a positive or neutral category. (Feagin, Vera & Gordon, 1995, p. 296)

Building on the work of W.E.B DuBois, James Baldwin, Kobena Mercer, and Richard Dyer, bell hooks argues that the popular imagination has envisioned whiteness as “synonymous with goodness” (1997, p. 169). hooks concludes that whites have been “socialized to believe the fantasy that whiteness represents goodness and all that is benign and non-threatening” (p. 169). Dyer concurs, arguing that, “as long as race is something only applied to non-white peoples, as long as white people are not racially seen and named, they/we function as a human norm. Other people are raced, we are just people” (1997, p. 1).

Such an understanding of whiteness as both ‘invisible’ and normative is imperative not only in terms of the narrative offered in *Kony 2012*, or even the pleasure and appeal of this campaign, but in the technologies used within the campaign. As opposed to other movements, whether culturally based (hip-hop) or those organised around politics (anti-apartheid; civil rights; prison-based), whiteness could literally remain in the dark. Adam Mansbach, in discussing white privilege and hip-hop in the 1980s and 1990s, reflects on the spatial importance of racial formation and the way integration—especially in spaces where whiteness is seen as exceptional, whether that be hip-hop or within anti-racist activist organisations—impacts politics:

For a long time there was not a critical mass of white people. So if you were a white hip-hop head, you were going to be the only one in the room ... It’s a very individual kind of thing. And if you were a white hip-hopper, you were made to be aware of whiteness. You had to be aware of your own physicality; your own race; your own privilege. You had to think about the ways historically that black culture has been co-opted by white people ... You would walk into a hip-hop party, and

someone would say, "What are you doing here?" And that was a good question; made you think. Now that has changed ... changed significantly in the last 15 years. We have gone from a situation where whiteness is put on the table, made to be recognized; white folks have to think about it, to a time a when white people in hip-hop are some of the most complacent around. White people have walked into hip-hop like it's our parent's living room, thrown our feet up on the coffee table. This is a major change ... And a lot of it has to do with an attempt to escape from our own privilege. (2009)

Similarly, when thinking about the history of anti-racist organising in the United States, it is important to note how cross-racial organising has not only forced whiteness into a place of visibility but accountability. To participate in Freedom Summer during the 1960s, anti-Apartheid movements in the 1980s, or anti-prison organising over the last 15 years, brought white youth into cross-racial alliances where they were forced to account for whiteness, for their privileges, for their complicity and implication in an ongoing history. It would be impossible to participate in these spaces, in meetings, within organisations, and not recognise one's whiteness. *Kony 2012* thus allowed white people the pleasure of change and proving oneself as anti-racist, without the pain, difficulty and obstacles of being challenged. In many ways it fosters not only activism from a distance, clicktivism without accountability, but also a desire to create spaces of change that affirm whiteness while minimising the accounting for whiteness. It provided the possibility to 'engage in change' elsewhere without having to look to change and examine oneself.

Facebook Activism

The 2012 "Stop Kony" viral video was emblematic of a strain of Facebook activism rampant in the United States and throughout the Western world. It offered and reflected the sort of activism that has become commonplace within middle-class white communities—one based in commodities, performative justice, and moralism. The extensive amounts of clicktivism have recently received ample discussion and media coverage as to its significance and usefulness.

While described as click through activism (clicktivism), or cyber activism, my interest here is more in the formation (and existence) of Facebook communities that exist apart and in isolation from Ugandan communities. This isolation embodies and contributes a movement based on apathy, limited knowledge, and overall disengagement with social/political issues and thus facilitating a form of slacktivism. This social media technology enables and thrives because of the insulation of whiteness. The *Kony 2012* campaign is a telling example of the ways new media technology can undermine struggles for justice. It is a movement for, by, and about middle-class white identity. *Urbandictionary.com*, usually not a source of theoretical insights, captures the essence of clicktivism with its definition of Facebook Activism:

The illusion of dedication to a cause through no-commitment awareness groups. Specifically in reference to Facebook groups centered around political issues.

Dave: Man, this genocide in Darfur is terrible. I sure wish I could make a difference.

Jenna: Well, I made a Facebook group about it. We have almost one million members!

Dave: That's great! Are you all going to donate money to refugees or something?

Jenna: No, but now those murderers will really know how sad we are!

Dave: Sounds like you're really into your Facebook activism!

(Rag Man, 2009)

With *Kony 2012*, although part of its agenda clearly is getting people to donate to the Invisible Children organisation or buy its tool kit (for 30 dollars), the video frames the issue as one of awareness where global pressure will lead to justice. In other words, merely 'sharing' the video on Facebook, via Twitter or tumblr, is advertised as bringing about change. Chris Csikzentmihalyi, co-director of the Centre of Future Media at MIT, compares "click-through activism" to "dispensations the Catholic Church used to give" (as cited in Hesse, 2009). As penance, the complicity of whiteness is erased or at least never accounted for in critical ways. Whether posting the video online, donating to the organisation, or raising funds or awareness, participation in the *Kony* campaign becomes absolution for a history of wrongdoing and even any potential complicity in the problems facing the world. That is, since people are 'doing good' by demanding justice, by raising awareness about Kony, war crimes, or any number of issues, they are absolved from responsibility. According to Csikzentmihalyi, such forms of activism are problematic because at best the impact is ephemeral. To Csikzentmihalyi, social media and its technologies limits accountability, limits pressure, and minimises demands that individuals "carry on the spark" (as cited in Hesse, 2009). Social media activism is more about absolution and redemption of self without correction, without any accountability and without any need to evaluate the policies and conditions that give rise to the Konys of the world and the consequences of US-supported policies on the health and welfare of people around the globe. Just as the privileges of whiteness minimise critique of whiteness, thereby limiting accountability and introspection, the technologies of "click-through activism" demand limited responsibility.

There are a growing number of cases in which people are using social media tools like Facebook to express their interests in a variety of social and political causes. Maybe it's signing up as a fan of an environmental or local community cause. In several other instances Facebook users are creating groups finding that it is an effective and efficient way to coordinate their efforts, share information, and generate momentum for their respective causes. (Hesse, 2009)

The number of users, the flexibility afforded by Facebook, its user-friendly nature, and its power within online culture has led to an increasing reliance on Facebook by activists.

Of course, the ease of participation and the lack of any sort of process of determining the effectiveness of participation results in members who are either disinterested or who may lack a skill set to convert knowledge, interest, and shared identity into change. Membership doesn't make a movement for change. Cyber activism isn't necessarily activism in that the nature of the technology limits possibility of activating change. According to Mary Joyce, co-founder of DigiActive.org, a new media organisation that focuses on assisting grassroots activists to use digital technology,

Commitment levels are opaque. Maybe a maximum of 5 percent are going to take action and maybe it's closer to 1 percent. In most cases Facebook group members do nothing. I haven't yet seen a case where the Facebook group has led to a sustained movement. (as cited in Hesse 2009)

Commitment is especially important when there is no expectation or possibility of action, sharing the *Kony 2012* video or donating was the goal rather than a sustained movement. The allure of participating in justice overseas further isolates and limits potential involvement on the ground. Whereas struggles against police violence in the US or incidences of racism on college campus engender Facebook activism, along with other forms of virtual resistance and grassroots organising and action, *Kony 2012* requires nothing outside of the virtual. The persistence of racially segregated America, whereupon the average white youth that has only 1 black friend—with 75% of whites having no friends of colour at all—is an important factor for understanding the lack of cross-racial social activism. As we see parallel levels of homogeneity online, it is no surprise that clicktivism functions in similarly racially homogenous communities. The pleasure that results from 'helping the other' mandates racial segregation. The likely questions and challenges that might force accountability and examinations of whiteness within a more integrated space are minimised through the structure of social media activism and a racially segregated online world. By design, the level of accountability is minimal (Ingraham, 2014).

Anders Colding-Jørgensen, a Danish psychologist, helps us understand this process and the problematic inherent in Facebook Activism (as cited in Hesse, 2009). He created a group on Facebook that insinuated city officials were planning to tear down the Stork Foundation, a famous monument in Copenhagen, Denmark. He invited numerous friends to join the group, and within a few hours 125 joined the cause. Shortly thereafter, the group had 1000 members. By day three, the group was adding two members per minute during the day, culminating with over 27,000 group members. Within a short period of time, 27,000 joined a fictitious cause, to protest the made-up removal of a fountain. In an interview with *The Washington Post*, Colding-Jørgensen explained his experiment in the following way: "Just like we need stuff to furnish our homes to show who we are, on Facebook we need cultural objects that put together a version of me that I would like to present to the public" (as cited in Hesse, 2009). Users had little interest in educating themselves about the situation or finding out ways to thwart this fictitious injustice, but, rather, clicked "to parade their own feelings of outrage around the cyber public" (Hesse, 2009).

Likewise, Sherri Grasmuck, a sociologist from Temple University who has conducted research about Facebook profiles, has found that users "shape their online identity implicitly rather than explicitly: that is, the kind of campaigns and groups they join reveals more about who they are than their dull 'about me' page" (as cited in Hesse, 2009). She concludes that Facebook does not foster action or cultivate a social movement but instead individualises the process: "I become the social movement as an affirmation of my identity, rather than choosing the social movement because it matches my identity" (as cited in Hesse, 2009). Such critiques are important, but they often erase race. The power of cultural objects, whether it be posting the *Kony 2012* or "Kony 2012: Part II—Beyond Famous" videos, decorating your car or notebook with a "STOP KONY" bumper sticker, or purchasing a 'Kony with a Purpose' t-shirt, is trafficking in

racial benevolence. The pleasure of clicktivism and its related consumerism, which given the power in dollars and credit cards is more like swipetivism, emanates from its distance and insulation from criticism. It results from not only financial privilege but also a technology that allows for participation without the burden or responsibility of being challenged or examining one's own complicity in injustice.

Writing about Gap's Red campaign, which sought to raise awareness and money for the global fight against AIDS, Margaret Sarna-Wojicki argues that the Gap's efforts embody a broader trend of "causumerism" which "is portrayed as a voicing of radicalism and dissent, yet to a degree the 'activism' is limited to the shopping mall" (2008, p. 16). The *Kony 2012* campaign is no different although the 'activism' takes place in the home disconnected from the voices, struggles, and organisations already engaged in fights for justice and empowerment in Uganda and throughout Africa. In an effort to help the silenced, *Kony 2012* not only perpetuates their own silencing, embracing as noted by Sarna-Wojicki, "distinctions of 'self' and 'other' that draw a strict line between empowered 'first world consumers' and Africans" (2008, p. 26), but constructs benevolent power through consumerism. A movement based in/on new media allows for this process with great ease and comfort. Clicktivism or sharetivism reaffirms the power of the white middle-class Western identity not only to purchase and consume but also to use that power and privilege to help the poor other. This power and pleasure is predicated on a particular definition of whiteness and racial otherness as well as the technology that transports the white Western body into far off lands all the while protecting these same bodies from questions, challenges, and other potential spotlights on whiteness. Working in concert, social media allows for activism from the safety of one's home—there will be few questions about whiteness, about privilege, about stereotypes, or about assumptions about Africa or blackness in the United States. Whiteness will remain unmarked and unchecked, fulfilling the allure of an authenticated post-racial and anti-racial self.

Visible Whiteness—Saving across the globe

In the wake of 9/11 and the ongoing war on terror, the United States has increasingly relied on national narratives that offer certainty, comfort, and security. In catchphrases and sound bites, pundits and politicians remind Americans of the importance of protecting the homeland, the role of all Americans in safeguarding national space and American democratic values, the need to guard against the enemies of freedom and civilisation, and the promise of spreading democracy throughout the world. As countless bodies fell, injured and dying, shattering families and communities over here and over there, multinational corporations have profited from an increased militarism, diminishing natural resources, and public panics. Within this climate, many in the United States have sought refuge in comforting narratives of good versus evil, civilisation versus savagery. The American public has sought refuge in the neoliberalist dreams of saving the world through individual consumerism. In such an environment we can see the power and appeal of *Kony 2012* and the relative silence on (white) Facebook pages or (white) Twitter timelines regarding Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown and several other killings of black youth, which have led to mobilisation within the black community. *Kony 2012* reaffirms the profitability

and pleasure of an ethos based in American exceptionalism, white benevolence, and the power of middle-class economic status, the killing of Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown, and Eric Garner, all unarmed young black males, who lost their lives at the hands of 'self-appointed' security guards or the police, undermines ideas of American exceptionalism, spotlights the entrenched realities of anti-black racism, and spotlights the realities of race and class privileges.

The power and cultural importance of these narratives has been evident with the murder of Trayvon Martin and in the spectacle of *Kony 2012*. Whereas white youth could participate in a fight against Kony and the human rights violations in Uganda without accounting for whiteness, without accounting for middle-class privileges, the spatial power of suburban America, to engage the killing of Trayvon Martin did not allow for such erasure and complacency. To understand Trayvon Martin was to understand white privilege. To participate in discussions about George Zimmerman, Trayvon Martin and racial profiling resulted in a spotlight on whiteness, a light that pointed to the connections between Zimmerman and whiteness, between perpetrators of violence and whiteness.

At the halftime of the 2012 National Basketball Association (NBA) All Star game, Trayvon Martin, a 17-year-old African American, decided to walk to the local store to get some candy and drinks. Tragically, it appears that he died because he was walking while black in a predominantly white, gated community in Florida. Shortly after calling 911 to report a 'suspicious' person within his community, George Zimmerman, a neighbourhood watch captain, confronted Martin, who was armed with skittles and an Arizona Ice Tea. What happened next is unclear, yet what is irrefutable is that Zimmerman shot Martin dead with a Kel Tek 9mm semi-automatic gun. Identified as a 'threat' Martin fell victim at the hands of a gun.

In a world where African Americans, particularly black male youth, are consistently represented as threats to the security, peace, culture, calm, and order of American society, how can 'threat' be seen outside of the context of race? In a world where racial profiling is routine and where explicit and implicit bias has created the "criminalblackman" (Russell, 1998) is it even possible to think about the confrontation and ultimate death of Martin outside of the paradigm of a criminalised black body? The 911 call, the confrontation, and the ultimate death fits a larger racist pattern whereupon blackness is consistently imagined as threat, as danger, and as evil. As a cultural and social pariah blackness needs to be controlled, disciplined, and ultimately punished. According to Michelle Alexander,

Just as African Americans in the North were stigmatized by the Jim Crow system even if they were not subject to its formal control, black men today are stigmatized by mass incarceration and the social construction of the 'criminalblackman' whether they have ever been to prison or not. (2012, p. 194)

In a review of Alexander's *The New Jim Crow*, Max Kantar describes the spectre of criminalisation as follows:

This is evidenced in part by dominant media and cultural narratives, institutionalized (and legalized) racial profiling, and police efforts to build mass databases of 'suspected criminals' which contain information almost exclusively on racial minorities who have often done nothing criminal at all aside from having

been born to black and brown parents. In addition to the numerous studies showing that most white Americans see crime in racial (nonwhite) terms, studies conducted by Princeton University also reveal that white felons fresh out of prison are more likely to get hired for jobs than equally qualified black men with no criminal record. African-American men without criminal records are more ostracized and widely perceived as being more criminal than white men who have actually been convicted of felony crimes. That is how deeply black people have been stigmatized as criminals and social pariahs in our society. (2011)

This is the context in which we need to understand what happened to Trayvon Martin not only on the fateful evening but also in terms of the police response and that of the media and general public. Potential involvement in discussions about what happened to Trayvon or joining struggles on or offline bring into focus not only the racial realities highlighted by Alexander but a system that protects, empowers, and privileges whiteness. In other words, attending a rally demanding justice for Trayvon Martin or posting articles on social media calling for the arrest of George Zimmerman would put into focus the ways that white lives are protected, differentially valued, and made visible as victims. *Kony 2012* by contrast, provided a moment to celebrate whiteness, to see white civilisation as benevolence and working to foster peace, organizing against the mass incarceration of more than a million blacks and Latinos, or other forms of state violence, positions whiteness in a polar opposite structural and cultural location.

Unlikely movements—#Zimmerman2012 or #Ferguson2014

In 2012 as *Kony* became a national spectacle, there was much discussion within social media about how race mediated what appeared in people's stream or timeline. Whereas many African Americans were posting about Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis and countless other black young men who had died at the hands of guns held by whites claiming fear, white youth were more likely to post on either *Kony 2012* or the more mundane aspects of life. Fast-forward two years, and the same sort of observations have been evident on how race structure news flows in social media. As many African Americans posted about Eric Garner, Mike Brown and countless other cases of police killing black youth, the Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) Bucket challenge, which saw people dumping water on their heads to raise awareness and dollars to fight this deathly disease, celebrity news, and animal videos are a fixture on their white counterparts' social media. In other words, as we look online we see a racially stratified world, where the issues confronting black and Latino communities and where the issues of police violence and racial injustice rarely penetrated the privileged and insulated spaces of their white peers.

Offering this as part of a discourse around social media, rather than an empirical fact, I use this comparison between *Kony 2012* and #BlackLivesMatters, a national moment protesting police violence and brutality directed at the black community, to conclude. The issues of race and racism evident with the killing of Trayvon Martin or Mike Brown are not limited to the incidents themselves or the police responses but also point to how these killings did not mobilise national outrage, media coverage, or action in ways that were seen in the aftermath of mass shootings at schools in Columbine, Colorado (1999) or Newtown, Connecticut (2012) or even with *Kony 2012*.

Firstly, the differential responses to *Kony 2012*, ALS 2014, or monthly mass shootings is not surprising given racial segregation on and offline. The lack of interaction and the close-knit nature of Facebook led to the reproduction of racial isolation and disconnection. The racial stratification of news feeds embodies and is the result of racial segregation in on and offline communities.

Secondly, the power of *Kony 2012* rests with the limited exposure to critique of American and white power, whether by voices in Uganda or commentators concerned with race in the United States. The campaign's success resulted from its self-imposed insulation from critiques. As Facebook communities were central to its mobilisation, there was limited chance for cross-racial challenges. That is, the persistent segregation of American life, which carries on within (and beyond) Facebook, limited white exposure to critiques and challenges, fostering an environment of admiration and celebration of white benevolence. The emphasis on creating clubs and actions within segregated schools, fraternities and sororities further insulated whiteness from any potential challenges. While Twitter was an important tool, Facebook, marked by its communities, segregation, and siloed realities, was the central platform for *Kony 2012*. This, and the nascent place of Black Twitter,² created conditions whereupon a 'white saviour' mentality and 'white tears' for the child victims of Kony resulted in *Kony* activism being relatively unchallenged. Those who participated in *Kony 2012* were not simply purchasing a tool kit, or contributing to 'justice' with their clicks and dollars, but adding to their own white pleasure, to a movement that neither inconvenienced nor challenged their privileges and identities.

Thirdly, *Kony 2012* had a clear goal that could be purchased: exposure, visibility, and global knowledge about Kony and the atrocities happening in Uganda. Exhibiting the neoliberal possibilities of consumption, coupled with "bland multiculturalism", *Kony* demanded little of its participants (Ramamurthy & Wilson, 2013, p. 78). As with the ALS Bucket spectacle of 2014, the limited commitment, the clear goals, and the individualised responsibilities central to neoliberalism contributed to *Kony's* popularity. We see this in stark contrast to movements in Ferguson or around Trayvon Martin's death. For example, the activism in the aftermath of Martin's death focused on the absence of media attention, the failures of the police to arrest Zimmerman, and the foot-dragging of prosecutors. There were specific and tangible goals, where public shaming and awareness had potential to shape public discourse. As such, it highlighted the power and potential of Facebook activism to bring people into a movement. It was not about the performance of outrage, or spotlighting public concern for violence across the globe, but facilitating justice at a local level. It was not only about a single goal but challenging the everyday criminalisation of black bodies and a culture that continuously says #blacklives (don't) matter.

² Black Twitter is a community, a movement, a space of resistance and opposition. According to Soraya Nadia McDonald, "Black Twitter is part cultural force, cudgel, entertainment and refuge. It is its own society within Twitter, replete with inside jokes, slang and rules, centered on the interests of young blacks online—almost a quarter of all black Internet users are on Twitter. There's no password. The only entry fee is knowledge. If you've spent time steeped in black culture, whether at a historically black college or university or in the company of friends or family, you will probably understand the references on Black Twitter" (2014).

Fourth, with *Kony 2012*, we see the celebration of whiteness, middle-class status, and American identity because they allow for the utilisation of technologies of social media. Caring comes from participation in the campaign but one's ability to participate, from having computer access and the leisure time necessary to partake in social media, to having the necessary money to purchase the required products of protest and being a college student, was tied to one's class and racial status. Likewise, as the campaign mobilised white youth against the ultimate evil, it reinforced the idea that whiteness was the world's moral compass. According to Anandi Ramamurthy and Kalpana Wilson,

The racism implicit in *Kony 2012*, which was reproducing colonial narratives about Africans in which white people are constructed as having a moral obligation to intervene to rescue and save black people from chaos, violence and irrationality was also highlighted. (2013, p. 89)

Additionally, the technological prowess and creativity, not to mention the people power, of Western white youth, were part of the narrative of the campaign, especially in juxtaposition to the representation of Uganda as fragmented, chaotic, and pre-modern. Participation in the campaign was part of a performance that authenticated the morality and the benevolence of a white citizenry.

The emphasis on the 'experiment' and participation in *Kony 2012* campaign through sharing the videos and other materials that sought to raise awareness around Joseph Kony and the ongoing conflicts in Uganda required neither individual contributions aside from money nor critical interrogation of positionality. The appeal of *Kony 2012* rests with its construction of whiteness as moral force of good and as a benevolent weapon in the war for peace. The association between whiteness and Western technology, and the importance of Facebook further spotlighted the moral, technological, and political power to enact change anchoring *Kony 2012*. Campaigns against police violence or racial profiling, however, destabilise whiteness as sources of morality and goodness.

Here we see another distinction in comparison to anti-racist movements within the United States. For example, the various Twitter campaigns that followed the shootings of Mike Brown or Trayvon Martin—#iftheygunnedmedown (Chappell, 2014) or #weartrayvon—sought to bring attention to their deaths, which were all about "SELF." Yes, these movements were about bringing awareness to these injustices, but they were also about interrogating the cost and consequences of anti-black racism on everyday lives. Their concern extended beyond injustices elsewhere to look at how class assumptions about who would be seen as respectable or the level of silence within the black middle-class contributed to these injustices. *Kony 2012* did no such thing, instead locating evil, responsibility, and culpability elsewhere. *Kony 2012* didn't force white American youth to look inward. In fact, it created distance from a source of conflict so that whiteness could be imagined not as embodiment of injustice, complicity or privilege but an instrument of change.

Finally, race matters. The victims of Kony were "legible" (Neal, 2013) as sympathetic figures worthy of sympathy and action. Comparatively, Kony and to a lesser extent Trayvon Martin, were legible only as perpetrators, as violent threats to civilisation, peace, and whiteness. Martin's or Brown's death can be

tyed to an ideological and representational reality that imagines blackness as a threat to peace, tranquillity, and civilisation (Shohat & Stam, 1994). A presumed unlawful entry into a white-gated community raised suspicion. Trayvon's criminalised body, as opposed to the innocence and bravery afforded to Zimmerman's white body in the national imagination, is suspect, helping explain both the media and police response to date. While the killings of Trayvon Martin or Michael Brown are the farthest thing from Joseph Kony, the fear they cause, their racialised criminality within the dominant imagination, and their presumed threats to civilisation demanded similar treatments from the police and military despite their polar existences. If this were not the case, maybe we could see a nationwide push to bring about justice for Martin. In this transformative world, financial contributions would not be directed to an organisation that seems intent on supporting military intervention in Uganda, instead money would flow to groups committed to challenging the criminalisation of blackness within the United States and throughout the globe.

It is no wonder that since 2012, there has not been #Trayvon2013, a movement for Renisha McBride, or #Fergusson2014 on Facebook, especially among white youth. No viral videos on #every28hours or experiments seeking to galvanise national attention for Eric Garner or Marissa Alexander or countless others. It is not surprising that the evils of Kony, and not the evils of white supremacy, inspired action. It should not shock anyone that stopping LRA and not stopping police brutality is what inspired a generation of white youth toward activism. The focus on arresting Kony rather than Zimmerman, Darren Wilson, and countless others tells us a lot about race and America. Reflecting entrenched white privilege (the choice when and where to fight for justice), and a yearning to see evil elsewhere, #Kony2012 as opposed to #Fergusson2014 is symptomatic of the politics of whiteness. Focusing on Kony allows whiteness to be reimagined as benevolence and as 'civilisation' whereas #Ferguson forces potential participants to account for white supremacy, anti-black racism, and white violence. Focusing on #Ferguson, #Garner, #McBride, #Martin, #Davis, and the hundreds of black deaths at the hands of police and security shines a spotlight on stereotypes and a racist criminal justice system that empowers white youth to exist without fear of law enforcement and with virtual impunity.

It is not simply an unwillingness to look at the 'imperfections' and problems that litter the American landscape, but that by fighting for justice for #trayvon or #mikebrown one must account for racial profiling. One must look at both the criminalisation of black and brown youth *and* the many ways that white youth are imagined as innocent, the ways that white college students whose bodies exemplify a system and ideology that engenders racial profiling, that enables white drug use with relative impunity, that empowers a criminal justice system reliant on white fear of black criminal bodies (Leonard, 2013; Leonard, 2012c). "White fear of Blackness isn't just something that racist extremists experience," writes Chris Crass (2014). "It's a core part of white consciousness and how structural violence and inequality are maintained" (2014). To become "Accomplices" and not "allies" (2014) of black activists in Ferguson and nationwide is to challenge the anti-black racism that is at the core of white supremacy, to question and dismantle the very belief system that both privileges white bodies and criminalises blackness.

To join the struggle for justice in Staten Island, Los Angeles, Ferguson, Dearborn Heights, or Florida is to say #blacklivesmatter as much as white lives—to challenge white supremacy. To join #Kony2012 was to say #KonyisEVIL or #whitecareisreal. *Kony* was about 'us,' about highlighting our 'values'. The organising on and offline around Renisha McBride, Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Trayvon Martin, Jordan Davis, Shelley Fry, and countless others was also about 'us' (Smith 2014, Leonard, 2012c). Yes, these are movements about justice and a collective pronouncement that #blacklivesmatter, but they are equally movements about white privilege, white supremacy, and demanding accountability from 'us'. In challenging white America to see how not all lives matter equally, culturally, politically, socially, and within the justice system, these recent movements challenged 'us' to ask, why are 'our' lives are protected and worthy of protection. *Kony 2012* demanded no such questions but instead celebrated whiteness for wanting to protect #UgandaLives from evil.

Maybe #whitesupremacy2015 or 2016 is just around the corner. Can you imagine an experiment, the release of video with a simple goal: could an online video about white supremacy or police brutality raise national consciousness? And if we realised the realities, the pain and suffering of racial minorities, would the nation work together to end the violence and inequality, to organise because #everylifematters? Sadly I doubt #justice4Renisha shirts or #saytheirnames stickers will be all the rage for white students in the coming years. I hope I will be proven wrong even in future years.

In the face of criticisms, many supporters of *Kony 2012* argued that 'awareness' was key. While activists pushing for awareness regarding Trayvon Martin or Renisha McBride were frequently accused of fostering racial division or 'playing race card', *Kony 2012* was celebrated, even though it ultimately makes viewers aware of the benevolence of whiteness. Moreover, when 'awareness' is mobilised through a vehicle that says more about 'us' than 'them', that is about affirming our white exceptionalism and benevolence, we are left with little more than a vanity project. "If 'awareness' is the payoff for paternalistic, imperialist, 'white man's burden' NGO campaigns, I don't want it," writes a blogger for *The Sojourner Project* in relation to the *Kony 2012* campaign and the broader white-saviour industrial complex.

Just the name 'Invisible Children' denies and co-opts the agency of Ugandans—many of whom have organized to protect child soldiers ... If you're more comfortable talking about Africans than you are talking to an African person, you really should not be in the business of representing Africa. (2012)

Remixing the burden, protecting the privilege ... *Kony 2012*. #DifferentYearSameMethod. Only time will tell if social media activism can activate change on the outside or remain within segregated white communities. Only time will tell if online activism will be about change and justice or merely the performance of outrage, of benevolence and post-prejudicial identity. Only time will tell if white America will use social media to challenge whiteness, to foster a culture of accountability, and create a movement that looks outward and inward. Social media has the potential to remix the movement and reimagine the future but only if it abandons the tropes and traps of an ongoing white supremacist past. It cannot continue to take "everything but the burden" (Tate, 2003) from black culture, and it can no longer perform the white man's burden

but must undertake the burden of accountability, and otherwise critically remixing whiteness in the twenty-first century.

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BOOK REVIEW

Veronica T. Watson

The Souls of White Folk: African-American Writers Theorize Whiteness

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Veronica T. Watson's *The Souls of White Folk: African-American Writers Theorize Whiteness* is an important and ambitious project drawing together writings published throughout the twentieth century that aim to confront the hegemony of whiteness and its operation as a form of political, psychological and social oppression throughout integral turning points in US history. Each of Watson's selected texts by authors including W.E.B. Du Bois and Zora Neale Hurston partially comprise a canon of what the author terms "white estrangement literature" (p. 5)—works ranging across literary genres which "make visible the unseen, unspoken and unevaluated nature of Whiteness" (p. 5)—and which here provide powerful and affective interjections into the dominant cultural scripts that govern our comprehension of the US national past.

The Souls of White Folk is a valuable addition to Whiteness Studies, building upon influential research undertaken by key scholars in the field including bell hooks (1992), Ruth Frankenberg (1993), Toni Morrison (1992), and George Yancy (2012) amongst others, with especial recourse here to the work of David Roediger, editor of the 1998 collection *Black on White: Black Writers on What It Means to Be White*. Watson's prose is both provocative and highly accessible, and is likely to appeal to students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, as well as a wide range of interdisciplinary researchers.

In providing a close reading of each text and in considering how deeper understandings of whiteness are brought about by those with a lived experience of oppression, Watson makes a solid case for the value of Whiteness Studies as a key component of Critical Race Studies. In making this case, she also points to the difficulties African-American authors have traditionally faced in using white estrangement literature as a strategy for reaching audiences and confronting white readers. As Watson explains, prior to the 1990s the body of work was little

read, taught or theorised due to the marginalisation of black literature in commercial contexts, discomfort with the material on the part of both black and white readers, and difficulties in categorising the work in the academic environment (pp. 6-8). Watson in her introduction thus provides an important consideration of the life of these texts, and the politics involved in their circulation, beyond the oppositional strategies employed within the pages.

The book comprises three chapters, with the first centring upon the 1903 W.E.B. Du Bois classic *The Souls of Black Folk* and Charles Chesnutt's 1905 fiction novel *The Colonel's Dream*—texts that Watson argues engage in a critique of white double consciousness. As Watson explains, double consciousness is “the two-ness that is born when one's self-understanding collides with social constructions of race that limit one's ability to actualise one's vision of the self” (p. 16), thus producing a set of emotional, psychological and spiritual effects in both those who benefit from and those who are disadvantaged by a discriminatory racial hierarchy (p. 17). Du Bois and Chesnutt, Watson illustrates, utilised white double consciousness to challenge the assumption that whites were better suited to occupy leadership roles within the United States, exploring this divided state of being as a threat not only to the individual but an obstacle to national progress (p. 19). Watson contextualises these ideas amidst medical and psychological debates of the time, particularly in relation to theories put forth by Dr George Miller Beard, which framed nervous disorders as markers of white intellectualism and emotional sensitivity. Du Bois and Chesnutt, she explains, contested ideological belief systems of their time in attributing white double consciousness not to medical affliction, but to historical and cultural sources.

Chapter Two explores the means by which Frank Yerby's *The Foxes of Harrow* (1946) and Zora Neale Hurston's *Seraph on the Sewanee* (1948) engage in a demythologising of idealised notions of the white American nuclear family, with a focus on exposing the performances that constitute white femininity. The chapter is particularly welcome for its consideration of the intersection of race, class and gender identities and the role white women have played in the maintenance of the white, patriarchal status quo—a role that continues to occupy a point of concern in arguments over feminist politics and methodologies. Watson in this chapter provides an examination of 1940s post-war America as exhibiting anxiety over the female place in the home following the Get a War Job campaign, noting that the decade produced five novels by African-American authors that challenged cultural myths about white female identity. Yerby's and Hurston's novels, which examine the figure of the Southern belle and the poor white woman respectively, “dramatise the psychological manoeuvrings necessary to make race and class elitism desirable to white women who are themselves marginalised” (p. 68). The effect, Watson asserts, is a more complex characterisation of the white woman that ultimately removes her from the pedestal upon which she has been placed.

Watson's last chapter examines the memoir of Melba Pattilla Beals, one of the nine African-American students chosen to attend Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas as part of the integration strategy following *Brown vs Board of Education*. In *Warriors Don't Cry*, Beals recounts the shocking violence and hostility she endured as part of a daily campaign by white students to force the group's departure from the school, which included an attempted rape and an acid attack. Watson here utilises Beals' writings in order to engage in a

phenomenological reading of the white body's relationship to space, discussing the interchangeability of white bodies and white spaces, and the violence at Little Rock as part of a strategy to "retain certain spatial privileges that had once been so widely defended and infrequently challenged as to seem natural" (p. 118).

Some criticisms of *The Souls of White Folk* may include that the texts are perhaps too diverse in style and genre to compare comprehensively or that the selection of texts is arguably limited for a study of white estrangement literature spanning the greater part of the twentieth century. While such criticisms may be valid, they would miss the fundamental point of Watson's impressive monograph, which aims to draw together a group of literary works whose authors share not only the pain of oppression but also the common goal of challenging the "myths, lies, and distortions of whiteness in an attempt to re-write the present and future of race-relations in America" (p. 12). It is this common goal that unites marginalised and often silenced voices across decades and certainly traverses differences in literary form and narrative content. It is the diverse approach to subject matter and writing style taken by these authors that allows Watson to encourage debate in relation to a variety of academic methodologies within the discipline of Critical Race and Whiteness Studies. Through detailed textual analysis of these historical works, this book offers a good deal of insight into the manner in which white hegemony operates in the contemporary context both inside and outside of the United States, and suggests some key strategies we may utilise in order to work toward a better tomorrow.

Author Note

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