Mobilizing for Global AIDS Treatment: Clicking Compassion and Shopping Salvation

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Lisa Ann Richey[1]

Abstract

Global communication about HIV/AIDS requires the creation of new communities that can bridge distances and distinctions of nationality, language, class, race, gendered-identities and other forms of local identification on a disease that is associated with the realm usually understood as private (sexuality). Global AIDS, characterized as 'the disease of our time', is responsible for spawning an entire industry devoted to the prevention, detection, treatment, and potential cure of HIV/AIDS. In terms of scale, this industry works primarily cross-nationally, with donors from the North funding programs for AIDS prevention and care in the South. Anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs), typically produced as generics by manufacturers in India or South Africa and purchased by aid funding, are central to global AIDS programs. Yet, mobilizing for global AIDS treatment embodies the logic of marketing, in which Africans with AIDS are sold as lives to be saved. This article will draw from international relations theory, sociology and anthropology to offer an interdisciplinary perspective on mobilizing communication globally.

Keywords: global communication, HIV/AIDS, Africa, virtuous vs. virtual

Introduction

The possibility of global communication about HIV/AIDS requires the creation of new communities. These communities must bridge distances and distinctions of nationality, language, class, race, gendered-identities, and other forms of local identification to allow for the possibility that communication can be 'global'– particularly on a disease that is associated with the realm usually understood as private (sexuality). Global AIDS has been characterized as 'the disease of our time' and is responsible for spawning an entire industry devoted to the prevention, detection, treatment, and potential cure of HIV/AIDS. In terms of global scale, this industry works primarily cross-nationally, with donors from the North funding programs for AIDS prevention and care in the South. Anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs), typically produced as generics by manufacturers in India or South Africa and purchased by aid funding, are now central to global AIDS programs. Yet, mobilizing for global AIDS treatment embodies the logic of marketing in which Africans with AIDS are sold as lives to be saved.

This article will draw from international relations theory, sociology and anthropology to offer an interdisciplinary perspective on mobilizing communication globally. This requires a contextualization of communication within understandings of AIDS,

Africa, and representations of relations between North and South. Treichler's (1999) work taught us that the representations of AIDS are critical to shaping the possibilities for understanding, intervening and living with the disease. In the following discussion, I will examine how representations of African AIDS treatment are used to construct certain kinds of communities of donors and recipients. I will analyze mobilization of the global community through two empirical examples of fund-raising for The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The first example is an email and internet-based communication campaign sponsored directly by The Global Fund; the second one is a visual media campaign by Product RED that appeared first printed in *Vanity Fair*, and then in a video linked to the RED website and YouTube channel. I will argue that stories without voices are used in the marketing of AIDS patients in ways that sell compassion through clicking and shopping, but do not move us beyond the stereotype of the 'suffering stranger.' Therefore, mobilizing globally in response to AIDS requires that communication about treatment move beyond marketing logics.

In the following sections, I will introduce the background for global mobilization to provide AIDS treatment to people living with HIV in the South. Then, the notion that global AIDS has become conflated with 'African AIDS' will be explained, and the links between heterosexual transmission of HIV and 'good AIDS' will be introduced. Section three will outline the eclectic methodology and theoretical framework used in this article, drawing on scholarship from communications and international political sociology. Next, I will describe two different case studies of attempts to mobilize communication globally to support The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and develop a critical analysis that distinguishes some of the parameters around virtuous versus virtual mobilization. Finally, the last section will conclude with some thoughts on how creative visual communication is provocative and important in linking North and South.

Context:
A Brief Introduction to ARV Treatment and Global Obligation

Among the most rapidly advancing global technologies, pharmaceuticals are at the center of global struggles for human rights, health, trade and human connectivity. Thanks to pharmaceutical advances, in rich countries AIDS was transformed from a fatal to a chronic disease through widespread treatment with combination antiretroviral ARV therapy in the late 1990s. While ARVs do not cure AIDS, when taken regularly, they can significantly slow the replication of the virus and suppress symptoms of illness. Significant changes in the past decade involving increasing access to (ARV) drugs for treating AIDS in Africa have reconfigured the landscape of aid for global AIDS. Today, approximately 37 percent of those medically eligible for AIDS treatment are receiving ARV medications in Africa (UNAIDS 2011); however, availability varies considerably from one country to another and from urban centers to rural areas.

This AIDS treatment assemblage produces new possibilities for social mobilization, activism, and 'grassroots globalization' (Robins 2006), but it also constrains and disciplines the scope and claims that can be made by therapeutic citizens (Nguyen 2010) in developing countries.[2] New empirical literature suggests that the extent to which local actors in developing countries will mobilize to have their claims fulfilled by global obligation is highly contingent on the social and political contexts of the AIDS treatment

programs in their countries. The kinds of obligations that are constructed as 'global' are based in part on the communications campaigns put into effect by AIDS industry organizations like the Global Fund.

The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is a re-granting institution that allocates public and private contributions toward global health. It works in 150 countries, and since its inception has committed $21.7 billion to programs for prevention and treatment of the three diseases. According to its own statistics, programs supported by the Global Fund have saved 6.5 million lives, or in other words, 4,400 lives each day. The Fund controls the second largest allocation of development aid money in the world after the United Nations (UN) system itself. The Fund's procedures for applying for money and for reporting its usage are notoriously difficult to follow for local collaborators.

The most visually publicized recipients of Global Fund funds, "women and children with AIDS in Africa," are quite different from the more controversial target groups of AIDS interventions elsewhere, or those of the pretreatment era. Mobilization for ARVs consistently targets "good AIDS," sending help to deserving recipients. In many ways, the global AIDS recipients resemble more closely the local beneficiaries helped by the "pink ribbon" corporate campaigns to support breast cancer in the West. Donors want to support worthy recipients, and these should not challenge their political or moral value systems. King documents how breast cancer funding is dependent on its easy fit with "corporate values," with its focus on "mothers, daughters, sisters and friends" and the common cultural perception that "among people with breast cancer, there are, thankfully, no men, no gays or lesbians, no IV drug users, and no sex workers" (2006: 77-78). In breast cancer and AIDS campaigns, beneficiaries are people who are not directly associated with sexual deviance or substance abuse. The particularly heterosexual transmission pattern of African AIDS, combined with the recent opportunity to treat the disease with ARVs, makes it possible to save women and children with AIDS in ways that appear ethically and politically uncomplicated.

Global AIDS= African AIDS= 'Good AIDS'

'Global AIDS' has been consistently conflated with 'African AIDS' in North American/ European (see Patton 2002) and Chinese (see Hood 2010) imaginaries and media representations. No doubt, the level of HIV infection in Africa, where approximately 23 million people are infected with HIV of the estimated 33 million infections globally, is part of this understanding. However, it is not all of the explanation for the consistent conceptual slippage between 'global AIDS' and 'African AIDS.' Representations of African AIDS sit within the context of how Africa has come be to understood in contemporary discourses. Mbembe (2001) has argued that the real and the imaginary are interwoven in the category of "Africa." J. Ferguson (2006) takes this further by suggesting that "Africa" has a particular place in "globalization" – a "place" understood as both a location in space and a rank in a system of social categories. The "forcefully imposed position in the contemporary world – is easily visible if we notice how fantasies of a categorical 'Africa' (normally, 'Sub-Saharan' or 'black' Africa) and 'real' political-economic processes on the continent are interrelated" (ibid.: 7). It is in the "reductive repetition" that African under-development becomes popularized (Andreasson 2005). Mbembe describes, "More than any other region, Africa thus stands out as the supreme receptacle

of the West's obsession with, and circular discourse about, the facts of 'absence,' 'lack,' and 'non-being,' of identity and difference" (2001: 4).

Imaginations of African AIDS go even beyond Said's Orientalism of "Otherness" (see Mbembe and Nuttal 2004). In Bayart's classic critique of Afropessimism, he describes "the AIDS pandemic, a sinister companion of conflict, which decimates those populations which war has spared" (2000: 217). In *Globalizing AIDS*, Cindy Patton argues that 'the legacies of colonialism and modernization allow for the spectacular and insidious recycling of racist, sexist, xenophobic, and homophobic ideas as though they were "scientific"' (2002: xxvi). In spite of the pessimism associated with images of Africa, African AIDS treatment has now become associated with 'good' AIDS in the constitution of communities of donors and lives to be saved.

Methodology: Global Communication and the Politics of Understanding from International Political Sociology

This article uses an eclectic methodology and theoretical framework that draws on scholarship from communications and international political sociology. Understanding the global communication examples from the case studies can be done best through explicit recognition of how they are embedded in politics and community engagement. Communications scholar Deborah Vidali (2010)[3] argues that citizenship has become a dispersed category, as various modes of public engagement or connection are forged and broken, leading to what appears to be political disengagement (particularly among so called 'generation-net'). If there is to be any possibility for reweaving the relationship between media and democracy, this relationship between an actively produced apathy and engagement needs rethinking.

This article takes Vidali's call to understand the power relations that certain modalities of communication can engender and move it into an international context. However, as communication is challenged by what has come to be called 'global' or international, scholarship that focuses on these levels of analysis is equally challenged by the meanings of communication. As noted by Albert, Kessler and Stetter (2008), 'the *concept* of "communication" notoriously marks a blank space in most contemporary theories of international relations' (43, cited in Jacobi 2011: 96).

However, communication is central in the study of international politics from the perspective of the experiences of those affected by it. I argue that, drawing from postpositivist approaches in international political sociology, we can develop an analysis of global communications that weds their representational and material power. Jacobi (2011) sets up a four-part typology that draws on literature from the sociology of knowledge. Global communicative structures that produce the reproduction and creation of knowledge across international borders can be understood by drawing on this typology.

First, communication is best understood as *relational*: 'We must avoid falling back on an outdated sender-receiver model which depicts communication as the simple transmission of a message' (Ibid.: 96). This requires that we think in terms of a contextually oriented vocabulary. With regard to global representations, this means that constructions of identity are always co-constituted. We are always both constructing an 'us' and a 'them' in our image-making, and there are meanings created by the relation between them, be it conversational or conflicting.

Second, communication is also *multilayered*. This is difficult to think of in global terms, since the global is often conceived of as being 'above' or 'around' or 'distant' from some other form of 'local.' Yet, the knowledge that comes from communication is always in reference to other knowledges, other layers. None can be constituted as primary, core or 'pure.'

Third, communication is *contextual*. Never a possibility between two isolated individuals, the inherent sociality of the communicative act is significant. The referents of time, place and space situate communication and localize it, even across the global realm. These are 'always embedded in a horizon of meaning, making communication a continuous process of (re-)contextualization rather than a loose sequence of ad hoc interactions' (Ibid.: 97).

Finally, communication relevant to the understanding of international relations is *more than language*. While this is hardly a surprise to media and communications scholars, international relations and global studies have privileged the spoken word and its documentation, and have been slow to take on board the importance of other forms of symbolic, virtual or physical communication. How more visually-oriented systems of communication (such as flags, rituals or emblems, for example) are read in a global context requires an analysis that accounts for the various settings, identities and layers of the communication, as well as the recognition that these are always in motion. Therefore, a static model must be replaced by a more dynamic understanding.

The decade of the 1980s produced foundational scholarship on critical engagement with global media representations of AIDS[4], and media reporting on African AIDS was taken up by scholars in the 1990s.[5] However, at present, while treatment has become the central theme in global AIDS, little critical scholarship has taken up the representations of AIDS treatment and the place of Africans in *the global discourse of lives to be saved*.

The case of mobilizing for AIDS treatment in Africa is useful because it relies on international communication about a global issue, and thus mobilizes citizens across borders; yet, as this analysis will demonstrate, the relationships called forth in these communications campaigns are more likely to produce political disengagement than active links of solidarity between donors and recipients.

Case Study 1: 'The Lazarus Effect'

One case study of mobilizing the public for funding AIDS treatment through purchase of cause-supporting consumables is from an article in Product RED's [6] 'Africa issue' of the popular magazine, *Vanity Fair*. Between rather stereotypical notions of bourgeois beauty and wild adventure,[7] the July 2007 issue of *Vanity Fair* published a story called 'The Lazarus Effect'.[8] Two African women and two men, all aged between 24 and 34, were displayed in paired 'before' and 'after' photographs 'showing how ARV treatment has allowed them to resume their lives.'[9]

This 'Lazarus Effect' was chronicled, perhaps with yet another Biblical analogy, in two images taken 40 days apart in Lusaka, Zambia's capital. Although the article begins with the heading 'A Population on the Mend', the text refers not to urban Zambia, as one might expect from photographs taken in Lusaka, but to a health center in Kigali, Rwanda. The slippage between countries that border Congo is not merely a lack of professional attention to detail by one of the world's most successful magazines, but a rudimentary

marker of the effacement of Africans with AIDS into one smooth, global subjectivity in which there is no great difference between being a Rwandan or a Zambian. Of the two countries, at the time the photo spread was published, only Rwanda had received any money from the RED contributions to The Global Fund.

The communication about AIDS, Africa and the constructions of communities makes these images worthy of serious analysis. The 'faces of AIDS' (Patton 2002) are shown in dramatic black and white photography, and three of the subjects are partially unclothed, so that the viewer cannot fail to identify the contours of their collar and rib bones. The 'before' photograph of Silvia Ng'andwe shows her staring wide-eyed into the camera lens, with only her face and upper shoulders visible. Her shirt has a western-style collar with studded embellishment, and her hair is tightly braided to her scalp. Behind her, but mostly obscured from the lens, we see a small head of a child whose face is covered by her hand. The background of the photo is blurry, but we can make out what appears to be a bed, small table, child's toy and metal walking aid. The setting produced is that of an intimate domestic space of care giving, a room in which a mother is with her child. The rocking horse toy with its associations of (western) play and lightness is pre-empted by the metal walker that supports crippled movement, associated with debilitation and the degeneration of age or illness. The bed, of course, can mark the conjugal and heterosexual nature of 'African AIDS,' rest and repose, and succumbing to sickness.

Nancy Malaku sits in profile, staring up at a man whose only presence in the photograph is that of his right arm, which rests on Nancy's left shoulder. Her naked right shoulder is revealed by an unbuttoned shirt, which is left to slip from her body as she touches at her sternum with her left hand. The gesture and position of the gaze appear vaguely like expressions of contrition. None of the objects in the background of this photograph are easily identifiable. These photographs, intimate and pleading (Blaiker and Kay 2007) to illicit pity from the readers, are quite unusual in the RED campaign. In fact, in the entire *Vanity Fair* Africa Issue, it is only the images of these four Zambians with AIDS before they began taking ARVs that indicate any obvious allusion to suffering.10

The 'after' photographs show color images of a young mother, Silvia, with her toddler and Nancy holding a head of cabbage in front of a cement house with a small plot in the background, and one young man, Elimas, sitting with his wife while the other young father, Nigel, poses with a wife and three small children. Silvia is radiant and beautiful, with loose, shiny hair, as she cradles the head of a little girl dressed up in a fancy pink western-style dress. In the background, we see a shelving unit displaying a domestic collectable and a colorful poster hanging on the wall. Nancy, shown from a slightly more distant perspective, appears more reserved, yet smiling as her right hand cradles a

large green cabbage. She is dressed in a western style blouse paired with a 'traditional' African cloth wrapper as a skirt. Behind the stone block-house with its glass windows, potted plants and wooden trimming, we see a dirt road flanked by bushes with no other houses in view. A blue plastic tub sits inside a red one close to the house, suggesting the continuity of domestic labor. All the 'after' photographs are smiling representations of a return to domestic productive and reproductive life. We do not know if Nancy will find a market for her produce or even if she has access to land, nor do we know which ones, if any, of Nigel's three small girls have the virus, or how many other siblings they have. Yet, in this depiction, we are led to believe that conjugal marriages involving caring spouses and healthy children are part and parcel of the Lazarus Effect of ARVs.[11]

From these images, it is difficult to understand anything really about the relationships, or even the disease vectors, between the people in the photographs. It would be difficult to speculate on whether or not the partners and children of these families had been tested for HIV, and whether they were on treatment also, or needed it. However, the supposedly transformative focus of treatment is on the domestic self, the husband, mother or father, or home-gardener. The African family has been central to constructions of African AIDS as a distinct and distant manifestation of the disease.[12]

We are also left somehow with visual finality, a sense of completion and closure that the domestic transformation is finished. Of course, all of these Zambians live in a culture that values childbearing and fertility and would be likely to want to have more children when they are returned to health, but that would open up a difficult and complicated story about the possibility of reproducing while on AIDS treatment (Richey 2011; Smith and Mbakwem 2007). Importantly, we are not told how these four individuals were persuaded to be photographed when they were ill in the first place.

In addition, it is quite difficult, even for a trained Africanist scholar, to identify with much specificity the background of the photographs. What is the likely social or economic situation of these people? A stone brick house with windows and plants in pots appears decidedly middle-class, while a straw mat over a stone floor seems less prosperous, but these are only guesses at best. And how do we know that the large, wooden framed mirror into which Elimas gazes forlornly at himself in his 'before' shot is actually part of his home's interior design, and not a prop brought along by the photographer? While these may appear as petty or irrelevant questions, they are not. These images illustrate the point that the representations of AIDS treatment, like the representations of

AIDS suffering before treatment became available, are bound up with the identities and expectations of the producers and consumers of these images and have little to teach us about the lived experiences of Africans who are managing treatment.

Case Study 2. *Clicktivism for The Global Fund*

In July 2011, The Global Fund sent an email targeted to Northern activists to encourage them to support the Fund's work in life-saving. The email from 'Claudia Gonzalez, Campaign Manager' began with the line, 'My friend, I want to introduce you to a special woman.' After a brief description of the work of Bongi Sipalma, a link to the website led to the page you see here in the photograph above.

   Under the headline 'One Million Lives Are Saved Every Year. Support The Global Fund', a faded background photograph shows an African woman with a round, smiling face embracing a girl child, seen from the back. We see a dish on the ground under a ladder made from sticks, and some homes in the surrounding area that appear to be made of mud with tin-sheet roofs. One home has laundry hanging to dry in front of it, and a small child is barely visible on the photograph's horizon. The scene evokes a domestic, gendered, peaceful Africa. One where underdevelopment has left dirt where we might expect pavement, where laundry is aired in public, and where females take care of each other.

   The 'other' stereotypical Africa of the Western imagination – that of child soldiers, domestic violence, alcoholism, and exploitation – is noticeably missing. Mobilizing the Western public to support AIDS treatment in Africa is about communicating a feminized 'other' – a life to be saved. Into this imagined virtualism of saving a live through the provision of AIDS treatment, a Western individual (male or female) steps in to assume the masculine role. With a click or a credit card, you can save lives. In doing so, you produce a masculinized heroism that connects you as a Western consumer with deserving recipients of your support in Africa.

The website opens with a centered text explaining:

> Bongi Sipamla is a remarkable woman whose work saves countless lives in her community – but she needs your support.
>
> In the impoverished South African township of Khayelitsha, Bongi works at St. Luke's Hospice, where she administers vitally needed antiretroviral drugs to patients with HIV. The Global Fund proudly funds her efforts, which have given hope to a population that once seemed hopeless. You can learn more about her and her workhere.
>
> You have the opportunity to make sure Bongi knows that we'll all keep our promise to help keep her going.
>
> **In the form below, write a short message to Bongi, letting her know that she's not alone and that she has your support. We'll pass it along to her.**[13]

Your email and your 'message to Bongi' are denoted with an asterisk as 'required fields.' Your first and last names and postal code are optional. In this way, you and Bongi are linked in a form of digital humanitarianism. In this virtual world, you 'support' Bongi's work in her African community through your clicktivism. All signs of your place in the geographical world (postal code) or in the social world (family names) are removed. You know her name and place of residence, but lack the decoding devices to tell you that Khayelitsha is a township a few kilometers outside of Cape Town, home of one of the first AIDS treatment clinics, supported by Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and now the South African government. Khayelitsha is the source of the lion's share of information we receive about the use of anti-retroviral drugs in Africa due to its longer history of active documentation by medical and social researchers. Yet, through the experience of email and clicking on a website, your work as an activist and Bongi's work in local hospice clinics in South Africa are intertwined. But how?

Analysis: Virtuous or Virtual?

Susan Sontag reminds us that even though ordinary language makes the distinction that an artist 'makes' drawings while a photographer 'takes' pictures, such an image 'cannot be simply a transparency of something that happened-it is always the image that someone chose; to photograph is to frame, and to frame is to exclude' (2003, 46). Innovative photographer Alison Jackson creates 'mockumentary' films and stills that use celebrity look-alikes posed in discomforting situations to force viewers to confront their own expectations, voyeurism and reluctance to question the truth of the visual.[14]

Surely viewers cannot really believe that a photographer would be present in the toilet of the British royal family, or that Princess Diana would have birthed a child with Dodi Fayed and that she would have had a family portrait taken.[15] Yet, we remain caught between what we believe we see and what we believe. Jackson's work confronts our literalist expectations that a photograph is meant to show, not to evoke. 'If you get the right composition, you can tell a whole other fantasy story that exists in the public imagination which is totally different from the truth-and that's what photography does.'[16] Jackson's 'fake' images satisfy the viewer's expectations, play effortlessly into their tight attention span, and show exactly what one imagines would be real.[17]
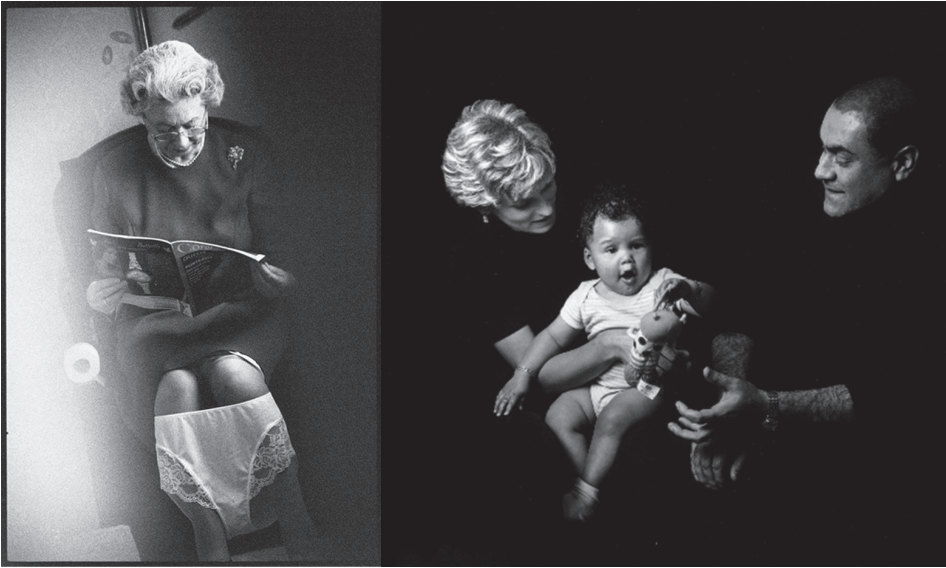
In the case of the Lazarus Effect RED campaign to mobilize global support for the Global Fund, the same photographs of Silvia, Nigel and Elimas from Vanity Fair provide the only video imagery for a video posted on YouTube from Product RED entitled 'The Lazarus Effect.'[18] This video's message in 30 seconds is as follows: written text fills the screen with '4,400 people die every day of AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa.' This slide is followed by the spoken words 'Treatment exists.' And Silvia's 'before' photograph fills the screen as an American female voice explains: 'In about 60 days, an HIV patient in Africa can go from here [Silvia, before] to here [Silvia after]. We call this transformation "the Lazarus Effect."' The voice continues as Nigel and then Elimas' before and after photos fill the screen: 'It's the result of two pills a day taken by an HIV/AIDS patient for about 60 days. Learn more about how you can help give people this chance at life at joinred.com.' The message of the 30 second film is powerful and compelling, because the images, like the art of Alison Jackson, tell western consumer viewers more than simply the objects that are shown.

While none of the RED products that you can buy are actually shown, these images use visual tropes of 19th century advertising and its Christian themes that visually perform a linkage between Western agency and African passivity. For example, Elimas, seated, gazes at his self 'before' ARVs in an oversize mirror. The mirror freezes time and creates spectacle: we are permitted to gaze at Elimas because he is reflected as a commodity. His life becomes something for the consumption of the viewer.

The mirror in the Lazarus Effect visual creates a spectacle in which the commodity fetish pills are linked to unseen RED products themselves, just as the people viewing are linked to the viewed. The framing of these photographs is iconic: Western consumers now have a visual snapshot to help them understand the problem of African AIDS and how they hold the power to help solve it. The promise is not dissimilar to that of 19th century advertisements showing a white boy 'bending benevolently over his "lesser" brother', who has a white-washed face and black body: 'the magical fetish of soap promises that the commodity can regenerate the Family of Man by washing from the

skin the very stigma of racial and class degeneration' (McClintock 1994, 512).

Why would the promotional videos for Product RED rely on the same six photographs that had already been disseminated to a popular audience in the *Vanity Fair* magazine months before? Surely of the 1.4 million people as of September 2007 who according to the RED website had received treatment for HIV/AIDS provided by The Global Fund there were other subjects who could have represented 'The Lazarus Effect'. Perhaps even those living in the countries where RED's support was channeled, as opposed to Zambia, where it was not at that time. The power of these images, like the art of Alison Jackson, comes from how these images are framed and how their viewers make sense of them. The images feel real and meaningful. In fact, many of the most iconic photographs providing intimate glimpses of love or death over time have been staged photographs (including the best-remembered pictures from the Second World War, thus predating contemporary Photoshop technologies), yet with time, these turn into historical evidence (Sontag 2003).

The RED 'Lazarus Effect' images provide a powerful snapshot of the resurrection of Africans with AIDS through the power of anti-retrovirals. Yet, the Lazarus Effect as representation is a prescriptive demonstration of reality that relies on the replication of iconic images. These icons draw on non-sectarian Christian scripts of salvation and re-birth.

The common understanding of an icon is that it is an image, representation or likeness that stands in for something else, something meaningful. The signage to Christianity throughout Product RED allows a slippage between the material and the spiritual. The Lazarus Effect of antiretroviral treatment for African AIDS, as represented in the iconic photographs of four Zambians, illustrates the work that Christianity does for RED as it shuffles religious metaphor and neoliberal values, salvation and resuscitation.

Both cases demonstrate how photographic images create a virtualism of AIDS treatment in Africa in which access to anti-retroviral drugs is the modality for achieving The Lazarus Effect -the mystical coming back to life that can happen with AIDS treatment. This virtualism, in its iconic images, locates the meaning of salvation in ARV technology that can restore African bodies, as it has been doing for over two decades with Western bodies. However, the complex social, economic and political conflicts that brought AIDS to the bodies of the people in all of the photographs –Bongi, Silvia, Nancy, Elimas and Nigel—fall outside of the visual representation.

Conclusions: Stories without Voices

Selling products to save African lives is about redeeming sex and stylizing gender relations. Barbara Browning's analysis of the Bennetton AIDS advertising campaign argues that 'to make difference visible, you need contrast, and for contrast, you need contact -skin on skin if possible' (1998, 151). Percy Hintzen's detailed critique of the text in the *Vanity Fair* Africa Issue -both its features and its product advertisements- draws out the appeal of the racialized sexuality of 'Africa.' He argues 'that the targeted "modern sophisticated consumer" is to be enticed by sexual desire produced by "stunning photography" to create "demand." This is to be accomplished through "popular dialogue" and "social commentary." It is the very stunning but unsurprising template evident in the juxtaposition of Bono's plea for Africa with the "stunning photography" of sexual

desire' (2008: 79). Hintzen is reminding the critical reader of the importance of images, of how the pictures of 'desire' work together with implicit expectations of what 'Africa' is like. Of course, the racialization of sexuality long pre-dates contemporary initiatives like RED, but RED puts a new spin to allow the West to reclaim sex as healthy. As other critical scholars have also noted, RED has not taken onboard any of the central messages of feminist scholars of development, and 'a Hollywood standard of heterosexual sexiness prevails, which may be good marketing but fails to provoke deeper analysis of broadly viable models of sexuality' (Cameron and Haanstra 2008: 1485). Shopping cannot simply be assumed to be 'helping': particularly as images of Northern, consumer agency are reproduced to mobilize their support to 'join the fight.' Yet, it is not just products that are being sold, but also the meaning of political mobilization itself. In the UK newspaper *The Guardian*, activists are warned against embracing 'clicktivism':[19]

> "As the folly of digital activism becomes widely acknowledged, innovators will attempt to recast the same mix of marketing and technology in new forms. They will offer phone-based, alternate reality and augmented reality alternatives. However, any activism that uncritically accepts the marketisation of social change must be rejected. Digital activism is a danger to the left. Its ineffectual marketing campaigns spread political cynicism and draw attention away from genuinely radical movements. Political passivity is the end result of replacing salient political critique with the logic of advertising."

Seckinelgin's work on global governance in African AIDS (2008) demonstrates the complex relationships between languages and policies of the global AIDS funders and the depoliticization of people infected and affected by AIDS as recipients of aid. The long-term vision, leadership, and social change required for a sustained intervention for dealing with HIV and AIDS requires agency and coordinated response, not de- politicized and disparate "emergency" interventions that rely on NGOs.

Popular representations of global helping are not delinked from traditional international development representations of the need to intervene and save the lives of the worthy but ineffective citizens of 'Africa.'[20] The 'suffering strangers' (Butt 2002) or '"iconic figures" of misfortune' (Fassin 2007, 22) abound in social science as well as popular media. Through these representations, Africans living with AIDS are defined, isolated and stripped of their own public voice: they are neither producers nor consumers of images or products, but are simply 'the face of AIDS.' As Patton succinctly condemns: 'If we as a society continue to desire a "face of AIDS," it will not be to show that we are all basically the same but, rather, to show that those who are already projected as deviants do not live here' (2002, 121).

It is now 'Africa' as the embodiment of developing countries that is the new face of AIDS (Ibid. 130). This is why the images used in fundraising for AIDS must be taken seriously. Sontag reminds us of the complicity involved in such representations: 'The imaginary proximity to the suffering inflicted on others that is granted by images suggests a link between the far-away sufferers -seen close-up on the television screen- and the privileged viewer that is simply untrue, that is yet one more mystification of our real relations to power' (2003, 102).

As Bleiker argues: 'Aesthetic approaches embark on a direct political encounter, for they engage the gap that inevitably opens up between a form of representation and the

object it seeks to represent' (Bleiker 2009: 21). My argument is not that pictures used in the Global Fund fundraising campaigns are purposefully misleading, distorted or lying. Whether or not this is the case, is in fact beside the point. I argue that there are always implications in relying on representations as 'truth' and that we must also consider the meaning of using images of suffering to sell products or create helping communities. As we move into a period of AIDS treatment in Africa where we no longer have to defend the possibility of treatment, its relevance to the people who receive it, or whether international funding will be amassed to support it, we can begin to acknowledge, document and analyze the fundamental social conflicts that arise in the processes of treatment. Thus, mobilizing communication globally must take seriously the relational, layered, contextual and emotional meanings attached to linking local crises with global 'do-gooding'. To respond to the global AIDS epidemic requires much more than marketing logics in which lives to be saved are another commodity for sale.

Notes

1. Lisa Richey is Professor at the Department of Society and Globalisation, Roskilde University, Denmark. E-mail: richey@ruc.dk.
2. An emerging literature examines the potential of therapeutic citizenship as a basis for social mobilization, local activism and empowerment of HIV+ community groups and civil society (Richey 2011; Beckmann and Bujra 2010; Biehl 2007; Cassidy 2010; Colvin and Robins 2009; Mbali 2005; Nguyen 2010; Robins 2006; Seckinelgin 2008).
3. 2010 "RE-GENERATION: A Play about Political Stances, Media Insanity, and Adult Responsibilities." Public Performance November 13-15, 2010. Schwartz Center for Performing Arts, Emory University.
4. See, for example, Watney 1987; Patton 1992.
5. See, for example, Johnson 2002; Patton 1996; Watney 1990.
6. Product RED is a cause-related marketing initiative launched in 2006 in which 'RED' co-branded products are sold and a percentage of the profits of these products is contributed to the Global Fund (Richey and Ponte 2011).
7. These are signified by an article profiling the first 'woman of color' to be named as 'The Face of Estee Lauder' and one entitled 'Congo from the Cockpit,' respectively.
8. Ibid. pp. 156-161. This is a Biblical reference to the raising of the dead Lazarus of Bethany by Jesus in the New Testament.
9. Ibid., p. 160.
10. There is a tiny aerial shot of the 'Mathare Valley Slum' but only roof tops are visible so one would have to know that this is the largest slum in Nairobi to have any sense that this photograph represented suffering.
11. Ferguson's work on the abjection of Zambians from the promises of neoliberal modernity places insightful emphasis on how 'expectations of domesticity' left unfulfilled create particularly painful repercussions on familial and conjugal life (1999).
12. Cindy Patton analyzes the categorization of 'African AIDS' and points to the example of the South African campaigns from the 1980s in which the 'white' campaign concerned itself with homosexual sex while the 'black' campaign focused on the preservation of the family (2002, 80).
13. http://onemillion.theglobalfund.org/page/s/support-bongi?utm_medium=email&utm_source=globalfund&utm_campaign=20110722bongi&source=20110722bongi
14. Her work shows images ranging from the British Queen on the loo to President Bush appearing to struggle with a Rubik's cube in the oval office. See http://www.alisonjackson.com/.
15. http://whitehotmagazine.com/articles/2008-alison-jackson-liverpool-biennial/1639
16. L. George, "In this Tabloid World," LA Times (18 November, 2007), http://www.alisonjackson.com/.
17. Playing up to the irony of perceptions of Africa and imagined realities, some top British celebrity do-gooders star in a short video for the British charity Comic Relief where Ricky Gervais fakes a report from Africa to raise money for charity that plays on the perceptions of celebrity caring for Africa to promote products and celebrity image. The punch-line comes when Gervais, pretending to be in Kenya while really on a staged set, finds that the 'African' he is interviewing, is actually Bono in disguise. See http://www.metacafe.com/.

18. See http://www.youtube.com/, the 15 second version and the 30 second version.
19. Clicktivism is ruining leftist activism guardian.co.uk, Thursday 12 August 2010. Micah M. White.
20. In a provocative presentation, Kathryn Mathers argues that in fact, 'saving Africa through tough love helps Americans to resolve the tensions between what they believe America to be about and what they experience' (2008, 2). Her other work examines popular humanitarianism in the American reality show, "Survivor Africa" (Hubbard and Mathers 2008).

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