Kony 2012: Humanitarian Work or Narcissistic Consumer Activism?

By Brendan Dugan

With over 78 million views and counting, Invisible Children’s (IC) KONY 2012 awareness campaign captured international attention in the span of a few days. Uploaded March 5, the 30-minute video “aims to make Joseph Kony famous...to raise support for his arrest and set a precedent for international justice,” according to IC. Kony leads the rebel Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), which terrorized the Acholi region in Northern Uganda until 2006 through rape, sex slavery, murder, and kidnapped children-made-soldiers, or kadogo. Initially, this sounds like a humanitarian organization rallying well-intentioned people towards a good cause. A bit of scrutiny, however, reveals a number of problems with the methods of IC.

IC co-founder, board member, and director/narrator of the video Jason Russell holds a degree in Cinematic Production from the University of Southern California, and points to numerous celebrities as his role models, according to an 2011 interview with PMC Magazine. As prone to idealistic visions as I can be, even this seems clearly unrealistic.

“There’s something inherently misleading, naïve, maybe even dangerous, about the idea of rescuing children or saving Africa...It hints uncomfortably of the White Man’s Burden,” said Yale political scientist Chris Blattman. Ugandans and other Africans who watched the video were quick to pick up on this, and many criticized or outright disapproved of the video, as a number of YouTube posts may attest.

“The White Savior Industrial Complex is not about justice. It is about having a big emotional experience that validates privilege,” said Nigerian writer Teju Cole via Twitter Mar 8. “Close to 1.5 million Iraqis died from an American war of choice. Worry about that.”

“It’s not simply a matter of flicking a switch and saying, yep, we voted. Let’s stop Kony now,” said freelance journalist Michael Wilkerson, who’s lived and reported in Uganda, when featured on NPR to speak about the issue Mar 8. As the video explains, the International Criminal Court called for the arrest of Kony in 2005 for crimes against humanity and war crimes. In 2006, the Ugandan army forced the LRA out of Uganda to parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, and Sudan, after the LRA continually refused to sign peace agreements. To be sure, Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Malcom X, or Dorothy Day are textbook examples of, well, celebrities. But among his heroes and heroines, i.e., his models after a media celebrity, a musical celebrity, a videomaker celebrity, an artist celebrity, and a corporate celebrity, all of whom are textbook examples of, well, celebrities. To be sure, Martin Luther King, Mahatma Gandhi, Mother Teresa, Malcom X, or Dorothy Day acquired something of celebrity status, but that was secondary to their activism, not vice versa.

Nothing of course is wrong with his heroes and heroines, or that he might lack the formal understanding of activism and social change. Rather, how they shape IC’s approach is a problem. Take for example how the video focuses more on IC’s work than on the complex issue itself, which the video simplifies and dramatizes. These are not the things that make social change, let alone an activist.

“I am a rebel soul, a dream evangelist,” who wants to “redefine international justice” and “the concept of humanitarian work,” Russell said in the same interview with PMC Magazine. As prone to idealistic visions as I can be, even this seems clearly unrealistic.

In many ways the video focuses more on IC’s work than on the complex issue itself, which the video simplifies and dramatizes. These are not the things that make social change, let alone an activist.

The School of Mathematics and Sciences (SOMAS) has also seen great increase over several years, from only 84 students in 2007 to currently 160, with an expected 180 in the fall of 2012.

“I do not know if there is any one thing that has generated such a growth product,” said Dean of Mathematics and Sciences, Dr. Loren Bertucci. “I have tried to be as active...as possible, so that I can do whatever I can to put a positive and public face on Marian University and the [SOMAS].”

When he first arrived, Dr. Bertucci said SOMAS made up only 7% of the total traditional student body. Now, SOMAS represents more than 11% and by the fall of 2012 are expected to represent 13%.

Dr. Paul Evans, Dean of Marian University College of Osteopathic Medicine (MUCOM), said the medical school might be a cause of future growth in the SOMAS.

“Once the medical school gets up and running, there will be a lot of high school students that have an interest in medicine [who] will say ‘I’ll go be a biology or chemistry major at Marian because they have a medical school.’”

MUCOM also seeks to increase the university’s population. Dr. Evans expects the College to bring in many students. Currently MUCOM awaits accreditation and expects to begin the see GROWTH. pg. 3

DO YOU CHEAT?
Marian students prove to be honest academically.

SPRING BREAK
Campus ministry hosts another successful alternative spring break.

ROSARY WALK
Faculty, staff, and students welcome the new addition to campus with a commemoration ceremony.

KONY ▼ 2012
SWAGGISM PROPAGANDA

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Kony, from page 1

Do you know who this man is?

He needs to be stopped

servers have labeled it) shirt, bracelets, stickers, and buttons. The problem is that not IC targets youth or funds its campaigns in Central Africa by providing commodities to consumers per se. After all, TOMS and Ethos water, among other nominally philanthropic companies, do much of the same. Rather, the problem lies in the fundamental message this type of activism conveys. Can we as human beings genuinely practice benevolence, activism, or civic duty by simply buying things—by sharing a video or tweet from our iPhones or personal computers, without leaving the security of our routines? Yes, social media facilitated in part the Arab Spring and Occupy movements, but that does not mean social media will inevitably transform the social order of the world or invariably bring about justice, as the video suggests and Russel believes.

And yes, some funds raised by donation and selling products go to direct services for the Central African campaigns. All of 32.4% of IC’s expenditures went to direct services in 2011, according to its financial report. Regardless, we need caution regarding such consumer activism and humanitarian injunctions to act (vicariously) against social ills, particularly when some of the same sort of troubles happen here, such as sex trafficking, and while other, less apparent forms of violence occur within the day-to-day functions of Western life. IC works to increase the accessibility and infrastructure of education in Northern Uganda, lobbies the US Government, established radio warnings, search and rescue teams, and similar operations to address issues stemming from the LRA, according to its website. So IC does its share of work in raising awareness, however inaccurately, searching for the dwindled LRA, and implementing recovery efforts in Central Africa.

But before buying into the latest humanitarian cause, we should do the research and get informed of the efficacy and methods of the group asking for our support. Do the means justify the ends? Moreover, the next time we feel compelled to “do something,” we ought to look at what we can do, right here.

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application for students in the fall of 2012.

“Part of the process to has to due with the types of students we are going to get,” said Evans. “This is the only Catholic osteopathic school in the country, so there will be a group of students who are very interested in the continuation of their Catholic Education or are looking for a continuation in faith based learning.”

Evans also expects Marian to attract more international students with MUCOM.

Professional Writing students write proposals

By Bradley Levi

The Professional Writing class, taught by Professor Wendy Vergoz, is writing proposals, memos, professional letters, and resumes to let students shift from academic to professional writing.

“We analyze documents very closely, whether they’re professional models or students’ own work, looking for strengths and weaknesses in content, tone, format, etc.” Said Vergoz.

Many students consider the class beneficial because they gain knowledge about professional writing before entering the work force.

“I would certainly recommend this class, especially to business students, because a big part of communication in the work place happens by e-mail, and how you write really has an effect on people’s impressions of you as an employee,” said former Professional Writing student Hannah Stahlhut.

Right now, there are only nine students enrolled, so the course consists of hands-on learning, workshops, and writing.

“This is a class which gives students practical skills to carry into the future,” said Vergoz.

If you are interested in professional writing, you can sign up for the ENG 239 course in the Fall.
Marian University hosts World Quest

By Hadeiyah Ameen

The Annual Academic World Quest Competition of 2012, sponsored by the World Affairs Council was hosted by Marian University on Feb 25. This year marks the 10th annual competition for the World Affairs Council, and Marian University has hosted this event for the past several years.

Excitement and nervousness flared as the teams prepared to display their genius on world issues. Teams from Arsenal Tech High School, East Chicago Central High School, MTI School of Knowledge, and Warren Central High School took their places with determined faces. The teams were tested on different topics with ten questions per topic. The topics included focused on the top six national security issues facing the USA in the run off to the 2012 presidential election. High school students debated on US Education, US Energy Policy, US Economic Competitive-ness, Middle East Affairs, Afghanistan/Pakistan, China, NATO, and Millennium Goal topics: Child Health, Azerbaijan, and Current Events.

The room remained silent as the audience watched the contestants answer tough and specific questions. With questions ranging from names of Presidents of specific countries to the percentage and ratio of certain developments in other countries, it was anybody’s game. As the judges convened to declare a winner, participants and the audience anxiously chatted as they awaited the ruling.

MTI School of Knowledge came out on top of the 2012 Academic World Quest competition. They will represent Indiana in the National Competition in Washington, D.C. in April. MTI School of Knowledge, Marian’s neighboring school located at 2850 Cold Spring Rd, is a private Islamic school for students K-12th grade. MTI en-
joyed its second year as regional World Quest champions as well as Indiana representatives in the national competition. They represented Indiana at Nationals in 2010 where they ranked as one of the top ten teams in the nation.

The relief, astonishment, and joy on the Muslim student’s faces were obvious for everyone to see. Sana, an 11th grader said, “It’s a great experience because it teaches you a lot about global issues.” Other MTI contestants said they were nervous but had a great time and looked forward to participating again.

Students spend spring break serving others

By Bradley Levi

Twenty-two students participated in the Alternative Spring Break program to serve others through community service projects and activities.

This year, the participants could choose one of four locations to serve: Chicago, Indianapolis, Tohatchi, New Mexico, and rural Owen County, near Bloomington.

“I enjoyed the cultural interactions that we’ve had with the Navajo [in New Mexico],” said Jessica Williams, one of the site leaders for the Alternative Spring Break trip in Tohatchi.

Many of the students and faculty members who participated said they had a life-changing experience.

“Alternative Spring Break was a beautiful experience for me as it assured my notions that I would like to teach kids in inner-city areas,” said Sylvia Denice, a participant in the Alternative Spring Break trip in Chicago. “It is one of the most rewarding, gratifying, and fulfilling experiences offered and available to students over Spring Break.”

The program for many students and faculty members is a life-changing program that is highly recommended by Campus Minis-
tries. “It’s a wonderful opportunity to gain friendships, do service, and discover who you are in different types of situations,” said Megan Gehrich, one of the site leaders for the Alternative Spring Break trips in Owen County.

Participants

New Mexico
Julie Rowe
Paige Prather
Matthew Duncan
Ashley Bartley
Billy Thompson
Joann Derbiszewski
Jessica Williams
Nicholas Soellner
Advisors:
Jimmy Cox
Robert Golobish

Indianapolis
Bradley Levi
Colleen Curtin
Melinda Weiss
Margaret Blandford
Delaney Arnoldy
Lara Kuczmanski
Lauren Hacker
Advisors:
Nick Aylward
Matt Nelson

Chicago
Kelsea Manion
Katie Copeland
Sylvia Denice
Cassy Brown
Mary Kate Hosty
Ana Ruiz
Clay Kendrick
Advisors:
Melody Lynch-Kimery
Ashley Hardy

Owen County
Bren Doyle
Kristen Keers
Amy Seger
Claire Callahan
Andrew Hess
Tanner Wilson
Justin Wedgewood
Megan Gehrich
Advisors:
Debbie Burks
Jeanne Hidalgo
Marian commemorates Rosary Walk
By Brendan Dugan

The Marian Shrine and Rosary Walk commemoration ceremony was held on March 2.

Close to seventy people stood the elements Friday morning, March 2, for the commemoration of the Marian Shrine and Rosary Walk. The Shrine and Rosary Walk are collaborated San Damiano Scholar projects of seniors Amy Garner, Karen McNulty, Andrea Fleak, and Amy Seger respectively. Construction began early winter and concluded before March this year, after the projected completion date of December 8.

Prayer led by Sr. Barbara Piller, singing, and a speech by President Dan Elsener constituted the commemoration ceremony, emceed by VP of Mission Effectiveness Sister Jean Marie. The Italian-sculpted Mary statue designed by Nick Ring now rests atop a pedestal in the center of the shrine. A further celebration of the Marian Shrine and Rosary Walk will occur March 26, after the 4:30pm Mass in Bishop Chatrand Chapel around 5:20pm.

Academically Honest University
By Brendan Dugan

Academic honesty pervades the student body of Marian University. On an annual basis, only 20 cases of academic dishonesty arise. “It seems fairly clear that violations are rare,” said Dean of Academic Affairs William Harting. Seven broad violations of academic honesty are enumerated in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities contained in every Marian University plan: cheating, plagiarism, multiple submissions, fabrication, misuse of materials, misrepresentation, and facilitation of academic honesty. One can find the repercussions and proceedings for violations of academic honesty there as well. Essentially, first-time offenders risk losing credit for whatever material they cheated on, or course failure. After that, students who cheat may be suspended or expelled from Marian. In the first case, students may appeal to have the case reviewed, while a panel is convened before March this year, after the projected completion date of December 8.

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