

Feeding the World a Line?: Celebrity Activism and Ethical Consumer Practices From Live Aid to Product Red

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Abstract

This article examines the nature and efficacy of three major celebrity-inspired, ethical consumer charity campaigns: the 1984-5 famine relief movement, Live 8 and “Make Poverty History,” and Product Red. Through an analysis of some of the most significant texts, spaces, and figures of each campaign, I establish how organizers capitalized on the “one-world” notion to effectively draw audiences to consume both charity concerts and merchandise; and I identify the economic and psychological beneficiaries of each campaign and their subsequent celebrity driven, ethical consumer spin offs. My analyses allow for a theorization of the ways in which both Africa and charity function within the Western cultural imagination.

You can be absolutely sure, on the day you die, somebody is alive in Africa because one day you bought a record or a book or watched a pop concert. And that, at once, is a compliment and a triumph, and on the other hand, it is the ultimate indictment of us all. (Bob Geldof)

In the early 1980s, less than ten years after drought had devastated regions throughout the Horn of Africa, millions were once again faced with the prospect of starvation.¹ By the summer of 1983, as a result of civil war, government mismanagement of resources, changes in US and UK foreign aid policy, and environmental degradation, food and water had become scarce commodities in both Ethiopia and The Sudan.²

¹ The Ethiopian famine of 1983-86 was the worst in recorded history according to the findings published in Stanley Siegel, Harvey Gutman, Tania Romashko and Louis Connick's *The U.S. Response to the African Famine, 1984-1986: An Analysis of Policy Formation and Program Management* (1986: 1).

² For more information on the complex causes of famine see Freedom House, *Ethiopia: The Politics of Famine* (1990: 45). For detailed discussions regarding

Consequently, hoards of desperate refugees left their isolated villages in the provinces and migrated toward feeding centers and refugee camps. The camps, not being designed either to house or help so many, were quickly overrun by refugees needing food, clothing, shelter, and protection from disease.³ Due to the limited resources available at such camps, alongside the unpredictability of food shipments, many refugees were denied the aid they required.⁴ By the time the famine had reached

the economic factors (national and global) that led to the famine see both Alexander De Waal's *Famine That Kills: Darfur, Sudan 1984-89* (1989); and Kurt Jansson, Michael Harris, and Angela Penrose's *The Ethiopian Famine*, (1987: 113-26). For further information on the idea of famine as genocide in Ethiopia, see Michael Maren's *The Road To Hell: The Ravaging Effects of Foreign Aid and International Charity*, (1997: 116); and Gebre-Ab Barnabas' *The Trek: An Ethiopian Family's Struggle Against Famine*, (1989: 15).

³ In *Surrender or Starve: The Wars Behind the Famine*, Robert D. Kaplan describes how diseases such as dysentery were a major contributing factor to deaths in the camps (1988: 5). Myles F. Harris describes the ramifications of such disease when he points out how the price of one pint of blood was equal to feeding a whole shed of children. See *Breakfast In Hell: A Doctor's Eyewitness Account of the Politics of Hunger in Ethiopia* (1987), 10-13.

⁴ Angela Penrose provides a stunning example of the inadequacies of the camps when she states that by October 1984 nearly 100 people were dying daily in Korem. She also states that, "2,612 out of 7,200 died between 29 October 1984 and the end of January 1985" (Jansson, Harris, and Penrose 1987: 157). Arguably, these rates improve once, as a result of the Buerk/Amin documentary and the ensuing public response, aid starts to pour into the worst affected regions. Pleas for aid had been ignored up until the BBC took measures: see *The Trek* (Barnabas 1989:13), for references to denied requests. For further explanation detailing why and how the US and the EEC denied aid to Ethiopia see David A. Korn, *Ethiopia: The Politics of Famine* (1990). See Penrose in *The Ethiopian Famine* for further information regarding conservative US policies on Ethiopia and how US refused to provide aid to a Soviet regime (Jansson, Harris, and Penrose 1987: 149-50) but provided support to Somalian guerillas opposing the Ethiopian Marxist government (Jansson, Harris, and Penrose 1987: 213) and reference to the EEC's claim that, despite surpluses, there was no grain to spare for Ethiopia (Jansson, Harris, and Penrose 1987: 151).

its height in the summer of 1984, the daily death toll in almost every camp was in the hundreds.

Despite numerous stories printed in the press,⁵ the disaster in the Horn was for the most part ignored by Westerners. US and UK governments developed foreign aid policies that only exacerbated an already dire situation there. In July 1984, almost by accident, BBC foreign correspondent Michael Buerk suddenly realized the enormity of the famine upon a visit to a refugee center in Northern Ethiopia.⁶ Three months later, he returned to Korem with film-maker Mohammed Amin to produce what can now be described as an exposé of the famine that shocked the world and led to the first consumer driven global aid movement.

While in Korem Michael Buerk and Mohammed Amin pushed the limits of their battery-powered equipment to produce two lengthy news reports (both over 7 minutes in length) depicting the thousands of refugees awaiting food shipments. Both reports were unprecedented, not simply because they graphically portrayed the horrors of mass starvation, but because of the public response they received. The first report was aired on the BBC on the 24th October 1984. The images of starving people, of dying children (the camera actually captures the death of a three year-old girl), had such an effect on news producers in the UK that they agreed to show the first film in its entirety, despite its length

⁵ For more detailed information on reactions to the famine in the print media see Kaplan, Robert (1988), 31-54; and Moeller, Susan, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sells Disease, War, Famine and Death* (1999), 112.

⁶ The only reason why BBC correspondent for South Africa, Michael Buerk had leave to visit Ethiopia was because there was little going on in South Africa that week. And, as Harrison and Palmer describe in *News*, Buerk stumbled upon the Ethiopian famine when, in July of 1984, he realized that he could not go as planned to Mozambique to “put together a five-minute BBC appeal... in some area where famine was a particular problem” (Harrison and Palmer 1986: 107). Because the “request [for the appeal] had come in ridiculously late” and because “the logistics of trying to get into northern Mozambique and out again on the time scale were just impossible” (107), Buerk—under the advisement of Paddy Coulter, the head of communications at Oxfam—decided to visit Ethiopia where “things were getting desperate” (Harrison and Palmer 1986: 108).

(Harrison and Palmer 1986: 123). Despite being cut to 2 minutes for the NBC nightly news, Buerk and Amin's rendering of the "biblical" famine, also greatly affected American producers (Harrison and Palmer 1986: 123). Tom Brokaw entitled the shortened piece "Faces of Death."

The first report was viewed by 470 millions viewers worldwide.⁷ The actual number of viewers, however, can no longer be estimated as the report was not only re-aired by the BBC at the beginning of the Live Aid event in July 1985 (the BBC version of Live Aid was transmitted throughout Europe), but is also featured on the DVD box set of the Live Aid event produced in 2004. Due to both its graphic nature and its reach, the Buerk/Amin report was integral to informing Westerners, and inspiring celebrities and members of the public to band together as part of a global famine relief movement.

Outraged by the images of emaciated children and their desperate parents, singer-songwriter Bob Geldof called the British public to act. With friends and like-minded supporters, Geldof established Band Aid, a charity to help prevent famine in Africa, and produced the first of a number of Ethiopia singles designed to raise funds and awareness of the plight of Ethiopian (and later Sudanese) refugees. The Band Aid single "Do They Know It's Christmas" was released in November 1984. It featured numerous best-selling British artists and became the fastest selling single to hit the UK charts, selling three million records and holding the Christmas Number One position in the charts for five weeks. The single raised over ten million British pounds. On the 5th March 1985, recording artists in the United States followed suit. Guided by Geldof and Harry Belafonte, forty-five recording artists joined together under the banner of 'United Support of Artists for Africa' (USA for Africa), and recorded "We Are the World." Like its British counterpart, the song

⁷ In *The Ethiopian Famine* Angela Penrose (administrator of the University Relief and Rehabilitation organization) provides the viewing figures for the Buerk/Amin documentary; the report was seen by over 30 million viewers in the UK and the US in October and, according to the BBC, "was later shown by 425 of the world's broadcasting organisations with a total audience of 470 million" (Jansson, Harrison, Penrose 1987: 154).

raised millions,⁸ staying at number 1 in the US for four weeks and in the UK for two.⁹

The UK and US famine relief songs were, like the Buerk/Amin report, integral in the rallying of public support. While journalists and academics rightly criticized “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” and “We Are the World” for their ethnocentric overtones and flawed one-world sentiment, the songs received little such criticism from the public.¹⁰ On the contrary, the songs became the self-congratulatory theme tunes to a growing movement that provided many disenfranchised groups with a sense of purpose, community, and agency as global citizens. The one-world sentiment, evident in “Do They Know It’s Christmas” but expressed more overtly in “We Are the World’s” comparison between the problems Americans and Africans face, particularly appealed to the masses. In *What Makes Charity Work* (2000), Myron Magnet provides some indication as to not only why the songs appealed, but how the famine reports and famine songs led to such a grand gesture of global togetherness and charity. He describes how methods and philosophies of charity have changed in the United States and Britain over the past seven hundred years, and identifies a specific shift in attitudes towards those in need of charity by the 1960s: “Philanthropy [...] became wholesale rather than a retail enterprise, concentrating not on individuals but on an abstract Mankind and on the all-embracing systems that purportedly misshaped so many lives. Charity projects became gigantic in scale and ambition” (Magnet 2000: vii-x). This shift in emphasis from individual

⁸ According to Roy Shuker in *Understanding Popular Music*, “We Are the World” (with merchandise) grossed over \$50 million (2001: 253).

⁹ Both “Christmas” and “We Are the World” were international hits; in addition, they inspired similar Ethiopia singles such as Germany’s “Nackt Im Wind,” Canada’s “Tears Are Not Enough,” and South Africa’s “Operation Hunger.” For further discussion of each Ethiopia single, see Straw, Will and Stan Rijven, “Rock for Ethiopia” (1989), 198-209.

¹⁰ For further discussion of the Ethiopia singles as ethnocentric, one-world visions, see Reed, T.V., *The Art of Protest: Culture and Activism from the Civil Rights Movement to the Streets of Seattle* (2005); Straw, Will and Stan Rijven, “Rock for Ethiopia” (1989); and Garofalo, Reebee, “Understanding Mega-Events: If We Are the World, Then How Do We Change it?” (1992), 15-36.

suffering to structural inequity becomes most evident when considering the famine relief movements of the 80s, as well as the spin-off 'aids' and charity branding campaigns that have become so popular in the early Twenty-First Century. The fact that more contemporary campaigns also form around celebrity activism and the global production and consumption of charity related merchandise is also significant to any understanding of the cultural function of both Africa (as a metaphor and empty signifier) and charity in the West.

This paper begins with an examination of the 1984-5 famine relief movement, in particular the nature and efficacy of its methods to raise funds and awareness for the starving in Africa, to determine not only the cultural capital of celebrity inspired, ethical consumer charity campaigns; but also to prepare the groundwork for an analysis of the ways in which the 1984-5 famine relief movement became the blueprint for future contemporary global campaigns designed to 'Save Africa'. Through an analysis of some of the most significant texts, spaces, and figures of the 1984-5 famine relief movement, I establish how organizers capitalized on the one-world notion in an attempt to draw audiences to consume both charity concerts and merchandise; I identify the beneficiaries of the famine relief movement and its subsequent celebrity driven, ethical consumer spin offs; and I attempt to theorize how both Africa and charity function within the Western cultural imagination.

This project asks why the famine relief movement model worked, why it appealed, and why the methods of the famine relief movement are still employed today. In order to determine the continuing appeal of celebrity activism and ethical consumerism, I look to the Twentieth anniversary of Live Aid; the three-day, global Live 8 benefit concerts; and to the innovative branding campaign named Product Red that takes celebrity activism and ethical consumerism for Africa to a new level. This analysis will provide insight into ethical consumerism in late Twentieth and early Twenty-First Centuries, as well as help us better understand the role of the suffering Third World and of charity in the West. Ultimately I ask who is now feeding the world, and what is the world being fed? The 1984 famine relief movement started with the notion that privileged Brits are feeding the world. Are we feeding anyone anything other than this line? And is that line a line of merchandise, or a line of capitalist, imperialist rhetoric?

The famine relief movement, 1984-5

Celebrity response to the famine precipitated a shift in famine coverage and kick-started what was to become the first global relief movement. Once celebrities became involved, the media quickly shifted gear, choosing to focus on the more aesthetically pleasing celebrities banding together to fight hunger, rather than upon those dying. The US and UK press covered hundreds of stories about Band Aid in the first weeks after the Buerk/ Amin documentary was aired; news channels produced stories about the movement for diverse audiences; and music programs and channels on both the radio and television repeatedly aired the songs, interviews with participants, and advertisements for the Band Aid cause. News images of the famine were replaced by images of celebrities gathered together to record the Ethiopia singles and advertise the famine relief movement. On the radio, reports of mass starvation were juxtaposed with the sounds of celebrities singing to “feed” or unite the world.

As a result of the extensive public and industry interest in the movement, campaigners attempting to raise money and awareness for those affected by catastrophe in the Third World were offered an array of new opportunities to fundraise and advertise. And, as the famine relief campaigns continued, the interests of charities and celebrity activists became increasingly tied up with those of media agencies and corporate sponsors who, working together, had the capacity to reach wider donor pools.

In July 1985, Band Aid and USA for Africa joined forces to produce what can be described as the climax of the 1984-5 famine relief movement, the Live Aid benefit concert. The star-studded concert was performed simultaneously in two separate cities linked by satellite, London in the UK, and Philadelphia in the US; 162,000 attended the concert at the two venues (70,000 at Wembley, London and 92,000 at Kennedy Stadium in Philadelphia). The sixteen hour event was broadcast live, via seven telecommunications satellites, to an estimated one billion television viewers in over 150 countries worldwide. Over the course of one weekend, Live Aid raised over seventy million dollars to “feed the world” (Shuker 2001: 237).

Live Aid was heralded as “The Greatest Show on Earth” by newspapers around the world.¹¹ In the US and the UK, national news programs and local papers alike reported on the technological components of the Live Aid, describing the ways in which satellite feed works, the amount of cable laid at each stadium, and the amount of energy needed to hold the event.¹² Consumers and donors were enticed by descriptions of the event as a never before seen feat of “technological wizardry”, a “global jukebox”, and a charity rock “triumph”.¹³

The show arose out of a search for possibilities: the possibilities of advanced visual and communication technologies, of popular culture texts and performances, and of global social movements. While ultimately it offered few new options to those starving in Africa, Live Aid offered many economic and cultural opportunities for the cities in which the concerts were held, for celebrity organizers and participants, for corporate sponsors, and for concert-goers. The cities of London and Philadelphia gained revenue and positive exposure for hosting the event. Celebrities, record companies, instrument and equipment manufacturers, and telecommunications companies all benefited from unprecedented advertising. Corporate sponsors, particularly those endorsed by famine celebrities involved in the concert, benefited, not only from the advertising gained through product placement (note for instance the paper Pepsi cups perched on amplifiers and keyboards throughout the concert) and commercial airtime; but also through their connection to an ethical consumer movement (for at least a day, drinking Pepsi became synonymous with being ethical). And members of the public benefitted

¹¹ “The Greatest Show on Earth.” 12 July 1985. *Scottish Daily Express*. 19.

¹² e.g. “Build Up to Live Aid.” 12 July 1985. *News Round*. London: BBC.; and Gruson, Lindsey. July 1985 “Global Concert Gives Philadelphia A Chance To Introduce Itself To The World,” *New York Times*, 13.

¹³ Stevens, L. 13 July 1985. “Global Concert Gives Philadelphia A Chance To Introduce Itself To The World,” *New York Times*.1: 5; Stevens, L. 14 July 1985. “72,000 Fans Flock To Live Aid,” *Sunday Mail* Queensland, Australia; Harrington, Richard and Geoffrey Himes. 14 July 1985. “Rock Around the World: Live Aid Concerts Raise Millions For Africa,” *The Washington Post*; Harrington, Richard. 12 July 1985. “The Greatest Show On Earth, Tomorrow: ‘Beatles’ May Reunite for the Global Concert,” *The Washington Post*. D1.

through their new definitions as ethical consumers and global citizens, through their identification with famine-celebrities, and through their multi-faceted relationships with compassionate corporate sponsors.

The global spectacle was extremely profitable for the economies and images of the concerts' host nations and cities. As one *New York Times* writer pointed out after the concert, this free publicity was particularly useful for the city of Philadelphia: "officials grabbed the Live Aid concert as a way of rehabilitating the city's image in the aftermath of the MOVE tragedy." In improving a city's image, and encouraging tourism, the Live Aid events proved highly profitable for the cities of London and Philadelphia by generating revenue through audience spending on transport, parking, accommodation, food and beverages, and other tourist merchandise. Because Margaret Thatcher refused to waive the 17.5% value added tax (VAT) on tickets or concert merchandise, the British government also benefited directly from the concert.

The fact that the Live Aid concert benefited two major cities within two of the most affluent nations in the world (and therefore, by default, benefited the nations too) leads me to two further points. First, it proves that, despite the shifts in economic power resulting from the processes of globalization, the US and the UK still maintain a position at the epicenter of the globe. Second, in this position (supported by the media, consumer markets), both countries (and the people within them) enjoyed a certain amount of privilege as seeming global leaders of a compassionate movement.

The Western celebrities involved in the Ethiopia songs and Live Aid benefited similarly through their involvement. Not only did all, like the cities of London and Philadelphia, gain access to free advertising, but all—despite having to donate money themselves—were also represented by mainstream media as concerned charitable beings.¹⁴ In the US, the more popular the star, the more advertising she or he gained: the performances of stars such as Madonna, who headlined in the UK, were recorded and replayed during primetime (thus, overshadowing other,

¹⁴ For a discussion of celebrities receiving free advertisement through their involvement with Live Aid, see Will Straw and Stan Rijnen's "Rock for Ethiopia."

lesser acts).¹⁵ A number of celebrities garnered attention not only by attending the concert or being part of the Ethiopia videos, but in the “making of” documentaries and media reports of preparation for events. In every case, the famine sufferer was replaced by more aesthetically pleasing celebrity and charity related merchandise: suffering was transferred from famine sites in Ethiopia onto famine relief sites in the West and, perhaps more specifically, onto the voices, bodies, and faces of famine celebrities. As a result of the substitution of suffering and famine sites by celebrity commodities and sites of performance, compassion was redirected away from the famine victim toward the celebrities singing on behalf of the victim and, later, toward the donor that identified with the celebrity. The shift in focus, away from famine sufferer to charity and charity merchandise, was exacerbated as the number of texts and commodities increased, and, as more diverse texts and famine related commodities were produced.

The celebrities who benefited the most from their involvement and exposure in Band Aid, USA for Africa, and Live Aid were the singer-songwriters who composed the Ethiopia singles, and the organizers of the Live Aid event. Bob Geldof, a singer who had, by 1984, lost much of the celebrity status he had enjoyed in the 1970s, rebuilt his career as a result of his participation. Not only did he begin to make music that sold well—he wrote “Do They Know It’s Christmas?”—but he was also able to build a successful production company. In addition, Geldof became so renowned for his charity work that he currently works as an African advisor to the UK government and, in 1986, received an honorary knighthood from the Queen of England.

In the course of his explanation of how to host a successful mega-event to the leader of Burkina Faso in 1985, Geldof describes that the format for future aid extravaganzas (future ‘aids’) should involve the employment of British contractors, using Western made equipment, and inviting Western superstars. His assertion that Western organizers and sponsors should be used indicates that, at least for Geldof, a significant impetus behind the mega-event is the potential to make profit for the

¹⁵ For a detailed discussion of ABC and MTV’s Live Aid line-up, see Esnault, Jean-Manuel and Daniel Agudo Rodríguez, “The Unofficial Live Aid Site” (2002). See <<http://liveaid.free.fr/>>.

Western nations involved. While the majority of profits of the event went to charity, numerous corporations and individuals also profited from advertising and production rights. As pointed out in a 2006 article in *The New Internationalist*, Geldof has profited immensely from his role as savior to Africa (perhaps why he is so committed to prevent any appearance of African agency in the Live Aid and later Live 8 concerts). He has become a figure relied upon not only by the British government on issues concerning Africa, but he also owns the company that produces the videos and DVDs of Live Aid and Live 8 for home sales. His company, Ten Alps, also produced spin off products, such as the DVD series *Geldof in Africa*. Perhaps more significant, however, are the connections that Geldof has developed with multinational corporations as a result of his re-found fame during the famine relief movement and his involvement in multinational charity organizations.¹⁶ Like Geldof, other organizers and sponsors involved in Live Aid have enjoyed major successes in the corporate and entertainment world. Harvey Goldsmith, promoter of Live Aid, as of 2007, had his own television show *Get Your Act Together*, also produced by Ten Alps.

The ways in which Lionel Richie (co-composer of “We Are the World”) benefited financially through his relationship with the famine relief campaigns once again emphasizes how celebrity and corporate interests are inseparable. The Pepsi commercials shown in the US throughout the course of the Live Aid concert are worth mentioning because they very clearly illustrate the interwoven relationships between sponsors and celebrity participants and between commercial texts and the concert text. Journalist Tom Shales caustically explains how, for instance, Lionel Richie and Pepsi worked together as a mutually beneficial advertising unit. Shales states:

¹⁶ The anonymous writer of *The New Internationalist* article entitled “Bob Geldof” explains: “One of [Geldof’s] company’s subsidiaries – Ten Alps Events – specializes in creating ‘branded environments’ and has worked for some of the world’s most powerful corporations, including BP, Glaxo Smithkline and Microsoft, not to mention the British Foreign Office.” All of the above have a vested interest in African poverty and disease.

Less charitably minded was the Lionel Richie spot for Pepsi-Cola informing viewers they were part of a new generation (newer than the one in April, when the commercial first aired?). Richie, mercifully absent from most of the program, appeared at the very end in Philadelphia. One couldn't help thinking that this appearance had to be worth a million bucks to Pepsi after the rigorous reinforcement of its Richie ties all through the day. (Shales 1985)

Shales' comments are more astute than he realizes. Richie shared connections simultaneously with the famine relief movement and Pepsi. This connection becomes obvious when one compares the lyrics of "We Are the World," a song that he co-wrote with fellow Pepsi celebrity promoter, Michael Jackson, and those of the song in the Pepsi commercial.¹⁷ The chorus-line of Richie's song in the Pepsi commercial is "We made our choice/ Make it a Pepsi."¹⁸ This line sounds rather strongly reminiscent of the chorus-line, "There's a choice we're making," in the "We Are the World" single. According to the end of the Richie Pepsi commercial, Pepsi is the "choice of a generation." Could it possibly be that the choice "we're making" when listening to "We Are the World" is not only the choice to help feed starving Ethiopians, but also to become part of a consumer-savvy, philanthropically minded generation—a generation that, according to the end of Richie's Pepsi commercial, drinks Pepsi?

In a rather cynical remark Marcus Greil sums up the potential consequences of the Pepsi, Richie, and Live Aid connection. He states:

the true result will likely be less that certain Ethiopian individuals will live, or anyway live a bit longer than they otherwise would have, than that Pepsi will get the

¹⁷ Interesting connections abound. For instance, EMCI (Entertainment Marketing & Communications, Inc.), "a Stamford, CT based agency that links consumer companies with music and entertainment properties" not only "handled such landmark entertainment alliances as Pepsi-Michael Jackson," but handled the corporate sponsorship for Live Aid. For more information, see "Rocketing To Success." May 2000. *PROMO Magazine*. See also <www.emcionline.com/pdf/2.pdf>.

¹⁸ Richie, Lionel. 1985. Advertisement for Pepsi. See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-fentTLsWhw>>.

catch phrase of the advertising campaign sung for free by Ray Charles, Stevie Wonder, Bruce Springsteen, and all the rest. (In Garofalo 1992: 29)

In using Richie and the music video format, the Pepsi commercial easily blended with the Live Aid performances that also appeared in the style of music video. It is at this point, where Pepsi and the famine became virtually synonymous. It became no longer possible to determine why consumers watch, listen, or consume. It is no longer possible to identify if their interests lie in philanthropic impulses or in being part of a community that is both philanthropic and corporate sanctioned. And it is no longer necessary to be a compassionate consumer in order to participate as a member of the famine relief market.

As the example of the Pepsi commercial clearly illustrates, the Live Aid benefit concert is inherently tied to corporate and celebrity interests. Those corporate interests ultimately resulted in a downplaying of the famine: why give the victims airtime (when, supposedly, everyone already knows what they look like) when airtime can be devoted to advertising more saleable products? Here Pepsi relied upon Richie's association with the movement, his image as a compassionate artist and as a member of the ethical consumer community (an image produced by the "We Are the World" video), to sell their soft drink products.

Rather than employing a superstar to advertise their phone service, AT&T employed a cheaper alternative. Shales points out that, in their advertisements, "[p]hotographs of the victims of famine were melded together while new lyrics to the company's old 'Reach Out' theme were sung: 'Reach out, reach out and touch someone/ Someone whose only hope is you'." Again, in order to sell phone lines, AT&T constructed a symbolic relationship between its service and the service provided by aid agencies. They, like Pepsi, relied on the association of their product with the ethic of compassionate consumerism and the famine relief movement to encourage audiences to buy what they have on offer, despite the fact that their phone service has nothing to directly connect it either to the famine or the famine relief movement.¹⁹

¹⁹ It is quite possible that AT&T's decision to sponsor the Live Aid event may have been an attempt to elide criticism of its monopoly, criticism that led to its breakup into the "baby bells" in 1984.

Both Pepsi and AT&T relied on the fact that their captive audiences in the stadiums (ads were also posted on billboards, and merchandise was made available at the concert) and at home were members of a new generation of rock community. Pepsi relied on the fact that audiences would see Richie and identify him as a famine relief figure and, by a process of transference, see Pepsi not only as a refreshing drink, but a famine related product (one need not mention the irony of a soda company endorsing an event intended to raise money and awareness for a group of people dying as a result of famine and drought). AT&T also capitalized on the rock community, assuming that the audience would effectively read the music video adapted to the advert on screen.

As a result of the videos and later the Live Aid concert, famine relief movement sponsors sold famine relief merchandise worth millions. While the proceeds of each supplementary text and product went to the famine relief cause, each additional visual text served to advertise the celebrities involved, their endorsements, their record companies, all the accoutrements necessary to maintain their celebrity image, and the producers and distributors of each text (be they producers and distributors such as RCA/Columbia Home Videos that produced and distributed *The Making of "We Are the World"* or Bob Geldof's Ten Alps that has produced and distributed the Live Aid DVD compendium).

The merchandise that accompanied the Live Aid concert not only economically benefited the movement but also private citizens, various writers, publishers, and publishing/production companies. Merchandising included not only footage, but also concert programs, a series of books including the not-for-profit *World Wide Concert Book* (proceeds of which went to Band Aid) and *Live Aid* (a for-profit text published for children by Cornerstones of Freedom/ Children's Press Chicago), clothing,²⁰ and, souvenirs such as press passes and tickets (the revenue for which is not guaranteed to go to the famine relief cause).

²⁰ Arguably the Live Aid logo was also a valuable commodity. Organizers fearing that, prior to the concert, pirates would create bootleg merchandise, kept the logo under wraps. "Live Aid Faces Rip-Off." 11 July 1985. *Scottish Daily Express*. 15.

Whether or not the profit for merchandise went to the famine relief cause, it is clear that sales were made as a direct result of the Ethiopia songs and video, video footage of famine in the Horn, and the Live Aid concert disseminated to an estimated 1.5 billion people around the globe. To participate in the famine relief movement, the public had to actively consume famine images and famine relief texts. Participants became united both in their shared knowledge of how to read famine relief texts and their roles as consumers. The ethical consumer market was both identified and unified through acts of consuming and purchasing within the famine relief site, and through the evocation of compassion that each consumer text and act of purchase enabled and intensified.

For participants, the famine relief events offered the opportunity to develop and participate in newly formed rock communities, charity driven communities, and global communities. The role of ethical consumer also provided many, if only temporarily, with a sense of political strength that allowed participants to affect socio-cultural change within and through the creation of new cultural sites of production and reception. In *Changing Cultures: Feminism, Youth and Consumerism* (1992) scholar and activist Mica Nava provides a most effective definition of consumerism. She states: “[c]onsumerism is far more than just economic activity: it is also about dreams and consolation, communication and confrontation, image and identity. Like sexuality, it consists of a multiplicity of fragmented and contradictory discourses” (Nava 1992: 67). Here Nava links consumerism to desire, expression, and identity formation. She succinctly intimates how, like the sexual object and sexual act, the consumer object and act of consumption have the potential not only to provide the consumer pleasure, but also with a sense of self. Nava argues, as a market force, consumers are not only provided with modes of expression and agency, but with the power to affect change on the individual, communal, and global levels. By consuming famine and famine relief texts, by donating time and money to the famine relief effort, consumers not only showed their propensity for compassion for the Other; but they also elicited pleasure, and carved out for themselves the new socio-cultural role of compassionate consumer, of self-reliant philanthropist, of worthy citizen. By embracing ethical consumerism, through their good deeds and consumer habits, ordinary citizens challenged their governments’ rationale for reducing aid to African nations in need, and, most significantly, altered UK and

US foreign policies regarding aid. Ultimately, involvement in famine relief allowed for the creation of socio-cultural sites within which the general public could experience pleasure and a sense of community.

In many respects the 1984-5 famine relief movement was a series of successful events that showed the world how noble and charitable Western nations, celebrities, and citizens could be. It did, however, also have some effect on the lives of some starving peoples in the Horn of Africa. Because US and UK governments were wary of providing aid to communist nations in the Horn, aid budgets for Ethiopia had been minimized prior to the Buerk/Amin report. Both governments feared that the Ethiopian government would misappropriate funds and food aid sent from the West. The aid that was sent was often processed through and delivered via other relief organizations (for instance, the British government sunk funds into the Norwegian Church Aid and the US into the Catholic Relief Services) (Kent 1987: 70). However, after the creation of Band Aid, USA for Africa, and Live Aid, government attitudes changed. The ability of celebrity and public opinion to alter government policy became evident at that point. Such conservative policies were immediately overturned when, in November 1984, as a result of media and public pressure, “20 fixed-wing aircraft and 30 helicopters from the UK, USA, USSR, FRG, and GDR, Italy and Libya were involved in airlifting supplies” (Jansson 1987: 154).²¹ This fact alone proves that the power of celebrity and public opinion, of ethical consumer campaigns, should not be under-estimated.

²¹ By 1985, the public in the US and the UK had, in large part, changed their minds about their abilities to help peoples in the Horn. After the Buerk/Amin report, a number of exposés were produced by various media producers. See: “Cry, Ethiopia, Cry” (1984); Blundy, David and Paul Vallyely, *With Geldof In Africa: Confronting The Famine Crisis* (1985); “Live Aid’s Desert Gamble” (1985). According to Robert D. Kaplan news reports in late 1985 started to focus on the public backlash against aid agencies and public anger at being ‘duped’ by both the media and newly emerged aid organizations such as Band Aid (Kaplan 1988: 7 and 11).

The Live 8 concerts, 2005

Unlike USA for Africa, the Band Aid charity continued to promote African poverty awareness after Live Aid. A number of spin-off ‘aids’ were created to further support Band Aid’s agenda. Following Live Aid in 1985 came Fashion Aid and Sport Aid (to name but a few) in the UK, and Farm Aid in the US. While some of the spin off movements focused on a different group of recipients (i.e. Farm Aid was designed to give aid to US farmers as well as overseas recipients), the basic methods of fundraising and awareness raising employed by the Band Aid charity continued to be employed. On 2nd July 2005, a number of Live Aid organizers arranged Live 8 to celebrate the Twentieth anniversary of the first global concert. Prior to the events, contemporary British celebrities re-released a version of “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” Benefit concerts were then held in ten different locations around the globe (London, Cornwall, Paris, Berlin, Rome, Philadelphia, Barrie, Tokyo, Johannesburg, Moscow, and Edinburgh) over a three-day period. The final concert took place in the Scottish capital, to coincide with the G8 Summit being held in Gleneagles (approximately 40 miles away).

The Live 8 concerts once again provided a venue for the free advertising of celebrities. Veteran Live Aid performers such as Madonna and Elton John still took center stage; but newer stars from every participating country also contributed greatly. Providers of equipment and sponsors such as Motorola also no doubt benefited from their participation and their new image as ethical corporations.

While the aims of Live 8 were the same as those of Live Aid, to raise awareness of African poverty in the West, the Live 8 concerts were distinct for a number of reasons. Rather than giving money, participants in all ten locations—and the thirty billion viewers around the globe—were asked to give their names to a ‘live8 list’, to be presented by Live 8 representatives to Tony Blair, the chair of the 2005 G8. Organizers believed that public pressure, symbolized by such a petition, would encourage the G8 leaders to cancel debt in a number of African countries and loosen trade restrictions with willing African nations. Thirty million people gave their names, which were then projected on screens behind performers at the concert venues. As is stated on the Live 8 website,

“The Story So Far,” participants “couldn’t have made it clearer that we expect politicians of this generation to end the scandal of stupid, immoral poverty.”²²

Although Live Aid made a clear political statement in 1985 to Thatcher’s government and the Reagan administration, the first, founding concert appeared to be less seriously political than its successors. At Live Aid, most emphasis was placed upon the global possibilities of the concert, and the attempt to build a globally conscious audience of donors. The Live 8 concerts, being deliberately scheduled to coincide with the G8 summit, were certainly designed to make a more overt political statement. In the 1980s, leaders were not made accountable nor did they engage in the famine relief movement: the most effective questioning of policy was Geldof’s occasional and opportune outbursts directed at Thatcher. In 2005, however, eight world leaders were being given a specific agenda: “Make Poverty History.” And the Live 8 organizers, being supported by the ONE foundation and educated by effective global charities such as OXFAM, had a specific list of requirements that was supported by tens of millions of ordinary citizens around the world.

Like Live Aid, the 2005 concerts were hailed as unprecedented global spectacles. Live 8 employed the most advanced technologies to advertise, transmit, and gain support for the concerts. The events were advertised using print, televisual, and virtual media; state of the art satellite technologies were used to connect and disseminate the ten concerts; and participants were asked to “give their names” via text message. However, as with Live Aid, the hype and the technology overshadowed the cause. Few Africans were allowed to perform, thus proving that little had changed since 1985 when Geldof, during a visit to Burkina Faso, undermined national customs, laughed at the ceremonies designed in his honor, and scathingly joked about the impossibility of putting on a Live Aid event in Africa because such an event would fail to attract Michael Jackson (Blundy and Vallely 1985: 47-9). Geldof’s decision that only musicians with more than four million records sold could play, otherwise people in China would ‘switch off’, resulted in

²² Live 8. 2007. “The Long walk to Justice.” See <<http://www.live8live.com/>>

many African performers being ineligible.²³ Many of those that were, were ghettoized at the Eden Project venue, Cornwall.

Despite the overt political agenda of the three-day global event, Live 8 was designed in such a way that it not only excluded Africans, but it also overshadowed one of the largest public protests in the history of Scotland.²⁴ The scheduling of the last concert in Murrayfield, Edinburgh to coincide with G8 Summit meetings, could be seen as a deliberate attempt to elide real public opinion by wrapping protest in palatable packages for the global market. Considering that Geldof, the founder of Band Aid and the brains behind the “Feed the World” theme tune and Live Aid/8 concerts, functioned in 2005 as a liaison for the British government—a role so shocking considering that Geldof still lacks either appropriate knowledge of the causes of poverty in Africa, uses essentialist rhetoric, and calls for a new form of exploitation of Africa—such a reading does not seem so far fetched.²⁵

The ways in which Geldof sees fit to patronize peoples from decolonized nations became very clear at the end of the Murrayfield concert when, during the end of the concert speech, Geldof—alongside Bono—asked the crowd to sing “Flower of Scotland.” While on the one hand he arranged a concert to avert the public gaze from Scottish protest, on the other hand he asked a considerable crowd of Scots to sing their unofficial anthem, a song that speaks to the exploitation of Scotland as a colonized nation and calls for the overthrow of English domination.

Arguably, for the crowd at Murrayfield, the concerts functioned to create a community united by nationality. The majority of performers at the event were Scottish. Scottish band Travis intermingled traditional Scottish tunes—many of which are songs of rebellion that would be well known to Scottish audience members—with their hit songs. And the

²³ See “Bob Geldof.” January 2006. *New Internationalist* 386. See also <<http://www.newint.org/columns/worldbeaters/2006/01/01/bob-geldof/>>.

²⁴ On 6th July 2005 over 5,000 protesters participated in an anti-globalization demonstration in Auchterarder, Scotland, a village close to the Gleneagles hotel where G8 leaders were holding their 2005 summit.

²⁵ For a discussion of Geldof’s problematic attitudes and rhetoric, see “Bob Geldof.” January 2006. *New Internationalist* 386. See also <<http://www.newint.org/columns/worldbeaters/2006/01/01/bob-geldof/>>.

concert ended with the crowd singing the unofficial national anthem. While other concert audiences may not have felt as unified as a national community, they most certainly were connected as part of a global community of concerned people, willing to give their time and names to a cause. At the same time, however, viewers at home and at the ten locations, were connected as viewers; as a community of pop and rock appreciators, a community of consumers.

The Live 8 event also had a direct influence upon the policies and agreements made at the G8 summit.²⁶ All leaders present agreed to cancel the national debt of eighteen African nations immediately, and another twenty in the following few years. In addition, the G8 leaders promised to provide \$50 billion in aid. However, by 2006, such pledges had already begun to slide.²⁷ The Band Aid charity organizers, despite their flaws and conflicting interests, are now engaged in a battle to make many leaders follow through on their promises to Africa. By June 2009, the spotlight had landed on France and Italy in particular, since both countries had seriously reneged on offers to provide aid and relieve debt.²⁸ The UK is the only nation to have honored its promises and paid its share of the pledged amount of aid. Geldof continues to tour the world and take leaders of wealthy nations to task for their neglect. Arguably, however, Geldof's endeavors will always be tainted by the fact that he, and thus his charity foundation, is too wrapped up in the notion of Africa as potentially exploitable resource to affect any notable change for the average African person.

Product Red, 2006-present

The legacy of Live Aid and Live 8 is the campaigns and movements that borrow celebrity activist and ethical consumer techniques. The most effective spin off campaign is a campaign that capitalizes on ethical consumer desire and celebrity egotism. Product Red, a business model that once again reiterates the vision of one-world that Live Aid and Live

²⁶ Larry Elliot and Kate Connolly, "In 2005, G8 Pledged \$50bn for Africa. Now the Reality." *The Guardian*. London, 25th April 2007.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

8 relied upon, harnesses charity branding in an unprecedented manner. Product Red employs ethical consumerism and celebrity activism in a more sophisticated campaign, and thus needs exploring in some detail.

In 2006, pop star and self-professed philanthropist Bono co-founded Product Red with philanthropist Bobby Shriver. The premise of Product Red, vague as it may seem, is to “help save lives in Africa.” A number of leading corporations participate in the Red branding campaign; through their participation, American Express, Apple, Converse, Dell, Emporio Armani, Gap, Hallmark, Starbucks, Windows, and most recently, NIKE, not only receive free advertising by Product Red, but get to participate in an ethical business model that “makes good business sense.” There is no attempt to hide the benefits for consumers or corporations, the former who benefit by gaining visibility and having their choices (and perhaps, by extension, voices) heard, and the latter who gain economically.

Unlike previous campaigns that employ charity branding as a necessity to raise money and awareness, Product Red is nothing but charity branding. The Red manifesto puts this most clearly when it states:

As first world consumers, we have tremendous power. What we collectively choose to buy or not to buy, can change the course of life and history on this planet [...] We believe that when consumers are offered this choice [to buy from charitable corporations], and the products meet their needs, they will choose (RED). And when they choose (RED) over non-(RED), then more brands will choose to become (RED) because it will make good business sense to do so. And more lives will be saved. (RED) is not a charity. It is simply a business model.²⁹

Here Product Red places all the emphasis on consumers, arguing that consumers have the power not only to purchase Product Red products, which results in corporations donating part of their profits to the distribution of retroviral medicines to Africans with HIV and AIDS, but also to influence whether or not corporations participate in ethical consumer business models. According to the manifesto, consumers have as much power over their own economies and corporate policies, as they do over their own consumer choices. But the consumer does nothing without the help of the friendly corporation, supported by the charitable celebrity activist who is both a business and Africa “expert.” At the same

²⁹ “The (Red) Manifesto” July 2007. *Vanity Fair*. 139.

time, however, the consumer gets to wear (in the case of clothing and electronic accessories) her or his own badge of ethical consumerism. The consumer becomes, like the corporation, marked by the color red; a color that, as the Product Red website claims, “unites us.”

Unification of consumers, corporations, and Africans through the color red once again supports the one-world notion of charity explained by Myron Magnet. What such a vision of oneness misses, however, is the fact that African peoples are not wearing or using red products. For them, the red is a much less commodified and much more visceral color: it is the color of blood. As Norma Anderson astutely asserts in “Shoppers of the World Unite: (RED)’s Messaging and Morality in the Fight Against AIDS in Africa,” such a notion of unification—in particular the reference to Africans as “brothers and sisters”—creates “a perceived bond or commonality between groups [...] [but does not] seek to connect us somehow to the folks it hopes to assist” (Anderson 2008: 41). Like the Ethiopia singles, The “Red Manifesto” constructs an imaginary recipient, an imaginary African, that—in being just like us, but considerably distant from us—is a safe and non-threatening victim, a worthy charity case. This imaginary African has, since the colonial era, existed in the Western cultural imagination. In the literature of Joseph Conrad, the images of Teddy Roosevelt on safari in Africa, and in charity advertisements, Africans have almost always been depicted as mysterious figures, born of a dark and unknown land that represents untamed adventure to the civilizing white man.³⁰ Such a problematic representation of Africans and Africa goes unchallenged in the Product Red paraphernalia. In fact, it is more than supported by both the images of supposed aid recipients posted on the Product Red website and, more shockingly, in the rhetoric of Red’s celebrity founder, Bono.

The stereotyping and elision of Africa and Africans becomes clear to anyone who examines the Red website—few actual images of Africans or testimonials of recipients exist, and when Africans do appear, they

³⁰ For detailed discussions of the construction of Africa as adventure and untamed land throughout the colonial period to the era of late capitalism, see Mayer, Ruth, *Artificial Africas: Colonial Images in the Times of Globalization* (2002); Landau, Paul S., “Empires of the Visual: Photography and Colonial Imagination in Africa” (2002), 141-71.

present very differently to the ideal Western Product Red consumer or celebrity.³¹ In fact, as with previous campaigns, the African becomes elided by the celebrity and consumer. As Percy C. Hintzen explains, this is most evident in the 2007 special issue of *Vanity Fair* where a group of famous contributors (including Barack Obama, Maya Angelou, George Bush, and Bill Gates) “speak to the saving grace of Africa and to the continent’s possibilities for human redemption” and, in doing so, “become transformed into the voices of Africa” (Hintzen 2008: 83), therefore superceding or eliding any African voices. Africans only exist as images in the world of Product Red.

Bono’s rhetoric, the most egregious of all Red celebrity participants, serves to do nothing but promote Africa as an empty signifier, waiting to be provided both meaning and purpose. Like his fellow countryman and friend, Geldof, Bono also supports the call to “Make Poverty History” by freeing up trade with Africa. And yet his rhetoric would imply that the only reason to free Africa is to re-colonize it. Bono claims that, as member of a society undermined by colonialist legacy and policy, he feels empathy for Africa. Still, he continues to view Africa as an exploitable resource, as an unlimited labor force and potential market. For Bono, Africa is a capitalist “adventure” that, with the help of good Western consumer decision, can be a “mesmerizing, entrepreneurial” continent “where every street corner boasts an entrepreneur” (Hintzen, 80). Here, Africa is positioned in business terms. As on the Red website, and in the majority of ‘Save Africa’ charity texts, African people do not exist as anything other than, at best, statistics and stock images. They are either elided, or presented as imagined commodified goods to be redeemed through Western sacrifice.

Arguably such images of Africa serve a purpose for the West. Presenting Africa as helpless victim, and celebrity activists as white men willing to take up the burden to save a continent dying from the lack of entrepreneurial spirit, does little but aggrandize celebrity figures. Not only do stars such as Bono and Geldof gain by presenting themselves as saviors of a dying continent, but as Teresa Barnes indicates, such

³¹ For a full discussion of depictions of Africans on the Product Red website, see Anderson, Norma, “Shopper of the World Unite: (RED)’s Messaging and Morality in the Fight Against AIDS” (2008), 38-39.

philanthropic stars also perform this task in ways that force both members of the charitable public and intended recipients of aid to give them thanks. Barnes persuasively argues that, through their letter writing and rhetoric, both Bono and co-founder of Red, Bobby Shriver, prove that “the egos of the rich must be continually stroked by the poor” (Barnes 2008: 74). She goes on to wittily remark that “Gim(me) the love, should be the motto of these circuses” (Barnes 2008:74).

Despite its multiple flaws, in particular the atrocious rhetoric used to sell Product Red by celebrities with questionable motives, the business model has been successful on many levels. Not only does the line of Product Red merchandise sell, some of its health aims have also been achieved. According to the Red website, by the end of 2009, the “amount of funds generated by (RED) [...] [was] the equivalent of providing more than 890,000 people with lifesaving anti-retroviral therapy for a year.” The Global Fund—a NGO established in 2002 with the help of Kofi Anan, supported by Product RED—“have averted more than 3.5 million deaths by providing AIDS treatment for 2 million people, TB treatment for 4.6 million people, and by the distribution of 70 million insecticide-treated bed nets for the prevention of malaria worldwide.”³² One other positive effect of Product Red, is the fact the business model and accompanying Global Fund have the potential to change African government attitudes and policies on AIDS management and education. As Teresa Barnes argues in “Product Red: The Marketing of African Misery,” critics of the business model may:

be silenced by the argument that even if pills are not the sole answer and even if their use will not “help eliminate” AIDS in Africa, they will alleviate the suffering of HIV-positive people who would die without them. In South Africa, where the goal of treating and beating back the disease has been indelibly and probably fatally marked by official viral denialism at the highest levels of government, this, finally, is a compelling argument. (Barnes 2008: 74)

While the flaws of Red, particularly with regards to the fetishization and commodification of Africa, are obvious, it is also necessary to see how ethical consumerism can be read in a more positive light and not

³² The Persuaders, “How Red Works” (2006). See <<http://www.joinred.com/Learn/HowRedWorks/GlobalFund1.aspx>>.

simply because a certain number of African men, women, and children have been provided the medication they need. I would also argue that, while we must be willing to provide constructive criticism, celebrity activism and ethical consumerism should not be taken too lightly. Both have become so entrenched within Western notions of charity, that it would be difficult to separate them in today's economy.³³ Westerners need to recognize how imperialist rhetoric—and sometimes sheer ignorance—are problematic and detrimental to the welfare of African peoples and nations; but it would be unwise to abandon such consumer models completely.

Conclusion

In 1984, Stuart Hall condemned the Left for dismissing the cultural significance and charitable abilities of the Band Aid and Live Aid endeavors in England. Hall argues that, unlike the Right, which, having realized its potential, quickly jumped on the famine relief bandwagon, the Left were slow to recognize the potential socio-cultural power of the famine relief movement (Hall 1988: 257). For the most part, the Left remained aloof from the 1984-5 famine relief movement, on the one hand, because of a snobbish disregard for mass culture and, on the other hand, because of concerns over the movement's ethnocentric and imperialist underpinnings. While the criticisms of ethnocentrism and profiteering lodged at Geldof and his co-activists are indeed grounded in accuracy, it should be possible to move beyond such narrow critiques and recognize that, for all its downfalls, the movement did have a number of positive outcomes for some Ethiopians and for many participants and sponsors in the West. When considering the failures and successes of famine relief, one must acknowledge how, as a *mass* movement, the famine relief movement could only affect a certain amount of change, within the confines of the culture that produced it.

³³ According to James Douglas, the late capitalist era saw the emergence of "voluntary and philanthropic organization as the Third Sector" (Douglas 1983: 11). By the 1980s, charity had not only become business throughout the West, but a growth industry in numerous parts of the world, and a sector that influences the compassionate nature of Westerners.

While we may be disheartened by the apparent conservativeness of results, we should not discount any campaign—branded or not—for failing to affect a revolution.

One of the biggest problems that arises from both academics' and from the Left's critique of mass movement and popular culture in general, is the critics' inability to account for the pleasure that popular texts can elicit from audiences, and the subversive power of pleasure itself. Through their involvement in the famine relief movement and subsequent celebrity inspired, ethical consumer campaigns, the participants gained both a voice and a sense of agency. Unlike the Leftist intellectuals that critiqued their behavior, ethical consumer participants at least recognized that, through the consumption of mass culture and their collusion with media and multinational corporations, they could simultaneously garner pleasure and become active global subjects and agents of change. If we were to take this option away from many in the West who feel, rightly or wrongly, as disenfranchised as the starving and sick Africans with whom they identify, then we would effectively disempower a group that already feels marginalized.

For all three 'Save Africa' campaigns examined here, there were multiple beneficiaries. Organizers, celebrity participants, corporate sponsors, event planners and providers of event equipment and locations, ethical consumers, and, to some extent, the intended recipients of aid have all gained in ways inconceivable without the help of the 1984-5 famine relief movement, Live 8 and "Make Poverty History," and Product Red. Should such campaigns, or celebrity activism and ethical consumerism in general, be condemned simply because multiple people benefit?

The difference between the models examined in this paper, and more traditional philanthropic campaigns, is the contemporary campaign's emphasis upon the relationship between pleasure, entertainment, and charity. Such a relationship, alongside advancements in technology, has led to the broadening of scope of charity campaigns, and often allows more people with access to philanthropic pursuits. While the scope and accessibility has served in some ways to support the problematic one-world view proposed by many celebrity inspired, ethical consumer campaigns; it has also proven that, as human beings, we can imagine a shared bond, a bond that prevents us from exploiting not only other humans, but the environment on which we all rely to live. The ways in

which certain people and corporations have profited economically from their involvement in 'Save Africa' campaigns is, at times, abhorrent. However, it seems unrealistic to assume that organizers and sponsors of events such as Live Aid and Live 8 are willing to do something for nothing. While it is important to acknowledge that celebrity profiteering through activism is rife, and to highlight the problems resulting from the contradictory motives and messages of those multi-national corporate sponsors involved in charitable events; it seems naïve to dismiss outright the economic and cultural role of celebrity activism or ethical consumerism in the West. In fact, it is nothing but shortsighted to completely condemn models of fund and consciousness-raising that provide charities with such immense possibilities to garner support, and donors the opportunity to participate as members of a global community.

Arguably, it is not the celebrity inspired, ethical consumer models that is the problem with such campaigns. The problems arise from the ways in which Africa and Africans are almost always constructed within the Western cultural imagination. In order to affect real change on the most exploited continent in the world, we must change the mythos surrounding Africa. Africa has, since the colonial era, functioned as an empty space upon which we play out Western entrepreneurial and/or philanthropic fantasies. Such a function within the Western cultural imagination has allowed for the exploitation of African peoples, environments, resources, and fauna for the past 600 years. Not until attitudes towards Africa and African peoples have changed, not until African people are presented as central to the future of Africa and significant to campaigns designed to aid Africa, will such models become truly effective. Celebrity activists can be educated. Ethical consumerism can be truly ethical. And campaigns that capitalize on celebrity and consumerism can be beneficial to Africans in need of aid.

This article began with the question: what are we feeding the world? While it would seem that much of the fodder is imperialist, capitalist rhetoric, it is necessary to concede that many in both the West and the Third World are also finding sustenance as a result of celebrity activism and ethical consumer practices. Of course, whether or not such ethical consumer based responses to catastrophe in the Third World can be sustained in a world of rapidly declining resources and continuous economic decline is a topic for lengthier discussion.

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