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Project report

MACS390, “Media, war and peace”

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Media and Cultural Studies, University of Wollongong

The project report assignment had two parts. For details of the assignment see http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/MACS390_12outline.pdf

Jess Pyers prepared (1) an information pack in the form of slide show, available separately, and (2) a fictional dialogue on doing the project, below.

- The link to this document is from http://www.bmartin.cc/classes/mwp_tops.html.

Dialogue

The following is a discussion between the creator of the MACS390 project and another university student, who has a basic understanding of the Ugandan Genocide. Pseudonyms have been used.

Alix: Do you know of anyone that actually participated in the ‘Cover the Night’ rally on April 20th, which was established by the non-profit organisation ‘Invisible Children’?¹ It was meant to make Joseph Kony, Leader of the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) in Uganda, famous. Weren’t people meant to plaster posters of Joseph Kony all over their hometowns and cities?

Lily: No. I don’t know of anyone that covered Wollongong with posters of Kony. Its aim was also to pressure governments into helping capture the guerrilla leader.

Alix: What do you think happened? The ‘Cover the Night’ campaign was nowhere near as successful as the first campaign, ‘Kony 2012’.² I think it

¹ ‘Invisible Children,’ available from <http://www.invisiblechildren.com/>, accessed on 3/06/12.

Invisible Children is a non-profit organisation that uses film and social action to raise awareness of Joseph Kony’s rebel war in Uganda. Its aim is to end the use of child soldiers and restore communities affected by the war.

² *New York Times*, ‘Lord’s Resistance Army,’ 2012, available from http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/l/lords_resistance_army/index.html, accessed on 3/06/12

The Invisible Children organisation created the ‘Kony 2012’ campaign, which was a video about the horrific crimes Joseph Kony and the LRA have

was a smart idea to post the Kony video on Youtube and Vimeo. It went viral within minutes; so many people were sharing and liking the video on Facebook.

Lily: The ‘Cover the Night’ campaign failed to move from the Internet to the streets. Yes, the video attracted more than 50 million viewers worldwide and apparently generated hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations on the first day.³ I’ve actually just finished making a presentation about this topic. It looks at the media’s portrayal of genocide in Uganda.

Alix: That sounds really interesting. The ‘Kony 2012’ video definitely succeeded at portraying the terrible crimes that Joseph Kony has committed. I had no idea who Joseph Kony was before March 5th 2012.

Lily: I agree. It was only when the video appeared in my news feed on Facebook that I found out about Joseph Kony and the LRA. I did some background research and was shocked to learn that the genocide has been going on for years and years in Uganda. I was even more shocked to learn that no one has taken any proper remedial measures to stop the genocide.

Alix: I really feel for the Ugandan people suffering from such a disturbing atrocity, especially the children.

committed. It’s aim was to make Kony and the LRA household names around the world.

³ *New York Times*, ‘Lord’s Resistance Army,’ 2012, available from http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/organizations/l/lords_resistance_army/index.html, accessed on 3/06/12

Lily: How sad is the information about Uganda's child soldiers. I can't comprehend the fact that the LRA abducts and brainwashes children into becoming child soldiers and sex slaves. I was horrified when I learnt of Kony forcing the children to mutilate and kill their own family and friends.⁴ He even makes them drink their blood and eat their flesh.

Alix: That is extremely disturbing. I didn't know about that last fact. Can I have a look at your presentation? If we are going to discuss this, I should probably be a bit more informed.

Lily: Sure.

Lily opens her bag and gets out her laptop. She opens the 'Ugandan Genocide' presentation file.

Alix: (Looks up after reading the presentation) The international media does not report fairly on the conflict at all. Where did you manage to find the information about the Ugandan Government's involvement in the genocide? I still can't believe that Kony has abducted more than 25,000 children and displaced around 2 million people.⁵ That is appalling!

⁴ Daniella Boston, 'Genocide in Uganda: The African Nightmare Christopher Hitchens missed,' The Huffington Post, 2012, available from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/daniella-boston/genocide-in-uganda-the-af_b_21150.html, accessed on 3/06/12.

⁵ Anthony Craine, 'Joseph Kony', Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, 2012, available from <http://www.britannica.com.ezproxy.ow.edu.au/Ebchecked/topic/1017670/Joseph-Kony>, accessed on 3/06/12.

Lily: I got most of my information from the Internet and journal articles. While, I was researching for the project, I found a lot of the articles to be biased. The media correctly presented the many atrocities committed by the murderous LRA, but neglected to address the role the Ugandan president, Yoweri Museveni and the army, has had in perpetuating the genocide.⁶ Museveni uses the LRA as an excuse to mobilise international support and military supplies, and fails to defeat the LRA or provide for the people in any way. However, the western media portrays him as someone who has brought stability to Uganda, and this is definitely not true...

But, I agree with you. It is so sad that he uses children for soldiers. The part that affects me the most is that thousands of children have to walk long distances each night to sleep in larger towns to escape torture, abduction and murder.⁷ I lay in my bed at night worrying about completing university assignments on time. While, the children in Northern Uganda lay on the cold ground at night worrying about whether they will survive the night. It really makes you think about the things you take for granted.

⁶ Boston, 'Genocide in Uganda', 2012.

⁷ Chris Pearson, 'LRA: The Genocide We Missed', *a Nadder*, 2008, available from <http://anadder.com/lra-the-genocide-we-missed>, accessed on 31/05/12.

The children that walk to other towns for safety are known as the 'night commuters' or 'invisible children'.

Alix: I can tell you feel quite passionately about this topic. Do you think people will feel informed about the Ugandan Genocide once they have watched your presentation?

Lily: I think I covered the topic thoroughly. I was able to get some useful information from Milton Obote, an ex-Ugandan president, who wrote about the concealment of genocide in Uganda.⁸ I personally think that Obote is quite the hypocrite, as during his regime he targeted the Baganda people, an ethnic Ugandan group. It was reported that more than 300,000 people were killed during his regime.⁹ So basically, he was trying to accuse someone of causing the genocide, when in fact, he played a part in it too.

But, I didn't find much information on the Ugandan media's portrayal of the genocide. The information that is available is by international media. I only came across one Ugandan article that highlighted the western media's failure to report accurately about the genocide. One anonymous source said, "as long as their Alibaba caves (plundered mines and oil fields) are safe, the tyrant

⁸ A. Milton Abote, 'Notes on Concealment of Genocide in Uganda', Uganda People's Congress, 1990, available from <http://www.upcparty.net/obote/genocide.htm>, accessed on 30/05/12.

⁹ Abdu Basajabaka Kawalya, 'Uganda', *eNotes*, 2012, available from <http://enotes.com/uganda-reference/uganda>, accessed on 30/05/2012.

(Yoweri Museveni) can kill and kill till he gets dizzy”.¹⁰ It’s true but. The western powers only care about their country’s economic and political interests. The people’s needs come second.

Alix: Do you think that you effectively communicated this in your presentation? That Uganda’s Government has failed to provide for the people?

Lily: Well, I certainly addressed the topic. I just hope that I didn’t use overly technical language. What do you think about the language used in the presentation?

Alix: I think that the points you made are clear.¹¹

Lily: When I was compiling the information in my presentation, I tried to simplify it as much as possible, so that it would be more accessible to a wider audience.

Alix: Well, I found your presentation to be compelling. I think you did a great job at analysing the media’s portrayal of the Ugandan

¹⁰ *Free Uganda*, ‘War Criminal Yoweri Museveni’, 2012, available from <http://freeuganda.com/?p=4665>, accessed on 3/06/12.

¹¹ Comments made by Alix about the presentation are reflective of the view expressed by those who were asked to provide feedback on it.

Genocide. The structure and layout of the presentation is basic, but successful presentations all use a basic story structure. The images also flow well with the text.

Lily: Thanks Alix. I don't know whether you have given it much thought, but do you think Bradley Campbell's theory of genocide can be applied to the Ugandan Genocide? He suggests that genocide is a method of social control, and that it belongs to a part of social life that incorporates all aspects of society that are used to control and manipulate.¹² He also asserts that cultural distance must be present between the groups involved, which creates unequal statuses between the groups and causes them to fight and destroy each other.¹³ So, I looked at the history of genocide in Uganda, and I think that the social theory can be adapted, as the genocide began from conflicts between Ugandan ethnic groups.

Alix: I think that Campbell's theory can relate to most genocide's, especially the Ugandan Genocide, which you convey well in your presentation. What really stirred me in your presentation was the information about the "protection" camps.¹⁴ Do you think that the

¹² Bradley Campbell, 'Genocide as Social Control,' *Sociological Theory*, vol. 27, no. 2, 2009, p.158.

¹³ Campbell, 'Genocide as Social Control', 2009.

¹⁴ Patrick Wegner, 'A Genocide in Northern Uganda?- The 'Protected Camps' Policy of 1999 to 2006', *Justice in Conflict*, 2012, available from

“protection” camps will be dismantled in the near future? If only the international community had a better awareness of the camps, like the invisible children.

Lily: The “protection” camps in northern Uganda were an unexpected finding. I had no idea that the Acholi population had been forcibly moved to concentration camps. Apparently, those people who refused to leave were subjected to beatings or random shellings of their village.¹⁵

Alix: It’s disturbing to know that the soldiers, who tested HIV positive, are posted to the camps with the mission to wreck maximum havoc on the female inmates.¹⁶ Why hasn’t the world arrested Museveni for these heinous crimes?

Lily: It is obvious that Museveni invited the International Crime Court to investigate the Ugandan Genocide, but carefully steered them in the direction of the LRA and away from the government.

<http://justiceinconflict.org/2012/04/09/a-genocide-in-northern-uganda-the-protected-camps-policy-of-1999-to-2006/>, accessed on 3/06/12.

The “protection” camps were established by the Ugandan Government when they failed to beat the LRA, they moved the Acholi population to the camps to protect them from LRA raids.

¹⁵ Wegner, ‘A Genocide in Northern Uganda?- The ‘Protected Camps’ Policy of 1999 to 2006’, 2012.

¹⁶ Abote, ‘Notes on Concealment of Genocide in Uganda,’ 1990.

The International Criminal Court has actually listed Joseph Kony, as the world's most-wanted war criminal.¹⁷

Alix: I'm surprised the Ugandan government has not captured Kony yet, if he is the world's most-wanted war criminal?

Lily: I know, but Kony has changed his tactics, and moves in small groups in dense jungle. This has made it very difficult for the Ugandan army to arrest him. He has also instructed the LRA to not use mobile technology, which means that no one can track him.

Alix: Do you think that the United States Army will remain in Uganda for much longer?¹⁸

Lily: Honestly, I don't think they will. Kony is old news now. The hype has died down. Nobody is pressuring the government anymore, due to the criticism that the Kony video received about

¹⁷ Beth Rowen, 'The World's Most-Wanted Fugitives,' *Information Please Database*, 2007, available from <http://www.infoplease.com/world/statistics/most-wanted-fugitives.html>, accessed on 3/06/12.

The International Criminal Court was created in 2002 to try those accused of war crimes, genocide, crimes of aggression, and crimes against humanity.

¹⁸ Agnes Asiimwe, 'US forces arrive to hunt for Joseph Kony', *New African*, 2012, vol.513, p.42.

In 2011, US President, Barack Obama announced that he had sent a team of US combat troops to Uganda to "take Kony out of the war zone".

its portrayal of the conflict in Uganda. No one knows what to believe.

Alix: What were the critics saying?

Lily: People pointed out that the video did not inform the audience accurately and fairly about the Ugandan Genocide. It is not until halfway through the film that the audience find out that the LRA are no longer in Uganda. Since, the audience were led to believe that the LRA are still fighting in Uganda, the Invisible Children Organisation were accused of misinforming the international community. People also accused the organisation of spending millions of dollars on officer salaries, film-making costs and travel, as opposed to on-the-ground programs to help rebuild the lives of the people traumatised by the conflict.¹⁹ Some people even claimed the 'Kony 2012' campaign was a scam.²⁰

Alix: What did Ugandans think about the Kony video?

¹⁹ New York Times, 'Lord's Resistance Army,' 2012.

²⁰ Zoe Fox, 'Kony 2012: Is the Viral Campaign a Scam?', Mashable US and World, 2012, available from <http://mashable.com/2012/03/08/kony-2012-scam/>, accessed on 3/06/12.

Lily: Those who watched the film supported the film's message of stopping Kony, but took offence at how the message was delivered from a western perspective rather than a Ugandan perspective.

Alix: Lily, I have actually got to run to class. I didn't think we would get so involved in this discussion. I am actually considering researching this topic when I get home. What area of the topic do you think deserves further investigation?

Lily: Look up the role the Ugandan Army has had in perpetuating the Ugandan Genocide. I think you will find some disturbing facts about the "protection" camps.

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