ETHICAL IMAGERY

Communication & The Dangers of a Single Story

Presented by: Gaju Karekezi
Objectives

1. Introduction to the “Dangers of a Single Story”

2. Present complexities of creating appealing and effective communication materials that aims to address social issues e.g. determinants of health such as poverty, food insecurity etc.

3. Present an example of an alternative approach organization’s can use to create ethical and effective images and communication tools
The Danger of a Single Story

“My roommate had a single story of Africa, a single story of catastrophe. In this single story there was no possibility of Africans being similar to her in anyway, no possibility of feelings more complex than pity, no possibility of a connection as human equals…”

“After I had spent a few years in the US I began to understand my roommate’s response to me. If I had not grown-up in Nigeria, and if all I knew about Africa were from popular images, I too would think that Africa was the place of beautiful landscapes, beautiful animals, and incomprehensible people fighting senseless wars, dying of poverty and aids, unable to speak for themselves and waiting to be saved by a kind white foreigner”

Chimamanda Ngozi-Adichie, [TEDtalks](https://www.ted.com), 2009
Controversial Advocacy & Fundraising Campaigns

CBC The Current
(Nov 26, 2012)

Radiator-Aid: Norwegian aid organization spoofs charities that stereotype Africa

16:10 - 16:53 mins

Kony 2012, Invisible Children

• Images & campaigns aim to appeal to audience’s sympathy & empathy.
• But can:
  • perpetuate stereotypes that misrepresent people in the global South or those most vulnerable & marginalized in our communities (ACIC, 2012)
  • perpetuate perceptions of Northern superiority
“The Pornography of Poverty”

Advantages
- Calls attention to real needs
- Builds awareness & mobilizes for action
- Effectiveness – don’t have time to reframe campaign when competing with limited $$

Disadvantages
- Undermines dignity & fueling racism
- Perpetuates destructive myths about global inequities
- Contributes to a sense of hopelessness

These competing values and perspectives create value conflicts within civil society organizations and individuals who work with populations who are in crisis or marginalized.

CCIC “Focus on Ethics: Addressing Tensions in Choosing Fundraising Images”
http://www.ccic.ca/_files/en/what_we_do/ethics_focus_e.pdf
Considerations When Using Images

Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC)
‘Code of Ethics: Guide to communication and fundraising activities’ – Article S6.4

“S6.4 The Organization shall ensure that images and text included in all communications to the public:

a. respect the dignity and rights of the individuals portrayed and their way of life;

b. are accurate, balanced, truthful and representative of reality and do not generalize and mask the diversity of situations;

c. portray local communities as active agents in their own development process and do not fuel prejudice or foster a sense of Northern superiority; and

d. encourage a sense of interconnectedness and interdependence between the Canadian public and the people shown in the image or discussed in the text.”

CCIC Code of Ethics & Operational Standards
http://www.ccic.ca/_files/en/about/001_code_ethics_operational_standards_e.pdf
Considerations When Using Images

• Different approaches to fundraising that respect values such as dignity and sustainability can be more effective

• Janice Nathanson proposed framing issues of inequity and fundraising appeals through the concept of “global citizenship”:
  • recognize connections between the global and the local;
  • see themselves as involved and able;
  • access and reflect critically on a diverse range of views and information;
  • participate in public dialogue and decision-making; take action to address the key challenges of our day

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Considerations When Using Images

**Framing theory** is suggested as a means to guide communication materials.

Framing theory posits that the:

1. “The more central the beliefs, values, and ideas associated with a frame are to an audience’s, the more likely it is that people will be mobilized by the message”

2. “The more an issue is framed or resonates with the personal, everyday experience of an audience, the more likely it is you can mobilize an audience”

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Considerations When Using Images

Framing Theory
- Personal relevance
  - sense of linkages, interdependencies, common destinies
- Social and political context
  - understanding that a social problem is related to a wider political context
- Self-efficacy
  - “I can make a difference”
- Response efficacy
  - “Development programming makes a difference”
- Opportunities for engagement
  - “What can I do?”
- A solutions-oriented approach.

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So What Does an Ethical Campaign Look Like?

There is no right answer

Critical elements:

1. Provide **context**
2. Think about what the overall impact of your communications package (images, text documents etc.) has on your audience?
3. Reflect on how your communication package addresses issues embedded in the Code of Ethics?
   - i.e. **respect, truthfulness, integrity, equality & partnership, and sustainability**

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So What Does an Ethical Campaign Look Like?

• **Respect**
  • Are images respecting the dignity of the people portrayed and encouraging respect for their way of life?

• **Truthfulness**
  • Are the images and messages accurate, balanced and representative of reality, and therefore truthful?

• **Integrity**
  • Is “what we show” the same as “what we know” about life in the South, so that we are acting with integrity?

• **Equality & Partnership**
  • Are we supporting or undermining our work in partnership? Are we promoting or discouraging equality between women and men?

• **Sustainability**
  • Are we building support for long-term sustainable development?
  • Are local people being shown as active agents of their own development or as passive recipients, dependent on others?

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Objectives Revisited

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Resources

1. CCIC Code of Ethics & Operational Standards
   http://www.ccic.ca/_files/en/about/001_code_ethics_operational_standards_e.pdf

2. CCIC Guidance Document to the Code of Ethics and Operational Standards
   http://www.ccic.ca/what_we_do/ethics_guidance_document/index_e.php

3. CCIC “Focus on Ethics: Addressing Tensions in Choosing Fundraising Images”
   http://www.ccic.ca/_files/en/what_we_do/ethics_focus_e.pdf

4. BCIC “The Rise in Development Porn”
   http://bccic.ca/rise-development-porn

5. ACIC “Ethical Images: The South through the Northern Eye”
   http://www.acic-caci.org/storage/EthicalImages_Exhibition_small.pdf

6. BBC. “Africa image harming aid effort, says charity Oxfam”
   http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-20842827