

# AFRICA: The Legacy of Cecil Rhodes' Anglo-American Empire

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*“Click this Button or African children will die”: How the “Kony 2012” video drafted a Facebook army to support the militarization of Africa”*

In 1877 the British Empire was at the height of its glory, the Spanish Empire would soon collapse, and a young Oxford student named Cecil Rhodes was gripped by a sudden religious vision. Rhodes scrawled out a manifesto. In it, he called for an “Anglo-American Empire” that would begin in the heart of Africa and spread out to conquer the known world.

“Africa is still lying ready for us,” he wrote. “It is our duty to take it. It is our duty to seize every opportunity of acquiring more territory and we should keep this one idea steadily before our eyes—that more territory simply means more of the Anglo-Saxon race; more of the best, the most human, most honorable race the world possesses.”

Rhodes went on to found the DeBeers diamond cartel and devote his company’s vast wealth to the colonial project in Africa. He couldn’t have known that, just over a century later, a new invention called the Internet would be tweaking his message, smoothing out his more inflammatory language, and sending his ideas around the globe through YouTube and Facebook. Nor would he ever have imagined that the first black president of the United States would be the one to carry his vision to its ultimate conclusion, under the guise of “humanitarian intervention.”

1. Fast-forward to March of 2012, when the non-profit “TRI” launched an online video called “Kony 2012.” Filled with lightning cuts, footage of battle-scarred African children, and tearful appeals to emotion, the movie rallies its viewers around a single goal: stopping the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and its leader Joseph Kony. With the help of the U.S. military, of course. And Oprah Winfrey.

At first glance, that’s not such a bad idea. After all, the Lord’s Resistance Army has kidnapped perhaps thousands of Ugandan children and forced them into their militia in their bid to topple the Ugandan government. The fact that the movie ignores, however, is that Uganda’s government, and its U.S.-backed leader, Yoweri Museveni, doesn’t appear to have a much better record when it comes to human rights.

After all, Museveni was recruiting child soldiers to serve in the Ugandan military before the LRA unleashed its guerrilla war against the government. His success is probably what inspired Kony to take up the same tactics. So why does “Kony 2012” try to pin the blame squarely on the LRA for a war in neither side seems to be a friend of the Ugandan people?

It's because Museveni is a willing tool of U.S. foreign policy. His troops are helping the Obama administration back up an impotent government in Somalia, a regime so mistrusted by its people that it has no power outside of Mogadishu. Because Museveni plays ball with the United States, he is given a free pass, just like Ethiopia's Zenawi, to commit human rights abuses. Meanwhile, African leaders who try to pursue an independent economic policy like Sudan's Al-Bashir and Libya's now-dead Gadhafi are rewarded with NATO bombs and arrest warrants by the International Criminal Court.

"Kony 2012" is a crafty piece of propaganda. It happens to have been released at just the right moment in history. The movie's narrator warns "this movie will expire at the end of 2012." Of course, it's just a coincidence that Obama is running for re-election this year. It's also a coincidence that the "Kony 2012" signs the group has created to publicize their campaign are the same color as Shepard Fairey's iconic "Hope" posters that swept Obama into office. The camera often makes shy glances towards shots of the "Kony" and "Obama" posters next to one another. The message is clear: elect one man and you will defeat the other.

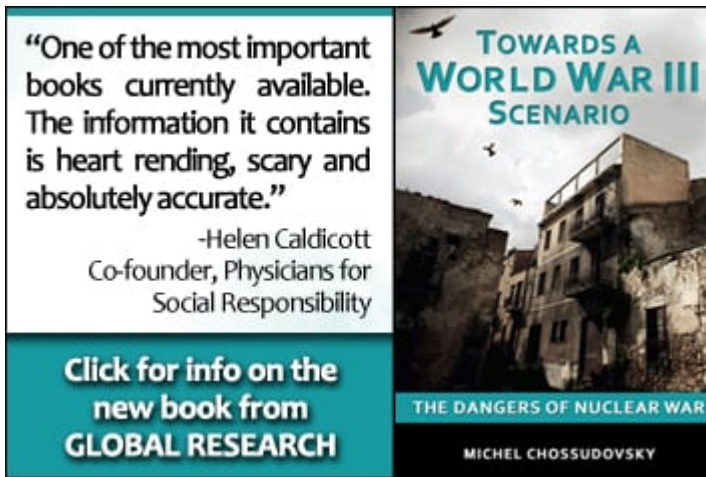
Never before has subliminal programming been so blatant. If the makers of the film are truly concerned about stopping violence in Africa, they might want to question the film's premise—that the 100 U.S. Special Forces Obama sent to Uganda in October of last year are actually there to fight the LRA. After all, according to the UN, the Ugandan military has whittled the LRA down to a mere 200 fighters. With only two guerrillas for every special ops soldier, you would think the war would have been over in a weekend.

Another fact the film neglects to mention is that Uganda's government announced the discovery of large oil deposits in the northern part of the country last spring. Of course, this is probably a coincidence and has nothing to do with Obama's decision to send special forces to Uganda several months later, despite the fact that the LRA has shifted their operations to the neighboring Congo.

According to the makers of the film, rather than questioning the true motive of sending troops to Africa, we should use whatever means necessary to pressure the U.S. to beef up its military presence in the region. To do this, the group has hijacked the language and imagery of the anti-globalization movement. Dropping banners, wheatpasting posters at night, holding rock concerts, and raising your fist in the air all become "subversive" ways to fight for escalating our military presence in Uganda.

Cecil Rhodes would be smiling in his grave.

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