

This essay will examine the subject of poverty porn/charity porn from the point of the Marxist in the 21st century. The following will critically explore the social subject that poverty porn has become, how media has used the 'Tug of the heart strings' to create a widespread guilt in the public eye, the social discourse of the capitalisation within the subject of charity porn. An explanation of how poverty porn/charity porn has become a social norm for today's society and how the media have used their power to do this. The Dependency Theory will be used to create a further understanding of how poverty porn was created from the seed of Marxism, in order to elaborate on what would seem to be a complex subject can be simplified. An in-depth knowledge of how companies use donations to charities as tax breaks and will unravel the deception of donating to Charities and the truth behind how much the charities receive.

Poverty/charity porn can be seen on a daily basis when either watching the television (YouTube, Live Aid Concert Video 1985), scrolling through your Facebook feed(Mair Curie, Facebook(2020) , or even listening to the radio. Adverts asking for donations towards the plight of a starving country, a video of a small unnourished child carrying an empty water bottle miles through a dusty track to a muddy pool of water, as seen in the videos shown in the Live Aid concert in 1985 (BBC On This Day, Live Aid Concert,(1985). The concert was created by Sir Bob Geldof to raise funds and to bring the plight of the Ethiopian famine to the fore front of the world. This was a live broad cast in the UK as well as in the JFK Stadium in Philadelphia (BBC On This Day, Live Aid Concert, (1985) . First of its kind, not only a concert that was opened by British Royalty, Prince Charles and Princess Diana (Live Aid, Princess Diana (1985), but also the support from the music industry. At the time it was thought of as groundbreaking, heart breaking poverty forced into the homes of millions of people around the world. Princess Diana had always the intention of highlighting the atrocities in third world countries by, herself, manipulating the media to report on her trips to the starving millions or the mine fields of war (BBC (ND) Princess Diana Iconic Mine field Walk).

From the view point of a Marxist it could be argued that the celebrities, such as the British Monarchy and pop stars, as the bourgeoisie, having the power to manipulate the public with the force of fame and fortune to highlight the poor, starving African children (BBC On This Day, Live Aid Concert, (1985). The thought was that if this, supposedly, unknown famine was brought to the media in such a way that it sent the message of the plight in Africa of these starving people, then the public would donate their money to this charity, with the public, in their everyday financial struggles, feeling the overwhelming predicament of this third world countries tragic situation. An example of how of the mediation between the purity of the concept and the need for donation, funds, to run the charity.

The British public could be seen as the proletariat, the labour force of the British commonwealth, being manipulated to part with their hard earned wages by the headlining acts, the modern day bourgeoisie, that gave their time and voices in support of the 3rd world countries devastating situation (BBC On This Day, Live Aid Concert, (1985). It could be argued that both the charity and the charitable nation were being manipulated. Could it be argued that the artists were being manipulated by the African country. A Marxist viewpoint could explain that the government created this situation in Africa (Frank, A G (1969a). The over farming of the land owners, themselves being the bourgeoisie who had the means of production to create wealth in their country, and the starving people being the proletariat, being forced to dig for water in a heat ravaged land that has been raped of its nutrients by the landowners greed for commodities. Karl Marx believed that the history of humanity, was indeed, economic in which the wealthy countries in the global north pillaging their less fortunate neighbours in the global south (Draper H, (1977)).

Another viewpoint could be used to explain how the 'Third world country', such as Africa, became 3rd world. The Dependency Theory, which has been linked with the Marxist mentality, could be used as a way to understand how a country could deplete its stores, ravage its lands with no vision for the future generations thus remoulding its status of being a third world country (Frank, A G (1969a). With the influence of major countries in the Western world, such as the USA, has this created an unequal playing field of commodity broking by exploiting the cheaper work force of such 3rd world countries.

A third World country status, as defined by the Borgen Project.org:

‘The first world refers to the countries that are more developed and industrialized societies; in other words, capitalist societies that aligned with the U.S. and NATO during the Cold War. This includes North America, Japan, Western Europe and Australia (Williams S, March 2018)’.

It could be argued that the 1st World Countries even stretch their control, as the bourgeoisie over the globe, in deciding which country has what status. The over farming in third world countries, due to the increased demand, has created a surplus and so putting this country into poverty, an increase demand to supply (Williams S, March 2018). With the creation of television programmes media rising the plight and poverty of these countries (BBC On This Day, Live Aid Concert, (1985), is this an attempt by the western countries to be more ethical in an attempt to gain the help of the general public, or is it the realism of the consequences of their actions that has become apparent and they are trying to repent for the sins of gluttony? Have these controlling countries finally found that in order to win over the people they need to show compassion and empathy towards the countries they have helped demise? The ruling western countries seem to be looking for repentment for the situations they have created within their demand for control of production in these less powerful countries. With the colonies being taken back to be controlled by their own governments the western power houses have now realised that in order to gain back the power in commodities they must in fact gain back the people’s trust. In doing this they have to show in a general way, covering as much of the population as possible in the most cost-effective way, and so creating the poverty porn productions that can be seen on the television, social media and advertisements worldwide.

Andre Gunder Frank description of the way the world can be seen through a Marxist lens is:

“A whole chain of metropolises and satellites, which runs from the world metropolis down to the hacienda or rural merchant who are satellites of the local commercial metropolitan centre but who in their turn have peasants as their satellites (Frank, AG(1969a))”.

What are the main causes of the general public wanting to make charitable donations, or carry out philanthropic acts? Could it be argued that religion is the main cause of philanthropy? Most religions promote being charitable in some way or another, how being a good christian by giving to the poor (The New Testament). The older generation of society, which have mainly grown up in a religious manner, have values that are religiously based and so are the possible target demographic for such media fishing such as Children In need, Comic relief and the adverts with the starving children in Africa.

One prime example of such teachings is in the New Testament:

“Corinthians 13:13

13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity (The New Testament)”.

This is a prime example of how religion has given faithful followers a sense of false agency. How devoted Christians carrying out charitable work within their church believes they are following the words of God and yet they are being manipulated by their own beliefs of being charitable. Marx felt that the working class were bombarded with society enough and that religion would just be another way of blinding them from the truth of their capabilities and societal requirements (Draper H, p.g152,1977). Karl Marx was not a believer of religion and would sneer at the Christian belief of charity. He wrote “and the proletariat.... needs its courage, its self-reliance, its pride and its sense of independence more than its bread (Draper H, p.g152,1977)”.

With the average age of a regular church attendee as 61 and with 59% (Gov.UK (2015) of the general population of the United Kingdom stating they are Christian, according to the National Statistics censor in 2011. But there has also been an a rise of 3% of the younger populations attendance at church from 2001 to 2011 (Average Age of Churchgoers now 61(Telegraph, 2010).

But yet it was reported in May 2018 that in fact the average age of a people donating to charities are within the ages of 35 to 53, giving an average of £265 ,(Oldest age group ‘does not give the most to charity’ *Third Sector* (May2018). But in this research it also showed that there is an increase in the younger population stating that they would donate more to charities in the up coming year, Could this be a prime example of how the charity porn viewed in the media is taking a hold of the younger population? Barclays Bank PLC have carried out research into how global companies can increase the donations to such charities in a report titled “ The Future of giving “detailing how the media play such a vital role in the plight of charitable donations

from the general public, in a cashless society (Barclays Bank PLC, *The Future of Giving*, (2019). They have also discovered that in fact the younger population donate more than the older generation, but could this be due to the accessibility of the charities online?

With a generation of smart phone users growing up with these devices now more than just a phone, Facebook have created an easy to use, step by step guide to creating a “Charitable Giving page” enabling any Facebook user to create an easy to use donations page.

Could this be the reason why young people donate more than the older generation, as it is at their fingertips. The page even uses very empowering vocabulary such as “Build Powerful tools that improve people’s lives” (Facebook (2020) *Social Good*) As this shows that even the social media are trying to manipulate the public with “Charity Porn”, with the use of such powerful language. Facebook even give examples of how to reach the correct market, giving ideas on wording as well as how to create the right advert for business and charities alike Facebook (2020) *Success Stories*)

Comic Relief is another example of how the media are used to highlight the charity and make it easier for the every day person to feel that there is always someone else worse off than they and so creating a heightened sense of giving for the public to donate towards these charities. Stories are given of children in desperate need of funds for life saving equipment or medical supplies, but as painful as it is to think, the British public are being manipulated, this is the purpose of such programmes and advertisements. In 2019 the total raised by the public of the UK was £60 million!(*Comic Relief Annual Report and Accounts 2017/18*(2019), But how ethical is the charity It was exposed in 2013 through a Panorama Investigates programme that in fact the charity has invest large sums of donations into Tabaco (Lawn D, 2013).. Charities have to be run as a business and yet the public are not openly explained the ways these charities run; they are blindly guided into the belief that all monies donated will be sent direct to the advertised needy. And so it could be argued that every charity has capitalist Marxist at the helm of the charity, in order to maintain its natural course of increasing its capital growth of the donations received. Therefore, could it be argued that these companies, charities, can be viewed as the bourgeoisie, manipulating the proletariat society of religious followers abiding by their faith.

In conclusion charity porn has been used in the modern world as a way to manipulate not just the mass general public but the big organisations and business that control the economy of the modern world. Creating a charity into a business, investing in shares and the economic future of the need for donations from the everyday working person. It would also seem to be that the more media aware generation donate to charities than the older generation. It could be argued that due to the way that the charities now advertise their plight on social media, creating easier pathways for the smart phone user to donate during their working day creates more funds for the charity. Yet the older generation in the UK, having knowledge of their disposable incomes, donate in what could be seen as an old-fashioned way of a direct debit, instead of being hypnotised into donating off the cuff on their lunch breaks. It would seem that charities are now seen and run as a business, with the intent to make the most from the donations given to them. And with the help of the UK government giving tax breaks to larger companies, when they donate to a charity the company does not pay tax on that income, and so this then encourages the companies to donate. It also enforces their media campaigns to highlight that they are caring companies, looking to the future and trying to give a helping hand to the less off, impoverished, people in society. It has been concluded that charitable donations from the younger, smart phone, generation is indeed greater than the over 55's (Gov.UK (2015)) but could be argued that this type of donations are not regular and more sporadic and that religion could be one way to explain the "need" to donate as a good Christian would do. The older generation donate on a regular basis and so they have a clear conscious that they are being charitable in a regular way, (Oldest age group 'does not give the most to charity' *Third Sector* (May 2018)). Social media have transformed the way that the public are shown poverty/charity porn and that it has indeed become a social norm. With social media daily being used and used to promote an easier pathway to users to donate to charity it could be argued that the general public have now "Charity fatigue" and that in fact they do not donate to charities as much as they see the adverts.

The world of economics was created with the capital socialist in mind and the Marxist socialist has been manipulating the public. But it could also be argued that due to the saturation of social media of charities that too many people just scroll on past without even thinking about the plight of such third world countries. Schools have now also increased their “community giving, charity support” by becoming more inclusive of the charities plight for donations. The charities have indeed seen the gap in the market and so have made days, like “Children in Need” days, more accessible to the schools to involve the children and their families to raise funds for them (BBC Children In Need 2018). With the investigation carried out by the BBC Panorama with regard to where the money raised by Comic relief. It was found that this charity has been running as a business and had investigated the allegations that the money raised was being invested in to tabaco shares, with the reasoning that the money donated needed to work as hard as possible for the people it was intended for. Live Aids final amount raised was £40 million, 20 million purchased food and 20 million was invested in long term development for the African countries and so the monies that have been raised are being sent to the intended but not in the same way the public had been led to believe Lawn, D (2013).

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