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Live-Tweeting and Distant Suffering: Nicholas Kristof as Global Savior

In his forward to the American edition of Somaly Mam's *The Road of Lost Innocence*, Nicholas Kristof celebrates the Cambodian activist and sex-trafficking survivor for embodying "the resilience, courage, and nobility of the human spirit."¹ Kristof, a journalist for *The New York Times*, was among Mam's most enthusiastic champions until an article published in *Newsweek* in 2014 threw the veracity of her testimony into doubt.² In his writing, Kristof has played a significant role in defining sex trafficking on the global stage—determining its operational parameters, identifying the people it involves, and proposing action to be taken in response. Kristof's mediation has taken several forms. In addition to writing the forward for Mam's book, he has penned a number of editorial pieces about sex trafficking and violence toward women in Cambodia and elsewhere. He created, with his wife and partner, Sheryl WuDunn, the *Half the Sky* movement (HTSM), a "trans-media project" they claim will "ignite the change needed to put an end to the oppression of women and girls worldwide, the defining issue of our time."³ Kristof also documented in a *New York Times* column his interactions with two Cambodian sex workers whose freedom he purchased in 2004. And in 2011, he live-tweeted a brothel raid orchestrated by Mam, which we might assume is the same raid featured in the Cambodia segment of the *Half the Sky* film.

Kristof's reporting has shined a light on exploitation and gendered violence in Cambodia and has helped to create Somaly Mam's international persona. By repeatedly telling emotional stories and proffering market-based solutions—and by placing himself at the center of these stories—Kristof has also redefined himself as a celebrity journalist: "He is the news story: Kristof is visiting, Kristof is doing something."⁴ As a celebrity journalist, Kristof's actions reproduce first those of the celebrity humanitarian, who performs the moral disposition that is assumed to already exist in the public and that is enabled by, or enacted in, the celebrity's passionate (and putatively authentic) call, and second those of the journalist, whose role is "to bring distant suffering close to home and invite us to respond to it."⁵ At the intersection of celebrity journalism and the global rescue industry, Kristof's reporting on sex trafficking in Cambodia is not only exemplary of the ethical limitations of both, but also reveals the extent to which the two feed each other in a perpetual cycle of crisis and intervention in which the tenets of journalistic deontology are subordinate to the lure of manufactured urgency.

This essay uses Kristof's reporting on sex trafficking in Cambodia to examine a set of interrelated debates surrounding the global rescue industry and to highlight the ways in which this industry is inflected by race relations, (social) media representations, and the

global distribution of labor and aid. These debates center on the conditions under which sex trafficking is produced, circulated, and accepted as a social phenomenon demanding humanitarian intervention; on the framing of sex trafficking in Cambodia not as part of the larger economic and political problem of labor migration in the region, but as a gendered phenomenon of exploitation requiring a moral (and often “militarized”) response; on the entanglement of ethics and politics behind *humanitarian reason* and the disruption, police violence, and discrimination that often accompany rescue interventions; finally, on the problem of how knowledge of sex trafficking, and sex work more generally, is constructed and mediated by outside authorities, including academics, social workers, and journalists, and to what end.⁶

I first situate Kristof’s narrative self-fashioning in the context of the neo-imperialist rescue fantasies his writing perpetuates. I then explore the intersections between Kristof’s writing and the various media he employs (i.e., online op-ed columns, print, film, interactive web design, and Twitter) and interrogate the effects of both on the audience interpellated in the name of action. I am interested here in the tensions created in Kristof’s texts, and in the 2011 live-tweeting episode in particular. Live-tweeting offers a different kind of mediation than other forms of mass communication, one that operates in a different temporal mode, interpellates a different kind of witness, and calls for a different kind of action. I explore the ways in which this episode suspends the implied witness somewhere between the immediacy of what Craig Calhoun calls the “emergency imaginary” and the physical and temporal remove of Luc Boltanski’s “distant suffering.”⁷ Boltanski’s work on morality, media, and the viability of humanitarianism provides a particularly useful lens through which to consider how Twitter as a medium for reporting endeavors, but ultimately fails, to reconcile the complex time/space-compassion/pity-action/observation nexus created in the spectacle of suffering. To assess the narrative realism the thread engenders and the moral agency it facilitates, I also draw on Lilie Chouliaraki’s “analytics of mediation,” a framework “that conceptualizes the news as an aesthetic practice with ethico-political implications.”⁸

In his writing, and particularly on Twitter, Kristof constructs and disseminates a set of claims about the truth of sex trafficking, presents himself as a transnational savior figure, and encourages the “ironic” participation of his witness, who is moved not to take part in a cosmopolitan morality centered on justice for the Other, but rather, to identify with the celebrity/savior figure and to contemplate their own narcissistic performance of solidarity.⁹ Given his prominence as a *New York Times* journalist, Kristof’s mediating role is indicative of the way sex trafficking and rescue are thought of in neoliberalism and points to a fundamental paradox at the heart of the rescue industry: the sex trafficking narrative serves less to eradicate sex trafficking than to perpetuate itself and the ongoing need for rescue.

The *Half the Sky* book begins its account of Kristof’s anti-trafficking activities in Cambodia as follows: “We became slave owners in the twenty-first century the old-fashioned way: We paid cash in exchange for two slave girls and a couple of receipts. The girls were then ours to do with as we liked.”¹⁰ Conjuring the “musty sepia photographs” of slavery with which Kristof opened his first column on the subject five years prior, the description lends an incongruent air of nostalgia to the narrative action.¹¹ Moreover, Kristof’s words encourage the reader to create their own “old fashioned,” “musty” image of the two frightened young women, their “eyes cast down in such indolent, seductive

modesty . . . that fills you with an unruly desire to know what [their] name[s are].”¹² Their names, Kristof tells us, are Srey Neth, “a giggly wisp of a teenager,” and Srey Momm, “so young and pitiable.”¹³ The description also gives reason to imagine the events that followed the purchase, when “the girls were . . . ours to do with as we liked;” it allows us to ask, if only momentarily: “How did the beauty of that hair, those eyes, beguile . . . ? How did that mouth kiss, to which desire curls up senseless as a smoke without fire?”¹⁴ If I evoke Benjamin’s discussion of David Octavius Hill’s *Newhaven Fishwife* here, it is not to suggest that acting “as we liked” entailed anything other than removing these young women from the brothels and returning them home. Rather, it is to underscore the interplay of desire and distance—temporal, but also cultural—in Kristof’s apprehension and narrative representation of Srey Neth and Srey Momm. But the desire communicated in Kristof’s framing is not directed toward the Other, but toward the Self, a subject position conceived in terms of the power relations underlying the Manichean allegory around which both texts—the book and the set of seven *New York Times* opinion pieces—are organized.¹⁵ At a few places, Kristof’s writing performs a “fetishistic disavowal” of his actions, voicing anxiety about the social and economic privilege that allows him to fight for others—but that also depends to some extent on their ongoing exploitation—while continuing to act according to that privilege and position.¹⁶ He declares his decision to buy two human beings “dreadfully unjournalistic” and acknowledges that such an act risks creating a market for more such purchases, as the women themselves become another item on the brothel’s menu of services, for example. He also insists, however, that his actions indicate that “progress is possible.”¹⁷

Kristof’s story in Cambodia centers on slave owners and slaves, and thus on power and powerlessness in a world where brown women from the Global South are sold and bought, in this instance, by a white man from the Global North. The contours of this world are themselves determined in similar terms: the lightness of Srey Neth’s skin and the darkness of Srey Momm’s; the violence and kindness exhibited by the brothel owners, who seem to care genuinely for the women they also manipulate and exploit; the aggressive—and laudatory, argues Kristof—response of the Bush regime and the complacency of “most Democrats, liberals and feminist groups.”¹⁸ The persistent use of this trope revives a form of neocolonial discourse the ideological function of which we can better understand in relation to the neoliberal world view and neo-imperialist practices embedded in Kristof’s humanitarian gestures.

Kristof’s humanitarianism is informed by his celebrity journalism and, as such, his writing focuses on “the outwardly visible and the spectacular, on special effects and sound bytes” and “avoids layered, substantive, and media-*unfriendly* investigation.”¹⁹ This is not to say that he fails to acknowledge the contradictions that also abound in this world he encounters. On the contrary, Kristof puzzles over the existence of benevolent brothel owners and women who do not wish to be rescued, and recognizes that the victim’s quest for justice can be compromised by social pressures to maintain one’s place in the family or community. These moments are relatively brief, however, and do little to counter the simplicity and sensationalism with which he, like many, presents the question of sex trafficking in Cambodia: “At its worst, the trafficking system takes innocent village girls, often sold by relatives or kidnapped by neighbors, imprisons them in brothels to be raped repeatedly and leaves them dead of AIDS by their early 20s—and yet there is far less

international effort to save these children than to, say, save the Brazilian rain forest.”²⁰ I do not wish to suggest that the exploitation of women for the purposes of sexual labor does not exist in Cambodia, or that some young women work in the sex industry against their will.²¹ Just as not all women in sex work are trafficked, neither has none of them been deceived, abused, or imprisoned. Nevertheless, it is difficult to ignore the luridness of this kind of writing, which deploys gendered and racialized stereotypes in the construction of faraway “humanitarian disasters” that then justify—and for Kristof, morally *demand*—the white Westerner’s intervention.²²

For Teju Cole, Africa has for too long been the “the backdrop for white fantasies of conquest and heroism,” and Kristof’s endeavors there, which demonstrate little awareness of the local specificities that have shaped the “disasters” to which he responds, are no different.²³ Asia, and specifically colonial Indochina, has also historically served as an “elaborate fiction,” a “phantasmatic” screen onto which the colonizer projects his desires, fears, and sense of ethnic and cultural superiority.²⁴ The paternalism informing these racialized projections is given full expression in campaigns against sex trafficking, particularly in the Global South. In her discussion of the convergence of three dominant trends in such campaigns—modern slavery, abolitionist feminism, and celebrity humanitarianism—Kemala Kempadoo speaks of the twenty-first-century return of white supremacy, which, “when steeped in neoliberalism . . . can express a longing for the presence of, or a desire to help, the Other [without] unsettl[ing] unequal racialized relations of power.”²⁵ In both missions—the civilizing and the rescue—benevolence is coded white.

Recent scholarship has further demonstrated that suggestive imagery and explicitly gendered tropes in narrative and visual representations not only collapse sex work and trafficking onto the universalized form of the female victim, but also commodify and immobilize sex workers’ bodies, undermining their economic agency. In her assessment of the visual language of antitrafficking campaigns, Rutvica Andrijasevic argues that certain techniques—grainy film, detachment and visual elongation of body parts, tropes of woman as doll—create gendered stereotypes that communicate eroticized passivity and victimization. These stereotypes are then deployed in narratives that equate labor migration with sexual slavery, thereby “controlling women’s mobility and sexuality,” excluding them from the labor market, and “confm[ing them] within the highly disabling symbolic register of ‘Woman’ so as to maintain an imaginary social order.”²⁶ Such campaigns, in the name of freeing sex slaves, consistently fail to recognize the complex situations that lead women to coerced and voluntary sex work. For her part, Claudia Cojocararu underscores the paradox of this “secondary exploitation” in art and activism, noting that the circulation of erotic or obscene images is “controlled when sex workers make a living from it, but not when artists, the media, or service providers are profiting.”²⁷

In Kristof’s descriptions of abandoned women and children in Cambodia, the racialized and gendered imagery perpetuates a white neocolonialist rescue fantasy wherein the Global South figures as an aberrant space of the backwards Other lacking the maturity and capacity to invest in its own future. They also reflect, and are to a certain extent legitimized by, the American State Department’s presentation of human trafficking. The annual Trafficking in Persons report has, since 2010, listed Cambodia as a Tier 2 or Tier 2 watchlist country, which indicates that it is not yet fully compliant with the minimum

anti-trafficking standards. At the same time, the 2011 country narrative for Cambodia insists upon widespread corruption as an impediment to antitrafficking initiatives. It further notes that the government has been unable to offer effective or consistent assistance to trafficked persons and has “failed to make efforts to prevent the trafficking of Cambodian migrant workers or to reduce significant local demand for commercial sex acts.” Corruption, insufficient prevention, and ineffective protection remain themes in the 2018 report on Cambodia’s progress.²⁸

In mobilizing such a narrative, Kristof places himself and any willing reader in the position of the benevolent parent performing the work of care Cambodian men and women are unable or unwilling to do. While neither Srey Neth’s nor Srey Momm’s family is portrayed as abusive, Srey Neth’s older female cousin convinced Srey Neth to sell her virginity for money the family needed and arranged the transaction when the teenager agreed.²⁹ The others are shown to be selfish and ignorant, robbing Srey Neth of the small grocery business Kristof funded after purchasing her freedom and setting her back down the path toward sex work before she was rescued again by another NGO: “Srey Neth’s parents and older brothers and sisters had a hard time understanding why they should go hungry when their sister had a store full of food . . . ‘It was our fault,’ her father told me looking ashamed.”³⁰ Kristof’s description of his interactions with the two women and their families is crafted in neutral terms. It nevertheless constructs an infantilizing portrait of contemporary rural Cambodia, echoing the paternalist discourses of colonialism and justifying intervention—here Kristof’s decision to “rescue” Srey Neth and Srey Momm by buying them.

As Abdul R. JanMohamed has shown, such seemingly neutral observations are extended allegorically and metonymically in the neo-imperialist context, transforming differences of physical attribute or, I would add, behavior and mindset “into moral and even metaphysical difference.”³¹ Like colonialist literature, and recalling the heroic and burdensome “mission” it sustained, narrative constructions like Kristof’s offer “an exploration and a representation of a world at the boundaries of ‘civilization,’ a world that has not (yet) been domesticated by European signification or codified in detail by its ideology.”³² The goal of a transnational savior like Kristof is thus not simply to rescue women and children from the barbarisms surrounding them, but to domesticate this still-uncivilized people. Whereas during the colonial period asserting dominance involved a display of military superiority, in the neo-imperialist context in which Kristof and his reporting circulate, in what JanMohamed refers to as “the hegemonic phase,” the subjugation of the Other entails imposing moral values and promoting neoliberal economic ideals.³³

In many ways, Kristof’s mission to save Cambodian women and girls is a reproduction of the overt and covert aims of colonialism. Speaking a language of aid—of helping the Other, of liberating and rehabilitating her, and of bringing an end to her violent mistreatment—Kristof promotes the industries that facilitate the extraction of the labor resources embodied by the Other. In proffering his ideal solution for fighting poverty in the developing world via the insertion of women into the work force, as micro-entrepreneurs like Srey Neth or, more often, as laborers in the service and garment industries, he turns a blind eye to the avowed gender exploitation upon which these industries depend: “The economic explosion of Asia was, in large part, an outgrowth of

the economic empowerment of women. ‘They have smaller fingers, so they’re better at stitching,’ the manager of a purse factory explained to us. ‘They’re obedient and work harder than men,’ said the head of a toy factory. ‘And we can pay them less.’³⁴ Kristof and WuDunn go on to laud East Asia’s development strategy for increasing access to education across generations, postponing marriage and childbirth, and fostering independence and mobility among women. They fail to address, however, the possibility that women are the “linchpin” of this strategy because they can be overworked and underpaid.

In January 2009, the same year that *Half the Sky* was published, Kristof penned an opinion piece in which he claims that “sweatshops are a dream,” a heaven soaring above his oft-cited alternative—the nightmarish garbage dump, a “Dante-like vision of hell,” full of barefoot children and forlorn vermin.³⁵ This piece follows others, for example, “Two Cheers for Sweatshops” and “In Praise of the Malignant Sweatshop,” in proclaiming factory labor as the most effective means of fighting poverty in the developing world. Kristof’s defense of this particular manifestation of neoliberal capitalism trades on a jovial exoticization of Southeast Asia—“the food stand . . . offered . . . a hearty breakfast, if one didn’t mind the odd antenna left sticking in one’s teeth”—and portrays the “well-meaning American university students” who oppose sweatshops as naïve to question an economic logic in which profitability trumps livable wages for laborers.³⁶ The writing also displays a surprising level of cultural essentialism: “Nothing captures the difference in mind-set between East and West more than attitudes toward sweatshops.”³⁷ Finally, it occasionally links the development and exploitation of labor reserves in the Global South to colonial cash crops: “Africa desperately needs Western help in the form of schools, clinics and sweatshops. Oops, don’t spill your coffee.”³⁸

Kristof’s reporting on sex trafficking in Cambodia is a moral crusade to end the scourge of sexual slavery. And yet, his is a market-based solution, wherein micro-entrepreneurialism, the service sector, and the sweatshop are the best alternatives to sex work and the only real horizons for economic possibility in the region. His writing posits as a given the idea—contested by a number of scholars—that the current global governance structure can eliminate poverty and hardship without ever examining the ways in which privatization, outsourcing, and corporate monopolies perpetuate the very downward spiral Kristof claims they can reverse.³⁹ For Kristof, “sweatshops are only a symptom of poverty, not a cause.”⁴⁰ Despite the occasional admission that the labor is tedious and at times dangerous, Kristof elides the repeated labor abuse problems that have led to protests in Cambodia in recent years. Among the most troubling conditions cited in these disputes, we find sexual harassment, women workers fainting en masse, forced overtime, factories collapsing or catching fire, and deadly government crackdowns of wage protests.⁴¹ The widespread use of short-term contracts, day laborers, and outsourced home-based laborers facilitates the ever-increasing production demands placed on factory workers since those who complain or are unable to meet daily quotas are dismissed. In the preface to the Cambodia segment of the *Half the Sky* film, WuDunn explains sex work not by discussing the specifics of the country’s economic structure or history of colonization and genocide, but by lamenting that its young girls are “truly disposable.” It is estimated in the 2015 Human Rights Watch report on the garment industry in Cambodia that 90–92 percent of sweatshop workers are women. Given the title of the report, “Work Faster or Get Out,” it

is unclear how these sex workers become any less disposable once rescued and reintegrated into the global labor force.

Kristof's advocacy for sweatshops, despite the abuses and environmental degradation they perpetuate, mirrors a political shift worldwide from class-based pursuits of justice and the eradication of suffering in society toward a moralizing and depoliticized focus on the human condition, on easing suffering, and on managing the present with consumer-friendly initiatives.⁴² The effective dissemination of his message depends on a wide-ranging and carefully orchestrated media campaign that includes his *New York Times* pieces, his Twitter profile, and the *Half the Sky* trans-media project comprised of the book, the film, and a website. Of these, Twitter and the HTSM website offer the most salient examples of what Chouliaraki calls "the technologization of solidarity," in other words, the transfer of the moral imperative and the expression of solidarity to the digital realm, wherein acting becomes a matter of, for example, "liking" something on Facebook.⁴³ In the case of the website, which offers a Debordian collection of commodity-images through which the relations among actors and sufferers are mediated, engagement involves downloading songs donated by artists in support of the movement and sharing video and graphic content inspired by the stories told. Spectators are also encouraged to play the now-defunct Farmville-style Facebook and mobile games that educate women and children in India, Kenya, and Tanzania about pregnancy and family values, and that generate funds for antiviolence projects. Goods and capital for these projects are accumulated on a kind of interactive slot machine where rescuers are rewarded with bells and cheers as they amass books for the local school or mangoes to sell at the market. But one wonders about the psychology behind the game. The players are led to identify with avatars who reproduce the work of rescue until, as Laura Agustín insists, they tire of such work and close the app.⁴⁴ Are players meant to be motivated by learning and saving or entranced by mindless activity and the false sense of productivity? An imitation of an imitation, the game mimics the already-idealized phenomenon of rescue in the world—instantiated, for example, in the raid on a northern Cambodian brothel—which is itself a representation. Both facilitate the rescuing subject's illusory sense of proximity to and reconciliation with concrete suffering and the possibility of its elimination. Finally, in the case of Twitter, and specifically the live-tweeting of a brothel raid, engagement is reduced to the passive consumption of a spectacle with the only real outlet for action a re-tweet.

On November 7, 2011, Kristof accompanied Somaly Mam, "against his better judgment," he later says, on a brothel raid in Anlong Veng, a small northern Cambodian town near the Thai border.⁴⁵ In addition to filming the raid for the *Half the Sky* documentary, Kristof live-tweeted the events that unfolded between 3:50 p.m. and 9:29 p.m. that day, helping Mam to identify the situation at the brothel as an emergency requiring immediate intervention and to create of it a spectacle for public consumption. As with the reporting he did on his transactions in 2004 and in the *Half the Sky* narratives, but perhaps more explicitly in this brief media stunt, Kristof positions himself as a transnational savior, a hero literally risking his life to rescue imprisoned women of the Global South. Kristof's narratives about sex trafficking perform contradictory functions, at once bringing distant suffering closer and, by highlighting a perception of the world centered on static cultural differences, further distancing the individuals represented. On the one hand, these narratives "*nourish the imagination* of spectators," which, as Boltanski

has proposed, facilitates the emotional commitment required for action; they encourage spectators to stop “thinking of” sex trafficking as an abstract possibility in the world and start “thinking that” it is a real occurrence involving real women and girls.⁴⁶ Drawing on the work of Adam Smith and Adrian Piper, Boltanski argues that the ability to “imagine what is impossible” is vital to the formation of pity.⁴⁷ On the other hand, as we have seen, they reproduce a Manichean vision of the world: of the Global North and the Global South, the West and the rest, those who value and empower the women among them and those who continue to subject them to rape, genital mutilation, and other savage horrors. It is also important to reiterate here the unique form of mediation offered by live-tweeting, which facilitates access and temporal proximity, but which in this case also reinforces the gulf separating those who suffer from those who do not, offering no effective means for the latter to intervene on behalf of the former.

Twitter is a valuable tool for disseminating information in times of crisis, particularly during environmental disasters and political conflicts. As a tool of mediation, it excels at “putting *technical* immediacy—the high fidelity of transmission—at the service of *socio-cultural* immediacy—the sense of copresence with faraway others.”⁴⁸ It is also a strategic choice for the journalist wanting to make news out of something that might otherwise go unnoticed since the platform and format have facilitated a significant increase in the number and variety of stories being told at any one moment. A means to circumvent traditional arbiters, Twitter’s incorporation into mainstream news platforms carries with it a democratic potential to the extent that it features citizen input, redefining the news as a collaborative genre.⁴⁹ Kristof, of course, is not a collaborative citizen in this context, but an institutionalized journalist who is recognized as an official source and is tweeting in that capacity. This makes his Twitter thread less an example of democratic journalism than of “convergent journalism,” insofar as it can be understood “in terms of (increasing) cooperation and collaboration between formerly distinct media newsrooms and other parts of the modern media company.”⁵⁰ But precisely because the thread is integrated into *The New York Times* platform via Kristof’s role there, it avoids the “theatrical paradox of authenticity;” in other words, it succeeds in producing a raw and reflexive account of an urgent situation, one that connects his Twitter followers with the suffering Other on the other side of the planet, while also maintaining the credibility that is jeopardized by the democratic turn in news media.⁵¹

Kristof’s Twitter thread (@NickKristof) from November 7, 2011 reads as follows:

3:50 pm

Joining raid on brothel in Cambodia that imprisons young girls. Following @Somaly Mam. Very tense.

3:56 pm

Brothel owners have military ties and said to be well armed. 2 cars of police from capital, also well armed.

4:05 pm

Police burst in, disarmed brothel owners, took their phones so they can’t call for help.

4:08 pm

Girls are rescued, but still very scared. Youngest looks about 13, trafficked from Vietnam.

4:13 pm

Social workers comforting girls, telling them they are free, won't be punished, rapes are over.

4:17 pm

Brothel has 10 rooms for sex, all lockable from outside. It has operated with impunity with underage girls for yrs.

4:29 pm

Some girls known to be here are missing. NOt sure if they're hidden somewhere, e.g. In underground cell. Police searching.

4:32 pm

Just got word we've got to leave. Brothel owners reportedly sending reinforcements. Concern abt what might happen.

4:35 pm

I've been told to rush out of town for safety. That's what I'm doing now.

4:42 pm

Huge respect for @SomalyMam for rescuing these girls at some risk to herself.

5:42 pm

Armed soldiers just showed up at brothel, ordered police to release army officer who is alleged brothel owner.

5:51 pm

Prosecutor refusing to release military officer accused of owning brothel. Tells soldiers they can shoot him if they dare.

6:47 pm

Prosecutor faced down soldiers. Military officer & wife, alleged brothel owners in N. Cambodia, taken to police station.

9:29 pm

I'm safe & my live-tweeting of the raid on brothel in northern Cambodia is over. You can see them all on my Twitter page.

By live-tweeting the brothel raid, Kristof brings global attention to the problem of sexual exploitation in Cambodia, capitalizing on Twitter as a powerful tool of mediation. But, as detractors have noted, he also stokes “hyperbolic fears” about sex work, which is reduced here to a narrative of “dark-skinned women and children being raped by sexual predators on the dirt floors of basements, until the white savior smashes the door down to save them.”⁵² Kristof's tweets have met with fierce criticism, with the complaints focusing on the inappropriateness of the Twitter format to capture an issue as complex as sex

trafficking, the potential danger that looms when such a delicate operation is broadcast to any who might wish to interfere, and the question of consent.⁵³ We can assume, given the real-time nature of live-tweeting, that Kristof had no occasion to obtain consent from the brothel owners or the young women involved, but this raises questions about whether the professional standards that are applied in the United States are extended to countries in the Global South: in other words, whether Kristof would have permitted himself the same ethical leniency had he been reporting on a brothel raid in upstate New York, for example. Agustín lambasts the journalist for what she sees as his total lack of responsibility toward the same women he claims to rescue.⁵⁴ Finally, in her discussion of journalistic writing about rape and other traumas in Africa, Jina Moore asks a question that could be applied to the Kristof example: “How do we make readers ethically comfortable with our storytelling choices and morally *uncomfortable* with what the story depicts?” She continues:

Trauma stories require the writer to consider the reader, listener, or viewer as a partner in the creation of ethical journalism. Our choices as craftsmen—about identity and attribution, about detail, about writer’s voice, about structure and style, and even about medium—do more than simply tell the story. They tell readers about our values. Most journalism seeks to convey information objectively, but trauma stories have an agenda: they call to the reader to witness, to agree with the writer that “This should not have been.” If there is no agreement between reader and writer, or if the writer fails, the story is an exercise in voyeurism.⁵⁵

What, then, are the aesthetic choices made in the creation of this thread, and how do they engage the reader/witness? Perhaps the first thing to note about Kristof’s Twitter thread is that it offers a purely verbal account despite the multimedia possibilities enabled by Twitter. The thread consists of fourteen tweets that include no links to video, still images, or any other hypertextual elements.⁵⁶ Instead, the focus is on building a seamless first-person testimony, the “cohesive structure” of which is hybrid.⁵⁷ On the one hand, it is organized according to a timeline, presenting a series of updates that convey what is happening in real time, at 3:56 pm, for example, and again at 4:05 pm. At the same time, however, unlike live-blogging, which is also organized temporally but which presents a polyvocal rendering of the event, Kristof’s Twitter thread presents a narrative whole with exposition, climax, and dénouement, mediated by one voice. Though the narrative is determined by the Twitter format and in particular its 140-character fragments and real-time construction and publication, it nevertheless loosely follows the “inverted pyramid” structure common to traditional news stories: the first few tweets establish the essentials of the story, the most pressing details, upon which the rest of the thread elaborates. The inverted pyramid is integral to the perceived objectivism of the news piece because it presents the events covered in terms of verifiable facts: the who, what, when, where, and how of the story.⁵⁸ Kristof’s tweeting opens by identifying *who* the principle figures are—Somaly Mam and Kristof himself—and subsequent tweets present the other characters in the story: the well-armed military and police, the brothel owners acting with impunity, the young girls, the social workers, and so forth. Though this first tweet alludes to the mental or emotional state as the raid gets underway (“very tense”), it also establishes

the *what*, *where*, and *when* of the story: a brothel raid in Cambodia that, as is suggested by the use of the continuous tense, is underway. Finally, the third tweet specifies *how* the raid is carried out: a sudden descent and neutralizing of the villains, communicated by the verb phrases “burst in” and “disarmed.” In what follows these first tweets, Kristof expands the story, adding further detail about the location, the girls involved, the violence endured, the danger of the raid, the escape, and the prosecution of the brothel owners.

Other aesthetic decisions made in the construction of the thread, and in particular, those concerning the language used, determine what kind of witnessing it performs. These decisions inform how a piece of journalism represents authority.⁵⁹ Kristof uses active speech, or categorical language, throughout the narrative, reinforcing the representation of his objective expertise in this context by presenting the details as unquestionable facts. Through repetition of active verbs in the simple present, the narrative encourages the reader to accept beyond doubt that the “brothel owners have military ties” and that the brothel “has operated with impunity with underage girls for yrs.” The reader is led to trust the authority of Kristof’s voice when he reports that the “police burst in, disarmed brothel owners” and that the “rapes are over.” There are also instances of the passive voice, for example, when referring to the victims, who “are rescued,” and when Kristof decides to flee, tweeting, “Just got word we’ve got to leave,” and then, “I’ve been told to rush out of town for safety.” In the first instance, the reader is faced with knowledge that the sufferer is unable to act on her own behalf and is aware that whatever agency is to be found in this moment relies on the actions of those intervening, here Kristof, Mam, the police, and the social workers. Assuming the reader shares the political commitment to action, they are likely to experience gratitude toward these agents on the scene as well as indignation toward the brothel owners. In the second instance, the passive voice underscores the volatility of the event unfolding, pointing to the forces beyond Kristof’s control, all the while maintaining him at the center of the drama through the use of the first person.

The first person is implied throughout the narrative thread. The examples above demonstrate its direct use, but its presence is understood in many other instances, for example, at the outset of the narrative, which begins with the figure of the hero, Kristof: “(I am) Joining raid on brothel in Cambodia.” The use of the first person links the objective presentation with the personal testimony, creating a piece of “testimonial realism” and placing the hero-journalist in a position of doubled authority.⁶⁰ He has access to the facts and, because he is reporting from inside the narrative action and not as a detached observer, to the lived experience. It further emphasizes that he has put his life into imminent danger by taking part in the raid, though it should be noted that Kristof leaves the brothel after almost an hour and thus only indirectly witnesses, presumably via a source who is keeping him informed, the action taking place between 4:37 p.m. and 9:29 p.m., when he tells us he is safe. Finally, because the first-person subject position is often only implied, as in the opening tweet, the Twitter thread encourages the reader to assume the subject position within the utterance and to imagine themselves as an active participant in the events unfolding.

In addition to analyzing Kristof’s Twitter thread in terms of its organizational architecture and the means by which it represents authority, it is useful to examine how the text positions actors in relation to suffering, in other words, “who acts on whom and in which capacity.”⁶¹ Though the dominant temporality of the narrative action is the

present, there is enough variation of the tenses throughout to situate the raid within a temporal continuum that links the previous period of time during which the brothel (and others like it) “operated with impunity” to the future of freedom for victims, where they “won’t be punished,” and of judgment for the brothel owners, who have been “taken to police station” by the end of the evening. As such, the representation of action on the suffering in the present moment is anchored to an ongoing problem and to a future time and space of healing and justice, even if not to any specific historic context (that could have been provided through hyperlinks to NGO websites, UN reports, or other sources on anti-sex trafficking actions in the Mekong region/Cambodia/Northern Cambodia).

Despite this anchoring of the raid within an established temporal continuum, there is an overwhelming emphasis on events developing before the witness’s eyes, communicated by repeated use of the present continuous: “Police *searching*”; “Brothel owners reportedly *sending* reinforcements”; “Prosecutor *refusing* to release military officer.” References to the immediate past further stress the urgency of the events: “*Just got word* we’ve got to leave”; “Armed soldiers *just showed up*.” This underscoring of the temporal proximity of the situation places the Twitter thread and the event it narrates into “an ‘ecstatic’ temporality—one that freezes ongoing action, magnifies the detail of suffering and compels the [reader] to hold their breath and share the intensity of the experience.”⁶² Indeed, narrative suspense and affective intensification are cultivated throughout the thread. The discovery that some girls are missing and possibly “hidden . . . in underground cell,” the fear of a retaliatory attack by the military, the abrupt decision to flee, the showdown between soldiers and the prosecutor, who “tells soldiers they can shoot him if they dare”—all of these details are designed to deepen the emotive force of the reporting. But the question is, what is the effect of this breathless narrative of peril and heroism? What kind of values does the narrative communicate, and what kind of witness is created?

The portability, constant accessibility, and dialogic nature of Twitter make possible the reader’s immediate engagement with distant suffering.⁶³ And in presenting his Twitter thread as a piece of urgent news, Kristof seeks to motivate ethical action in response. For Boltanski, action in the face of distant suffering, where direct involvement is impossible, implies that the witness will convey the situation to another with the faith that this communication is “capable of acting on reality and of transforming it.”⁶⁴ This is arguably what Kristof is doing in relaying the distressing display before him to his Twitter followers. And his reader too is capable of acting through public speech insofar as voting and collective demonstrations of commitment can push the state to intervene on behalf of the suffering.⁶⁵ This potential capacity is not explicit in the thread itself, however, which does not end by providing suggestions for action to be taken, but instead, by encouraging the reader to check out Kristof’s Twitter page.⁶⁶ While the narrative content of his account is likely to produce in the reader an emotional response that might lead to a concrete form of action against the perpetrator of harm, the narrative voice—and especially this invitation to learn more about Kristof rather than Cambodia or trafficking—shifts the focus away from the perpetrator and this response. Instead, as Boltanski notes, when the focus is on the benefactor—here, Kristof as an agent of rescue—the reader is more likely to experience the gratitude of the suffering Other, or, to the extent that they assume the subject position alongside Kristof, the misplaced satisfaction of having already undertaken compassionate action.⁶⁷

Further, the reporting exposes a traumatic situation without sufficiently developing the context or explaining the reporter's approach. Granted, live-tweeting, while useful for coordinating efforts in times of catastrophe and offering color commentary on sports events and presidential debates, does not lend itself to lengthy reflections on scaffolding and methodology. But then one wonders why Twitter would be the chosen medium for a story about rescuing sex trafficking victims. Instead of crafting a piece of traditional journalism on the subject, in which these reflections might be sufficiently developed, Kristof chooses to broadcast his commentary live, giving the reader little to no time or space to develop a sense that they have been made a partner in the creation of ethical journalism, as Moore defines it above. On the contrary, by not presenting the full story, the thread disregards the principles of journalistic deontology, giving the Twitter reader access to traumatic events at the expense of professional caution and, though not to the same degree, the sufferer's right to privacy.

At the same time, the lack of context and of sufficient methodological scaffolding in Twitter reporting like Kristof's contributes to framing such traumatic events, and the broader problem of sex trafficking, as humanitarian emergencies, in Craig Calhoun's words, as "sudden, unpredictable event[s] emerging against a background of normalcy, causing suffering or danger and demanding urgent response."⁶⁸ The emergency imaginary allows no time for investigation of the root causes of migration for the purpose of sexual labor, no room for political or economic analysis of the specific source and destination sites implicated, and no impact beyond the spectacle of the present crisis. Instead, the humanitarian emergency necessitates an immediate and—for Elizabeth Bernstein—"militarized" response.⁶⁹ Here the language used to describe the intervention in which Kristof participates is telling. Though as a "rescue" its purpose is to deliver a group of young women from peril, Kristof refers to it as a "raid," in other words, an unexpected attack. As such, surrounded by armed men in uniform—be they the benevolent police or the maleficent military—the young women are (once again) subjected to forceful removal and incarceration.⁷⁰ The rescue-as-raid thus embodies the paradoxical response demanded by the humanitarian emergency; as an action designed to protect women, it operates according to a logic and perpetuates a form of violence similar to the one it seeks to eliminate.⁷¹

The emphasis on immediacy in the tweets not only strengthens the emergency imaginary within which a kind of armed mobilization is deemed necessary; it releases the reader from any pressing obligation toward the suffering because the intervention is already underway. As with his other narratives, Kristof's live-tweeting episode appears as a means to engage the reader as an active participant in the fight against sex trafficking, but its appeal rings hollow, leading the witness to confuse re-tweeting, or worse, merely reading the Twitter thread, with meaningful action. The live-tweeting of a brothel raid facilitates a momentary engagement with the drama taking place on the other side of the planet, sanctioning a form of distracted solidarity as the reader scans their Twitter feed or surfs the Internet. And the reader following Kristof's tweeting, though encouraged to imagine themselves in the position of the savior, is reduced to a mere voyeur, a figure whose relation to the spectacle of suffering and the journalist's bravery is defined by the detached, even furtive, gaze. The voyeur does not participate, but observes in secret, deriving pleasure from the event (here the frissons afforded by the lurid sexuality, threat of violence, and

righteous domination of rescue). Almost entirely freed from the horizon of historicity that would situate the intervention and the broader social problems it masks, Kristof's Twitter thread creates a situation in which to witness is to "sit back and enjoy the high-adrenaline spectacle" he delivers.⁷²

Perhaps even more than Somaly Mam's controversial memoir, Kristof's writing about the oppression of women around the world, and specifically, sex trafficking in Cambodia, appears as a form of humanitarian communication that speaks more to us about Kristof than anything else. In their writing, both Mam and Kristof frame the question of sex work in Cambodia through the specifics of their individual brands, for Mam, that of the sex trafficking survivor turned glamorous spokesperson; and for Kristof, that of the transnational savior committed to ending violence against women worldwide. And in both instances, this narrative self-fashioning circulates within broader and often mutually reinforcing NGO and media humanitarian discourses, two discursive realms that appear to rely as much on emotional appeals as on factual accuracy and that trade in morally simplistic tales. In the wake of the accusations of falsification leveled at Mam, Kristof has himself been castigated for creating a hero when he should have been checking the facts, and then for failing to adequately address his responsibility in the affair.⁷³ Having initially neglected to verify her stories of abuse and injustice before celebrating her cause in *The New York Times*, Kristof later declined to pursue the story and possibly correct his reporting, claiming: "I'm wary of being an arbiter of her backstory when I just don't know what is true or false."⁷⁴ This is a puzzling position to take given the basic principles of his chosen vocation—truth, accuracy, accountability, and impartiality. But his insistence on the universal truth of trafficking despite the possibility of falsehoods in its particular stories is consistent with the broader narrative in neocolonialist writing on trafficking, insisting on the existence of exploited individuals in need of saving. Moreover, his reticence to dig deeper into Mam's backstory points to a disregard for—or at the very least, a misunderstanding of—ethical journalistic practice when faced with sensational stories and technological immediacy.

Accusations of fraudulence and self-aggrandizement affect individuals, to varying degrees, but less so the system in which these individuals operate. The work of rescue industry groups reinforces the validity of the sex trafficking narrative, similar to the way that, for Ilan Kapoor, it alleviates tension within a system of capitalist exploitation, thus allowing for the "continued production of emergencies, which [in turn] enables and legitimizes their spectacular humanitarianism."⁷⁵ In this light, Mam's and Kristof's narratives emerge as exemplary chapters in a much larger discursive project on the global significance of sex trafficking and the legitimacy of anti-trafficking humanitarian work. Despite the unquestionable good that it does in individual instances—if Srey Neth and Srey Momm, for example, have found health and happiness since Kristof freed them, then some good has been done—one cannot escape the sense that this project is ultimately one of reinforcing the status quo. For rescue work to be done, there must always be someone to save. As such, the industry's representation of the world,—to return to a modified version of JanMohamed's discussion of the colonialist—"contains neither a sense of historical becoming, nor a concrete vision of a future different from the present, nor a teleology other than the infinitely postponed process of ['rescuing']"⁷⁶ It is telling that Kristof's proposed model for abolishing slavery in the twenty-first century draws on the

British campaign to end slavery in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. One wonders what form of slavery the rescue industry will target two hundred years from now, what sensational stories will be told to galvanize the movement, and how those stories will interpellate and position distant victims and saviors in relation to each other and to the truths of their lived experiences.

NOTES

1. Somaly Mam, *The Road of Lost Innocence: The True Story of a Cambodian Heroine* (New York: Spiegel and Grau Reprint, 2009), xii.
2. See Simon Marks, "Somaly Mam: The Holy Saint (and Sinner) of Sex Trafficking," *Newsweek*, May 21, 2014, <http://www.newsweek.com/2014/05/30/somaly-mam-holy-saint-and-sinner-sex-trafficking-251642.html>. Marks contests many of the details in Mam's autobiography—that she was an orphan, that she did not attend school, that she was sold into prostitution as a young girl—and accuses her of scripting the televised testimonies of women in her care. In his response to the allegations, Kristof is quick to point out that *The Washington Post*, *CNN*, and *Time* were also persuaded by her story, the truthfulness of which, he says, we still do not know. He further maintains that "the (likely) scandal of false or embellished backstories" does not lessen "the scandal that is human trafficking." See Nicholas Kristof, "When Sources May Have Lied," *New York Times*, June 7, 2014, <http://kristof.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/06/07/when-sources-may-have-lied/>. In anticipation of Marks's article, Mam resigned from the Somaly Mam Foundation, and in September 2014, the organization ceased its activities. A 2016 *Marie Claire* article and interview with Mam by Abigail Pesta refutes the accusations point by point and castigates Marks not only for ruining Mam, but also for jeopardizing rescue work (and the livelihood of rescue workers) in Cambodia. In December 2014, Mam relaunched her NGO, *Agir pour les femmes en situation précaire* (AFESIP: Acting for Women in Distressing Situations) under the name The New Somaly Mam Fund: Voices for Change, and in June 2016, she founded the TogetherHeart organization for which she currently serves as vice president.
3. See the Half the Sky Movement, <http://www.halftheskymovement.org/pages/movement.html> (accessed November 15, 2018). The *Half the Sky* game is no longer available on Facebook, though HTSM story apps and mobile games are available at gamesforchange.org. The last project "inspired by" the movement was posted in 2013, and the blog has not been updated since 2014.
4. Laura Agustín, "Kristof and the Rescue Industry: The Soft Side of Imperialism," *Counterpunch*, January 25, 2012, <http://www.counterpunch.org/2012/01/25/the-soft-side-of-imperialism/>; Agustín, "Somaly Mam, Nick Kristof, and the Cult of Personality," *Jacobin*, June 16, 2014, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2014/06/somaly-mam-nick-kristof-cult-of-personality/>.
5. Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Ironic Spectator: Solidarity in the Age of Post-Humanitarianism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2013), 80, 138.
6. On sex trafficking and humanitarian intervention, see Johan Lindquist, "Images and Evidence: Human Trafficking, Auditing, and the Production of Illicit Markets in Southeast Asian and Beyond," *Public Culture* 22, no. 2 (Spring 2010): 223–36. On the militarized response, see Elizabeth Bernstein, "Militarized Humanitarianism Meets Carceral Feminism: The Politics of Sex, Rights, and Freedom in Contemporary Antitrafficking Campaigns," *Signs* 36, no. 1 (Autumn 2010): 45–71; Didier Fassin and Marielle Pandolfi, eds., *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions* (New York: Zonebooks, 2010); Indrapal Grewal, *Transnational America: Feminisms, Diasporas, Neoliberalisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005); and Didier Fassin, *Humanitarian Reason: A Moral History of the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012).
7. Craig Calhoun, "The Idea of Emergency: Humanitarian Action and Global Disorder," in *Contemporary States of Emergency: The Politics of Military and Humanitarian Interventions*, ed. Didier Fassin and Marielle Pandolfi (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 29–58; Luc Boltanski, *Distant Suffering: Morality, Media and Politics*, trans. Graham Burchell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).
8. Chouliaraki, *Ironic Spectator*, 152. Chouliaraki's framework lends itself well to a discussion of live-tweeting the news event. See also, Lilie Chouliaraki, *The Spectatorship of Suffering* (London: SAGE Publishing, 2006); and Lilie Chouliaraki, "Mediation as Moral Education," *Media, Culture & Society* 30, no. 6 (November 2008): 831–52.
9. See "ironic participation" in Chouliaraki, *Ironic Spectator*, 20.
10. Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* (New York: Knopf, 2009), 35.
11. Nicholas Kristof, "Girls for Sale," *The New York Times*, January 17, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/17/opinion/girls-for-sale.html?_r=0. Kathryn Mathers notes a similar tendency to combine sentimentalism and individual women's stories in Kristof's reporting on Africa. See, "Mr. Kristof, I Presume? Saving Africa in the Footsteps of Nicholas Kristof," *Transition* 107 (2012): 16.
12. Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1931–1934*, trans. Rodney Livingstone, ed. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 510.

13. Kristof, "Girls for Sale."
14. Stefan George, "The Carpet of Life and the Songs of Dream and Death," quoted in Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 510.
15. Abdul R. JanMohamed, "The Economy of the Manichean Allegory: The Function of Racial Difference in Colonialist Literature," *Critical Inquiry* 12, no. 1 (Autumn 1985): 59–87.
16. See Ilan Kapoor's discussion of Žizek's "fetishistic disavowal" in *Celebrity Humanitarianism: The Ideology of Global Charity* (London: Routledge, 2013), 25.
17. Nicholas Kristof, "Leaving the Brothel Behind," *The New York Times*, January 19, 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/19/opinion/leaving-the-brothel-behind.html>; Nicholas Kristof, "Stopping the Traffickers," *The New York Times*, January 31, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/31/opinion/stopping-the-traffickers.html>. For more on Kristof's purchase of the two women, see Gretchen Sodurlund, "The Rhetoric of Revelation: Sex Trafficking and the Journalistic Exposé," *Humanity* 2, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 204, 205.
18. Kristof, "Stopping the Traffickers."
19. Kapoor, *Celebrity Humanitarianism*, 96.
20. Nicholas Kristof, "Going Home, With Hope," *The New York Times*, January 24, 2004, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/24/opinion/going-home-with-hope.html>.
21. Heidi Hoefinger strikes a good balance between insisting on the problems with the Cambodian anti-trafficking industry revealed by the Mam scandal and recognizing the legitimacy of "real cases of trafficking and exploitation." Heidi Hoefinger, "Neoliberal Sexual Humanitarianism and Story-Telling: The Case of Somaly Mam," *Anti-Trafficking Review* 7 (2016): 56.
22. See Kristof's response to Teju Cole, printed in Cole's essay, "The White Savior Industrial Complex," *The Atlantic*, March 21, 2012, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>: "There has been a real discomfort and backlash among middle-class educated Africans . . . To me though, it seems even more uncomfortable to think that we as white Americans should not intervene in a humanitarian disaster because the victims are of a different skin color." Nineteenth-century anti-prostitution discourses emphasized the comparable duty of white women toward the "fallen." See Jo Doezema, "Loose Women or Lost Women? The Re-emergence of the Myth of White Slavery in Contemporary Discourse of Trafficking in Women," *Gender Issues* 18, no. 1 (December 1999): 23–50. See also, Laura Agustín, *Sex at the Margins: Migration, Labour Markets and the Rescue Industry* (London: Zed Books, 2007).
23. Cole, "The White Savior Industrial Complex." See also, Mathers, "Mr. Kristof, I Presume?" 16. For Mathers, aid projects in Africa allow Americans to "'do good' in the world without questioning the growing inequalities at home" (20).
24. Panivong Norindr, *Phantasmatic Indochina: French Colonial Ideology in Architecture, Film, and Literature* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 1–3.
25. Kemala Kempadoo. "The Modern-Day White (Wo)Man's Burden: Trends in Anti-Trafficking and Anti-Slavery Campaigns," *Journal of Human Trafficking* 1, no. 1 (2015): 13.
26. Rutvica Andrijasevic, "Beautiful Dead Bodies: Gender, Migration and Representation in Anti-Trafficking," *Feminist Review* 86, no. 1 (July 2007): 30, 42.
27. Claudia Cojocaru, "My Experience is Mine to Tell: Challenging the Abolitionist Victimhood Framework," *Anti-Trafficking Review*, no. 7 (2016): 22. The United States government has since passed the *Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act* (FOSTA) and the *Stop Enabling Sex Traffickers Act* (SESTA), which together became law in April 2018 and have criminalized websites that host classified ads for sex workers. The most immediate and concrete impact of the law, however, affects sex workers, whose websites have disappeared, whose Twitter accounts have been shadow banned, and who find themselves pushed back into the streets to do business.
28. See the 2011 and 2018 *Trafficking in Persons* reports: <https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/2011/164231.htm> and <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/282800.pdf>. The Tier rankings in the 2018 report generally reflect a north/south divide, with Tier 1 composed largely of North American, Northern and Western European countries—former empires—while Tier 3 countries come mostly from Africa, Central and South America, and Southeast Asia—former colonies.
29. Kristof, "Going Home, With Hope."
30. Kristof, "Leaving the Brothel Behind"; Kristof and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, 41.
31. JanMohamed, "Economy of the Manichean Allegory," 61.
32. *Ibid.*, 64.
33. *Ibid.*, 62.
34. Kristof and WuDunn, *Half the Sky*, xix.
35. Nicholas Kristof, "Where Sweatshops Are a Dream," *The New York Times*, January 14, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/15/opinion/15kristof.html>.
36. Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, "Two Cheers for Sweatshops," *The New York Times*, September 24, 2000, <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/09/24/magazine/two-cheers-for-sweatsh-ops.html>; Nicholas Kristof, "In Praise of the Maligned Sweatshop," *The New York Times*, June 6, 2006, <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/06/opinion/06kristof.html>.
37. Kristof and WuDunn, "Two Cheers for Sweatshops."

38. Kristof, "In Praise of the Maligned Sweatshop."
39. See, for example, Kempadoo, "Modern-Day White (Wo)Man's Burden."
40. Kristof, "Where Sweatshops Are a Dream."
41. Human Rights Watch, "Work Faster or Get Out: Labor Rights Abuses in Cambodia's Garment Industry," https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/cambodia0315_ForUpload.pdf. Pro-sweatshop arguments like Kristof's cite the long-term contributions they make to improvements in the standard of living, but in Cambodia this is limited to an increased opportunity for wage labor. According to the 2015 Human Rights Watch, only 10 percent of garment factories in Cambodia are Cambodian owned. When Kristof does take issue with the proliferation of sweatshops, it is because of the environmental damage they cause, though he stops short of interrogating the effects of such environmental degradation on the workers' standard of living.
42. Elizabeth Bernstein identifies the same neoliberal logic behind the shift toward incarceration in abolitionist and evangelical anti-trafficking efforts. See "Militarized Humanitarianism."
43. Chouliaraki, *Ironic Spectator*, 16.
44. Agustín, "Kristof and the Rescue Industry."
45. Nicholas Kristof, "Fighting Back, One Brothel Raid at a Time," *The New York Times*, November 12, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/13/opinion/sunday/kristof-fighting-back-one-brothel-raid-at-a-time.html>.
46. Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, 51.
47. *Ibid.*, 50.
48. Chouliaraki, *Spectatorship*, 20. See also, John Tomlinson, *Globalization and Culture* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), 157; and Patrick Meier, *Digital Humanitarians: How Big Data is Changing the Face of Humanitarian Response* (Boca Raton: CRC Press, 2015).
49. Chouliaraki, *Ironic Spectator*, 142.
50. Mark Deuze, "What is Media Journalism?" *Journalism Studies* 5, no. 2 (2004): 140.
51. Chouliaraki, *Ironic Spectator*, 143.
52. Yasmin Nair, "Somaly Mam, Nicholas Kristof, and the Real Sex Trafficking Story," *YasminNair.net*, June 2, 2014, <http://www.yasminnair.net/content/somaly-mam-nicholas-kristof-and-real-sex-trafficking-story>.
53. See Faine Greenwood, "Nick Kristof Live Tweets a Raid on an Underage Brothel—And Not Everyone is Thrilled," November 15, 2011, <http://khmerization.blogspot.com.au/2011/11/nick-kristof-live-tweets-raid-on.html>.
54. Laura Agustín, "The Conceit of Nicholas Kristof: Rescuing Sex Slaves as Saintliness," *The Naked Anthropologist*, November 22, 2011, <http://www.lauraagustin.com/the-conceit-of-nicholas-kristof-rescuing-sex-slaves-as-saintliness>; "Kristof's Seventh-Grade Sex Slave, Censorship, and Colonialism," *The Naked Anthropologist*, December 4, 2011, <http://www.lauraagustin.com/kristofs-seventh-grade-sex-slave-censorship-and-colonialism>.
55. Jina Moore, "The Pornography Trap: How Not to Write About Rape," *Columbia Journalism Review*, January/February 2011, http://www.cjr.org/reports/the_pornography_trap.php.
56. The taped raid was not shown until the release of the *Half the Sky* film a few years later.
57. Chouliaraki, *Ironic Spectator*, 152.
58. *Ibid.*, 155. See also Michael Schudson, *The Power of News* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1996).
59. Chouliaraki, *Ironic Spectator*, 152.
60. *Ibid.*, 160.
61. *Ibid.*, 152.
62. Chouliaraki, *Spectatorship*, 145.
63. Readers responded most enthusiastically to Kristof's first tweet (29 replies, 158 retweets, 13 likes) and last tweet (58 replies, 93 retweets, 16 likes). The 4:42 p.m. tweet, where Kristof praises @SomalyMam's bravery is the third most popular (26 replies, 117 retweets, 23 likes), and the 4:35 p.m. tweet, where he announces he is leaving the brothel for safety reasons, follows (52 replies, 87 retweets, 6 likes).
64. Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, 173.
65. *Ibid.*, 183–88; here, Boltanski insists on the connection between the meaning (*vouloir dire*) and intention to act (*vouloir faire*) in effective public speech (187).
66. *Half the Sky* ends with two chapters devoted to action that readers can take in the long and short term and an appendix of organizations assisting women around the world.
67. Boltanski, *Distant Suffering*, 46.
68. Calhoun, "Idea of Emergency," 30.
69. Bernstein, "Militarized Humanitarianism," 61.
70. The Human Rights Watch report "Off the Streets: Arbitrary Detention and Other Abuses Against Sex Workers in Cambodia" underscores the violence experienced by sex workers caught up in NGO and state-sponsored raids, noting the conflation of sex work with trafficking and the restrictions sometimes placed on the rescued victims' freedom to leave the shelters (6, 18). See also Noy Thrupkaew, "The Crusade Against Sex Trafficking," *The Nation*, September 16, 2009, <https://www.thenation.com/article/crusade-against-sex-trafficking/>.
71. See Kristin Bumiller, *In an Abusive State: How Neoliberalism Appropriated the Feminist Movement Against Sexual Violence* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 136; Gretchen Sodurlund, "Running from the Rescuers:

New U.S. Crusades Against Sex Trafficking and the Rhetoric of Abolition,” *NWSA Journal* 17, no. 3 (Autumn 2005): 64–87.

72. Chouliaraki, *Spectatorship*, 145.

73. See Margeret Sullivan, “Nicholas Kristof Should Give Readers a Full Explanation About Somaly Mam,” *The New York Times*, June 14, 2014, <https://publiceditor.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/06/02/nicholas-kristof-should-give-readers-a-full-explanation-about-somaly-mam/>; Erik Wemple, “NYT’s Nicholas Kristof Should Drop Everything, Audit His Cambodia Work,” *The Washington Post*, June 2, 2014, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/erik-wemple/wp/2014/06/02/nyts-nicholas-kristof-should-drop-everything-audit-his-cambodia-work/>; Pat Joseph, “Victims Can Lie as Much as Other People: What the Somaly Mam Scandal Says About the Media’s Treatment of Humanitarian Heroes,” *The Atlantic*, June 5, 2014, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/06/somaly-mam-scandal-victims-can-lie/372188/>; Karen Coates, “Somaly Mam, Nick Kristof, and Journalism’s Hero Problem,” *Columbia Journalism Review*, July 16, 2014, http://archives.cjr.org/behind_the_news/somaly_mam_nick_kristof_and_jo.php.

74. Sullivan, “Full Explanation.”

75. Kapoor, *Celebrity Humanitarianism*, 93.

76. JanMohamad, “Economy of Manichean Allegory,” 69.