

# Invisible Children campaign under fire

## Invisible Children organization grows in popularity and scandal

Mitchell Mataria | Staff Writer

Invisible Children, an organization promoting peace in central Africa, released the film “Kony 2012” to YouTube on March 5 which has since become the most viral video to ever hit the web according to *Time Magazine*. Ever since the debut of the “Kony 2012” film, Invisible Children has come under fire over the legitimacy of their information and how their donations are distributed, according to Fox News.

The Prime Minister of Uganda, Amama Mbabazi, has also criticized Invisible Children’s campaign. In a video posted to YouTube, Mbabazi stated that there is no conflict in Uganda and that the Lord’s Resistance Army leader, Joseph Kony, is no longer in Uganda.

Senior Michael Duplisea said that Invisible Children’s presentation of facts could be misunderstood and also said that in some cases, are untrue.

“The fact that they boiled it down to such simple terms, some of it became practically untrue because they made it sound like Kony was still in Uganda,” Duplisea said.

Junior Julia Johnstone disagrees and said the war against the LRA shouldn’t be ignored.

“I think [Invisible Children] tried to put it in a way that everyone can understand,” Johnstone said. “[The war] may not be in Uganda, but it’s still going on in other places and that’s enough for it to still matter.

Beyond the message that Invisible Children delivers in the “Kony 2012” video, Duplisea said the donations Invisible Children receives, are a cause for concern as well.

According to the Invisible Children website, the organization claims that 37.14 percent of donations went directly towards programs in Africa and rebuilding in Uganda in 2011. In that same year, 62.86 percent of donations, as reported, went towards fundraising, media and film creation, awareness products, management salaries and awareness programs.

“If I’m paying them \$10 and only \$3 goes to helping the problem, I don’t really feel like I’ve gotten what I want out of the money I’ve given them,” Duplisea said.

Johnstone said the widespread popularity of “Kony 2012” has triggered questions and suspicions among the public.

“I’ve followed their finances. Nothing has really changed except now the new “Kony 2012” [video] is out and people are starting to question and people are starting to pay attention,” Johnstone said.

Today, Johnstone and the Mason Invisible Children Club will take part in Cover the Night to bring attention to who Joseph Kony is. According to the “Kony 2012” video, Cover the Night involves activists spreading posters of Kony around their



photo by Megan McCormack

Junior Julia Johnstone hangs posters for the KONY 2012 event taking place on April 20.

hometown to promote awareness of his crimes.

However, Duplisea said that Cover the Night and the Invisible Children organization itself could be threatened by the actions of an Invisible Children spokesperson. Jason Russell, Invisible Children director, was detained by police on March 15 after a display of public nudity and reports of “banging his hands on the ground and screaming incoherently,” according to *The Wall Street Journal*.

“I think the widespread coverage of [Russell’s] mental breakdown is definitely going to hurt the organization and it’s definitely going to hurt his credibility with his target audience,” Duplisea said.

Since the premier of “Kony 2012”, Invisible Children has released “Kony 2012: Part II – Beyond Famous.” Last year, President Obama sent 100 U.S. troops to central Africa to combat the LRA but according to CNN, LRA attacks were on the rise in March.

Johnstone said she will continue to follow and support Invisible Children.

“Their methods have been really effective in the fact that the war’s no longer in Uganda and people are lot safer,” Johnstone said.

Duplisea said that even if Invisible Children’s cause is righteous, he won’t be donating to their organization because of the information that was not shared.

“The way [Invisible Children] presented it, it seemed like, ‘Wow, we all need to do something about this right now, we all need to buy these shirts, and we all need to buy this and do something about it,’” Duplisea said. “As it stands now, there’s no reason to go through Invisible Children.”

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