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March 26, 2012

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THE INTERNET NEWSPAPER: NEWS BLOGS VIDEO COMMUNITY

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[Eugene Cho](#)

Follower of the Way,
Humanitarian, Pastor, Activist

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Our Response to Jason Russell Should Not Be That Complex

Posted: 03/26/2012 2:00 pm

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The conversations surrounding the campaign of [Kony 2012](#) are complex. They really are. To simplify them only furthers the criticism that some have had with the entire campaign with over-simplification.

Part of the reason [why I haven't written anything sooner](#) about Kony 2012 is that I'm still processing what I liked and disliked; what I agreed or disagreed with; what was compelling and deterring. There are some important lessons to be learned by all -- but especially nonprofit organizations -- such as the one I recently started, [One Day's Wages](#). So, my posture has been slow to speak and quick to listen. I'm reading, processing, asking, conversing and, perhaps later, I'll have some thoughts to share.

But one thing I'd like to make clear is that to reduce the work of [Invisible Children](#) to a 30-minute video would be simply unfair -- to them, to those that they have sought to come alongside in Uganda and to all of us. They've done some important work since their inception in 2003 and will continue to do important work.

Having said that, I was surprised (to say the least) and saddened to read the recent "[breaking news](#)" of Jason Russell's detainment and hospitalization in San Diego. Jason is a co-founder of Invisible Children and the narrator of the Kony 2012 video. He has also bore the brunt of much criticism during the recent weeks from the entire world.

The conversations surrounding the issues of Kony 2012 may indeed be complex but hear this loud and clear: Our response to the recent news about Jason Russell ought to be very simple -- *compassion and grace*.

Unimaginable Attention

I don't personally know Jason. While I've had the pleasure of meeting with several members of the Invisible Children team, I've never met Jason... and I look forward to the day I can personally say hello.

Each person is responsible for their own actions and I'm sure that when Jason is in a healthier state, he'll be able to own up, apologize, give an explanation, seek additional help if needed and continue to live out his convictions. [His well-being and that of his family are the most important things.](#)

While I'm not making excuses for Jason, I think it's important to imagine -- just for a second -- the amount of attention he has received as the "face" of Invisible Children. Attention is one thing. But this is something the world has never seen. More than 120 million views of their video (and counting) and possibly every country and variety of news sources, media outlets and bloggers "reporting" on the video and the organization equals unimaginable feelings of _____.

Drop Those Stones and Pray

It's true, isn't it? We love our heroes -- when they achieve their stardom. But perhaps, we love our villains and scapegoats even more. Their demise is our pick-me-up. Their destruction is our elevation. It's easy to pick up our stones and say with glorious glee the infamous line:

"I told you so..."

If you're tempted, I have three words for you:

"Don't do it..."

One thing that's absolutely clear to me is that Jason, his family and the entire Invisible Children team are good folks. Really good folks. Drop those stones. Turn away from the temptation to throw them under the bus, and pray for them. I'm not talking metaphorically. Literally -- pray for Jason, his wife, their two children and the entire organization.

Whatever your views of Invisible's Kony campaign, *now* is the time to pray for Jason, his wife and children. Not abandon them.

Never Revel in the Trials of Others

Leaders, individuals, causes, churches and organizations should *never* revel in the trials of other leaders, individuals, causes, churches and organizations.

Never.

I'm not going to mention names but reading couple of recent tweets from "leaders" to the effect of "I told you so..." makes me sick.

Feedback, criticism, pushback and tough questions are all fair game -- fair game and even necessary for all of us to be better and deeper. But never revel in the trials of others.

Never.

Imagine Yourself in That Situation

Seriously. We've all had our bad days.

Imagine for a second your worst day or your worst decision -- and having that magnified a million times. A Google search for "Jason Russell arrest" (which was not an actual arrest because charges weren't made) conjured up 121 million results on Google. Imagine that with your name.

Seriously. Imagine this. I went ahead and inserted my name in [the first article](#) I read about his detainment (see below).

Go ahead and insert your name... and let me know how it feels to have a million eyes reading, judging, shouting "I told you so's", condemning, laughing, ridiculing...

The truth is that all of us are only an event away from our personal nervous breakdowns.

So, here it is for the entire world to see -- had it been me in this situation. Do as you will but I hope in the midst of your response, there's some room for compassion and grace -- not just for my sake, not just for Jason's sake, but for your sake, too. For all our sake.

Eugene Cho, 41, was allegedly found masturbating in public, vandalizing cars and possibly under the influence of something, according to the SPD. He was detained at the intersection of Ingraham Street and Riviera Road.

An SPD spokesperson said the man detained was acting very strange, some may say bizarre.

"Due to the nature of the detention, he was not arrested," Lt. Andra Brown said. "During the evaluation we learned we probably needed to take him to a medical facility because of statements he was saying."

Police said they received several calls Thursday at 11:30 a.m. of a man in various stages of undress, running through traffic and screaming.

Police described Cho as "in his underwear." He allegedly took off his underwear at one point, but it was back on by the time officers arrived, said police.

Several people attempted to calm him down and when officers arrived police said he was cooperative.

"He was no problem for the police department however, during the evaluation we learned that we probably needed to take care of him," said an SDPD spokesperson. "We determined that medical treatment was a better course of action than arrest."

Cho was taken to a medical center after the incident.