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Saving Sex Slaves: The A21 Campaign and the Mobilization of Christian Affect

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The University of Southern Mississippi

SAVING SEX SLAVES: THE A21 CAMPAIGN AND THE
MOBILIZATION OF CHRISTIAN AFFECT

by

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A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate School
of The University of Southern Mississippi
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for the Degree of Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

SAVING SEX SLAVES: THE A21 CAMPAIGN AND THE MOBILIZATION OF CHRISTIAN AFFECT

by Nicole Elizabeth Magee

May 2015

In this thesis, I argue that the A21 Campaign's discourse mobilizes Christian affect to produce relational proximity between audience members and human trafficking victims. My study intervenes in related literature surrounding Burke's (1969) idea of identification by acknowledging that discourse can invite audiences to feel relationally close to or empathetic with others in the absence of consubstantiation. Relying on Gould's (2009) notion of the mobilization of affect, I contend that unconscious, Christian affective investments are mobilized within A21's rhetoric through the covert deployment of evangelical tropes that register with Christians' affective desires and encourage believers to act as Christ or "saviors." Specifically, this analysis unveils three ways in which Christian affect is covertly mobilized. First, the campaign uses coded Christian language and tropes to appeal to believers' religious values, constituting an evangelical public willing to affectively invest in the non-profit. Secondly, victims' experiences are personalized to prime audiences to empathize with sex slaves, viewing themselves as relationally proximal to the trafficked "other." Lastly, audiences are positioned as "saviors" who are encouraged to fulfill their role as Christ followers by taking action to support the A21 Campaign. Together, these strategies function to invite Christians to embrace the taboo topic of sex slavery within the sacred setting of the church, beckoning believers to further the social movement based on their religious convictions.

DEDICATION

To Momma and Daddy – for always being my biggest fans.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In January 2013, a crowd of 60,000 students, ages 18 to 25, assembled at the Georgia Dome for the annual Passion Conference. Throughout four days of worship and prayer, the young people were exposed to the cruel reality of the over 27 million people currently trapped in modern day slavery (Frasier, 2013). The event called on attendees to unite as a generation of abolitionists in support of the END IT Movement. Louie Giglio, founder of Passion, claimed END IT launched as a way to bring the conversation of human trafficking to the forefront in America (END IT Movement, 2013). After donating nearly \$3.2 million dollars to the coalition partners affiliated with END IT, swarms of young believers returned to their 2,300 universities to “shine a light on slavery” (Hultine, 2013). On April 9, 2013, the students furthered the movement by overwhelming social media outlets with images of red “x’s” displayed on their hands, accompanied by the hashtag “endit,” to raise awareness about human trafficking (Sutter, 2013). Though the movement gained widespread attention from the secular news media, it is fascinating to consider that Christians were the largest motivators of this initiative. Thus, it is important for rhetorical scholars to analyze why the church, a sacred setting in which “sex” is typically considered a taboo topic, was so easily persuaded to combat the issue of sex slavery and abuse.

The A21 Campaign, a leading coalition partner of END IT, relies upon the discourse of this movement, among its other endeavors, to extend the conversation surrounding modern day slavery to audiences with diverse beliefs. Regarded as one of the most popular anti-slavery organizations (Christian, 2013), the campaign was founded in

2008 by evangelical leader Christine Caine and her husband Nick (Hall, 2011) to prevent future victims from being trafficked, protect rescued victims, prosecute traffickers, and partner with supporters to further its initiatives (A21, 2014n). Because Caine is an ordained minister and claims the campaign was birthed from her initial involvement with the mega-church Hillsong (Althoff, 2013), it is no surprise that portions of A21's messages have spiritual undertones. Still, while religious references are sprinkled throughout the non-profit's discourse, Caine argues the group is not primarily for Christians, and her staff does not try to convert the sex slaves to conform to their spiritual ideology (Kavanagh, 2011). Thus, the group seeks to appeal to both secular and spiritual societies through strategically coding its faith-based underpinnings in an undercover way, summoning an empathetic response from believers that motivates them to take action, without necessarily deterring the support of non-believers.

When analyzing this type of phenomenon, rhetoricians may be inclined to use the lens of identification to describe what is taking place within the A21 Campaign's discourse. Identification, as we know it, is a critical part of persuasion in which humans seek to reduce the space between them by searching for shared similarities that increase their relational proximity (Burke, 1969). Thus, our ability to "identify" with another individual or group is dependent upon rhetoric's power to break down barriers and unite audiences based on the common ground they share. However, I argue that an analysis of the A21 Campaign's discourse based solely on the notion of identification is limiting and would fail to fully represent the organization's persuasive appeals. Consequently, this project attempts to intervene in the pre-existing literature surrounding this concept by acknowledging its failure to encompass the idea that rhetoric can bring audiences to feel

relationally close to or empathetic with others by employing strategies other than identification. Based on this assumption, I maintain that social movements can produce rhetoric that invokes relational proximity between potential supporters and the proposed cause through the strategic mobilization of affect. Therefore, this analysis makes a significant contribution to the field of rhetoric by expanding our repertoire of tools used to examine how rhetorical closeness is achieved beyond just the use of identification.

The primary objective of this thesis is to demonstrate that the A21 Campaign's discourse mobilizes Christian affect in order to produce empathy between both Christian and non-Christian audiences with human trafficking victims. Though rhetoricians tend to classify the achievement of relational closeness as identification, I maintain it is not the primary strategy the non-profit relies on in order to invoke audiences' support of the movement. Rather, unconscious Christian affective investments are specifically mobilized through the covert deployment of evangelical Christian tropes and forms that tap into Christian affective registers, which encourage believers to act as Christ and saviors on earth. The rhetorical study of affect concerns the analysis of affective yet enthymematic registers that can be mobilized through rhetorical discourse to encourage action or constitute publics (Lundberg, 2009). Christian affect, specifically in this case, involves the unconscious desires derived from involvement with the Christian community that are mobilized in order to produce relational proximity between faith-based persons and sex slaves. I argue that the A21 Campaign mobilizes Christian affect in three ways. First, while the campaign is not publicly promoted as a Christian organization, its rhetoric invokes coded Christian language and tropes to appeal to believers' underlying religious values, allowing the campaign to engage audiences that may otherwise be unmotivated to

further the cause. This process functions to constitute an evangelical Christian public invested in the A21 Campaign, despite the organization's insistence that it is not a Christian movement. Second, victims' experiences are personalized through the campaign's discourse in a way that emphasizes the singular subjectivity of the sex-trafficked. This process functions to prime individuals to empathetically respond to A21's messages based on the notion that they view themselves as relationally proximal to the sex slaves. Lastly, the campaign calls on the affective investments of those who encounter the discourse, positioning them as an audience of potential "saviors," in an attempt to beckon them to be supportive of the movement. The strategy of taking on the role of a "savior" employs the trope of "acting Christ-like," mobilizing affective investments dominant within Christian communities and functioning to constitute an evangelical public committed to ending human trafficking.

Based on this interpretation, I propose three research questions that will guide my investigation of the campaign's persuasive efforts. First, how does the A21 Campaign's popular discourse concerning human trafficking resonate with a broad range of audiences, using coded methods of identification? Second, how does the organization mobilize Christian affect? Third, how does the A21 Campaign act as a clandestine Christian movement, simultaneously rallying Christian values, while coding its religious references in an obscure way? Examining the mobilization of affect among varying publics will provide a deeper understanding of A21's specific rhetorical strategies, as well as its operation in the broader social movement to abolish human trafficking.

To address these questions, I will analyze the popular discourse regarding the A21 campaign, including messages released by A21 and the popular mediated discussion

surrounding the organization. Specifically, I will examine texts that unveil the emergence of the social movement to abolish human trafficking in virtual contexts, as reports indicate that the tools used by new media forms “have reinvented social activism” (Gladwell, 2010). In support of the idea that technology provides a platform for “disruption, liberation, and even revolution” (Schradie, 2014), the A21 Campaign relies on the Internet as a prime communicative means of addressing audiences. Thus, my investigation will analyze A21’s visual texts found online, such as its images and videos, as well as content disseminated by the organization on its social network sites, in the virtual news media, and on its website.

An examination of several case studies is provided, as I unpack the campaign’s rhetorical motivations to appeal to broad audiences through the mobilization of non-conscious Christian affect. Conversations online surrounding the A21 Campaign’s involvement in the END IT Movement, the Passion Conference, and other religious settings are studied to assess the non-profit’s support of faith-based initiatives, though it claims to have no spiritual ties. Additionally, content produced by the group on their social media sites and webpage are analyzed, such as blog posts and popular YouTube videos, to uncover how these messages have been strategically crafted to resonate with both non-Christian and Christian audiences’ religious viewpoints. Though including an examination of additional virtual spaces may broaden the scope of this project, discussions concerning the publics’ deliberation of the movement, such as individual’s personal comments or discussion threads, have been excluded from my argument. I argue that limiting my analysis to the virtual environment surrounding the A21 Campaign and

several specific visual productions the non-profit has released provides acceptable parameters to thoroughly depict the group's mobilization of Christian affect.

In the remaining pages of this chapter, I will first provide a brief overview of related literature, which will review existing rhetorical studies that address the notion of affect, the conception of identification (or consubstantiation), as well as the use of visual rhetorics and their relation to social movement scholarship. This portion will not only describe how these pre-existing analyses contribute to the field of communication studies, but will also articulate the significance this project will have in furthering such conversations in academia. Next, I will offer an explanation of the critical method that will be applied to answer my research questions, followed by a brief outline of my subsequent thesis chapters.

Affect Studies

Scholars have long investigated the concept of affect across varying fields, such as psychology, sociology and communication. Still, despite its prevalence within scholarly research, Gregg and Seigworth (2010) argue it lacks both a “pure or somehow originary state” (p. 1), presenting academics with the difficult task of articulating its definition. While many consider the term as synonymous with feelings or emotions, affect is not reducible to such classifications (Deleuze, Guattari, & Massumi, 1987). Shouse (2005) distinguishes that a “feeling” is personal sensation comparable to prior experiences, and an “emotion” is one's display of a feeling. But, affect precedes emotion and can be described as “a non-conscious experience of intensity” involving “a moment of unformed and unstructured potential” (Shouse, 2005, p. 26). In this way, affect must not be abbreviated as an emotional experience; rather, it entails the “the practices of

subjectivization that are the conditions of possibility for emotion” (Lundberg, 2009, p. 390). Gould (2009) clarifies affect as a state one can internally sense without being consciously aware of what is taking place or how to articulate the experience. Though he or she is unable to fully grasp such intensity, the experienced sensation is “nevertheless in play, generated through interaction with the world, and affecting our embodied beings and subsequent actions” (Gould, 2009, p. 20).

More specifically, affect is often depicted as the passing of intensities between “bodies.” Though Spinoza maintained scholars have not yet fully determined the body’s capability (Curley, 1994), many researchers consider it necessary to emphasize its role in relation to affective assemblages. For example, Gregg and Seigworth (2010) argue that affect’s power is contingent on the body’s ability to both affect and be affected when forces are encountered. The bodily response, or “shifting of affections,” conveys the act of being affected by such intensities, which, consequently, drives bodily action, demonstrating the body’s capacity to conduct the affecting. Indeed, such forces experienced by audiences drive them to collectively unite and take action; however, it is critical to note that affect does not seek to comprehend the production of these intensities, but, rather, it uses these affections to alter our social practices (Thornton, 2011).

Gould (2009) extends the argument that affect motivates audiences to take action by acknowledging it as a significant contributor to social change. She explains, “Ideas about the need for social change and movement toward bringing it about often begin with an inarticulate and inarticulable sensation that something in the established order is not quite right” (p. 26). In this way, affective intensities indicate “things could be and perhaps should be different,” calling on audiences to challenge existing societal norms

(Gould, 2009, p. 26). This focus on the mobilization of affect, as she calls it, warrants further research to improve our understanding of how social change renders “feelings that downplay elements that may not be articulable but that nonetheless exert force, shaping people’s experiences and knowledge of the world as well as their actions” (Gould, 2009, p. 27).

Though such extensions would contribute much to the scholarship surrounding social movements, Gould (2009) notes scholars in the area have paid little attention to the notion of affect, in particular. Jasper (2011), among other sociologists, has explored the ability of emotional responses to motivate audiences and achieve collection cooperation within social movements. He argues that social protests, in particular, rely on individual’s innermost feelings to first inspire action, before secondly shaping the goals of those actions to produce change (Jasper, 1998). Relying on the idea that humans act to verify their underlying attitudes, potential social movement supporters are committed to specific causes whose emotional appeals closely align to their moral values (Heise, 1987). As Jasper and Poulsen (1995) suggest, when personal feelings intersect with reactive emotions, individuals may be motivated to conform to the collective identity found by being part of a certain social movement, increasing their willingness to act as an active participator or contributor to support the cause.

Still, Lundberg (2009) is disapproving of current research involving affect because he claims rhetoricians, much like Jasper and his colleagues, fail to acknowledge the complexities of this conception. He asserts that rhetorical scholars, equating emotion and affect, critique an emotional display based on its intention and context in an effort to describe the ways in which “affect” functions. Consequently, Lundberg suggests

rhetorical scholarship should recognize affect's power to influence, exhibiting an ability to produce action, which is lacking in the formation of emotion.

Based on these findings, there is an existing need for rhetorical scholarship to uncover affect's ability to garner internal responses from audiences and stimulate both social and political change. Specifically, social movement rhetoric should contribute to the conversation regarding the mobilization of affect to cause audiences to join in protest and further a specific cause. To fill this gap in the related literature, I draw upon Rice (2008) and Thornton's (2011) assertion that what matters to us, or what we choose to affectively invest in, are the beliefs so strongly held that they become part of our individual identities. I argue if audiences are invited to feel something that internally resonates with their personally held beliefs and are provided with suggestions for actions to take, the individuals will, as Gould (2009) suggests further the goals of a movement, rather than "disidentifying with the mobilization around a cause" (p. 69).

Rhetorics of Identification

Kenneth Burke is perhaps most well known for his extension of our conventional understanding of persuasion, which has been fundamental to the discipline of rhetoric. He argues that persuasion cannot be achieved in the absence of identification (Day, 1960), even in its simplest occurrences, stating a man is only persuaded when "you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (Burke, 1969, p. 55).

Burke claims that a variety of factors contribute to our division as humans, including our biological births, differences in race, gender, sexual orientation, class, and the like (Brock, 1998). As a result, we naturally seek to overcome this separation by

using symbols to construct messages that evoke identification, inducing a sense of community and cooperation with one another (Quigley, 1998). Because identification is both “affirmed by” and “compensatory to division” (p. 22), we seek commonalities in meaning, interests, and experiences with others that make us “consubstantial” to them, or sharing the same substance (Burke, 1969). This consubstantiality, or positioning one’s self as akin to his audience, helps achieve persuasion (Day, 1960).

However, we are not merely limited to associations with others; we may disassociate from them, as well, identifying qualities that are not shared among us and, thus, creating separation (Littlejohn & Foss, 2008). Moreover, Cheney (1983) argues that the fact that people share commonalities is also accompanied by the assumption that they are different in nature, suggesting congregation does not take place without segregation. Consequently, our social interactions provide opportunities to position us as similar to certain groups and distinctly separate from others.

Though many theorists have referenced “Burkean identification” to explore audience-centered messages, Cheney (1983) sought to “broaden the application of identification in rhetorical criticism to include other domains of discourse” (p. 144), such as organizational communication. In addition to the common ground technique, which Burke (1969) describes as the rhetor’s attempt to link himself to his audience, Cheney recognized two other identification strategies that are less obvious, but can be found in Burke’s analysis. The first, known as “identification by antithesis,” involves uniting against a common enemy to promote identification among speakers and listeners. The second tactic relies upon the “assumed we” and the consequential “they” to induce identification. The “assumed we” bonds the rhetor and audience together, even when they

have little in common, while the consequential “they” distinguishes outsiders as those who are unsupportive of the majority’s ideas (Cheney, 1983, p. 149). Through the implementation of these strategies, individual speakers or organizations can promote a sense of “unity and collective acceptance of organizational values” (Cheney, 1983, p. 148).

Cheney’s (1983) explanation helps us better understand how Burke’s identification functions not only as a method of persuasion, but also as a means to determine how audiences are formed through discourse. Jasper (1998) argues this production of a collective identity is useful in the study of social movement “emergence, recruitment patterns, longevity and decline” (p. 408). He claims that individual’s justification for partaking in the collective identity affiliated with a social cause is often the result of “an underlying social categorization” (p. 415). For example, specific traits such as race, gender, or personal beliefs are attributes that often serve individuals’ interests, motivating them to join groups that affirm the identity they desire to display. However, social protests have the potential to draw in supporters who act outside of their self-interest as a means to fulfill their moral duties. Stewart (1999) labels these persons as members of an “other-directed” social movement, which still promotes the formation of a collective identity, rather than individual ones. Yet, this type of movement is comprised of individuals who view themselves as “saviors” of the oppressed that have been positioned to act as “moral forces for good” against “perpetrators of evil” (Stewart, 1999, p. 97). Thus, some claim morality is achieved through active participation in such movements.

Though extensive literature exists surrounding Burke's (1969) notion of identification, I maintain that scholarship regarding this concept is not comprehensive enough to encompass the rhetorical appeals evident in discourse disseminated by the A21 Campaign. My analysis seeks to reveal how audiences are both formed and persuaded, as Burke infers, through more than just the acknowledgement of shared similarities, either among individuals or with a particular group. I wish to expand our understanding of the ways in which individuals choose to "identify" with certain things or persons by including the mobilization of affect as a contributor to the achievement of relational closeness, rather than simply the use of consubstantiation. My contribution specifically pertains to social movements' dissemination of visual rhetorics that seek to mobilize affectual responses among audiences who identify as religious or non-religious persons, motivating them to take action regardless of their personally held beliefs.

Visual Rhetorics

Visual rhetoric, or the study of how visuals rhetorically operate to influence human experience (Foss, 2005), sought to expand rhetorical theory's role in the field of communication studies. As a result of its conceptualization of images as communicative artifacts, rather than just dialogue, this scholarship is now "more comprehensive and inclusive" (Foss, 2004, p. 303). Often, rhetoricians reference Burke (1969), who maintains that visual rhetorical productions call upon the creation of public audiences who are persuaded by the symbolic actions with which they can identify certain instances, spaces or contexts. In this way, the rhetors establish agency within such persons, or "the ability to act in a way that will be recognized or heeded by others in one's community" (Campbell, 2005, p. 3).

As collective action is necessary to sustain social movements (Jasper, 1998), these groups depend on the use of images to resonate with the public, acknowledging “visual clearly has dimensions that verbal speech does not” (Goodnow, 2005, p. 188). Indeed, an activist group’s inability to disseminate stimulating visuals results in failed persuasion (Hart & Daughton, 2005). Whereas words have distinct limitations in their ability to convey messages, visual arguments are “far more vivid and immediate,” allowing rhetors to express ideas they would otherwise be unable to verbally communicate (Blair, 2004, p. 53). Blair argues that both the call upon audiences to use their sympathetic imagination, as well as the power to invoke involuntary responses, typically through the use of pathetic appeals, enhances visuals’ efficiency and makes them more pervasively powerful than written or spoken word.

Scholars have long established that visual appeals play a significant role in the shaping and reshaping of an audience’s identity, as well. Social movement rhetoric, specifically, employs identification strategies through the use of visual means, causing individuals to question the separation between their personally held identities and the identities of other groups (Atkins-Sayre, 2010). Cloud (2004) argues this can be accomplished by arranging opposing images of the self and “other” alongside one another to create a <clash of civilizations> among one’s own version of reality and challenges to his way of life. Emphasizing both qualities shared with and differences from “other” can create a sense of identification through visual displays (Atkins-Sayre, 2010). For example, if one identifies the “other” as what he is not, he may take on the role of “benevolent, but superior caretaker” (p. 294), who is positioned to intervene on behalf of the oppressed “other” (Cloud, 2004).

Even when visuals evoke identification among social movement members, one must question how these groups persuade potential supporters to take action to further the cause. Yet, Hill (2004) suggests that organizations' intentions often exceed just persuasion, as many of these groups seek transformation of individuals as their ultimate goal. Such a conversion requires one to do more than consciously process the presented information, which can easily be achieved through verbal discourse. Rather, visuals are used to invoke longer lasting emotional responses that result in personal convictions, motivating audiences to take action (Hill, 2004).

Drawing upon the previous literature relating to affect, identification and visual rhetorics, this study demonstrates social movements' reliance on these techniques to persuade audiences to accept the presented message and support the proposed cause. Moreover, I posit that the visual discourse produced by the A21 Campaign relies on an affectual response to mobilize audiences, rather than emotional reactions. Though prior literature indicates strong emotions have the capability to elicit support, I argue that the rhetorical strategies employed by A21 are not reducible to feelings, which are fleeting and unlikely to sustain the movement. Thus, the visual messages included in this analysis attempt to unveil how these texts use covert methods that invoke an empathetic response to rally Christian affect among faithful believers, as well as additional agents of change, including non-believers, that positions them as relationally proximal to human trafficking victims and asks for support of A21's initiatives to end sex slavery. Specifically, this study will broaden our explanation of how visual rhetoric functions to engage audiences, draw them into a movement, and sustain their support of the cause.

Critical Method

My thesis will examine how the A21 Campaign's discourse mobilizes Christian affect in a covert manner to produce relational closeness between audience members with human trafficking victims. Though the organization's primary audience seems to be Christians, the rhetoric produced by A21 does not exclude non-Christians. Thus, I argue that the visual discourse distributed by the non-profit invites audiences to respond to the call for support, regardless of their religious affiliation, based upon their sensory experiences, which beckon them to take action. Still, this analysis specifically focuses on the ways in which the campaign affectively appeals to members of an evangelical public, unveiling how Christ followers are encouraged to support the movement to end human trafficking.

In determining the purpose of the discourse, I analyze the ways in which the campaign resonates with religious members through disguising faith-based appeals to invoke their support in the fight to end human trafficking. Upon encountering A21's messages, Christians experience an internal force that reverberates with their Biblical ideology. The intensity connects this audience to the oppressed sex slaves, rallying support from this group of more fortunate viewers. However, agnostic audiences are not excluded from the campaign's persuasive efforts, as the virtual and visual production of A21's Christian references are strategically coded in order to refrain from ostracizing nonbelievers and discouraging their support of the movement. To achieve these ends, the A21 Campaign relies on affectual intensities to associate audiences with varying beliefs to the sex slaves, rather than the use of consubstantiation, or encouraging individuals to recognize the common ground they share with the victims.

Based on these assumptions, this analysis reveals how the discourse includes religious ideology, which is affirmed through certain hidden language and implied values that the campaign seems to support, without excluding nonreligious persons, who may not detect the undercover intentions of the A21 Campaign. To fulfill this aim, I will conduct a critical cultural analysis of both the visual and virtual discourse surrounding the A21 campaign, including messages released by organization and online news references regarding the nonprofit. My examination of popular discourse and cultural artifacts in relation to the social structures they influence attempts to answer Grossberg's (2010) call for an awakening of cultural studies from its prior agenda, seeking to present "a more reflexive and critical contextualization of the power of our own discourses as communication scholars" (Grossberg, 1993, p. 96). Specifically, this study will examine the inadequately addressed issue concerning religion, which Grossberg (2010) claims is current weakness within rhetorical theory.

Employing a critical cultural approach will allow me to unpack the specific ways in which the A21 Campaign's discourse works to accomplish its purpose of resonating with Christian and non-Christian audiences alike. Thus, this thesis should "investigate how people are empowered and disempowered by the particular structures and forces that organize their everyday lives in contradictory ways" (Grossberg, 2010, p. 8) by revealing the campaign's mobilization of clandestine Christian affect through the dissemination of its messages. In order to fulfill this goal, I first assess discourses referencing the A21 Campaign in virtual contexts, such as popular online news sources, along with the organization's social network sites and webpage. An investigation of such platforms is

necessary to determine the nonprofit's persuasive appeals, as the Internet is its most visible connection to the wide range of audiences it seeks to reach.

To begin, I conduct a descriptive analysis, in which I thoroughly examine both the discourse and the context from which it was produced. This close reading provides an opportunity to familiarize myself with the texts, placing me in a position to act as a critic of the A21 Campaign's rhetoric. The intrinsic study of the content released by the campaign uncovers distinct aspects of the discourse, such as its persuasive strategies, tone, imagery, language, and supporting materials, which illustrate how affect is mobilized within audiences.

Specifically, I analyze the campaign's strategies through which it attempts to personalize its messages for a broad audience with varying beliefs. For example, I consider how the non-profit's decision to use specific language and symbols exhibit the moral or spiritual persona it assumes within the discourse, causing audiences to identify A21 as an ethical, honorable organization worthy of support. I also question how the visual components of the discourse are strategically crafted to garner a specific kind of affectual response among viewers subjected to its content. This exploration allows me to reflect on the sympathetic tone that is evident within the organization's content, including the stylistic qualities that infer how audiences should receive the subject matter. Additionally, an evaluation of the supporting materials, which act as evidence to gain support for the cause, unveils their role in targeting audiences who identify as empowered persons, or "saviors," capable of fulfilling the mission of A21.

Each of these textual elements are scrutinized in an effort to answer the research questions I have proposed, before relying upon those categorized instances found within

the texts to answer the appropriate research question. Finally, I relate my findings to prior research pertaining to rhetorics of affect, identification and visual images to determine how the A21 Campaign's messages rhetorically function in the fight to end human trafficking. Based on my analysis, conclusions will be drawn and suggestions will be offered for future research.

Overview of Chapters

After outlining the critical methodology I employ in this thesis, which attempts to answer the research questions I have proposed and provide extensions to the theoretical frameworks I previously referenced, I must acknowledge my intentions for the remainder of this analysis. I will now provide an overview of the subsequent chapters that follow this introduction, presenting the expected content that will later be addressed in this work.

My second chapter further examines the theoretical underpinnings that drive this analysis, first historicizing the ways in which affective rhetorics' can be mobilized to call on audiences' internal desires and constitute specific publics. I then expand on my insertion into existing rhetorical theory, setting the foundation for the study of the mobilization of affect as a better alternative for analyzing social movement rhetoric in some cases than the lens of identification. Specifically, I outline traces of spirituality and the influence of faith-based perspective detected in the A21's Campaign's actions regarding the broader effort to end sex slavery, such as the group's presence in religious settings, like Christian conferences and churches. Still, the nonprofit's rhetorical discourse disguises its spiritual connections in a way that does not necessarily negate the support of secular societies.

Chapter III will analyze visual materials released by the A21 Campaign, such as its most popular YouTube videos and Instagram photos that are disseminated to appeal to broad audiences, regardless of their religious affiliations. Specifically, my examination will scrutinize the clandestine methods of reaffirming Christian ideology, which are hidden to prevent non-Christian audiences from collectively identifying with the movement. This explanation will provide a deeper understanding of the A21 Campaign's rhetorical motives to mobilize Christian affect.

The final chapter of my thesis will conclude by reflecting on the rhetorical strategies employed by the A21 Campaign, which contribute to the abolition of human trafficking. I will, again, reiterate my contributions to rhetorical theory, and more broadly, what this means for the field of communication studies. Implications and suggestions for future research will also be provided.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL CONTEXTUALIZATION

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”

Nelson Mandela, *Long Walk to Freedom* (1995)

In December 2013, the A21 Campaign posted an image of Nelson Mandela on its Instagram account, accompanied by the powerful quote listed above (A21, 2013b). The group’s circulation of this picture demonstrates that the campaign views its work as comparable to the efforts of peacemakers like Mandela, who have sought justice and struggled for equality for years. Indeed, A21’s discourse aims to further the work of human rights activists; however, the group’s mission extends beyond just the liberation of modern day slaves, as A21 encourages its members to act as “saviors” of the estimated 27 million trafficking victims who are currently in captivity (A21, 2014r; A21, 2014o).

Because A21 is a significant contributor in the broader anti-trafficking movement, this thesis attempts to unveil the ways in which the campaign’s rhetorical discourse mobilizes unconscious Christian affect in an effort to invoke an empathetic response among Christian and non-Christian audiences, which positions group members as relationally proximal to sex slaves and beckons supporters to act as the saviors of the victims. To fulfill this objective, I proceed to historically contextualize both the notion of the mobilization of affect, as well as the A21 Campaign’s clandestine employment of affect as a rhetorical strategy.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will provide a foundation for how the mobilization of affect can be a fruitful concept for rhetorical scholars to study, which

moves beyond reliance on the use of identification to determine how social movements produce relational proximity among supporters and the oppressed. The fulfillment of this aim is two-fold. First, I review literature surrounding affect and identification studies in rhetorical scholarship. This section allows me to emphasize how the study of the mobilization of affect fills an existing gap in related literature and better describes the production of empathy, which moves us to feel close to someone and act on his or her behalf. After making a case for how this thesis advances our study of relational proximity, I will provide the context for how A21 operates within the widespread social movement to end human trafficking by covertly mobilizing Christian affect.

Theoretical Intervention

When Consubstantiality is not Enough

Kenneth Burke is lauded as “the father of modern rhetorical studies” (Davis, 2008, p. 125), and rhetoricians rely on his explanation of identification as an integral component of the ways in which persuasion is accomplished. Burke (1969) argues that identification involves the unity of individuals who share substance with one another, such as comparable ideas and beliefs, which make them consubstantial. Yet, Harte (1977) maintains that it is identification’s implication of division within Burke’s work that invites the need for rhetoric in general. Because “identification is compensatory to division” (Burke, 1969, p. 22), rhetoric’s existence is contingent on the idea that individuals are in some ways separate. Moreover, the use of rhetorical communication that emphasizes commonalities, rather than differences, is needed to achieve consubstantiality. Therefore, a “successful speaker” uses language that focuses on the shared substance between him or her and the audience, in order to overcome the natural

division that exists between them (Harte, 1977). Burke coins the motivation to seek these mutual ties between one's self and the "other" as the act of identification, or consubstantiation, which he claims involves the self's "quest of identity" (Ambrester, 1974, p. 206).

While Burke's position regarding the notion of identification reigns superior among communication critics, it is essential that we refrain from becoming complacent in our understanding of this concept. Rather than accepting Burke's idea of consubstantiation as the most effective means of accomplishing persuasion, Wright (1994) suggests we should aim to develop an interpretation that is more beneficial to rhetorical scholars. I argue the assumption that rhetoric must overcome the natural division among humans, or invoke Burke's consubstantiality, is not the only method to motivate audiences to be receptive of a claim. Specifically, I maintain that Burke's understanding of identification is insufficient because it inadequately addresses the influence one's unconsciousness has on his or her choice to associate with another. In addition, I reason that the perception of similarity and the achievement of relational closeness should not solely be reduced to the employment of Burke's idea of identification, as relational proximity can be achieved in the absence of consubstantiality.

Other scholars agree that the concept of identification is lacking, such as Davis (2008) who compares Burke's perspective to Freud's original philosophy regarding the notion. Davis claims that Burkean identification is restricting and fails to acknowledge Freud's idea that affect is what invites people to "identify" with others. Consequently, Davis suggests rhetoricians should revisit Burke's idea. She reiterates that identification is not "compensatory to division," neither is it initially dependent on shared meaning or

consubstantiality. Rather, identification operates within “affectable-beings, infinitely open to the other’s affection, inspiration, alteration” (Davis, 2008, p. 133), which precedes one’s ability to identify with another. Consequently, “primary identification,” as Freud calls it, is equivalent to affective identification, indicating that affectability is what initially brings about symbolic intervention and encourages the act of identifying with a presented message (Davis, 2008).

Consubstantiality fails to fully account for the occurrence of persuasion in certain cases, as previous organizational scholars have argued (Cheney, 1983; Cheney & Tompkins, 1987). For example, Wright (1994) contends that a symbol’s capacity to persuade individuals is dependent on their state before they encounter the character. Day (1961) confirms persuasive symbols are most effective when identifying “with” something else, as shared substance is dependent on prior affective experiences. Yet, Burke’s identification fails to acknowledge the unconscious intensity that precedes one’s decision to connect with specific persons or ideas, which allows the individual to be persuaded. Still, few scholars have attempted to address the need to study the unconscious process that initially invites us to collaborate, before invoking identification (Quigley, 1998). Nonetheless, even Burke (1969) acknowledged that audiences often identify with specific language or symbols they encounter without deliberately doing so, indicating identification’s “partially unconscious appeal” (Ambrester, 1974). Kraemer (2013) claims this “precondition” of persuasion causes audiences to gravitate to the call. Extending such claims, I argue that our unconscious, internal feelings are responsible for “awakening an attitude of collaboration in us” and “inviting participation regardless of the subject matter,” causing individuals to assent to the presented message (Burke, 1969,

p. 58). My claim further reiterates the restrictions of Burke's idea, and recognizes that internal forces can cause audiences to adhere to a persuasive claim, even when the individuals are not consubstantial.

Still, identification's failure to acknowledge unconsciousness as part of one's choice to identify with another is not the only limitation of Burke's method. Consubstantiation is also often falsely accredited for the attainment of relational closeness that invites persuasion to take place. Wright (1994) contends that as individuals are confronted with certain symbols, they either accept or reject these representations in an effort to identify with parallel persons. The symbols' ability to persuade is enhanced when audiences believe the speaker's experiences closely align with their own. As a result, the most effective communication occurs when the degree that individuals are able to identify with one another exceeds the degree to which they are divided (Burke, 1969). Brockriede (1968) confirms that rhetoric functions, based on Burke's idea, "to reduce man's interpersonal distance from man" (p. 199-200), allowing persons to overcome the division among them and engage in "good communication" (Fisher, 1987). Thus, if relational proximity is the key to effective persuasion, rhetoric's goal is "not to win an argument but to make a connection" (Davis, 2008, p. 125). Moreover, Burke claims only when consubstantiality is achieved do individuals begin to associate with one another, inducing the type of relationship required for persuasion to take place (Day, 1960).

My argument seeks to extend the claims of Davis (2008) and others, which call for an expansion of the notion of Burkean identification. Specifically, I argue that, if we are to believe that "good communication" necessitates relational proximity, rather than division, rhetoricians should not solely reference identification scholarship to describe

how this closeness is accomplished, as one can easily be moved to feel close to others without being consubstantial with them. Thus, rhetorical scholars should attempt to unveil the ways in which the proximity that leads to persuasion can be obtained without only relying on the similar substance individual's share. My analysis seeks to address this concern by intervening in the existing conversation surrounding this dilemma and proposing that the study of the mobilization of affect addresses the shortcomings with which identification fails to account. I maintain that an explanation of unconscious, affective intensities, which precede one's decision to "identify" with another, provides scholars with a way to analyze the production of empathy and the achievement of relational closeness in a way that identification fails to conceptualize.

Affective Investments

My analysis seeks to offer an explanation for the ways in which the mobilization of affect accounts for one's unconscious, inarticulatable desires that move him or her to feel relationally proximal to others, even when the individuals are not consubstantial. I argue the study of affective investments is more fruitful than Burke's idea of consubstantiality, particularly when analyzing the rhetoric of the A21 Campaign. Similarly, Wright (1994) maintains the concept of identification is less useful in understanding social movements, organizational communication, and strongly unified large groups" (p. 302). Echoing Wright, I contend the messages disseminated by A21 are far too complex to study through the perspective of identification alone, which claims that in order to achieve the type of relational closeness that leads to persuasion, individuals must view themselves as sharing the same substance as another. However, A21's discourse mobilizes feelings or internal forces in a more complicated manner.

My employment of the mobilization of affect as a means of unpacking A21's rhetorical discourse derives from Lundberg's (2009) study of *The Passion of the Christ*. His analysis seeks to extend Burkean identification by arguing that the use of affective tropes allows for the creation of specific publics who are willing to make certain "public identity commitments" (p. 387). Whereas Warner (2002) claims publics are "organized by nothing other than discourse itself" (p. 413), Lundberg contends that publics acknowledge specific texts as a result of the affective intensities that are manifest within them. These desires are assembled through "economies of tropes" (p. 390), which direct audiences' attention to the discourse and produce the conditions necessary to constitute a public. Thus, Lundberg argues our study of affect should involve the examination of publics as sites of "tropological exchange" (p. 388) where individuals are invited to affectually invest in a discourse. Such sites of investment rearticulate the relations between individuals with a public, causing them to identify with strangers and respond in a certain way (Lundberg, 2009).

Still, Lundberg's (2009) analysis of *The Passion of the Christ* involves a text that is obviously Christian in character; thus, the film's message naturally reverberates with the internal forces of believers and constitutes an evangelical public. Lundberg simply describes the specific type of faith-based public that the discourse calls into being. My study expands Lundberg's argument by asserting that Christian publics can be constituted through rhetorical discourse that does not claim to be explicitly Christian in nature. I contend that A21 covertly employs Christian tropes, which internally resonate with believers, resulting in the creation of an evangelical public willing to affectively invest in the campaign's discourse and take action to further its cause. Nevertheless, like

Lundberg, I agree the study of affect better encompasses the achievement of relational proximity, which results in persuasion among audiences. Not only are affective investments capable of reducing the space between differing persons, allowing the individuals to achieve closeness in the absence of consubstantiality, but these internal forces also address the unconscious process that influences one's choice whether or not to associate with something else.

Affect, more broadly, "refers to states of being, rather than to their manifestation or interpretation as emotions" (Hemmings, 2005, p. 551). Massumi (1996) clarifies such states as the critical points that encompass "one's sense...of changeability" (p. 229), as individuals are confronted with "multiple, exclusive potentials," but only choose to embody one (p. 226). Grossberg (2010) maintains that discourse functions to provide these varying potentials, acting as "a virtual space of possibility and imagination" (p. 192). In this way, discourse is employed as affectual sites of becoming or identifying through "production, mobilization, deployment, and transformation" (p. 192), which encourages affective bodies to respond based upon their personally held values. Thus, discourse appeals to affective, unconscious registers that aid in the articulation of one's identity, as "individualities are constructed and investments in specific realities are defined" (Grossberg, 2010, p. 194). Grossberg extends this claim by asserting that the mobilization of affect actualizes individuals' values, motivating an otherwise uninterested audience to care about a specific cause by drawing upon the internal force that beckons them to do so. As a result, affect is a powerful motivator for people to take action.

Such unconscious, affective investments, which precede one's decision of whether to associate with a discourse, are also said to be what satisfies us and links our

experiences to those around us (Hemmings, 2005). Tomkins (1963) confirms affect as a means of recounting our personal lives to others, such as our desires and dislikes, providing us with the opportunity to imaginatively connect with them. Because the nature of our affective attachments involves “associations between feelings and contexts that are unpredictable” (Hemmings, 2005). Sedgwick (2003) contends that affect influences both our personal character and the ways in which we relate to others. Therefore, the argument can be made that relational proximity is in some ways dependent on our affective investments, which have the potential to invoke a connection between differing persons based upon shared internal intensities.

Based on these findings, I argue that the rhetorical discourse produced by the A21 Campaign should be analyzed using the lens of affect studies, as opposed to Burke’s (1969) strategy of identification. Rather than explicitly calling on audiences to view themselves as consubstantial to others, the non-profit invites viewers to support its efforts through the covert use of evangelical tropes that resonate with Christian registers, encouraging believers to identify as part of an evangelical Christian public whose responsibility is to act as a savior of the oppressed sex slaves. Thus, the clandestine mobilization of Christian affect is the rhetorical perspective I will use to examine the A21 Campaign’s visual and virtual discourse.

The remainder of this chapter is devoted to providing a historical contextualization of the A21 Campaign’s position in the anti-human trafficking movement. This background information will unveil the organization’s employment of covert Christian affect to gain the support of the evangelical Christian public, without dissuading agnostic audiences from backing the cause.

Historical Contextualization

Concerns regarding human trafficking have gained the attention of many today, making the heinous crime a trendy topic in the national public forum. A problem deeply rooted in prior years when injustice reigned and slavery was standard, some assume the resolution of this tragic misfortune was attained by the earlier generations who deemed it tolerable. However, such a perception is inaccurate, as countless victims around the world are currently in bondage (Cornyn & Klobuchar, 2015). Though approximations vary regarding the number of enslaved persons and complete accuracy is not assured because of their belonging to a hidden population, recent reports estimate approximately 30 million individuals worldwide identify as part of this group (Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking, 2014). This evidence suggests “there are more slaves in the world today than at any other time in human history” (McNally, 2009. p. 1), making “human trafficking the world’s fastest growing criminal industry” (Couch, 2015, p. 2). Defined as an organized illegal activity that involves the movement of human beings for the purposes of sexual exploitation or forced labor (Oxford, 2014), this form of modern-day slavery typically preys on vulnerable populations who are manipulated into a form of servitude against their wills (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2010).

According to the CIA’s calculations, over 15,000 individuals are annually trafficked into the US (Goolsby, 2003), contributing to the nearly 60,100 known slaves currently living within our borders (Global Slavery Index, 2014). Such numbers reiterate the idea that criminals now favor the sale of humans over drugs or guns, because these trades are both safer and more profitable (Collins, 2011). Collins (2011) states, “A pound of heroin or an AK-47 can be retailed once, but a young girl can be sold 10 to 15 times a

day—and a ‘righteous’ pimp confiscates 100 percent of her earnings” (p. 1). Still, the sexual exploitation of Americans plays a minuscule role in a much larger global issue, as human trafficking is the second largest criminal enterprise in the world, accumulating over 150.2 billion dollars in illegal profits each year (International Labour Organization, 2014).

President Obama has called the fight against human trafficking “one of the greatest human rights causes of our time,” claiming the act “is barbaric, evil and has no place in a civilized world” (The White House, 2013). Despite opposing political affiliations, many agree with his administration’s commitment to combat this crime and are taking action to end the sexual exploitation of oppressed peoples. As a result, nongovernmental organizations, staffed by passionate opponents, are stepping up to target the act of human trafficking and end the sexual exploitation of oppressed peoples. The formation of non-profit groups across the globe, such as the Polaris Project, Love146, Free the Slaves, and the Not For Sale Campaign, were created with the sole intention of putting a stop to this horrific offense.

The A21 Campaign

While the previously mentioned anti-human trafficking organizations seek to contribute to the fight against modern day slavery by promoting the cause, I argue that the A21 Campaign’s efforts exceed initial awareness. Rather than simply calling on audiences to support its initiatives, A21’s discourse covertly mobilizes Christian affect in way that awakens viewers’ internal feelings, encouraging them to act as “saviors” of the oppressed slaves. Thus, the campaign’s discourse rhetorically functions to motivate believers to promote the cause, without averting the potential interest of non-believers.

Specifically, the A21 Campaign's mission involves "abolishing injustice in the 21st century" (A21, 2014f). The program was founded in 2008 after Christine Caine and her husband Nick saw posters at an airport in Thessaloniki, Greece with the faces of missing young girls who had been captured by sexual predators (Hall, 2011). Questioning the depravity of humanity and firmly holding onto her belief that "people are not commodities for sale," Caine was motivated to create what is now one of the most widespread movements against modern day slavery (Kavanagh, 2011).

The A21 Campaign uses its "4 P Paradigm" to combat modern day slavery through prevention, protection, prosecution and partnerships (A21, 2014a). First, the group works to promote education and awareness, in an effort to stop average citizens from falling prey to this crime. The protection component of the plan involves taking part in the actual rescue of the sex slaves from their perpetrators, before attempting to offer both physical and emotional restoration for the victims. The prosecution aspect of the model entails providing trafficked individuals with legal representation, as well as working with legislators to strengthen the current government regulations created to hold accusers accountable for their actions. Still, the key component in these aims focuses on partnership with an audience of potential supporters, including both ordinary citizens and government affiliates (A21, 2014n). The organization wishes to inspire agents of change to support the A21 Campaign's cause by making monetary donations to help sustain the movement and promoting the program throughout their communities. Thus, the primary purpose of its discourse is to persuade people to defend the organization's position, offer financial aid and unite to see injustice abolished (A21, 2014f).

I argue that the discourse strategically released by A21 aids in the campaign's attempts to employ its "4 P Paradigm," especially when considering the number of journalistic sources surrounding the campaign (Christian, 2013). As a result of its messages, numerous individuals and groups, such as Good Women International, have partnered to support the campaign because of its methodological approach to this growing human rights concern. The non-profit's co-founder, Mary Wollesen stated "We were impressed with A21 because it deals with all aspects of trafficking, including prosecuting, and has an educational component" (Fisher, 2014, p. 1). Additionally, the A21 Campaign received the Hero of Human Trafficking Award in 2012 for the work completed in Greece (US Department of State, 2012), a country in which the organization still contributes to over 50 percent of human trafficking convictions as of 2014 (A21, 2014q). Based on the widespread support and attention the campaign receives, I maintain that the non-profit evidently plays an integral role in the larger movement to abolish modern day slavery.

Indeed, a simple Google search for items including the phrase "A21 Campaign" yields over 360,000 results, which is a significantly larger number of references than the organization's counterparts, such as Love146 and Free the Slaves. Additionally, the A21 Campaign is one of the most pervasive modern slavery movements, generating a large number of devout followers on sites such as Facebook, with nearly 140,000 "likes," and with over 83,000 followers (A21, n.d.; A21 Campaign, n.d.). Moreover, the A21 Campaign has both administrative offices and restoration facilities on the ground in Norway, Ukraine, Bulgaria, Greece, South Africa and Australia (A21, 2014t). The group's large following and global expansions indicate that A21 is a noteworthy

contributor in the international fight for freedom. I contend the non-profit's popularity stems from the construction and dissemination of A21's messages in a way that influence a broad range of audiences and beckons their support.

In order to maintain a significant presence within the anti-human trafficking movement, A21 must intentionally create messages that resonate with certain publics. More specifically, I maintain that A21's popular discourse has traces of Christian doctrine embedded within its content, seeking to connect with an evangelical Christian public who may otherwise be uninterested in supporting such a movement. However, these glimpses of spiritual references are covertly coded in a way that seeks not to offend agnostic persons, indicating the group's sensitivity to audiences with varying religious perspectives. In fact, its efforts to subtly promote Christianity, I argue, demonstrate the campaign's greater devotion to maintaining continued relations with those who are faithless. This is evident through the group's removal from religious categorizations because it does not claim to be faith-based, nor does it strictly appeal to an audience of believers (Blumberg & Hafiz, 2014).

Still, there is an existing overt connection to religious ideology instilled within the A21 Campaign that becomes evident after a thorough analysis of the materials it produces. It is for this reason that, I believe, the Christian church has become a supportive setting where A21's discourse can thrive, enabling believers to discuss the implications of sex slavery in a sacred space. For example, Hillsong church points to A21 as an initiative worthy of support on its "Because We Can" webpage, which provides members with global and community outreach programs that further the message of the gospel (Hillsong, 2014). Thus, this portion of my thesis is devoted to historically

contextualizing the clandestine Christian influences present in the discourse disseminated by A21, laying the groundwork to further prove how the campaign relies on the mobilization of Christian affect in its attempt to end human trafficking. In the remainder of this chapter, I seek to demonstrate how the non-profit relies on faith-based methods to resonate with believers, without deterring the interest and potential support of non-believers. Again, this argument will reiterate the role A21 is attempting to play in the larger abolitionist social movement, mobilizing Christian affect through the covert use of evangelical tropes that resonate with Christian registers, encouraging believers to act as “saviors” and support the cause.

Hillsong Church Births a Movement

Christine Caine accredits her nearly 25 years of involvement with Hillsong Church as her motivation to create the A21 Campaign (Althoff, 2013). With its main campus in Sydney, Australia, the Pentecostal ministry, which has been referenced as one of the “most globally influential churches,” welcomes approximately 100,000 worshipers each week to its campuses across the globe (Bailey, 2013). This growing organization thrives in a country known for its nonchalant attitude towards religion, as marketing experts speculate that the church is “Australia’s most powerful brand” (Hicks, 2012). Here in the US, the ministry is equally as popular, drawing in large crowds of lay persons, along with numerous celebrities, such as pop artist Justin Bieber, Oklahoma City Thunder forward Kevin Durant, and actress Vanessa Hudgens (Schuster, 2014).

Critics claim the secret recipe for the ministry’s success involves its production of theatrical services, complete with live Christian rock music and articulate preachers who passionately present charismatic teachings (Pitts, Brown, Ramirez, & Efron, 2014). Still,

some disagree with the church's choice not to address controversial topics such as homosexuality and gay marriage, claiming Hillsong's releases feel good messages to encourage and empower the masses, rather than unapologetically teaching the Bible (Paulson, 2014). However, experts agree the re-framing of the gospel of Jesus Christ in a way that appeals to the contemporary culture of young people, who once considered the Bible stale and outdated, has confirmed that this new form of "hipster Christianity" aids in the church's ability to sell its religious doctrine (Hicks, 2012). Furthermore, many are unaware of the ministry's humble beginnings, overlooking the initial scandal that prompted the mega-church's emergence. Blackwell (2014) confirms that lead pastor Brian Houston's father, Frank Houston, confessed in 2000 that he had sexually exploited an underage male member of his church congregation in New Zealand 30 years before. Disapproving of his actions, Brian, who was then the national president of Australia's Assemblies of God, fired his father and took over his church, merging it with his own ministry to create what we now know as Hillsong Church (Blackwell, 2014).

I argue that Frank Houston's act of sexual exploitation forced the Christian church to address the taboo topic within a sacred setting. Yet, rather than allowing the shame of this dishonorable act to destroy their faith, believers appeared to unite in an effort to rise above Houston's mistake. Hillsong's ability to thrive among evangelical groups in the midst of such a scandal, I believe, opened the door for groups such as the A21 Campaign to obtain the support of Christian audiences, as well.

Thus, it was Hillsong's establishment based on a sex scandal that convinced Christine Caine that a greater good can result from a reprehensible story – a story much like her own. Caine was a childhood victim of sexual abuse herself, testifying that from

the ages of three to 15, she was exploited by four men in her life (Christian, 2013). Caine claims during that time Australian's refused to acknowledge the existence of such forms of injustice; therefore, she buried her insecurity and shame, admitting she often believed the mistreatment she experienced was in some way her fault (Althoff, 2013). It was not until the age of 32 that her "mother" informed Caine that she and her older brother had been adopted as newborns. Her official birth certificate labeled her "unnamed #2508" of 1966, reminding Caine that she was simply another number and was unwanted by her biological mother (Meyer, 2013).

Caine claims her past of abuse and neglect reached a turning point at the age of 22 when she began to attend Hillsong. Reared in a Greek Orthodox background, Caine was encouraged not to read the Bible, as it was the profession of the priest. However, after getting involved at Hillsong, her passion for God was reignited, and she immersed herself in the ministry (Partridge, 2010). Initially, she started volunteering to clean up after Hillsong's youth group meetings, eventually taking on a leadership role in the youth ministry, before joining the pastoral team at the church (Althoff, 2013). In light of the ministry's influence on her life, Caine states, "Without a doubt, so much of who I am and what I do today is a direct result of having been consistently exposed to what I consider the greatest leadership teaching on the planet" (Caine, 2012a, p. 1). She praises Brian and Bobbie Houston for the role they played in converting from a broken person to a passionate leader, and has set out to fulfill their goal of "championing the cause of local churches all over the world" (Caine, 2012a, p. 1).

I argue that Caine is a product of Hillsong's global Christian mission to reach a world of non-believers, and she attempts to fulfill her position as a leader of this

movement to save the lost by employing the persuasive tactics the Houstons instilled within her. First, Caine established the A21 Campaign by using the same rhetorical strategies Hillsong employs to constitute an evangelical public of devoted followers. Seeking to appeal to the masses, the campaign disseminates its messages, which are clearly rooted in Christian doctrine, in a way that does not highlight the group's religious ties. Like Hillsong, A21 similarly works to empower potential "saviors" to rescue lost and broken people, specifically sex slaves. Additionally, I maintain that based on the church's emergence, Caine recognized people could spiritually benefit from sex scandals like her own, and she founded the A21 Campaign as a result to free the captives, both physically and spiritually (Equip & Empower, 2015). Claiming that through Christ, she had overcome, Caine desired young sex slaves to experience that same form of redemption. Thus, she set out to create an evangelical public of "saviors" whose objective is to rescue the "lost" trafficking victims in more ways than one.

Clandestine Christianity at Work

An analysis of the discourse promoting the A21 Campaign reveals an evident emphasis of the organization's intentions to provide restoration to former sex slaves. While such an assumption could easily be made in regards to other anti-human trafficking groups, A21's messages, which are based on the perspective of Caine and her Hillsong experience, more specifically aim to provide physical, mental and spiritual healing for victims. The following portion of this chapter will first examine the language Caine employs when publicly referencing both the campaign's efforts and its fundamental supporters. I argue that when speaking on behalf of the organization, Caine openly acknowledges Christ's role in fulfilling her personal mission as an abolitionist, as

well as her global vision to bring an end to the issue of sex slavery. Caine's words are then juxtaposed to the content released by the campaign itself that does not directly involve her presence, which, I contend, includes clandestine Christian references without overtly involving religious ideology. Still, while Caine openly professes her faith, the A21 Campaign denies any religious affiliation. Thus, I illustrate the group's first attempt at mobilizing Christian affect by using coded Christian language and tropes within its rhetoric to appeal to the underlying values of Christians. This rhetorical strategy functions to create an evangelical Christian public willing to support the campaign, despite its rejection of the Christian label.

First, I unpack how Caine's words spoken in regards to the A21 Campaign are strategically selected to echo the Christian doctrine responsible for birthing the organization. Leading the movement, Caine often reiterates that abolitionists' positioned in A21's transition facilities help transform broken victims to be made whole again through their display of "grace" and "mercy" (GodTV, 2015). Caine elaborates on this transformation in a personal interview that is featured in the promotional video entitled "Christine Caine – The A21 Campaign," which can be found on YouTube. In the film, the leader explains that the first priority of the organization is to meet the physical needs of the trafficked, before providing post-trauma therapy to repair their psychological state of mind. Her faith-based perspective is revealed through what she describes as the campaign's third provision for victims, which involves bathing the former sex slaves in continual prayer and asking God to heal their spiritual wounds (Franklin, 2013). Seconds later, Caine deems the volunteers' service as "a labor of love," stating that her workers are capable of breaking down barriers between themselves and the victims through their

display of unconditional love, grace and mercy. She states, “With the love of God, we can love people to wholeness and freedom.” According to Caine, this display of Christ-like qualities instills confidence within those affected, proving to trafficking survivors that through God’s redemption, they are assured a bright future, and a relationship with Jesus Christ (Franklin, 2013).

In the same video, which has been widely circulated among Christian circles on the Internet, Caine ultimately gives God and His followers credit for the campaign’s successes thus far. She comments, “It works, the gospel of hope works,” in reference to the hundreds of transformations the group has witnessed in the lives of the rescued individuals (Franklin, 2013). While Caine admits, “It’s breathtaking to see what God has done in our offices around the world” (Althoff, 2013, p. 2), she also points to the church as a significant motivator of the campaign’s messages. She explains, “Without the church community, I don’t know how I could do this” (Partridge, 2010, p. 4). The leader recognizes that her organization is most fruitful because of its reliance on churches to deem A21 a credible cause worthy of support and to include A21 in their mission’s profile (Short, 2010). Caine, speaking on behalf of her army of volunteers, is recognized showing her appreciation for the financial support of religious groups, in addition to their prayers and willingness to spread A21’s mission in a sacred setting (God TV, 2015).

I argue that Caine’s position as a minister provides her with opportunities to endorse the A21 Campaign throughout her teachings. Thus, she is able to naturally insert the religious principles connected to the anti-trafficking movement within evangelical settings to audiences that are more receptive of such influence. Indeed, as the face of the campaign, audiences expect Caine to openly make Biblical references in order to gain the

support of believers. Still, while Caine does not hesitate to explicitly mention the Bible when talking about A21's efforts, the campaign, itself, rarely mentions any affiliation it has with religion. I contend that the group's rhetoric distances itself from the spiritual world in an effort to maintain the interest of those who disagree with Christian ideology.

Though the fundamental Christian values Caine referenced in the previously mentioned video still apply to the organization, A21's spiritual suggestions are much more covert in nature. A popular page on the group's website called "21 Ways to Help" offers practical actions that ordinary citizens can take in order to abolish this injustice (A21, 2014p). The post includes common ways in which outsiders can be supportive of social movements, such as promoting the cause on social media, donating money, and volunteering their time. However, ranking eighth on the list is the call to pray, stating the campaign covets the prayers of audiences and encouraging them to download the group's official prayer guide. This document is not included within the post and can only be accessed by opening a different webpage. Still, upon locating the guide, the text requests prayers on behalf of the victims, traffickers, governments, root causes, global awareness, the church and the campaign (A21, 2014b). Another spiritual reference noted within the list of potential contributions includes a request to "remember the 21st," calling on audiences to join A21's fast on the twenty first day of each month "as a reminder to take action and stand for justice around the world" (A21, 2014p, p. 1). This is the group's attempt to convince audiences to deny their fleshly desires and give up some form of nutritional substance in order to be reminiscent of the sufferings of less fortunate trafficking victims. Consequently, the coded Christian language embedded within the "21 Ways to Help" post is strategically included to resonate with the beliefs of Christians and

call for the creation of an evangelical public of supporters. Still, supporters must seek out the traces of religious ideology located within the list, or the clandestine references would otherwise be easily unnoticed.

A21 also frequently uploads blogs to their webpage that update viewers on current events surrounding the international fight against sex slavery, feats the campaign has recently accomplished, and encouraging stories of former human trafficking victims (A21, 2014d). Within these posts, which are typically written and distributed by staff members and volunteers, traces of Christian discourse often appear, affirming the clandestine use of spiritual tropes to appeal to readers. In the post entitled “June Update,” staff writers report that since the campaign’s creation, it has successfully “brought light to dark situations, hope to hopeless places, and life to listless lives” (A21, 2014i). Recurring language, such as hope, light, justice, and compassion, are often used to describe the work of those dedicated to fulfilling the organization’s mission (Partridge, 2010). The blog also intentionally labels these individuals as “freedom fighters” who diligently work to provide “physical recovery as well as internal freedom” to former sex slaves (A21, 2014s). Though secular quotations, such as “No one is free when others are oppressed” (A21, 2014i, p. 1) enforce the promotion of freeing those in captivity without mention of religious doctrine, the argument can be made that “freedom” is a critical campaign objective based on the fact that Christians believe they have been freed through Christ’s bloodshed. Again, these instances merely hint at the campaign’s support of Christianity; however, such references call upon the affective investment of believers whose values clearly align with A21’s objectives. Moreover, the affective tropes mobilize a public of evangelicals to take action and further the anti-human trafficking movement.

The examples mentioned above demonstrate the A21 Campaign's loyalty to uphold the Christian values from which Caine founded the non-profit. Though the leader is much more overt in her examples of how A21's efforts fulfill the church's objectives to reach the lost, the campaign also covertly mentions its support of Christian ideals. However, these references are discreet in nature, seeking to appeal to the inner affections of believers, without offending potential supporters who are agnostic. The covert Christian language and tropes employed not only function to create an evangelical public of supporters, but also to mobilize these individuals to take action. The following section of this chapter will continue to affirm this argument as I unveil the broader movements with which the A21 Campaign aligns itself to see injustice abolished on a global level. Specifically, I analyze the A21 Campaign's role in the popular END IT Movement, which, to no surprise, has been intentionally crafted to resonate with Christians, yet still draws upon the support of nonbelievers. The group's rhetoric affiliated with END IT, I argue, not only employ covert Christian tropes, but also functions to produce an empathetic response among an audience of believers through the personalization of victim's experiences. As a result, relational proximity is achieved through the discourse's emphasis on the singular subjectivity of the trafficked persons.

Supporting the END IT Movement

The END IT Movement was founded in 2013 as a grassroots campaign to raise awareness of the millions entrapped in sex slavery today. Its goal is to shine a light on the existence of this injustice in what many consider to be a "free" world (END IT, 2014). END IT is comprised of the world's leading anti-human trafficking organizations, which are physically positioned on the ground to prevent potential victims from being

trafficked, rescue individuals currently in bondage, and restore their lives to a state of normalcy (END IT, 2014).

I contend that the A21 Campaign, which is one of the movement's key coalition partners, plays an integral role in achieving END IT's objectives. An analysis of the movement's discourse reveals its dependence on the same covert employment of Christian tropes employed by A21, which strategically appeal to an audience of believers, without disengaging the interest of nonbelievers. The upcoming portion of this chapter is devoted to historicizing the END IT Movement's position in the international protest to abolish modern day slavery. I will first describe how the movement originated, laying a foundation for its allegiance to Christian ideology, before discussing Christine Caine and A21's role in furthering its aims. Additionally, I will expose the exact ways in which the END IT Movement mobilizes clandestine Christian affect within its discourse, inspired by the similar work of A21.

The END IT Movement's initial emergence in 2013 occurred at one of the most popular religious gatherings worldwide, known as the Passion Conference, officially branding this initiative as belonging to the spiritual sector. Although the movement is not limited to Christian involvement and is not intended to promote Passion or its beliefs (Frasier, 2013), its original affiliation with the conference causes many to believe otherwise. The Passion Conference, founded by Pastor Louie Giglio of Passion City Church in 1997, is an assembly of thousands of young adults, aged 18 to 25, who congregate for one weekend at the beginning of each calendar year to worship, pray, learn, and give (Frasier, 2013). Giglio formed the gathering to ignite a passion for Jesus within a massive group of young Christians willing to ground themselves in the words of

Isaiah 26:8 (New International Version), “For Your name and renown are the desire of our souls” (Christian Broadcasting Network, 2015). Drawing in college students from campuses all throughout the nation, Passion serves to unite a generation of radical evangelicals to invest in “something bigger than themselves” (Hansen, 2007, p. 1), staking their lives on “the fame of the One who rescues and restores” (Malhotra, 2014, p. 2). The conference involves worship services led by some of the most popular Christian artists, such as Matt Redman, Chris Tomlin and David Crowder, as well as teachings from well-known evangelists like John Piper, Francis Chan, and Beth Moore (Hallowell, 2013).

Christine Caine, who is a close friend of Giglio and his wife Shelley, frequents the Passion Conference as a keynote speaker. In fact, her presence at the worship gathering is highly anticipated by the young adults each year, as she is considered as one of the most dynamic Christian communicators (Partridge, 2010). I maintain that in 2012, Caine returned to Passion and used her well-established platform within the religious community to associate the injustice of human trafficking to her audiences’ role as Christians. I argue that Caine’s message called upon the believers’ affective desires in an effort to create an evangelical public of supporters committed to furthering A21’s initiatives by acting as “saviors” of the oppressed.

Caine’s message, included in the short film called “Christine Caine at Passion 2012 Georgia” (David, 2012), begins with a personal story of her trip to the concentration camps in Auschwitz, Poland. This experience is where Caine was reminded of the young children, which were the same age as her daughters, who lost their lives in the Holocaust. Disappointed in the church’s failure to take action against such a horrific injustice, Caine

recalls promising God that if such a tragedy were to occur in her lifetime, she would not stay silent. Thus, her call to abolish modern day slavery follows the story, motivating an audience of “rescued” persons to fulfill God’s purpose for their lives by rescuing others. Caine elaborates that the scriptures deem believers as the light of the world, reminding listeners “light works most effectively in one place...darkness.” Consequently, the evangelical leader metaphorically identifies the “darkness” as the existence of sex slavery in our modern world, encouraging Christians to fight for the freedom of the oppressed (David, 2012).

Again, her presentation within this religious setting provided her with the opportunity to overtly reference the role one’s faith should play in his or her choice to support the abolition of sex slavery. However, as Caine approaches the end of her teaching, she seeks to invoke relational proximity between her audience of privileged Christians and the oppressed sex slaves she wants to them help save. Caine concludes her talk by strategically reiterating that “the line between us and them is very fine,” but, “we,” as the more fortunate persons, tend to consider the millions of oppressed slaves as just another statistic. Yet, Caine challenges audiences to personalize the experience, claiming, “When something changes from a number or a statistic or something on a poster to ‘mine,’ everything changes” (David, 2012). Replacing the conception of the “millions” with the “one,” or a single individual that audience members are motivated to rescue, is Caine’s final attempt to evoke an empathetic response among the evangelical public. Her primary aim involves priming her audience to feel relationally close to the trafficking victims through the use of subjectivity, which invites them to see themselves as relationally proximal to the sex slaves. This act of personalization, which is used by

the campaign and its leader, is the second evident rhetorical strategy that calls for the mobilization of Christian affect by an evangelical public.

Caine's teaching was well received, generating over 91,000 views on YouTube to date (David, 2012), and it sparked the awakening of a young generation of Christians to further the cause. Thus, the argument can be made that the rhetorical devices employed within Caine's message called for the creation of a Christian public willing to fight to see slavery ended in their lifetime. In addition, the sermon's popularity inspired the following Passion Conference to devote its "do something now" portion of the event to the abolition of human trafficking. Therefore, in 2013 Giglio and his team introduced the over 60,000 college-aged students in attendance, a number that broke the record for the largest single gathering of this movement in North America (Malhotra, 2013), to the END IT Movement, which marked the commencement of one of the most popular anti-human trafficking protests in America among believers and nonbelievers alike.

The END IT Movement's intent to "shine a light on slavery" acknowledges the fact that raising awareness will not solve the problem of human trafficking. However, the initiative firmly believes that audiences cannot be expected to act on behalf of the oppressed if they do not know that this injustice exists. Thus, END IT claims "awareness is doing the work" by alerting people of the issue surrounding sex slavery, in hopes that the individuals will be motivated to take action (Robinson, 2013, p. 3). Specifically, END IT has asked its audiences to draw a red "x" on their hands on what it has deemed "Shine a Light on Slavery Day" to raise awareness that modern day slavery exists in the allegedly "free" world we live in today. Not only is this symbol intended to initiate interpersonal conversations with others in regards to its meaning, but supporters were

also encouraged to display these “x’s” on their social media accounts to virally spread their personally-held convictions that slavery has no place in our current society (Sutter, 2013).

I contend that the rhetorical discourse produced by the END IT relies on the same clandestine Christian appeals, which are evident in A21’s messages. Much like its leading coalition partner, the movement covertly mobilize unconscious, Christian affect, aiming to constitute an evangelical public of persons whom not only empathize with the sex slaves, but are also willing to act as “saviors” on their behalves. I argue that END IT relies on multiple sites to beckon audiences to affectively invest in the movement’s cause, such as the images, symbols and videos produced by the group. Thus, the remaining portion of this chapter is devoted to unveiling END IT’s mobilization of affect within these forms of discourse.

When analyzing the visuals produced by the END IT on its Instagram account, it becomes clear that the movement strategically crafts its images to affectually appeal to an evangelical Christian public. Again, the use of covert Christian tropes specifically beckons the attention of faith-based persons. For example, specific language, such as the goal to “shine a light on slavery” by activating a generation of “freedom fighters” to combat the “darkness” of sex slavery and provide “restoration” to victims (END IT, n.d.), likely resonates with a community of spiritual persons who identify such phrases as critical components of their Christian ideology. Thus, the captions of END IT’s images call for the creation of an evangelical Christian public willing to support the movement based upon the affective intensities felt from the use of covert Christian tropes.

Still, the images themselves surpass the initial call for the constitution of such a public, acting as a visual form of discourse that primes audiences to empathetically respond to the presented message. For instance, the tragic stories of trafficking victims are personalized in way that reiterates the singularity of their subjectivity to this crime. While “27 million” acts as a justification for the severity of this concern, it is simply another statistic that holds no immediate value to viewers. Thus, END IT releases a series of images that visually depict the idea that “slavery has a face” (END IT, n.d.). To illustrate this concept, they focus on the visual portrayal of individuals’ experiences that have fallen prey to human trafficking. One example depicts the folded legs of a former female sex slave concealed by a wet glass shower door, indicating her desire to wash away the horrendous experiences of her past and the stench of the men who had sexually exploited her (END IT, 2013). A series of additional images display the faces of former sex slaves who have been freed from captivity because of END IT’s efforts. The close-framed shots include the varied facial expressions of these young victims, accompanied by a caption with the individual’s name (END IT, n.d.). These images invoke an empathetic response among viewers who are confronted with the singular stories of one victim at a time. This act of personalization invites audiences to feel relationally close to the “one” trafficked person than the millions currently trapped in modern day slavery. Through the achievement of relational proximity, this evangelical Christian public is summoned to fulfill their roles as followers of Christ and save the slaves, just as they believe he saved them.

A third rhetorical strategy used within this discourse to mobilize Christian affect involves the strategy of acting as a “savior” which, I argue, is evident through supporters’

embodiment of the red “x.” While scrolling through the A21’s Instagram account, viewers are likely to see one of several images released by the campaign that portray supporters of the END IT movement with red “x’s” on their hands and tape over their mouths (A21, 2014h). In this way, the followers’ display of the “x” symbolically speaks for itself, without necessitating the need for words. Thus, the act of embodying the “x” conveys a message that the oppressed persons cannot, “speaking” on their behalves. Ironically, when the activists silence their own voice in honor of those whose voices have been silenced, they essentially become a voice for the voiceless. Hence, supporters adopt the responsibility to act as a “savior” based upon their affective investments in the evangelical Christian public, which invokes their commitment to fight for the oppressed and end human trafficking.

In addition to the previously mentioned visual images, accompanied by their captions, I argue that END IT’s video called “If You Could See It, Would You End It?” invites an evangelical Christian public to affectively invest in the movement’s initiatives and act as “saviors” of the victims (END IT Movement, 2013). As the video begins, a woman struggles to escape from a man who forces her into the back of a large truck, along with other females he is holding captive. While the white truck is seen traveling along a country highway, flashes on the girls’ bruised faces and tattered, bloody bodies are displayed to illustrate that the vehicle is transporting victims of abuse. When the truck enters the city of Atlanta, Georgia, its walls suddenly become transparent, allowing people outside of the vehicle to see the act of human trafficking take place right before their eyes. The video then depicts the disturbed faces of bystanders on the street as they are confronted with the sight of the abused women through the glass, portraying the

individuals' shock and disgust after being exposed to a glimpse of sex slavery. Thus, the clip functions, I believe, to personalize the victims' stories, creating an empathetic response among audiences, which cause viewers to feel relationally proximal to the women. Consequently, an evangelical public is called into being, before being motivated to respond as "saviors" of the sex slaves based on the discourse's appeal to their unconscious, Christian affective intensities.

The texts included in this analysis seek to briefly demonstrate the ways in which the END IT Movement's discourse covertly mobilizes Christian affect using similar tactics as the A21 Campaign. Coded Christian language, the personalization of victims' experiences, and calling on audiences to act as "saviors" of the oppressed are each evident techniques employed by the END IT Movement. Together, rhetorical strategies operate to motivate audiences, both Christian and non-Christian, to affectively invest in the movement's cause to end human trafficking on a global level.

This chapter first provided an argument for rhetorical scholars to move beyond the use of identification to describe how social movements invoke relational proximity between supporters and the oppressed. I suggest that the mobilization of affect is a more beneficial concept for rhetoricians to employ in certain cases, as it conceptualizes the achievement of relational closeness based upon unconscious, internal feelings in a way that consubstantiation fails to do. Finally, I sought to provide the necessary background information needed to develop a further understanding for how the A21 Campaign operates within the anti-human trafficking movement through the covert mobilization of Christian affect.

In the next chapter, I provide a fragmented analysis of the visual rhetorical discourse produced by the A21 Campaign, such as the pictures and videos shared on the non-profit's blog, Instagram and YouTube accounts. A close reading of these texts will demonstrate the ways in which A21 covertly mobilizes Christian affect in an effort to constitute an evangelical public whose members willingly act as saviors of the oppressed.

CHAPTER III

CALLING ALL SAVIORS: VISUALLY ANALYZING THE A21

CAMPAIGN'S MOBILIZATION OF CHRISTIAN AFFECT

“Compassion is only emotion – until you cross the street. Compassion means action. You go to them.”

Christine Caine, *Undaunted* (2012)

Christine Caine made the above remarks while discussing why she created the A21 Campaign, claiming the non-profit's origin is based on the story of the Good Samaritan in the Bible (Luke 10:25-37, NIV). Caine argues that the Levite and priest in the parable were too busy with their religious agendas to stop and help the man lying on the side of the road. But, the Samaritan saw the man as the “object” of his ministry, rather than as an “interruption” to his spiritual commitments. Much like the religious men in the story, Caine blames the Christian community for pitying the oppressed, rather than crossing the street to help them. Thus, she calls on believers to be compassionate, instead of emotional, and take action to rescue those who are less fortunate (Caine, 2012b). Moreover, I argue the founder specifically beckons the support of an evangelical audience, labeling believers as agents of change who are capable of acting as saviors of human trafficking victims and fulfilling their Christian responsibilities, as a result.

In the previous chapter, I contend that rhetoricians should examine the mobilization of affect in discourses, rather than simply whether or not identification occurs, when studying how social movements attempt to position audiences as relationally proximal to the oppressed. I then historically contextualize how the A21 Campaign operates within the widespread social movement to end human trafficking by

surreptitiously including traces of spirituality within its messages, based on the group's undeniable connection to faith-based perspectives. In this chapter, I provide an example of the usefulness of such an analysis by examining how the A21 Campaign mobilizes Christian affect and constitutes a Christian public primed to fight human trafficking as a social issue. Specifically, I unveil how the campaign's visual rhetorical discourse mobilizes Christian affect and appeals to the affective desires of an evangelical public by calling upon the Christian trope of acting Christ-like, positioning believers as having the ability to save the oppressed sex slaves and fulfill their role as followers of Christ. The campaign accomplishes this using two primary strategies. First, I argue the non-profit frames trafficked individuals as "victims" in need of a savior. Second, they frame observers of the discourse as active agents and potential saviors. As a result, Christians are encouraged to support A21's cause and take action to end human trafficking as a means of achieving their religious responsibility to help save the lost, just as they believe Christ saved them from their sins.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will first provide a brief description of the intricacies of Christian tropes, before unveiling how these tactics are used to mobilize Christian affect and constitute an evangelical public. I will then conduct a fragmented analysis of the visual images and videos produced and disseminated by the A21 Campaign on its webpage, blog and Instagram account, as well as the public service announcements released by the group. This close reading of the non-profit's visual texts will support my claim that A21 mobilizes Christian affect in a covert manner, consequently constituting an evangelical public. As a result, the campaign attempts to

motivate members of this Christian public to act as saviors of the victims portrayed in A21's discourse, based upon the strategic appeals made to believers' affective desires.

Affective Evangelical Christian Tropes

Lundberg's (2009) study reveals "the inextricable link between texts, public affinities, and affects, arguing that public affinities and affective investments are lodged within an economy of tropes that precede, work through, and point beyond public-making texts" (p. 388). In an effort to extend his ideas, I argue the A21 Campaign's visual discourse rhetorically functions to constitute an evangelical public. Additionally, the group's intentional framing of sex slaves as "victims" mobilizes unconscious affective investments within this particular public, or "site of tropological exchange" (p. 388), by tapping into Christian registers and relying on the trope of "acting Christ-like" to attempt to encourage supporters to "save" the oppressed.

According to Lundberg (2009), discourse has the capacity to both constitute publics and encourage action through the mobilization of affective intensities. Based on this description, the study of Christian affect specifically analyzes messages that resonate with audiences' unconscious investments as a result of their affiliation with the Christian religion. Such rhetorical techniques are used to encourage persons who identify themselves as "Christ followers" to imagine their relations with others as grounded in their pre-existing religious logic, mobilizing an evangelical public to mimic their actions after those of their savior, Jesus Christ.

The employment of specific tropes can provide insight into the formation of such identity commitments upon encountering a text. Tropes, or "sights of investment" (Lundberg, 2009, p. 390), solicit audience participation and function to reaffirm

individuals' devotion to certain publics of which they are members. Similarly to Lundberg, I believe rhetorical discourse can employ tropes in an effort to reiterate audiences' "identity commitments at the core of American Evangelicalism" (p. 388). Indeed, Hall (2003) calls for the use of religious tropes as a means to construct more effective Christian rhetoric. Specifically, I argue that A21's visuals use the trope of "acting Christ-like" to call upon the affective investments of Christian viewers and beckon believers to support the campaign as a means of identifying themselves as belonging to the religious community.

Other scholars examine the use of evangelical tropes with rhetorical discourse, such as Turek's (2014) study that unveils President George W. Bush's religious appeals that attempt to persuade audiences to vote for him. She argues the former president strategically utilized the trope of "compassion" to validate his political actions. Still, other academics focus on tropes of "martyrdom," which are often employed by Christians who feel they are the weaker opponents in an unfair fight against evil (Stichele & Penner, 2009).

For the purpose of this analysis, I refer to the trope of "acting Christ-like" as Christians' effort to emulate their behavior according to the life they believe Christ, himself, lived while on earth. Having faced the same trials and tribulations that we, as humans, experience today, followers of Christ are expected to live their lives based upon the example he set. This fundamental principle of those who claim to be believers is reiterated in Ephesians 2:10 (NIV), which calls Christians "God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works." The Christian community is also called to live a life that "is holy and pleasing to God," as stated in Romans 12:1 (NIV). Thus, in order to

please God, members of this evangelical public must be “doers of the Word” (James 1:22, English Standard Version), aligning their actions with those of Christ, as portrayed within the Bible. In this way, Christians can fulfill their savior’s will, as requested in Romans 8:9 (NIV), by acting in the way that Christ would act. Consequently, the trope that I believe A21 employs within its visual discourse of “acting Christ-like” is primarily grounded in how the Bible instructs Christians to behave.

I argue the non-profit’s messages affectively appeal to the evangelical Christian public constituted by the discourse through attempting to reduce the space between believers and sex slaves, positioning faith-based persons as relationally proximal to the oppressed. More specifically, the campaign seeks to achieve these affective investments through its construction of the women in its visual messages as helpless victims in need of others willing to act on their behalves and save them from human trafficking. Members of the evangelical public are then often motivated to support the campaign’s cause to end sex slavery, viewing their involvement with A21 as a way to fulfill their role as “Christ followers.” As a result, evangelical publics feel that they can achieve their purpose as believers after acting to help the oppressed, saving the sex slaves just as they believe Christ saved Christians. Thus, I contend through pairing emotional experiences of trafficked victims with Christians’ commitment to act as saviors, an intense investment is produced within the discourse that activates a core component of evangelical public affinities, which is the need to “save” the oppressed just as Christ is believed to have done.

The subsequent section of this thesis critically examines the visual discourse distributed by the A21 Campaign in order to provide a deeper understanding of the

group's attempts to mobilize affect among an audience of believers. This analysis will unveil the ways in which A21's images and videos are constructed to covertly appeal to Christians' internal desires, without overtly labeling its discourse as "religious," in order to keep from deterring the potential support of nonbelievers.

Picture This: Victims in Need of Saviors

Construction of Victimhood

A primary strategy used to mobilize unconscious Christian affect within A21's messages involves the framing of sex slaves as victims in need of the audience's help. I argue the campaign strategically releases visual images and videos that portray trafficked persons as helpless individuals who have been forced into domestic servitude and sexual exploitation against their wills. Additionally, the non-profit typically depicts members of the oppressed group as young, white women trapped in abusive situations by male perpetrators who unfairly take advantage of them. The females in the images, which are viewed as the weak, vulnerable prey of ruthless offenders, contribute to the "metaphor of victimhood," which inspires the affective investments of individuals who identify as part of the evangelical community of believers (Lundberg, 2012, p. 153). Examples of the A21 Campaign's construction of white females as "victims" in need of a savior are evident upon analysis of the group's advertisements, Instagram posts and YouTube videos, which are referenced in the remainder of this section.

One particular public service announcement released by the campaign via its virtual contexts, such as A21's social media sites and blog, displays the message that "prostitution is not always a choice" in large white letters across the center of the image. The picture portrays the lower portion of a white female's legs, who is wearing high-

heeled black, leather boots and evocative stockings, alluding to the idea that she is a participant in some form of sexual activity. However, the bulky chains that lie on the hardwood floor near her feet and darkness that surrounds her legs suggest the individual is being held against her will (Platt, n.d.). The image functions to reiterate the notion that young sex slaves do not always choose the path of sexual exploitation; rather, the girls are “victims” of an unfortunate experience that is forced upon them, despite their resolve to refrain from prostitution. Consequently, the female is recognized as being in bondage, unable to escape the shackles that bind her to her sexual offenders.

The metaphor of victimhood is similarly displayed in an additional advertisement produced by A21, which, again, reiterates the idea that the sexual abuse experienced by trafficked persons is not always the result of a personal choice that the individuals have made. This specific poster displays a young, white female being pulled by the hand in two different directions, accompanied by the quote “Many women are prostituted against their will, and are actually victims of human trafficking.” The picture functions to juxtapose how traffickers view the act of sexual exploitation, in comparison with how trafficked individuals feel about these encounters. The left side of the image colorfully depicts the female holding the hand of a man as an act of embrace. In the upper corner of the visual, the words “sex for him” are shown, confirming the perpetrators’ belief that the experience involves a pleasurable and intimate act. Yet, the right side of the picture is black and white in color, illustrating the same girl being grabbed by the arm as an abusive action. The phrase “slavery for her” is included in the top corner of the image, demonstrating that the girl is merely being held captive, and she is not free to escape this lifestyle that has been forced upon her (Brooks, 2014). Again, the use of specific

language, such as “victim” and “slavery,” accompanied by the juxtaposition of opposing perspectives displays A21’s construction of victimhood, labeling the sexually exploited as slaves in need of someone to save them from their situation.

A21 also relies on YouTube videos as a venue to circulate its metaphor of victimhood, releasing short films that echo the previously mentioned notion that sex slavery is a trap, rather than a personal decision. This is apparent in the non-profit’s popular clip called “Be Her Freedom,” which recounts the story of a former sex slave named Lillia, who unknowingly fell prey to human trafficking while seeking income to provide for her starving family. The personal testimony of the young, white female focuses on how she was manipulated by her trafficker to “work” for him, physically abused and raped by multiple offenders, and threatened in order to prevent her from trying to flee the situation (A21, 2014c). This narrative reaffirms A21’s framing of the sexually exploited as “victims,” through the use of language and pathos driven appeals that cause audiences to view the girl as oppressed. Once again, the film makes claims that “her life is not her own,” and “she’s forced to live in the shadows...hidden in plain sight.” Thus, viewers are called to believe that not only is the girl in need of their help, but, more importantly, the rest of the world is overlooking her condition, and no one is making an effort to save her.

The A21 Campaign also frequently displays trafficked persons as vulnerable to violent experiences, framing the individuals as fearful of losing their lives, but too weak to help themselves or escape the dreadful situation (A21, 2014k; Williams, 2012). Such images reaffirm the group’s intention to construct the sex slaves as “victims” who unfairly suffer abuse, exposing their bodies as sacrificial offerings exploited for the

pleasure of greedy criminals. This portrayal is noticeable in a number of the A21 campaign's visual productions.

One popular photographic image released by the campaign's offices in Greece is a prime example of the ways in which A21 seeks to highlight the physical conditions of the trafficked in order to frame the individuals as "victims." The public service announcement, released to advertise the Greek hotline A21 created to report suspicious activity related to trafficking, shows the face of a young, white girl whose expression appears upset and scared. Audiences suspect she has been crying because of the smudged mascara beneath her eyes. The only other prominent features viewers can visibly detect from the black background surrounding the female's head are two large hands of a man. While one of the hands firmly grips her shoulder, the other covers the girl's mouth, prohibiting her from running away or calling out for help. The ad proclaims, "One phone call could free her," suggesting the sex slave's voice has been silenced (A21, 2014k). Her inability to ask for the audiences' aid confirms the viewers' idea that she is weak and susceptible to violent experiences if no one acts on her behalf.

A comparable image functions as an awareness advertisement for the A21 Campaign, which has also been released on the non-profit's virtual platforms. The picture focuses on the shoulders and head of a white woman who appears to be unclothed. The expression on her face is both weary and desolate, with tears in her eyes and black tape over her mouth. The audiences' assumption that she is unable to speak for herself is echoed by the quote included at the top of the picture from Martin Luther King, Jr. King's statement that "We are called to speak for the weak, for the voiceless, for the victims of our nation..." is strategically used to label the exploited female as "weak,"

“voiceless,” and a “victim” (Williams, 2012). The photo of the battered woman visually illustrates the violent experiences trafficking victims endure while being held captive by their abusers.

An emphasis on the physical weaknesses of sex slaves is also evident in the widely circulated video disseminated by the A21 Campaign called “In Her Shoes.” The short film juxtaposes the life of an average teenage girl with the horrific experiences of a sex slave. The young, white girl who is depicted as the victim of human trafficking is seen being assaulted and molested throughout the clip’s entirety. Her perpetrator violently shakes her to awake her from sleep, before dragging her by the arm down a long corridor and pushing her down a stairwell. As the two exit the building, the trafficker shoves the young girl into the back of car and drives her to a brothel against her will. Within the tiny bedroom of the brothel, the video displays the victim being beaten and trying to escape the arms of her offender. Multiple sexual encounters are also implied as men enter and leave the room, and viewers recognize the depressed, hopeless face of the female as the film concludes (A21, 2014g). Thus, the video is a prime example of the ways in which the campaign releases visuals that portray sexually exploited persons as “victims” susceptible to the violent, physical abuse of men who prey on their vulnerable positions.

Additionally, A21 released an advertisement to further demonstrate the tumultuous experiences of trafficked persons, classifying the individuals as “victims” in need of the audience’s support. The black and white image depicts a female frantically running down an alley away from the darkness trailing behind her. The girl is seen taking long strides towards the light in front of her at the end of the passage. A simple message

included on the picture states, “Every 30 seconds another person becomes a victim of human trafficking” (A21, 2014m). This picture, again, labels the girl as a “victim” and insinuates to viewers that the girl is trying to escape the dark shadows of human trafficking, before she becomes part of the growing group of oppressed sex slaves.

The final image constructed by the A21 Campaign that affirms its employment of the metaphor of victimhood is a staged photo that was taken at a conference to raise awareness of human trafficking. The visual depicts the black silhouettes of young girls whose heads are ducked in between their knees. The females are lined up along the walls of a truck with the word “abduction” separating them, which is meant to visually resemble a scenario when individuals are seized and taken into captivity as slaves against their wills. The victims’ experiences are personalized as the silhouettes display the names and ages of former trafficking victims (Cuevas, n.d.). This recreation of a kidnapping incident brings to actuality the real life experiences of sexually exploited persons; consequently, audiences view these individuals as helpless victims unable to break free from captivity.

Based on this analysis, I argue that the A21 Campaign strategically uses its visual rhetoric to call upon the affective investments of an evangelical public by framing sex slaves as “victims” in need of a savior. Specifically, the non-profit depicts young, white females as the primary prey of sexual offenders, indicating these girls are part of the most weak and vulnerable population. I contend that because the exploited persons are viewed as helpless, abused, voiceless individuals trapped in slavery against their wills, audiences recognize the need for someone to take action and provide aid to the oppressed. Moreover, I maintain the A21’s employment of the trope of “acting Christ-like” is also

dependent on the visual's construction of an audience of "saviors" to motivate Christians, in particular, to fulfill their role as Christ followers. Thus, supporting the campaign allows believers to uphold their identity commitments to an evangelical public by taking action to "save" the victims, just as Christ is believed to have saved them. The remainder of this chapter unveils how the campaign's visual discourse calls upon an audience of potential "saviors" and covertly mobilizes Christian affect, as a result.

Construction of Saviors

I argue the metaphor of victimhood, which was demonstrated in the previous analysis of A21's visuals, is followed by the construction of an audience capable of acting as "saviors." Building upon the idea that "victims" need audiences' assistance is the campaign's means of activating a site of investment used to affirm the identity commitments of Christians who are called to act like Christ. Just as believers feel they have been set free and redeemed by Christ's bloodshed on the cross, they are called to extend that same grace to others, according to Isaiah 4:18 (NIV), which states, "He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners...to set the oppressed free." Thus, within A21's images and videos, one can easily detect the strategy of positioning audiences as "saviors," specifically beckoning an evangelical public to take action to end human trafficking based on their personally held belief that "saving" others is the what Christ has called them to do.

The first attempt to call upon a public of potential saviors is apparent within a number of A21's visuals that request audiences to speak on behalf of the sexually exploited. For instance, the black and white image of the young girl with black tape over her mouth, which was discussed in the previous portion of this chapter, asks viewers to

“speak out against human trafficking” (Williams, 2012). Additionally, Martin Luther King, Jr.’s statement at the top of the picture mentions believers “calling” to speak for the weak and voiceless. King’s reference originates from Proverbs 31:8 (NIV), which insists that Christians “Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute.” I argue that the words of this well-known religious reformer combined with the image of the female who cannot speak make an unspoken appeal for audiences to be a voice for voiceless, broken individuals. Thus, the image’s Christian undertones resonate with the beliefs of faith-based persons, making them feel as if it is their job as followers of Christ to follow the Bible’s instructions and speak up for save sex slaves.

A visual that serves the same purpose is featured on the campaign’s Instagram account. The picture displays a large mass composed of mostly white individuals whose hands are raised and are dressed in all black attire with red tape over the mouths. In this case, the tape is representative of the idea that actions speak louder than words, functioning as a symbol that makes a public statement without relying on actual dialogue (A21, 2014j). Again, the image implies that viewers are positioned to act as “saviors” of “victims” whose voices have been unjustly silenced as a result of human trafficking. By calling on Biblical references of “being a voice for the voiceless” (Proverbs 31:8, NIV), Christians are tempted to support the movement to abolish modern day slavery because of Christ’s request that they, as believers, extend his grace and mercy to less fortunate individuals.

A second factor that supports the positioning of viewers as “saviors” is evident through the personalization of victim’s experiences, which are the evident appeals being made in much of the campaign’s visual discourse. A photo on A21’s Instagram account

particularly emphasizes the singularity of one individual's story in an effort to remind audiences that saving one victim at a time combats sex slavery. The image portrays the hand of a male figure reaching out to touch the shoulder of a white female, accompanied by the message "because she is someone's sister, mother, daughter" (A21, 2013a). The phrase causes viewers to consider how they would feel if someone close to them were being trafficked and what actions they would take to make certain that the individual was delivered from sex slavery. Just as audiences would likely take action to save individuals with whom they feel relationally proximal, A21 suggests they should treat the oppressed "other" in a similar fashion. Not only does this allude to the call for Christians to abide by the "golden rule" (Matthew 7:12, New King James Version), but, more specifically, it reiterates the verse found in Matthew 25:40 (NIV), "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." Thus, A21 produces images, such as this one, in an attempt to convince believers that their actions towards trafficking victims directly reflect how spiritual persons regard their personal relationship with Christ himself. In order to honor and respect the one who is believed to have saved Christians who were once lost, they, too, must make efforts to save broken victims in need of a redeemer.

I argue the "Be Her Freedom" video, which was previously mentioned, also uses personalization in an effort to employ the strategy of inviting audiences to act as "saviors" (A21, 2014c). Throughout the clip, "Lillia" is framed as a young girl who could potentially be the viewer's friend, sister or daughter. Audiences are then encouraged to support A21's efforts to help Lillia because of the campaign's ability to provide the victim with "freedom, hope and restoration." This coded language along with the use of

emotional appeals that call on audiences to listen to the cry of sex slaves suggests viewers have the opportunity to save girls like Lillia and “be her freedom.” Because Christ came “to seek and to save the lost,” according to Luke 19:10 (ESV), members of the evangelical public are called to provide the same form of emotional and spiritual healing and freedom to victims of human trafficking in order to emulate the actions of the one they claim saved them.

A final representation of the personalization of victims’ stories occurs in the “In Her Shoes” clip mentioned in the previous discussion (A21, 2014g). The campaign has structured the video in a way that emphasizes the harsh reality that “human trafficking can happen to anyone,” which is stated at the end of the film. By depicting the horrific experiences of a singular victim, A21 seeks to distinguish one life affected by sex slavery, rather than the overwhelming number of individuals who are currently being exploited. The final scene in the short clip begs the question, “What are we going to do about it?” I argue the “we” included in the phrase implies that audience members are capable of taking action to end the mistreatment of sex slaves. Specifically, this question calls upon Christians to support A21 as part of their responsibility as Christ followers, in order to uphold the command written in Psalm 82:3 (NIV), “Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.”

Still, other visual discourse released by the campaign utilizes the strategy of acting as a “savior” by acknowledging that because Christ is believed to have saved Christians on the cross, he holds these individuals accountable to save others. According to 1 Corinthians 1:11 (ESV), God demands Christians to “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ,” reiterating their responsibility to extend his saving grace to those who have not

yet received it. This appeal is evident with an image posted to A21's Instagram account, displaying the words "because she is worth reaching" above a white woman's hands that are seen extending upwards. The focus of the image is on the female's inner palms and wrists, which is the exact location where Christ is believed to have taken nails on the cross (A21, 2014e). This position, in particular, resonates with evangelical's ideals regarding the crucifixion of Christ and what was accomplished on their behalves as a result of that event. Jesus is believed to have "reached" his arms out wide on the cross to save sinners who were lost and broken. His decision to sacrifice his own life is claimed to be a direct reflection of the value he saw in the lives of humans. Based on John 3:16 (NKJV), he claims individuals were "worth" the price he paid in order to give them with new life, providing sinners with spiritual freedom by saving their lives from eternal darkness. The picture composed by A21 is framed in a way that invites Christian audiences to identify Christ's death on the cross as similar to the experience of sex slaves. Yet, just as Christ is said to have reached out to save members of the evangelical public, the picture calls believers to take action and rescue the oppressed from the darkness of human trafficking.

Relying upon the notion of redemption and restoration provided by Christ's bloodshed on the cross, the A21 Campaign employs a parallel strategy in a specific picture included on its blog. The image depicts two white women with their arms wrapped around a trafficking victim's back. The girl framed as the former sex slave, who is also white, has the word "restored" written across her back. The arms of the two female rescuers are labeled "for such a time as this," referencing the scripture in Esther 4:14 (NIV) that claims Esther was created to fulfill the specific purpose God intended for her

to accomplish (A21, 2014l). I argue this is another prime example of the A21 Campaign's rhetoric that clandestinely appeals to the affective investments of religious persons by strategically including Biblical phrases within its images, without crediting the word of God as the source of the presented message.

Finally, I again reference the public service announcement mentioned in the prior section of the young girl desperately running out of the darkness into the light in front of her (A21, 2014m). While this image clearly functions as a visual representation of a victim in need, I believe the text printed at the bottom of the picture covertly calls on Christians to save the female. The statement "Every 30 seconds another person becomes a victim of human trafficking" not only labels the individual as a "victim," but also frames her situation as urgently needing help. I contend this is included to cause audiences to act promptly and provide her with a way out of the darkness before the exploited female falls prey to sex slavery, as so many before her have done. Yet, this also insinuates that this injustice is frequently repeated because Christians are failing to fulfill their role as saviors of the oppressed. Believers' unwillingness to act as saviors of the sex slaves, as Christ has blatantly called them to do, furthers the development of a society in which modern day slavery thrives. Consequently, this image functions to blame members of the religious sector that human trafficking is, in some ways, dependent on their actions or lack thereof; thus, faith-based persons are encouraged to become "better" Christians by supporting A21's initiatives to abolish human trafficking.

Conclusion

Based on my analysis of the visual rhetorical discourse produced and disseminated by the A21 Campaign, I have unveiled the ways in which the group

mobilizes Christian affect and constitutes an evangelical public prepared to combat modern day slavery. In order to accomplish this objective, I believe the campaign relies on two strategies when attempting to appeal to the affective desires of an evangelical public by employing the trope of “acting Christ-like,” calling on Christians to save sex slavery victims as a means of achieving their religious obligations. First, I argue that the images and videos released by the non-profit frame sexually exploited persons as “victims” by depicting these individuals as young, white women who are weak and vulnerable to sexual abuse, despite their desires not to be part of this trafficked group. Secondly, A21 constructs the audience as having the potential to rescue the victims in need of their aid by employing the trope of “acting as a savior.”

The employment of such strategies is not overt in nature, as the campaign denies direct affiliation with the Christian community. Still, I argue these strategic appeals are covertly included to resonate with the affective investments of an evangelical public in order to make Christians first acknowledge the existence of the need to save the oppressed, before encouraging them to act as saviors and fulfill the role as Christ followers. These tactics are just two of the primary ways in which A21’s visual rhetoric functions to covertly mobilize the affective investments of an evangelical public, encouraging them to support the campaign’s efforts.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

In the short amount of time it takes for one to read the final chapter of this thesis, it is estimated that at least two minors in the US will be sexually exploited, as reports indicate that every three minutes an adolescent falls prey to sex slavery within our borders (Clawson, Dutch, Soloman, & Grace, 2009). Consequently, lawmakers are striving to strengthen our current human trafficking regulations (Kramm, 2015). Yet, efforts to end this injustice are not limited to governmental actions; in fact, members of the Christian community are regarded as the most “significant players in activism to end human trafficking” (Zimmerman, 2011, p. 574). While many expect religious persons to disapprove of such acts, associating these practices with adultery or prostitution, the church has embraced the cause of modern day slavery, rather than condemning the problem. Because of this, my thesis analyzes how evangelical Christians are persuaded to combat the issue of sex slavery, making it an acceptable issue to discuss within a sacred setting.

I argue that the A21 Campaign, a non-profit devoted to abolishing human trafficking, produces rhetorical discourse that contributes to religious persons’ acceptance of sex slavery as a social cause worthy of their support. I maintain that A21’s rhetorical discourse functions to mobilize Christian affect, attempting to position both believers and non-believers as relationally proximal to trafficking victims. Specifically, my study focuses on how the campaign invites its target audience, which appears to be Christians, although the campaign denies association with the Christian community, to take action and support its cause. Thus, I argue that as a result of the employment of covert

evangelical tropes, the non-profit's messages tap into the affective registers of Christians, motivating followers of Christ to act as saviors of the oppressed and end human trafficking. To review my argument, the final pages of this concluding chapter will first discuss the findings of this analysis, before acknowledging the implications my study provides for rhetorical scholars. Lastly, I will offer closing remarks to conclude this project.

Chapter I sought to explore the concepts of affect and identification within the field of communication studies. While scholars typically depend on Burke's (1969) notion of identification to describe the achievement of relational closeness between individuals, I reason that the lens of consubstantiation is too narrow to adequately describe why people choose to identify or empathize with other people or causes in certain instances, such as the case of the A21 Campaign. I then propose that affective rhetoric can be used to influence audiences' connections with specific persons or ideas, empowering them to take action based upon non-articulable sensations that are internally felt. I contend that the A21 Campaign includes Christian tropes within its messages in an attempt to appeal to the affective desires of an evangelical public, producing relational proximity between believers and sex slaves and beckoning Christians to take action and support the movement. Specifically, I assert that A21 mobilizes Christian affect by releasing discourse that includes coded Christian language, which constitutes a evangelical public. Members of this public are then primed to act as "saviors" of the oppressed "victims" whose tragic experiences have been personalized to resonate with the affective registers of believers.

Chapter II unveils why the mobilization of affect has the potential to be a more fruitful concept for rhetorical scholars to study than the use of identification in some cases, particularly when analyzing how social movements promote relational proximity between supporters and the oppressed “other.” I argue that the study of affective investments better describes the reduction of space between persons that results in relational closeness, without their having to share substance, or be consubstantial with one another. Thus, I attempt to intervene in existing literature by suggesting that the mobilization of affect accounts for the influence of the internal forces we must unconsciously process before choosing to associate with another individual or cause, resulting in the achievement of relational proximity. I then historically contextualize A21’s covert mobilization of Christian affect as a means of contributing to the broader social movement to end human trafficking, discussing the campaign’s efforts to gain the support of an evangelical public, without overtly claiming to operate from a Christian perspective.

In Chapter III, I provide an analysis that illuminates the usefulness of the mobilization of affect as a rhetorical strategy by unpacking the persuasive appeals made through the A21 Campaign’s visual rhetorical discourse. I maintain that the images and videos produced by the group strategically appeal to the affective desires of an evangelical public through the employment of the trope of “acting Christ-like.” The non-profit accomplishes this through first framing the sexually exploited as helpless “victims” in need of assistance. Secondly, it positions viewers as potential “saviors” of the trafficked victims. Consequently, this encourages members of the Christian community to

take action to support A21's initiatives as a means of fulfilling their duty as believers to rescue lost persons, just as they believe Christ saved them.

Upon reviewing my argument, I feel it is important to reflect on the ways in which this analysis contributes to the field of rhetoric, more generally. After considering these contributions, I will briefly discuss how future studies might attempt to further this work, before offering final remarks in regards to the A21 Campaign's mobilization of Christian affect.

Theoretical Contributions

Turning to Affect Studies

Through my analysis, I seek to advocate for a greater dependence on the study of affective investments within rhetorical scholarship. I attempt to demonstrate the idea that affect studies is, in certain cases, far more useful than the lens of identification. While I acknowledge that Burkean identification is a fundamental principle to the field of rhetorical studies and is a useful concept in some instances, I argue that consubstantiation is not a suitable perspective to use when analyzing diverse, complicated rhetoric. For example, in the case of the rhetorical discourse disseminated by the A21 Campaign, the concept of identification is too simplistic to describe the achievement of relational closeness between an audience with diverse beliefs and trafficking victims. Consequently, I hope this approach is both employed and extended by other rhetorical scholars, such as Lundberg (2009).

Lundberg's (2009) analysis of *The Passion of the Christ* calls for the constitution of an evangelical public primed to "enjoy" the film based upon the affective Christian tropes with which the visuals register. Still, I expand his ideas by applying the

mobilization of Christian affect through evangelical tropes to discourse that does not claim to be affiliated with the religious sector. Thus, this study, in particular, is a fruitful area of scholarship, as it analyzes the use of clandestine Christian appeals to motivate audiences to feel relationally close to sexually exploited persons and act on their behalves because of their inarticulatable, internal desires, which stem from believers' identification as part of an evangelical public.

Additionally, I argue that this relational closeness is accompanied by the production of empathy, which moves Christians to take action. Based on this assertion, my study is particularly useful as it extends our ideas regarding how audiences are persuaded to fulfill the call of the rhetor. In this case, I contend that the invitation to empathetically respond to A21's discourse is what calls people to take to participate in the movement. Specifically, I maintain that the persuasive appeals employed by the campaign call on Christian audiences' affective investments, which cause them to feel empathy. Moreover, these appeals extend beyond sympathy, which social movements typically use to cause viewers to feel compassion. Yet, A21 asks audiences to place themselves in the shoes of the trafficked persons, encouraging viewers to imagine what it would be like to be sexually exploited. Based upon those shared feelings with the oppressed, resulting in the production of empathy, audiences are moved to take action to further the social cause of the abolition of human trafficking, which is a new rhetorical device used to persuasively appeal to potential supporters of social movements.

Studying Affect within Evangelical Discourse

While Gould (2009) theorizes about the mobilization of affect as a significant strategy to employ within academia, my study, again, offers extensions of her original

conception. Specifically, I reveal how the A21 Campaign mobilizes affect in a Christian way. This differs from our general understanding of the mobilization of affect, which considers how one's internal sensations contribute to his or her decision to promote social change, and it fulfills Grossberg's (2010) call for critical cultural studies that examine religious discourse. Moreover, this study is specifically applied to social movement rhetoric. Thus, it offers a rewarding way to look at how organizations motivate audiences to support their proposed social causes by calling upon the affective investments of viewers, which are grounded in the individuals' internal beliefs systems. As a result, I believe this will birth a new wave of studies pertaining to social movement rhetoric, which is a subject that deserves to be updated in order to remain a relevant area of scholarship within the field.

Based on this idea, I argue that the mobilization of affect should be further investigated within our field to determine its effectiveness as a theoretical lens. Extensions of this framework to other forms of discourse outside of social movement rhetoric leads me to briefly suggest how rhetoricians might make further contributions to existing scholarship by expanding upon this analysis.

The Role of Christian Affect in Future Research

My analysis elucidates an existing need within the field of rhetoric to study religious discourses and their constitution of evangelical publics. I argue that this form of rhetoric, which was once considered monolithic in nature, should no longer be deemed a static area within the discipline. As time has passed, religious rhetorics have evolved as a result of changing trends, in order to remain relevant to a more modernized society. Consequently, I maintain rhetoricians must be willing to analyze such changes and report

what these alterations within evangelical discourses mean to the broader field of rhetorical studies.

Still, an examination of evangelical discourses may be more intricate than scholars think, as traces of Christian influence are sometimes strategically coded within the rhetoric we encounter. This clandestine inclusion of Biblical references or covert religious ideology may be especially difficult to detect if observers, themselves, are not privy to such evangelical doctrine. However, this is often the primary objective of rhetors to include signs of Christianity without overtly deeming themselves as belonging to the spiritual sector. I argue this is done to keep from deterring the support or disrupting the potential connections with agnostic persons, as nonbelievers seem to account for a large majority of the public opinion today (Pew Research Center, 2012). However, I conclude by reminding scholars that religious references are often present within persuasive messages, particularly those related to social causes. Why else would masses of evangelical Christians, believed to be part of a group of some of the most judgmental persons (Idleman, 2015), lead the charge to save prostitutes and adulterers – better known as “sex slaves”?

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