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# Critical Race and Whiteness Studies



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## **'Africa is a national cause': Race and nation in development aid communication—A Danish case study**

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*This article analyses the intersection of race and nation in development aid communication by way of a case study of the annual Danish aid telethon Danmarks Indsamling (Denmark's Collection, hereafter DI). The article reads the media campaign which surrounds DI in order to understand the specific local cultural and political function of celebrities who have 'African roots.' The reading focuses on how and when they are mobilised within a particular version of a Danish national narrative. These celebrity figures contribute to two interconnected local understandings of the nation. The first envisages the nation as a diverse, inclusive and outwardly caring community. The second links the Danish nation with a one-dimensionally depicted innocent and childlike 'African Other' in an affective economy of aid. The article concludes that these two intersecting versions of national community are held together through the performance of the celebrity Wafande Pierre Jolivel Zahor (a singer) via representations of his 'Africanness'. By foregrounding 'Africanness' and simultaneously including him in the diversity of the nation he becomes located as 'African in the past' and 'Danish now'. As such he functions as metonym for the promise of progress, which the development aid narrative prescribes for the 'African Other'.*

**Keywords:** development communication, race, celebrity, nationalism, Denmark

### **Introduction**

Research into development aid communication has become a growing field of study in recent years (Chouliaraki, 2006, 2012; Höijer, 2004; Jefferess, 2013; Moeller, 1999), with particular attention paid to the increasing power of celebrities in this field (Brockington, 2008; Clarke, 2009; Kapoor, 2012; Richey & Ponte, 2011). The intersection of celebrity and race in the context of development and global humanitarianism has predominantly been analysed via

the imperialist narrative of 'white men saving black women from black men' (Kapoor, 2004; van den Bulck, 2009; Mahrouse, 2012). While insights from these studies are important to this study, because they situate the intersection of race and celebrity in the historical political economy of race and empire (McClintock, 1995), they also run the risk of oversimplifying the complex cultural and political processes that occur in the intersection of racialised imagery and local cultural imaginaries outside the mainstream United States/United Kingdom development industries. Studies that draw out the complexities involved in celebrity and race, point towards new discourses of race in global humanitarianism, where Whiteness is a fluid and somewhat inclusive category, demarcating progress and modernity, into which certain selected individuals are invited, either via adoption (Repo & Yrjölä, 2011), celebrity status and a 'cultural insider' position (Christiansen & Richey, forthcoming) or by transcending national 'cultural borders' (Bolognani, 2011). However, Blackness in the context of global humanitarianism, as these studies point out, remains a cultural signifier of 'backwardness and deprivation', from which African individuals who enter into identification with cultural Whiteness can 'progress' (Repo & Yrjölä, 2011, p. 58).

The article at hand explores the interstice between these two categories. Through a case study of a Danish telethon, this article will focus on the ways in which an imagined affective community between a local western public and 'Africa' is being shaped via a complex play on race as a liminal cultural/visual category, in which celebrities with 'African roots' function as cultural figures that can embody the desired affective relation between a western public and 'Africa'. The case study looks at the specific cultural and political function of these celebrity figures in the context of an annual aid promotion telethon called Danmarks Indsamling (Denmark's Collection, hereafter DI). The article focuses on the intersection between two articulations of Danish national identity, which can be read from the media campaign of DI. Firstly, the program articulates a plural nation which comes together in *fællesskab*<sup>1</sup> as a product of 'the good cause'. Secondly, Danish celebrities with 'African roots' who feature prominently in the telethon, will be read as embodying a narrative of Danish exceptionalism in relation to postcolonial critiques of the neo-imperialism of development aid (Kapoor, 2008; Kothari, 2006), and as embodying an affective relation between Denmark and Africa predicated on an unequal distribution of power and responsibilities.

The article thus interrogates the way in which development aid has been integrated into Danish constructions of national identity and local understandings of Denmark's role in a global world. I cross-read discourses of Danish development aid in DI with their imbeddedness in constructions of 'Denmark in the world' in order to understand how they connect Denmark with an imaginary 'Africa' in an affective economy of aid (Ahmed, 2004a). The analysis will demonstrate the function of race within this imaginary. I ask: how does the telethon DI form an affective economy of aid, in which the nation becomes narrated as a collective body—the *fællesskab*—acting in unison on an imaginary 'Africa' onto which notions of anti-racism, postcolonial exceptionalism and global caring are mirrored?

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<sup>1</sup> The Danish concept *fællesskab* roughly translates to 'communality'. However, *fællesskab* resembles the German concept *Gemeinschaft* in key elements, such as a connotation of a shared value system and an idealised notion of the community.

## Imagining the nation as a global actor

The article is based in the specificities of the Danish political and cultural context which must be read against the backdrop of political struggles over a re-articulation of Denmark's global image in the aftermath of the so-called 'Muhammad cartoon crisis' of 2005-6 where local debates over the role of Muslims in Denmark via the cartoons sparked an international crisis for the Danish state. The local debates which led up to the international crisis revolved around right wing attempts to vilify and/or assimilate the middle eastern Muslim minorities in Denmark, under the guise of 'immigration policies' and cultural debate (Linde-Laursen, 2007; Rydgren, 2004). In the aftermath of the crisis, a search for new ways of imagining Denmark's role in the global political community has been sought as a re-boosting of national pride, but also as a way in which to understand Danish society as a multi-ethnic community with global ties (see Hervik, 2012; Linde-Laursen, 2007). These local debates over the nature of the multi-ethnic community have shaped the local Danish political landscape in important ways over the last 15 years and prior to the cartoon controversy (see Andreassen, 2007; Lawler, 2007; Wren, 2001). There are (at least) two sides to this development. Firstly, political debates over the place of immigrants in society in general and successive right wing calls for cultural assimilation of immigrants, which has become a more and more mainstream view. Secondly, an institutionalisation of cultural assimilation has occurred in relation both to immigrants, refugees and prospective new citizens (Hvenegård-Lassen & Maurer, 2012; Larsen, 2009). It is in the context of this political climate that a new articulation of Denmark's global role—a re-articulation of global caring via development aid—is being forged in relation to DI.

Like its Scandinavian neighbors, Denmark supported liberation struggles in Southern Africa in the 1960s-1970s, efforts which intersected with the budding development aid industry (Morgenstjerne, 2003, p. 13). As a result, a Danish self-image as 'the defenders of Human Rights and global equality' has traditionally been attached to development aid (Christensen, 2002, pp. 9-10). As such, an idealised relation with 'Africa' has over time been connected with Danish notions of exceptionalism *vis a vis* postcolonial critiques—a discourse in which solidarity politics relating to these anti-colonial struggles were held as 'proof' of Danish anti-racism (Kvale Svenbalrud, 2012; Lawler, 2007). In his reading of the intersection between the Nordic tradition for internationalism and the 'cartoon crisis', Peter Lawler goes so far as to argue that:

... it is in the relationship between contemporary Danish internationalism and the present trajectory of the Danish *folkhem* that we can detect an emergent challenge to Scandinavia's internationalist reputation. If the Nordic welfare state becomes increasingly associated with the preservation of a monocultural haven for only certain classes of person, and internationalism becomes increasingly seen as a means for legitimizing a highly restrictive immigration and refugee policy, this could arguably pose a challenge to the plausibility and legitimacy of Nordic internationalism traditionally understood. (2007, p. 121; original emphasis)

In this political context, a version of national identity as celebrating diversity, displaces the constitutive 'menacing immigrant/Muslim Other' with a one-

dimensional representation of the 'African Other', via the liminal character of the 'African Dane'.

### **A national event—a national *fællesskab***

The telethon and media event DI supports the 12 leading humanitarian organisations in Denmark under a broad common theme related to African development projects. This article analyses selected materials from the campaigns of 2012 and 2013. The telethon is aired on the main television-channel DR1 of the national broadcaster *Danmarks Radio* (DR) and is preceded by a week of constant coverage on DR's two leading Radio stations P3 & P4, in TV talk shows, documentaries and news coverage. As such DI is a widespread multi-platform media event (see Compton, 2004), and by far the largest single development aid promotion scheme in Denmark.

The Danish notion of *fællesskab* community is important to the function of the overall media strategy of DI and to the way in which DI shapes the narrative of an affective relationship between Danes and 'Africans'. In the Danish construction of national identity, *fællesskab* and particularly its cultural connotations of unity and popularity, play an important role (Koefoed, 2006; Korsgaard, 2004). Firstly, *fællesskab* resembles what Benedict Anderson terms "the beauty of *gemeinschaft*", that is, a political love associated with the idea of the community (1991, p. 143). It is associated with a shared value system, which is locally understood as underscoring the ideals of the welfare state. The welfare state is, in turn, seen as a political manifestation of the values associated with the *fællesskab* of the Danes (Østergård, 2003). Secondly, *fællesskab* is connected with the sense of belonging to the community that is naturalised as a cultural/visual fact. The community that *fællesskab* here connotes is made up by the *folk* (Volk or 'the people'), the protestant state church *Folkekirken*, and the welfare state. This version of community is one in which the nation is becoming increasingly viewed as a simultaneously cultural and biological 'family' (Østergård, 2003; Rytter, 2007).

The concept of *fællesskab*, which is being promoted via DI, thus links the event to debates over national identity. The way in which DI is framed by DR is that of a 'national event.' In respect to this framing, the introduction to the documentary '*Danmarks Indsamling—det nytter*' (Denmark's Collection—it is beneficial),<sup>2</sup> which in 2013 aired a week before the telethon itself on DR1, is instructive. The intro of this documentary featured the Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt who depicted DI in the following way:

Voiceover: February 8th it will be the seventh time we will have Danmarks Indsamling here at DR—And the collection has become a national event.

Helle Thorning-Schmidt: In times of crisis we have actually given more than we normally do. That says something about who we are, and whom we want to help. We are not unconcerned about people in other countries. We want to get involved, and that is what we are showing via Danmarks Indsamling. And what one needs to be aware of is that the money is going towards some very good causes. We are helping actual, living people out there. And that is what we can

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<sup>2</sup> All translations from Danish to English are by the author.

do, when we create events like Danmarks Indsamling, and we all give what we can. (Danmarks Radio, 2013a)<sup>3</sup>

DI is “a national event” in which the collective “we”—the nation—is depicted as the active agent. The national “we” is portrayed as involved and caring in relation to global suffering—as such, the national discourse around DI performs a re-articulation of the role of “Denmark in the world” and simultaneously constructs ideas about what and who Danes are and what holds the nation together. The Prime Minister’s statement about the relation between DI and Danish national identity articulates an interconnectedness between the characterisation that “we are extraordinarily generous in times of crisis” and the claim that “Denmark is a nation of caring”. What is important here is not only the proclamation of the “nation as caring,” but also, the way in which this “caring” is depicted as a *communal* action-oriented characteristic. What is articulated is not individual agency, it is collective agency. And collective agency is what characterises the “we” of the nation. Viewers are not only called upon to individually donate money to various projects in Africa, Denmark as a nation—a collective social body—is called upon to act in unison. The Prime Minister’s description of DI is predicated on a form of *fællesskab*, which comes into being through communal agency—that which Benedict Anderson describes as ‘unisonality’—the experience of the community as acting as one in time and space (1991, pp. 24-26, 145).

However, this version of *fællesskab* is imbued with another defining characteristic in the context of DI—Diversity. As a national event, DI seeks to encompass people from all walks of life and represent them as actively engaged in the cause. The plurality of participating agents in the media event (both on- and off-screen/air/line) speaks to an overall discursive strategy of inclusion and communal agency. To describe this plurality let me outline examples of different types of projects, organisations, persons and happenings, which the event encompassed in 2013:

- The daily evening talk show on DR1 ‘Aftenshowet,’ organised ‘collection competitions’ where two celebrities competed to see who could collect more money; for example, one event featured two politicians: left wing politician Johanne Schmidt-Nielsen and right wing politician Joachim B. Olsen.
- Crown Prince Frederic acted as spokesperson for a national running campaign organised by the Danish Gymnastics Association (DGI) and the DR radio-channel P4, where over 30,000 people participated in running events across the country.
- Day care workers organised a bake sale of cup cakes baked by children.
- School children all over the country organised various events, such as ‘car wash’ for donations.
- DR’s children’s channel RAMASJANG organised a ‘do good deeds’ campaign for children, funded by LEGO which donated an amount of money for each ‘good deed certificate’ they received from children.

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<sup>3</sup> Original quote: Voiceover: Den 8. februar bliver det 7. gang at der er Danmarks Indsamling her på DR, og indsamlingen er blevet en national begivenhed. HTS: I krisetider har vi faktisk givet mere end vi plejer. Det siger noget om hvem vi er og hvem vi gerne vil hjælpe. Vi er ikke ligeglade med mennesker i andre lande. Vi vil gerne involvere os, og det er det vi viser ved Danmarks Indsamlingen, og det man skal gøre sig klart, det er at pengene går til nogle rigtigt gode formål. Vi hjælper nogle konkrete levende mennesker derude. Og det er det vi kan, når vi laver sådan en Danmarks Indsamling, og alle sammen gir’ det vi kan.

- Local businesses (both large supermarket chains and small local businesses) featured DI-branded products.
- The association of boarding schools for youths (*efterskoler*<sup>4</sup>) ran a YouTube competition between schools to collect money.

So, alongside the streamlined logos, glamorous celebrities and media-savvy hosts, the show depicts DI as a popular *folkelig*<sup>5</sup> cause, which is anchored in the local life of ordinary Danes. The campaign showcases the plurality of a nation that is united via this single purpose. The nation is described as caring about a particular 'global connection': DI "says something about who we are, and whom we want to help" (Thorning-Schmidt in Danmarks Radio, 2013a). This "whom" is left undepicted by the Prime Minister in the documentary airing before DI, quoted above. However, the intro to the documentary features a second character, a female schoolteacher, who describes an affective relation formed by the telethon:

Voiceover: And support has come both from Denmark's largest firms and from the viewers at home in their living rooms.

Schoolteacher: When I see Danmarks Indsamling, and when I see the segments about particularly children—particularly pictures of children touch me—when I see that they do not have a home or access to clean drinking water or food—then I get like—it's almost my duty to do something – then I feel like giving whatever I can. (Danmarks Radio, 2013a)<sup>6</sup>

The unifying object that touches—leaves an *impression* on—the schoolteacher and moves her into affective action (Ahmed, 2004b, pp. 27-28; 2004c, p. 6, 25) is the figure of the child in need. The connection to the cause is affective—the figure of the child in need, so frequently called upon in aid promotion, to the point of causing 'compassion fatigue' in western media audiences (Moeller, 1999, p. 36)—propels the schoolteacher into action. The call to action is a moral one, she feels duty bound by the impression these images have left on her. The Danish idiom used to express this is: 'så får jeg lyst til', which would literally translate as 'then I get the desire to'. This connotation then strips the moral imperative of its burdensome connotation. Desire to act is interconnected with the affective function of the child in need. Here the articulation of agency is stripped of rational deliberation, or political demarcation. The Prime Minister articulates the uniting values of the national 'we' and the schoolteacher provides the moral and affective imperative for these values to be activated. And so, the cause can serve to facilitate a depoliticised version of national *fællesskab*. In the

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<sup>4</sup> *Efterskole* is a popular institution, where teenagers between the ages of 14 to 17 can take the last years of primary school in a boarding school setting.

<sup>5</sup> *Folkelig* is described by Michel de Certeau as "a Danish word that cannot be translated [literally]: it means 'what belongs to the people'" (1984, p. 131). *Folkelig* is an adjective, which depicts something as qualitatively rooted in popular appeal. It also indicates an unassuming character and is positioned in opposition to narrow elitist aesthetics and intellectuality (see Christiansen & Olwig, forthcoming).

<sup>6</sup> Original Quote: Voiceover: Og støtten til Danmarks Indsamling er både kommet fra Danmarks største virksomheder og fra TV-seerne hjemme i stuerne. Skolelærer: Når jeg ser Danmarks Indsamlingen, og ser indslagene om især børn—især billeder af børn rører mig—når jeg ser at de ikke har et hjem, eller ikke har adgang til rent drikkevand eller ikke har mad. Så får jeg det sådan; jamen så, så synes jeg næsten at det er min pligt at gøre noget. Så får jeg lyst til at gi' det jeg nu kan.

absence of rational deliberation, and in the context of a unifying discourse of caring, the nation can come together across political divides to unify around a common purpose.

An instructive example of this unity discourse is a Facebook update from (then) Minister for Development Christian Friis Bach who had been staffing the phones during the show. The update depicts the plurality of the people with whom he had talked to throughout the evening:

A Kurdish refugee who wanted to show his children that one needs to help others, a kindergarten in [the village of] Tune, an elderly woman of 92, a small software company ... all of them gave handsome donations. Fantastic fine evening by the phones. And 76 mil. is a strong collection result in the middle of crisis and the winter holiday! That's it. Well done DR. Well done Denmark. (Bach, 2013)<sup>7</sup>

The image, which accompanied the status update, is just as important (or even more so) than the text itself. It is a seemingly random snapshot of the other celebrities who had been staffing phones alongside the Minister. The image appears to have been taken with his camera-phone and uploaded to his Facebook page instantly. The people featured in the photo are: former TV-host Camilla Miehe Redard; left wing activist, actor, artist and film director Leif Sylvester; actor and theatre director Jytte Abildstrøm; the former (and still active and influential) leader of the right wing 'Danish People's Party' (Dansk Folkeparti) Pia Kjærsgaard who has made it her political mission to safeguard Danish cultural identity by stemming the tide of immigration, particularly by Muslims (see Rydgren, 2004). And finally, Kjærsgaard is posing with the young pop-star Basim Moujahidden (stage-name 'Basim'). Basim became a popular pre-teen idol after he participated in Danish version of the TV-show *X-Factor*<sup>8</sup> in 2008. He is the son of Moroccan immigrants, a fact which has been politicised on a number of occasions, most recently when he won the Danish nomination for the Eurovision Song Contest in 2014 with a stage show that prominently featured a large Danish flag (see Engmann & Nordvang, 2014; Moujahidden, 2014; Politiken, 2014; Winström, 2014).

What Bach is constructing (text and picture together) is an articulation of unity in plurality. We are shown how a plurality of different social (the text) and political (the picture) positions can be encompassed by the 'good cause'. Even the seemingly opposing positions of Basim and Pia Kjærsgaard can be united for the national cause. My argument is that a notion of *fællesskab* is being constructed here. It is a notion of national *fællesskab*, in which a plurality of political, social, ethnic and economic divides are being smoothed over or deemed irrelevant in light of the cause. The showcasing of the many different local initiatives, the range of politicians, industry leaders and celebrities from all walks of the entertainment industry come together to depict a diverse and inclusive version of the nation. This is done in a spirit of celebration—"well done Denmark!" (Bach,

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<sup>7</sup> Original quote: En kurdisk flygtning, der ville vise sine børn at man skulle hjælpe andre, børnehaveklasserne I Tune, en ældre kvinde på 92, et lille softwarefirma ... alle gav flotte bidrag. Fantastisk fin aften fed telefonerne. Og 76 mio. er et stærkt indsamlingsresultat midt I krise og vinterferie! Sådan. Godt gået DR. Godt gået Danmark.

<sup>8</sup> The *X-Factor* show, also on DR1, is one of the highest rating entertainment shows in Denmark. It has a history of promoting participants of racial/ethnic minority backgrounds, and branding them via this background (see Andreassen, 2011).



2013). That which facilitates this moment of national unity in diversity is, as I will go on to demonstrate, a one-dimensional representation of 'the African Other' and the imagined global *fællesskab* around which the media campaign revolves.

### **An affective economy of global *fællesskab***

It will be my contention throughout the following analysis that the articulation of unity in action for a good cause revolves around an imagined global *fællesskab*—in contrast to the celebration of unity in diversity that characterises the 'national we'—that is laid out in a very narrow pattern of representations that draw on colonial and neo-imperialist versions of compassion and moral duty (see Duvall, 2009). In the context of DI, the imagery of 'the African Other in need' is predominantly positive—that is, smiling African children in positively angled 'before and after' storylines. However, as Keith Tester has argued, the image of smiling African children has the ability to stimulate (or call to mind) the feelings of shame and guilt associated with the cultural archive of images of death and dying (2001, p. 102). This means that even 'positive' images of smiling well-fed children have the ability to evoke what Lilie Chouliaraki terms "the spectacle of human vulnerability" (2012, p. 26) and call on the imagery of human suffering which have been associated iconically with the reporting on the Ethiopian famine/civil war in 1984-85 (Moeller, 1999, pp. 118–119).

DI relies on two interconnected representations of the 'beneficiaries' of its development aid projects. Firstly, DI uses a 'before and after' storyline. Inherent in this narrative structure is the 'before' situation. This is at times only alluded to, but the reference to a pitiful situation which has been rectified via aid, still calls on the catalogue of images of death and dying that traditionally underpin aid campaigns (Chouliaraki, 2006; Moeller, 1999). The 'before and after' storyline intersects with 'comparison narratives', often depicted via celebrities or 'ordinary Danes' who have visited projects or act as spokespersons for the participating organisations. In these narratives the images of how 'they' live are cast as relevant to 'our' own lives as cautionary tales of how spoiled 'we' are but also, how deserving the Africans in need of aid are. Their deservedness for aid thus relies on a comparison with the fortunate, spoiled and comfortable lives 'we' live in Denmark. This depicts a division of roles and responsibilities between 'us' and 'them'—we who have so much, must give to those who have not.

The following example from DI 2013 illustrates the ways in which this division of roles is integrated into the overall discourses of *fællesskab*. The example is taken from the *X-Factor* TV-show which in Denmark is the highest rated show in its genre. *X-Factor* has been the so-called 'lead in' for DI in 2012 and 2013—that is, *X-Factor* airs directly before the DI live telethon. The episode is aid-themed and SMS-donations are possible throughout the program's duration. To set the stage for the aid-theme, the cast of participants and judges perform a newly composed song which viewers can buy directly online, with proceeds going to DI. The 2013 song was entitled '*En Verden*' ('One World') and composed by the singer/songwriter Anne Linnet, who was a judge on the show. The song had a music video—featuring the performers and images from DI of the Africans who would benefit from donations.

The video starts with one of the judges, Thomas Blachman, who performs a monologue:

You have got so much love  
So you say  
But, who receives all this love?  
The chosen few?  
Or, do you have enough love for the whole world?  
(Thomas Blachman in Danmarks Radio, 2013b)<sup>9</sup>

The articulation of a relation of love, which ideally should be able to encompass “the whole world” corresponds with the title of the song ‘One World’. The imperative here (again) is not rational but emotional—that which connects ‘us’ to the whole world is love. The video then proceeds to shots that shift between the two other judges Anne Linnet and Ida Corr who sing the verses, the rest of the cast who provide background and sing the chorus, and shots of African landscapes, a family sitting by their home which is a thatched hut with mud walls, and a group of children who are sitting on the ground singing and clapping in choreography. The *X-Factor* cast and judges are shown in full performance styling, against the black background of the set, backlit and projecting beauty, affluence and professionalism, whereas the Africans are portrayed in a poor, rural and ‘backward’ setting, casting them as ‘in need’. The visuals thus provide a stark contrast between the performers and the African ‘beneficiaries’.

The lyrics of the song start off by depicting a world that bleeds, a continent (Africa) that is burning with war and dying, but also, a world in which ‘someone’ is lighting a candle of hope. This dichotomy between despair and hope comes to full fruition in the chorus:

But who can carry those  
Who cannot walk themselves  
And all those who fall down,  
And all of us who have  
What have we got to give  
When the *fællesskab* calls?

And we can carry those  
Who cannot walk themselves  
And all those who fall down?  
And all of us who have  
We have so that we can give  
When the *fællesskab* calls.  
(Lyrics by Anne Linnet in Danmarks Radio, 2013b)<sup>10</sup>

Here we see the dual versions of *fællesskab* being depicted as two simultaneously existing communities. The *fællesskab* is calling—it is calling on: “we who have”, “we who can carry” and “we who can give”. Importantly, the

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<sup>9</sup> Original quote: Du har så meget kærlighed, Si’r du, Men, hvem får al denne kærlighed? De få udvalgte? Eller har du kærlighed nok til hele verden?

<sup>10</sup> Original quote: Men hvem kan bære dem, der ikke selv kan gå, Og alle dem, der falder, Og alle vi, der har, Hvad har vi så at gi’, Når fælleskabet kalder. Og vi ka’ bære dem, Der ikke selv kan gå, Og alle dem, der falder, Og alle vi, der har, Vi har så vi ka’ gi’, Når fælleskabet kalder.

*fællesskab* is the global, "one world", in which a moral duty to help those in need falls to those who have the strongest arms, those who "can carry". Simultaneously, the national *fællesskab* is called into being through the invocation of the "we" that acts on the global *fællesskab* in a clear division of roles. Africans are the ones that cannot walk themselves, Danes are the ones that can carry them. The video shifts between images of the *X-Factor* cast and images of the 'Africans in need', predominantly the happy playing children, who despite of their poverty (sitting on the ground, in a rural setting wearing ragged clothes) are joyful in play. Children in general are in need of being 'carried' and therefore the dichotomy perhaps at first glance appears to be natural. However, from a critical postcolonial point of view, portraying the 'African Other' as childlike, or via metonymic representations of 'the African child' is such a familiar imperialist trope as to gain immediate recognition and critique (Moeller, 1999, p. 111; Pieterse, 1994, p. 43; van den Bulck & Clarke, 2009).

Two simultaneous *fællesskab*(s) work on each other: The global *fællesskab* calls the national *fællesskab* into action, a national *fællesskab*, which comes into being by depicting a one-dimensional representation of the 'African Other'. This plays on a dialectic between distance and closeness— "we" the Danish *fællesskab* is brought closer together via the affective imaginary distant constitutive Other—an Other, who is depicted as a child in need of being carried.

### **The African Dane—the symbolic embodiment of plural *fællesskab* and global caring**

Celebrity studies scholars have pointed out how celebrities and celebrity logics function to stitch together disparate communities because they are "highly visible to a large number of otherwise disconnected individuals—as 'weak ties' binding disparate segmented individuals together" and furthermore have a "socially integrative effect, constituting significant 'nodes' which hold together a communicative social network" (van Krieken, 2012, p. 82). This is especially significant for national communities where sports stars, for example, have this function (Wong & Trumper, 2002). I examine here how this socially integrative role functions when enacted by celebrities who are positioned in a liminal position to the nation in relation to race. So far, we have discussed the issue of race primarily as a component of the ethnic minority 'Other' in the national discourse on *fællesskab*. However, the function of distance and closeness in the articulation of the global *fællesskab* is not a straight forward reading of bodily signage where the global division of roles are depicted via visual representations of 'White' (Danish) and 'Black' (African) individuals. The reason for this is the deliberate depiction of Danish celebrities 'with African roots' as part of DI.

The *X-Factor* show has previously been analysed as a site where "participants of colour" are represented as part of the national 'we' (Andreassen, 2011, p. 171). The *X-Factor* judge Ida Corr is of Gambian/Danish heritage and thus part of this overall narrative. So in the context of DI, we cannot read Corr's performance as only linked with her part-African heritage but also as part of the overall diversity discourse associated with *X-Factor*. In this sense, DI does not stand alone in constructing the celebratory diversity discourse. However, Corr's bodily signage (alongside *X-Factor* contestants who also have African heritage) functions as a visual rejection of a version of national *fællesskab*, in which the nation is seen as

'White'. When the national *fællesskab* is narrated by Corr, who is simultaneously a cultural insider and 'African', this visually functions to reject a straightforward 'Black/White' reading of the dichotomous representations of Denmark and 'Africa'.

The next performer, whom we will discuss in detail, is more directly depicted via his 'African roots'. The singer Wafande Pierre Jolivel Zahor (stage-name 'Wafande') who performed during the live telethon in 2012 (as well as doing live radio performances in the preceding week) was cast as the 'African Dane', a category which functions to interconnect the two versions of *fællesskab*. I will examine the way in which Wafande was introduced to the audience during the telethon. I read Wafande's engagement with the DI host Louise Wolff via Sara Ahmed's notion of 'sticky signs'. Ahmed argues that racial difference functions via 'sticky affects'—that is, racial terminology 'sticks' by employing the catalogue of historical meanings in "an economy of difference" (Ahmed, 2004c, p. 59). Ahmed draws on Frantz Fanon's distinction between the bodily experiences of being 'Black' and being 'White' in contexts of White privilege. Ahmed argues that

To be black or not white in 'the white world' is to turn back towards oneself, to become an object, which means not only not being extended by the contours of the world, but being diminished as an effect of the bodily extensions of others. (2006, p. 139)

I argue that we can read Wafande's participation in DI 2012 as a complex play on race as a liminal cultural/visual category in relation to Danish national identity. I demonstrate how Wafande depicts his 'African roots' and native mastery of Danish culture along with his celebrity status in an attempt to escape 'being called into race' (Fanon, 1967, p. 111). Wafande is placed in the DI campaign as liminal figure that can embody both the national and the global versions of *fællesskab*. This is a social position that I have elsewhere defined as 'celebrity-black' (Christiansen & Richey, forthcoming).

Before his performance of the song 'Ny Dag' (A new day), Wafande was interviewed by DI host Wolff. In this interview, Wafande was asked to depict his relation to Africa, via his family background, and through his present affective relation to the cause of DI 2012, 'Children Refugees'. I have chosen to quote the interview in its entirety:

Louise Wolff: Wafande—It is actually your father who is sitting down there playing (*cut to an onstage shot of the elderly man who is playing a Kalimba*)—and you are going to join him in a little bit—we are going to hear the song 'A new day'. What is the song really about?

Wafande: Well, it is actually very much related to the theme of Danmarks Indsamling this year—that is—Children Refugees. It is written, as—well not fully—but based on my father, but like also based on all the terrible stories you see, like, both from the Horn of Africa and all the things that have happened in—well, the last 20 years—well, the last 50 years.

Louise Wolff: So, your father, he has actually also been a refugee!?

Wafande: Yes, he was a refugee—not from war—we come from Tanzania, and there was no war there, but from poverty and in order to get out, to experience a better world. And then he ended up here in Denmark.

Louise Wolff: What does this song mean to you?

Wafande: It means that I can sort of express myself in giving something back—that I know where I'm coming from, my lineage, and that it is important to remember ones' roots and giving something back when one has the opportunity to do it.

Louise Wolff: But now that your family has experienced this situation of being a refugee, and your father has come here to Denmark, and you have grown up here, and have had a completely different upbringing—what do you think about it all on such a day as today?

Wafande: I think that it is fantastic to be able to do something—that is—firstly for myself, because now I have my music, which I can share with the people and can use that to spread a little joy. But I also think in general that it is unbelievable to think of how lucky I have been compared to some of the children that are—well—the same age as my little sister—she is eight years old, and I think that it is horrible to think of really. So, now I want to do something on my own—and with Denmark behind us (*turns to face the audience and shouts*) What do you say!? (*The audience responds with cheers*). (Danmarks Radio, 2012)<sup>11</sup>

The first thing that Wafande is connected to in the interview is his father's presence on-stage, where he is seen playing the Kalimba, a performance which goes on during the interview. So he is in this context primarily depicted via his 'African roots', not his role as a musician or via his celebrity status. There is no mention of his African body markings, a point which might seem moot in light of his primary association to Africa via his father, nevertheless, Wafande is wearing a wooden pearl necklace with an Africa-shaped pendent that emphasises his association with Africa.

By actively interpreting the category of 'refugee' in his opening statement to refer to his father's migrant status, we see Wafande attempting to place himself outside the depoliticised unity discourse—that is, he describes his father as an

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<sup>11</sup> Original quote: LW: Wafande—det er faktisk din far der sidder dernede og spiller—og ham skal du også ned og spille med om lidt—vi skal høre sangen 'en ny dag'. Hvad handler den egentligt om? W: Jamen, den handler faktisk utroligt meget om det som Danmarks Indsamlingen handler om i år—altså, børn på flugt. Den er skrevet, ligesom—ikke fuldt ud fra min far, men li'som også ud fra de forfærdelige historier man ser, altså både fra Afrikas Horn og alle de ting der er skert i—ja de sidste 20 år—ja 50 år. LW: Så, din far han har faktisk selv været på flugt!? W: Min far var selv på flugt—ikke fra krig—vi kommer fra Tanzania, der var ikke krig, men fra fattigdom og for at komme ud og opleve en bedre verden. Og så endte han her i Danmark. LW: Hvad betyder den her sang for dig? W: Det betyder at jeg lig'som udtrykker migselv i at gi noget videre til at jeg ved hvor jeg kommer fra, min afstamning og at det er vigtigt at huske sine rødder og gi noget tilbage hvor man har mulighed for at gøre det. LW: Men når nu din familie har oplevet der her med flugt, og din far nu er kommet her til Danmark, og du er vokset op her, og har haft en helt anden opvækst—hvad tænker du så om det hele på sådan en dag som i dag? W: Jeg tænker at det er fantastisk at kunne gøre noget—altså—for det første for mig selv, for nu har jeg jo min musik, som jeg kan dele med folket og kan bruge det til at gi lidt glæde. Men jeg synes i det helt taget også at det er utroligt at tænke på hvor heldig jeg har været i forhold til nogle af de børn der er—ja—på alder med min lillesøster ikk'—hun er 8 år gammel, så jeg synes at det er forfærdeligt at tænke på altså. Så nu vil vi gøre noget på egen hånd, og med Danmark bag os (vender sig ud mod publikum, og råber): Hvad sir' I til det!?

'economic refugee'. This is not an available category of refugee in a contemporary Danish political context. Rather economic migrants are frequently portrayed in media and political discourse as 'parasites on the welfare state' and closely associated with the earlier mentioned vilification of Muslim immigrants (see Wren, 2001). Nevertheless, Wafande attempts to steer the conversation towards this contentious political subject. He fails. The host pulls him back into the affective narrative of 'innocent' refugees = children. The host reminds him that he is there to talk about his song, and not his description of the ways in which he ended up in Denmark. Wafande does not resist the call to take up his expected role. Rather, he reverts to the 'celebrity script' of 'giving back' (see Barron, 2009; Littler, 2008).

In Wafande's version, however, he places this well-known narrative in the context of his own 'African lineage'. This gives the host the opportunity to depict him via his liminal position—the African who has grown up in Denmark.<sup>12</sup> She simultaneously attempts to place him in an affective narrative—a narrative that he in the first instance resists, by attempting to revert to the 'celebrity script', but which he eventually places himself in—he has been incredibly lucky to grow up in Denmark, children the age of his own sister (an affective relation) suffer horrible things, this propels him to want to act. Drawing from Ahmed, I read Wafande's performance of liminality as a careful balance between being called back into race and maintaining his critical political edge. His refuge in this attempt is to call on his celebrity status, and utilising the 'celebrity script' of giving back is an attempt to avoid the stickiness of the racial marker 'African'. Via the celebrity narrative, Wafande does escape being *just* the 'African Dane'—the go between—he has status. However, he cannot in the context of DI escape the liminal position entirely. The positioning of the celebrity Wafande as someone who can speak *of* and simultaneously *from* the experience of Africans comes out through the way in which the host attempts to 'pull him back into his lineage'. However, the narrative is not that of 'the poor African'—it is salvation through inclusion in the national *fællesskab*. Wafande's personal narrative is one of transformation because Denmark is a "nation of caring"—one in which a little African boy can grow into a celebrity who is able to "give back" to 'his African roots'.

## Conclusion

At the outset of this article, I asked how DI forms an affective economy of aid in which the national *fællesskab* comes into being as connected with 'Africa' in a global *fællesskab*. As we have seen throughout the analysis, DI places the nation as *the* important referent. Viewers are not only called upon to individually donate money, Denmark as a nation—the collective social body—is called upon to act in unison. The collective body of the nation is here imagined not only in an imperialist 'White man's burden' civilizing mission, but also in terms of complex local notions of "the whiteness of Danish culture" (Andreassen, Folke Henningsen, & Petersen, 2008). Homi Bhabha has pointed out that

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<sup>12</sup> Wafande's family history is in reality relatively complex. His mother is Danish/French, and Wafande spent a considerable part of his childhood in Provence. The 'from Africa to Denmark' narrative, is therefore, if not exactly a fiction, then tweaked for the occasion (see Christensen, 2011).

[i]n the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes a site of *writing the nation*. (1994, pp. 145-146)

My analysis points out how the Danish nation—as written—in the narrative construction of a constitutive *fællesskab* with an imaginary one-dimensional 'Africa', positions celebrity characters with 'African roots' in an ambivalent liminal position in relation to Danish national identity. The role played by these characters in the national pedagogics of the narrative is double. Ida Corr and Wafande are portrayed as both cultural insiders and visually 'African'. As such, they are seen to embody the desired affective relation between Denmark and the 'African Others', in which the national 'we' is seen as celebrating diversity in many forms (political, social, ethnic, racial, economic etc.). However, as this version of the national *fællesskab* and its relation to the global *fællesskab* with Africans relies precariously on a representation of this 'African Other' as one-dimensionally 'good, childlike and in need', Ida Corr and Wafande's 'Africanness' must be pushed out of the present and into the past in favour of their Danish cultural insider identification. In Wafande's interview, this is done by depicting his 'African experience' as tied to his father's refugee experiences and emphasising how Wafande himself is a product of a Danish upbringing. Ida Corr simply functions visually as a marker of 'non-racism' (she is included). As such, their performance adds ambivalence to both versions of *fællesskab*: they are proof of the celebration of diversity in the nation, and simultaneously embody the potential for change, which this nation's involvement in the global *fællesskab* promises. Their having 'developed' out of their 'African roots' into the plural, affluent and caring *fællesskab* of the Danish nation functions metonymically for the promise of Danish development aid of the 'African Other'. Their performances function both as signs of 'unity in diversity' and as visual manifestations of the desired global *fællesskab*.

### **Author Note**

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