

MUSIC VIDEOS: A TOOL FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

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Music videos and disasters

Disasters have increasingly caught the attention of media in the last few decades with catastrophic imagery saturating many avenues of mass media (Bankoff, 2001). In particular, the advent of the music video clip has become an exceptionally poignant medium for such display of disaster. Made popular first via the mainstreaming of the cable network, Music Television (MTV) in 1981 and later through websites such as YouTube, music videos have become a pervasive means of communicating knowledge to the masses. There are a myriad of music videos produced by a variety of stakeholders which draw upon imagery associated with disaster to represent themes of people's vulnerabilities and capacities in the event of a hazard. This poster looks at four different types of music video and aims to provide insight into how different actors (artists, producers, aid agencies and the like) construct various vulnerabilities and capacities within this form of media. Whether they hold messages of political challenge, advocacy, fundraising or community participation, music videos have been and continue to be a ubiquitous and appealing mode of communication that can be used as a powerful outlet of knowledge construction and dissemination of disaster risk reduction (DRR).

Vulnerabilities

Awareness

Charity



Grassroot initiatives

Statement

Since he was elected as President, Bush's policies have been less than kind towards African Americans.

In your head, I've never missed a day of school. I want to go to school for the rest of my life.



Interested in Volunteering? Get involved in the disaster risk reduction efforts of the GBSS School Grenada.



- Legendary KO collaborated with Grammy Award winning rapper, Kanye West and produced the video and altered the lyrics to the tune of West's infamous 'Golddigger'.
- Recorded and produced shortly after Hurricane Katrina, acts as a strongly worded political statement towards the American government after its slow response.
- It addresses the issue of race and provides viewers with a clear sense that there was major neglect of African American citizens in the wake of the disaster.
- The video acts as brazen political statement, raising awareness of the social and political vulnerabilities existent within American society.
- It gained major media attention after it was released and despite being produced by major recording artists, emphasized its role as a grassroots, awareness raising mission rather one designed for commercial success.

Legendary KO

'Bush Don't Like Black People'

Grassrootinnovation (2005)

The contribution of music videos to DRR

- Music video synthesises sound and vision and is an effective way of communicating disaster rhetoric to masses.

- The advent of and relative freedom within networks such as MTV and YouTube allows for a variety of messages (even politically charged and sometime subversive ones) to be displayed in a rather digestible manner.

- Music videos allow for the creation of a new 'cultural space' in which artists and producers can operate and ride the dichotomy of artistic creativity and political activism.

Eclipse, Swipe & Avonni

'Be Prepared'

GBSS School Grenada produced by J. Bastide (2012)

- Produced by Joan Bastide in collaboration with three GBSS students from Grenada, as part of a French and Grenadian Red Cross competition called 'Spice it up! Sing for Preparedness'.
- Aimed at the local community level, it engaged high school students to make a music video to be used to raise awareness for the local community capacities following the devastating effects the 2010 Haitian Earthquake.
- Images of disaster and community cohesiveness are used to send the message of working together to prepare for disaster.
- While relatively low budget, the video raises awareness of the potential capacities a local community can hold, thus instilling hope to many other small and otherwise 'vulnerable' communities.

- Largely dramatised display of political advocacy for communities affected by Hurricane Katrina.

- The video emphasises the subjugation of African American families and through a visual narrative of a fictional family trapped in their rapidly flooding house, viewers are confronted with wide panning shots of the mass destruction left in the wake of the hurricane.

- Images are in dark hues and there is a sense of helplessness for this family and the surrounding communities.

- The video is an excellent example of the interplay between political activism and artistic expression.

- It strikes an interesting balance between fostering communication about peoples' vulnerability in times of disaster and producing a creative work that is deemed aesthetically attractive to their target audience.

Rise Against

'Help Is On The Way'

DGC Records (2011)

Band Aid

'Do They Know It's Christmas'

Mercury Records Ltd. (1984)

- Compiled by a series of well-known British artists.
- One of the most prominent and archetypal examples of political charity rock.
- Produced in 1984, through the formation of Band Aid, and worked to use music and imagery to raise funds for poverty and drought-related issues in Ethiopia.
- Bleak imagery coupled with clips of famous 1980s pop icons like Boy George and George Michael synthesise to create an emotionally charged work that simultaneously persuades viewers of the extremity of drought in Ethiopia and promote artists as 'heroic' figures within popular culture (Garofalo, 2005).
- It relies upon emotive responses to narrative imagery and lyrics of catastrophe and by doing so, viewers are overwhelmed with a sense of moral obligation to 'help the helpless'.

Commercial initiatives
Advocacy
Fund raising

Awareness

Charity

Capacities

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Fostering disaster risk reduction through music videos

Music video, as a reasonably new outlet of cultural expression, is an interesting and exciting means of both communicating knowledge about disaster and fostering DRR within the public sphere (e.g. Goodwin, 1987; Kaplan, 1987). Through the active engagement of a variety of actors, music videos act as a stimulating way of encouraging viewers to think about disaster and wider socio-political issues that impact upon peoples' vulnerability and capacities. Videos, such as the aforementioned ones, indeed promote the need for DRR (whether in the form of making political statements, advocating for help, raising funds, or demonstrating community capacities), while concurrently providing viewers with active forms of entertainment. In this way, [popular] culture, like music and performance, all create opportunities for 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' integrated DRR, as there is greater 'creative space' for the communication of disaster knowledge (Alexander, 2012).

