



Band Aid 30: Leave Bob Geldof's Christmas anthem alone — how much have you raised for Ebola?

I'm on the side of people who don't judge someone raising money for charity just because they're not considered edgy or cool

Benjamin Parker | @BenParker90



Bob Geldof arrives at a west London studio to record the new Band Aid 30 single on November 15, 2014 ANDREW COWIE/AFP/Getty Images

I'm all too aware of the backlash that has met Bob Geldof's latest **'Do They Know It's Christmas?'** offering. And in some respects I can see where the haters are coming from. However, I'm all for Band Aid 30.

Academic types are acting like the lyrics are worth line-by-line theorems, while social media comments are outraged over the choice of celebs singing it. But Ebola isn't going away any time soon, and it's not as if Band Aid 30 is pretending that it's presenting the only solution to the disease.

Médecins Sans Frontières have been responding in the epicentres since March this year, and the Disasters Emergency Committee have raised more than £21m. This great work should be applauded, but you can't criticise Band Aid if it takes the limelight; all the appeals can work together, and they are.

I'm on the side of people who don't judge someone raising money for charity just because they have a good voice, or because they can command an audience of millions on YouTube. Would the scores of One Direction fans have donated so freely without appearance of Harry Styles et al? I'm not so sure.

It's also important to separate disliking personalities with legitimate criticisms of the 2014 revamp. Yes, Geldof might come across as arrogant, and Bono's tax arrangements are dodgy. But neither men are criminals, and Ebola is killing thousands of people — so why not throw some of your spare change into their bucket? Would you treat fundraisers on the street with the same unnecessary scrutiny?

I don't accept a lot of the academic dissections of 'Do They Know It's Christmas?'. The West's desire to fight Ebola — whether acted upon or simply lip service at this time — is nothing to do with the relics of empire. In my opinion, the accusation by Robtel Neajai Pailey, a PhD student at SOAS, that the song promotes an "us and them" approach should be looked at in the following way: it is us (the UK, for whom the song is intended) hoping to raise money to save lives of them (people affected by Ebola).

This is the only distinction that needs to be made, as the "them" applies to any people affected by any tragedy that the British public pull together for, and in any part of the world, including incidents on our own shores. Fears that the UK's perception of Africa will be twisted into a UKIP-esque **"Bongo Bongo Land"** are unfounded, and if anyone has a patronising, old fashioned image on what is a vibrant, complex continent then it certainly won't be coming from this song alone.

A lot of people have been upset at the line 'Do They Know It's Christmas?' because of course, many Africans aren't Christian. With the exception of Liberia, all the countries affected by Ebola have a majority Muslim population, which means Christmas doesn't rank highly on the calendar. But Christmas is a far more secular celebration nowadays, and is still embraced by many people, **including Muslims** and atheists. It brings out the best in us, and is one of the strongest ways to encourage a Western audience to donate.

Like it or not, Band Aid 30 is on course to be number one this weekend, and favourite to be the Christmas chart topper. If you really can't get on board then don't buy the song. But at least understand the message and donate elsewhere.