

(PRODUCT)^{RED}

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Love and Debt: The Product Red Campaign and the Racial Dynamics of Neoliberal Religion

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This talk uses the example of the Product Red campaign to show how U2's Bono has been a celebrity promoter of neoliberal religion in Africa that combines the moral prescriptions of the prosperity gospel with the economic principles of free markets and private entrepreneurship. The talk emphasizes the racial dynamics of neoliberal religion, explaining how Bono's view of Western intervention in Africa depends upon an essentialist idea of racial difference and musical expression that connects him to an American history of blackface minstrelsy. The talk concludes by reflecting on the economic function of Bono's minstrel act, which is to increase the personal debt of Western consumers by making them feel as if they are relieving the debt of others far away in developing countries. This chapter reflects on how Bono makes it seem as though he has reversed the minstrel rules of popular culture, now giving to, rather than stealing from, Africans, and how he offers this idea to consumers in the branded image of Africa in need.