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When White Saviorism Turns Deadly: American missionary played doctor, children died, when will there be justice?



No White Saviors

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Pictured is Renee Bach, an American missionary who moved to Jinja, Uganda at age 18. She is not a Doctor, not a Nurse. With no formal medical training, Ms. Bach started experimenting with medical procedures she'd learn from Youtube.

When I first visited Uganda in 2010, I was 20-years-old and chock-full of the white savior complex. I volunteered for 3 months at an orphanage in Jinja, Uganda and I really believed I was *making a difference*. I fundraised for my trip, raising thousands of dollars from family and friends to fill a role that was *absolutely not necessary*, even though I believed it was. The Ugandan women who cared for the children in the home were far better equipped to love and care for these children. They knew the culture, language and were a constant in the lives of the at-risk kids who came into care.

One of the hardest but most important lessons I have learned over the last 8 years has been that good intentions are not good enough. No matter how well meaning I

have been or continue to be, the impact of my actions on the community I claim to be helping far outweighs my goodwill.

While in Jinja my white savior complex was only reinforced as I met other young, white American women who had moved to this same town. I watched in awe of young women who moved halfway across the world at age 18 with no experience, no college education. They were starting organizations and adopting children. *How amazing?* If they could do it, why not me? So I did. With only a bachelors degree and little-to-no experience, I co-founded an NGO in the same town as Renee Bach and her project - **“Serving His Children.”**

Initially, I admired Renee for her sacrifice and tireless commitment to *helping* children battling malnutrition. *It was not until January 2014 that my perspective really started to change.* There was a child referred to our center who had previously been at Serving His Children (SHC). He and his Grandmother stayed with us for several months while he received much

needed medical care. The day after we had received some good news about his heart condition, he died of a sudden heart attack. His 3-year-old body had been through a great deal of stress and it had finally given out.

We found out that this little boy had suffered a severe case of malnutrition and was brought to Renee's NGO in Masese. They got him fat and healthy and then sent him home without so much as any consideration for the root cause of his malnutrition. There was no follow up, so he fell sick again, so sick that his body was not able to come back from it this time.

Renee and her Social Worker at the time came out to our office to discuss this case, as I made it clear I held her partially responsible for this child's death. I explained that had she training or experience in child welfare, she'd know how critical it is to follow up on cases like this. *I was frustrated at that point but all I was asking was that Renee and her team do*

better follow up moving forward to prevent kids from falling through the cracks and ending up right back where they started.

It was soon after this that my concern moved to terror, as I learned that the poor follow-up procedures were far from the most dangerous thing happening at Serving His Children. **It was reported by multiple parties that Renee was actively practicing medicine on children that came to the center.** She had medical professionals on staff but she herself, with no medical training, chose to actively treat and respond to serious medical needs of children in crisis.

Below is a screen capture of a blogpost Ms. Bach published on the Serving His Children website. This post, among others, have since been taken down.

Nothing published on the internet really ever goes away. We were able to recover a number of troubling posts just like this, that were taken down after evidence was submitted to the Jinja Police and Ministry of Health in Uganda in 2015.

...and when I pushed me covering back my eyes swarms, not under the swarms say a smoo, not very, very common, pale baby girl. Her breaths were frighteningly slow. No wonder I was told she might be dead, the rise and fall of her chest was almost invisible.

I immediately wheeled them into the clinic, I hooked the baby up to oxygen and got to work... As I took her temperature, started an IV, checked her blood sugar, tested for malaria, and looked at her HB count, they began to tell me her story.... A story that I feel I have heard many times before. But even though I've heard countless similar stories, my heart still breaks every time!

<https://web.archive.org/web/20120121122615/http://www.english.illinois.edu/ganda/blogpost.com/2011/10/patricia-is.html>

8/23/2014

But the greatest of these is LOVE... Patricia

The baby's name is Patricia. She is 9 months old. She had fallen sick 3 weeks ago. Her Mom had taken her to a health center, but there was no improvement. She continued to get worse, despite any treatment that was given. One of their relatives told them about a "hospital" in Mbarara with a "White Doctor". So that Sunday morning they left their home early and journeyed to Jinja in hope of finding someone, anyone who could help their daughter.



While I was listening, I was attempting to diagnose the many problems that could potentially be at hand.... Got it. Malaria positive. HB 3.2. Both are a big problem. And together they create an even bigger (most likely fatal) problem for such a small child.

Here you can find a detailed account of just some of the direct, *self-taught* medical care this American missionary engaged in. She writes, “I hooked the baby up to oxygen and got to work....As I took her temperature, started an IV, checked her blood sugar, tested for malaria, and looked at her HB count... I was attempting to diagnose the many problems that could potentially be at hand...After doing a search for blood around Jinja town, we found her type and it was a match! We

started the transfusion...”

According to previous volunteers and former staff, the above account is *nothing* compared to the high level medical practices Ms. Bach would engage in at Serving His Children. Taking children from actual hospitals and medical centers, Renee and her team would bring children back to the center in Masese. Renee herself would openly talk about how much she enjoyed “hands on medical care”. **An unknown number of children have died in the care of this center.** Proper protocol was not followed after the children died, so it could be quite challenging to find the total number of lives lost due to such serious negligence.



Pictured is Renee Bach standing in a room at Serving His Children in Masese. The room is covered, wall to wall, with photos of malnourished children.

Many of us who have tried to hold Renee and SHC accountable have been lambasted, yelled at and referred to as “the enemy” by supporters of Renee. The “home church” that Ms. Bach attended in Jinja, as well as a significant portion of the missionary community there, supported and defended her. *It seems as though missionaries may have a selective tendency when it comes to following the laws of the land.* Could you imagine if a young, Ugandan woman was experimenting with medical procedures on their children and they ended up dying? These same missionaries who have stood by and justified these behaviors would not sleep until they got justice if this had happened to their children.

What’s worse? Renee’s Board of Directors in America consisted of close friends and family members. When volunteers and

employees would write to the board about these concerns, rather than holding Renee accountable, the board would find a way to get rid of anyone who was seen as “critical” of *Renee’s calling from God*.

After SHC was shut down in 2015, many of us hoped that there would finally be justice for all of the families who had children die at the center under Renee’s care. *We were wrong*. Up until now, there has not been a full investigation into the evidence provided to authorities here in Uganda. While we are holding Ms. Bach and SHC accountable first, we also must ask why the authorities who should have held her accountable failed to do so.

The purpose of this article is for advocacy and awareness purposes only. Sometimes, when justice is not had by way of a country’s *justice* system, the last resort is seeking public attention. When you share this and help us spread the word, there will be more voices demanding accountability for these families who lost

their children.

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WRITTEN BY

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