

# Waves of Grace

Presented by: Vi Nguyen

---

*Virtual Reality Storytelling for Spring 2016*

# An Ebola Survivor's Story, Told in VR



“Empathy to action”

–*Gabo Arora*

# Who, what, when, & where

---

- ❖ Deontee Davis
  - ❖ Ebola survivor now turned advocate
- ❖ Plea for help to rebuild her country after the Ebola outbreak in 2014
  - ❖ For the survivors of ebola; orphans in Liberia
- ❖ Advocate that the survivors are no longer a threat





*“I remember the fear—the fear people had of me. They were too scared to even touch me. And I was scared of my own child. I was scared of the man I loved. Forgive me, Lord. Forgive me.”*



# Created by:

---

- ❖ Gabo Arora
  - ❖ Lead filmmaker at United Nations
- ❖ Chris Milk
  - ❖ Founder & CEO @ Vrse.works
- ❖ VICE News



**VICE NEWS**





“Even the term “created by” reflects how new the virtual reality medium is. “You’re ‘creating’ these worlds rather than you’re ‘directing’ a scene with actors and rectangular framing. We’re still playing with the way we define these roles,”

*–Chris Milk*



# United Nations & Vrse:

---

- ❖ The “on-ramp” for VR
  - ❖ “Waves of Grace” is to get people to understand the emerging medium of storytelling and filmmaking
- ❖ Tiers of technology gives audience a taste of VR even if audience is not strapped into a headset
  - ❖ The options includes a scrollable, 360-degree web player



# Successful? Connection & Empathy

---

- ❖ United Nations found that those who watched and experienced VR stories were more likely to donate (1 in 6 donated, long term \$\$\$)
- ❖ “Hand off point” - the way the audience is brought into a scene, based on where you were looking at in the last scene, the anticipation
- ❖ Breaking of the “4th Wall” in cinema
  - ❖ Gives more of an immediacy & intimacy relationship
- ❖ Shown at high-level meetings where policy makers, philanthropists, and big donors are present



# What worked...

---

---

- ❖ Breaking the 4th wall in cinema
  - ❖ Gives it a more personal experience, the Liberians are looking straight at you
- ❖ The “hand off point”
  - ❖ The way the audience is brought into the scene...based on where you the viewer was last looking in the previous scene... is dependent on what will drive the next scene
- ❖ Audio
  - ❖ Decontee’s own personal narrative, music and natural sounds

# How was it released?

---

- ❖ Awareness campaign and UNICEF fundraising
- ❖ Available through the Vrse app on every VR headset
- ❖ Or “magic window” mode -makes your phone look like a window into a virtual reality world
- ❖ Embeddable web player for scrolling
- ❖ Baby steps into the fullest, most immersive experience possible





# Problems in VR Storytelling

---

- ❖ Ethics?
- ❖ Honesty?
  - ❖ Success of the story depends on the characters and story arch
- ❖ Strong characters to narrative the story
- ❖ How to get the viewer to see a specific scene?
- ❖ How to direct viewer's attention?



# What comes after VR?

---

- ❖ “But does that create real loyalty to a cause or to an idea? Or is it something that’s just very moving or very emotional at a given point and there’s a regular drop off later on?” -*Unicef Innovation co-lead Christopher Fabian*
- ❖ There's a certain earnestness to the making of VR now. People are really wanting to use it to start conversations, to push a dialogue. I hope that stays. - *Filmmaker Rose Troche*
- ❖ “To move beyond fundraising...to an educational tool” - *Gabo Arora*



# Similar Projects/Companies

---

- ❖ UN First VR Documentary & VRSE
  - ❖ “Clouds Over Sidra” (Jordan, Feb 2015): Follows a 12 year old girl inside a Syrian Refugee camp with 80,000 other refugees, living in the Za’atari camp
  - ❖ Helped raised over \$3.8 billion for the refugee crisis
- ❖ NYT “The Displaced” (Nov 2015): Documentary on three refugee children (Chuol, Hana, & Olga)
- ❖ Brand new: “My Mother’s Wing” (March 2016, 5th VR piece from UN, Israeli & Palestine conflict)
  - ❖ Family living in Gaza of 37 year old OM who lost his two sons
  - ❖ Can VR also help with peace-building in the world’s most difficult conflict
  - ❖ Awareness to actual change
- ❖ Nepal Earthquake Relief, industrial pollution in India, climate change in China & the Amazon
- ❖ Ryot and Vrse have also ventured into more journalistic endeavors, partnering with the AP and NYT

“This Gaza piece is the first time where we’re going to try to bring it into these communities that have these stereotypes and these issues with each other, and try to see, ‘Does building this [VR] space do it? We want to try to humanize the suffering.’”

*–Gabo Arora*





# Works Cited

---

- ❖ <http://vrse.works/creators/chris-milk/work/waves-of-grace/>
- ❖ <https://news.vice.com/article/waves-of-grace-an-ebola-survivors-story-in-virtual-reality>
- ❖ <http://www.wired.com/2015/09/vr-ebola-film/#slide-1>
- ❖ <http://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2015/09/01/visit-an-ebola-hot-zone-in-the-virtual-reality-film-waves-of-grace/>
- ❖ <http://www.unicefstories.org/2015/10/13/how-the-united-nations-is-using-virtual-reality-to-tackle-real-world-problems/>
- ❖ <http://thecreatorsproject.vice.com/blog/an-ebola-survivors-story-told-in-virtual-reality>
- ❖ <https://alwaysactingup.wordpress.com/what-is-the-4th-wall/>
- ❖ [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/21/opinion/sundance-new-frontiers-virtual-reality.html?nytapp=true&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/21/opinion/sundance-new-frontiers-virtual-reality.html?nytapp=true&_r=0)
- ❖ <https://unitednationsvirtualreality.wordpress.com/>
- ❖ <http://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2014/11/01/360453236/she-lost-her-fiance-to-ebola-but-found-a-new-mission>