

profession and to the people who trust us in their time of need.

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## References

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## Cover Art

### Artist's Statement: The Absent Multitude

A tiny baby lies limp on a tattered blanket below a window that glows white from the intense Ugandan sunlight. Holes and blood stains riddle the white cotton cloth where he rests his frail arms. His teenage mother, who journeyed for eight hours in flip-flops on a rock-ridden, dirt road to the rural hospital, stands beside me in silence. Her hand covers her mouth and tears trickle down her cheeks as she stares at her premature baby.

“You can touch him,” I say.

She snuffles and bites her lower lip. After a moment, I take her hand and rest it on her son's head. Her brown eyes soften as she strokes wisps of her baby boy's black hair, traces her finger along his soft cheeks, and then holds his little hand in her fingers. Her baby boy opens his mouth and pauses. With a brief gasp, he takes his final breath.

For the next minute, the mother continues to watch her silent baby. Then with a loud sob, she covers her face with her hands and falls into a chair. Her body shakes as she weeps.

Her baby boy's closed eyes will never see a sunrise; his nose will never smell the sweet scent of blooming flowers; his ears will never hear his mother sing; his feet will never dance; his hands will never catch a ball; and he will never laugh with joy.

If he were born here in America, he would now be running around a park, throwing a baseball, playing in the grass with other children, or wrestling with his golden retriever puppy while his mother watches and smiles. However, this baby boy died with nothing, not even a name. He was born in a village without



The Absent Multitude

electricity or running water. There is an African proverb that says, “It takes a village to raise a child.” But not if death first takes the child from the village.

As an academic neonatologist, I had the privilege to volunteer in Kiwoko, Uganda, where I partnered with local health care providers on ways to improve newborn care through education and quality, sustainable care practices—despite limited funding and medication. I marveled at the successes of the dedicated Ugandan doctors and nurses, but also mourned the many newborn deaths I saw, deaths attributable to poverty and insufficient resources.

To honor the baby boy who died without a name, I painted *The Absent Multitude*—featured in part on the cover and shown in full here. As I painted, I reflected on the heartbreak of witnessing the massive health care gap that exists between high- and low-income countries. The voices advocating to end the global injustice of health inequality are too often stifled by shouts from the privileged and unsympathetic, encouraging barriers

to “protect” people. For the millions of babies dying every year from preventable causes, walls should never impede access to basic medical needs. Instead, countries with abundant resources, including the United States, should build bridges to improve access to care in places like Uganda, so more children can survive and thrive.

The tragic story of the dead, baby boy born in Uganda is synonymous with millions of unwritten stories about poor, nameless newborns who die in our world each year. The brevity of their lives should never diminish the value of their lives or abate our call to help.

Who are the absent multitude? Those who need help? Or, those of us capable of helping?

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