A short 20 years:

meeting the challenges facing teachers who bring Rwanda into the classroom

As the twentieth anniversary of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda approaches, Mark Gudgel argues that we should face the challenges posed by teaching about Rwanda. Drawing on his experience as a history teacher in the US, his experience researching and supporting others' classrooms in the US and UK, his training in Holocaust education and his knowledge and experience of Rwanda, Gudgel identifies some of the most common challenges facing teachers. He offers practical advice, some principles for continued development of suitable approaches and his personal reflections on the importance of bringing Rwanda's history into the classroom.

Mark Gudgel

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Introduction

In 1994, an estimated one million people were murdered between 6 April and 17 July in the small African state of Rwanda. Almost instantaneously, on the assassination of President Habyarimana, roadblocks were erected, armed militias dispatched and the killing of the Tutsi minority began. Many victims were murdered by people they knew, and most of them with machetes and other agricultural hand-tools. While the international community observed and was aware from the start, meaningful state-sponsored intervention did not occur. In the aftermath of the killing, a new nation was formed, a diaspora repatriated, bodies buried in mass graves and a way forward sought. Only afterward, when too late for action to save another life, was the collective consciousness of the world engaged.

By all accounts, 1994 was a busy year. The frontman for the Seattle grunge band Nirvana, Kurt Cobain, took his own life one day prior to the outbreak of violence in Rwanda. In June, the police chase and ensuing murder trial of actor and athlete O.J. Simpson commanded the attention of the media. Shortly thereafter, the World Cup began, ending with yet another victory for Brazil. More directly related, perhaps, was Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List*, the Holocaust-era story of a Nazi-turned-rescuer. Yet few seemed to make connection between 1940s Europe and present-day Rwanda. While a film about the Holocaust was being celebrated for its importance, hundreds of thousands of people were being murdered in a genocide that employed different methods and affected different people, but was undeniably reminiscent of the Holocaust in Europe.

After the Holocaust, western states sought moral justification for fighting the war through having 'liberated' the infamous German *lager* system. Yet the release of Jewish and other prisoners from Germany's camps was the happy bi-product of an Allied victory, and was certainly not what motivated war with Germany in the first place. Perhaps the complexity of this history and the somewhat convoluted narrative associated with it, coupled with a genuine sense of shame, horror, or even disbelief, might begin to explain why Holocaust education was slow to be taken up in the United Kingdom, in the United States and in other nations.

In addition to the passage of time, another factor that contributed to an increase in Holocaust education was an increase in available materials. *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank was first released in 1947. Over time, more and more survivor testimonies, documentaries and other resources became available, fostering a greater discourse and making it possible for the subject to find its way into the classroom. And as the twentieth anniversary of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda fast approaches, it seems likely that a similar surge in texts, films, articles and more is likely to further its popularity as a topic for teaching.[1]

However, while Holocaust education remains an ever-evolving field, it has been my experience that similar education focused on genocide in Rwanda is rarely given the same level of consideration. My own interest in the subject was born in 2005, when a high-school classmate who knew that I had recently begun teaching English at Southwest High School in Lincoln, Nebraska,

encouraged me to view the recently released *Hotel Rwanda*. Although I have come to learn that the film itself is largely a work of fiction, it affected me deeply at the time, perhaps most potently by bringing to my attention the fact that, while I remembered much about 1994, from Cobain's suicide to the gifts I received for my thirteenth birthday (not least, Billy Joel's *Piano Man* on Compact Disc), I was entirely unaware that the lives of a million of my fellow human beings had been cut short in an act of genocide. This realisation spawned in me an indignation, and it quickly became a mission of mine as an educator to ensure that my students would never leave school as ignorant of their world as I had been. From that point, I began teaching courses on the Holocaust, making 1994 a part of the focus, and I travelled to Rwanda. I also started working with various educational institutions whose focus was on genocide. I co-founded a non-profit organisation, the Educators' Institute for Human Rights, that works with teachers in Rwanda and other nations affected by genocide.

It is almost 20 years since 1994. As the anniversary approaches, students and teachers alike seem likely to take deeper and deeper interest into the *Mille Collines* – the Land of a Thousand Hills – and it becomes all the more important that educators are prepared to face the unique challenges posed in teaching about Rwanda. This article will attempt to identify a number of the most common and perhaps significant obstacles, most of which I have encountered in my own classroom in the United States, and to offer practical advice about how to begin to move past them and help students to understand and appreciate the nation and people I have grown to love.

Establishing a rationale for education about Rwanda

The question 'Why?' is important whenever a teacher introduces any topic into their classroom, but it can be even more important to think through when the issue is as potentially harrowing as genocide. Rwanda is rarely more than a mention in standard textbooks, and is unlikely to be a part of mandatory curricula outside of the nation itself. With an increased emphasis on core subjects and successful completion of standardised assessments, teachers wishing to introduce topics or curriculum that are deemed 'non-essential' must be prepared to rationalise and support their decisions. The question, then, of 'for what purpose?' becomes an important one.

The manner in which Rwanda is introduced to students will be determined by various factors. The most likely places to find it at present might be in subjects such as history or citizenship. Yet teachers might select Rwanda as a vehicle to arrive at very different objectives. A history teacher in England, for example, in the context of the 2014 National Curriculum for history, might draw upon the concepts specified in the 'Aims' of that curriculum to tackle a study in causation (asking 'Why…?') or, using the concepts of change and continuity, require pupils to characterise speed, nature or extent of change over time (asking 'How rapidly…? What kind of change …? What patterns of continuity …?'). Under that curriculum's stated aims, it would also be appropriate to answer challenging questions about differing interpretations

Figure 1: Rwanda's location in Africa. Students in England may find it helpful to hear that Rwanda is roughly the size of Wales.

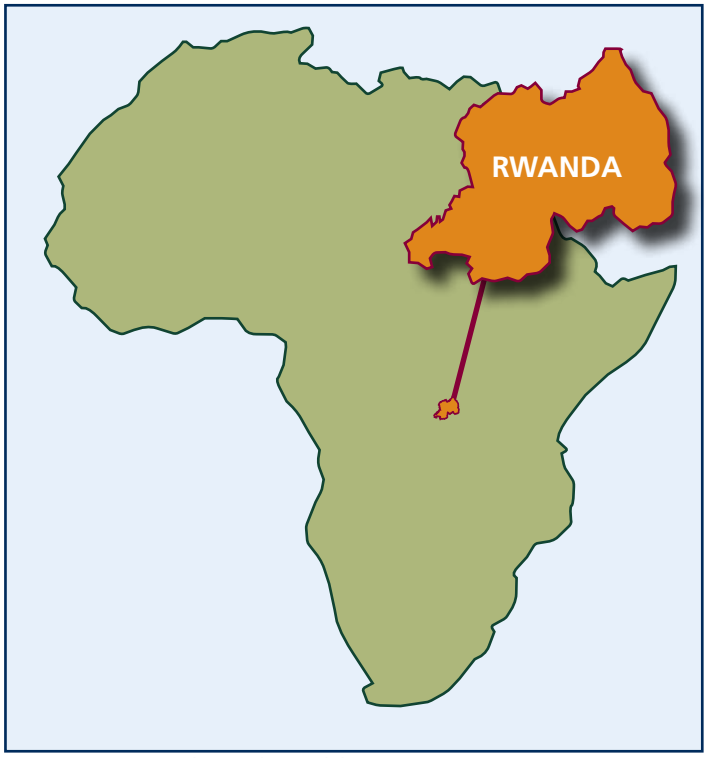
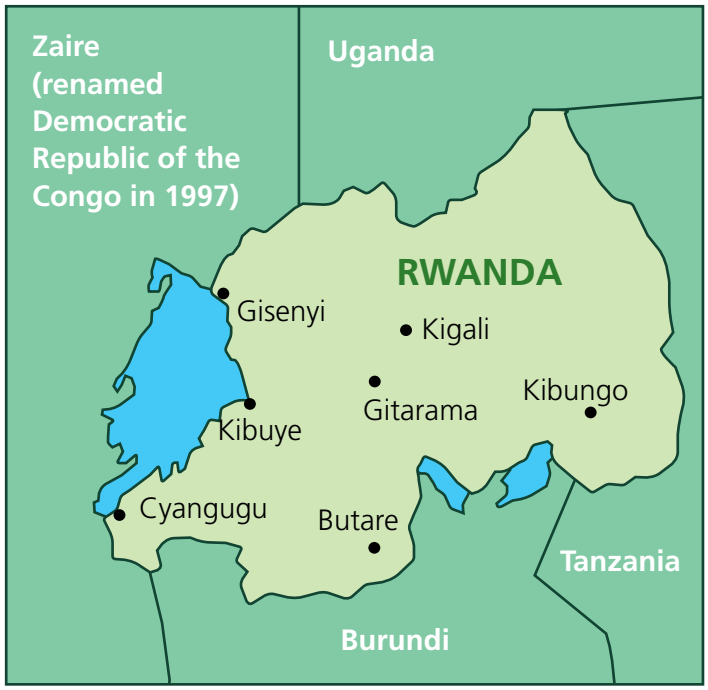


Figure 2: Rwanda and neighbouring countries in 1994



and accounts.[2] Many further options for types of historical question are encouraged by that curriculum and common in the history education communities in England. The requirements or options will be different again in other countries, and different in other disciplines. Any of these aims could easily be tied into a lesson or unit on Rwanda. In each instance, however, the need to address the question of 'why Rwanda?' remains.

Lessons on Rwanda are frequently linked to the Holocaust, a subject which has long been part of the National Curriculum in England and is encouraged on a state-by-state basis in the US, in a variety of ways.[3] Helping young people make meaningful connections between the 1994 genocide of the

Tutsi in Rwanda and the Shoah can be done with great efficacy. There are numerous legitimate parallels worth examining, from the use of propaganda to world response to justice in the aftermath, each of which can lead to students better understanding both events. What cannot and should not be compared, however, are the human elements. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum advises teachers to 'avoid comparisons of pain' in teaching about such events, and while students are inclined to ask of genocides simple questions such as 'Which one was worse?' there is no profit in comparing death by machete to death by Zyklon B inhalation from within the confines of a carpeted, climate-controlled classroom.[4]

There are many reasons to focus on Rwanda, many approaches that will help students to access and understand it and much that can be learned by studying the tiny country, her history and the people who live there. As an example, a study of society or politics in a citizenship lesson would reveal that Rwanda is the only nation in the world with a majority female parliament, a parliament which is democratically elected and in which the population of females continues to grow with each election, reaching 64 per cent after the most recent voting.[5] Another aspect of Rwandan society that students often find interesting is the concept of *Umuganda*, a Kinyarwandan word that means 'contribution'. On the last Saturday of every month, three hours in the morning are set aside for people to donate time to the community in whatever fashion they are best equipped, from planting or harvesting crops to cleaning the community.

Specifically in relation to the genocide of the Tutsi and the killing of moderate Hutus, Rwanda's tumultuous postcolonial history provides an example through which to examine Dr Gregory Stanton's Eight Stages of Genocide.[6] The general issue of international responses to genocide, the actions and motivations of global superpowers and the role of the United Nations can be meaningfully explored through the lens of 1994. And a student exploring criminal justice in a citizenship lesson would discover a unique, somewhat controversial, yet arguably effective traditional system of justice, known as *Gacaca* trials, in which a whole community – or what is left of it – may hold court in the open air, enabling them to face the accused, to give evidence, with the aim of promoting truth and – ultimately – reconciliation.

In all of these ways and many more, Rwanda is original and complex. Rwanda offers students an opportunity to gain knowledge and insights relevant to many disciplines or school subjects. In each instance, a professional educator familiar with their discipline and their curriculum can find ways to meaningfully intertwine a study of Rwanda with a variety of curricular areas. But it should not be assumed that the connections between particular curricular areas are obvious to students, nor should it be expected that the lessons to be learned are somehow inherent, that the meaning of these events cannot be missed. Rather, teachers must assist their students to examine Rwanda thoughtfully, through a lens of genuine inquiry rooted in the aims and questions of particular disciplines and, from their observations, determine the knowledge and insights that they hope students will gain. And while there is nothing problematical about linking the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda with the Holocaust or contrasting Rwanda with other nations past or present, students must ultimately come to see the *Mille Collines*, its people, and its genocide, as both important and significant in their own right.

Whatever motivates the inclusion of the topic of Rwanda in the classroom, from the 1994 genocide, to culture, society, government, reconciliation or other aspects entirely, teachers are charged with the task of identifying how it fits into their discipline, their school subject, their curriculum and their aims and objectives. While ultimately the rationale will vary from subject to subject and from teacher to teacher, it is clear that the topic lends itself to producing and examining diverse answers to the question 'why?'

Developing a broader historical context

Rwanda is not a genocide. Rather, Rwanda is a nation, a culture, a society, a people. These seemingly obvious truths regularly slip through the cracks of western understanding when it comes to the tiny African jewel. While scholars and educators would never even consider defining the Jewish people – and thousands of years of history, culture and tradition – merely by the depths of their persecution in the Shoah, this has become commonplace with Rwanda.[7] Teachers must not allow students to define Rwanda, the nation, and all of her culture, society, geography, economy, history and people, by their worst one hundred days. Moreover, in order truly to understand what happened between 6 April and 17 July in 1994, one must have a solid understanding of the context and events that enabled hatred and mistrust to be manifested in genocide.

First and foremost, it must be understood that the continent of Africa and all its thousands of kingdoms, societies and cultures did not magically spring into being upon the arrival of Europeans who, in addition to 'guns, germs, and steel', were also in possession of sophisticated written language skills.[8] Like the continent on which it sits, Rwanda has existed geographically for millions of years. People have lived there for the past several thousand. The creation of artificial boundaries to separate the newly obtained colonies did immense and irreparable damage to societies all over Africa. The effects are still felt and seen across the continent today.

The history of the kingdom of Rwanda dates backs hundreds if not thousands of years. The official web page of the government of Rwanda states:

> *For centuries, Rwanda existed as a centralized monarchy under a succession of Tutsi kings from one clan, who ruled through cattle chiefs, land chiefs and military chiefs. The king was supreme but the rest of the population, Bahutu, Batutsi and Batwa, lived in symbiotic harmony.*[9]

In this account, the emphasis is placed on the ability of diverse peoples, specifically Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, to coexist and interact peacefully. In fact, intermarriage among groups was common, and identity in these groups was less than static; for example, a Hutu person who obtained enough cattle could, reportedly, become a Tutsi. The peaceful nature of the groups living in Rwanda prior to the colonial period stands in stark contrast to the better-known 1994 genocide.

Figure 3: A timeline depicting key events in the history of Rwanda, from the colonial era to the present day

A timeline depicting key events in the history of Rwanda, from the colonial era to the present day

1885
Inter-European negotiations conclude with Rwanda given to Germany at the Conference of Berlin

1894
German explorer Count von Gotzen arrives in Rwanda

1899
Ruanda-Urundi (Rwanda and Burundi) become part of German East Africa

1916
defeated by Germans in WWI, Belgian forces occupy Rwanda

1919
Treaty of Versailles establishes League of Nations, strips Germany of colonies including German East Africa

1923
Rwanda ceded to Belgium via League of Nations

1933
Belgium issues racial identity cards to Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa

1957
Hutu Manifesto is written, and the PARMEHUTU (Party for the Emancipation of the Hutu) is formed

1959
Hutu Uprising in Rwanda, now-President Paul Kagame and family narrowly escape death with assistance of King Rudahigwa's chauffeur

1960
Belgian officials call for elections in Rwanda to formalise power shift; Hutu radicals win 70% of the vote

1961
influential Rwandans convene in Gitarama, monarchy dismissed, republic declared, PARMEHUTU leader Gregoire Kayibanda placed in charge

1962
Rwanda formally gains independence from Belgium, Gregoire Kayibanda officially named president

1973
President Kayibanda overthrown by General Juvenal Habyarimana

1978
Juvenal elected president under new constitution

1979
Rwandan Alliance for National Unity (RANU) is formed of Tutsi exiles in Uganda

1986
RANU fights alongside National Resistance Army in Uganda, overthrows Milton Obote, installs Yoweri Museveni as President

1987
RANU becomes the Rwandan Patriotic Front, or RPF

1990 – (October)
civil war between RPF and Forces Armed Rwandese (FAR), Rwanda's standing army, begins

1993
President Habyarimana signs power-sharing agreement with RPF leaders in Arusha, Tanzania. United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) arrives to monitor peace

1994
Between 6 April and 17 July, the newly-formed government led by Hutu extremists, along with *Interhamwe* militias, set out to systematically annihilate the Tutsi people of Rwanda. Nearly one million people are murdered.

1995
International Criminal Tribunal on Rwanda (ICTR) established

2000 – (April)
Paul Kagame elected President by Rwandan Parliament

2001 – (October)
Gacaca courts are established

2008 – (August)
Mucyo Commission Report accuses the French of active role in genocide; (October) English replaces French as lingua franca

2011
Rwanda Genocide Teachers' Association (RGTA) is founded as a professional organisation for educators who teach about genocide in Rwanda

2012 – (June)
Gacaca court system shut down

2013
Approaching the twentieth anniversary of the genocide in 1994, Rwanda commands the world's attention and respect with a rapidly growing economy and progressive society as a model of post-genocidal growth and prosperity

The first Europeans to arrive in this region of East Africa were Germans. Rwanda became a German colony in 1899 and was absorbed into *Deutsch Ostafrika* or German East Africa, which also included Burundi and Tanganyika (modern Tanzania). During the First World War, the Belgians managed to occupy some German colonial territory, including much of German East Africa. In 1919, when the Treaty of Versailles forced punitive measures on Germany, these included the ceding of the Germans' colonial holdings. While Tanganyika was given to the British, Rwanda and Burundi became part of the Belgian colonial empire.

For students to understand events such as the genocide in Rwanda, violent atrocities in Idi Amin's Uganda, genocide in Darfur, the 'Blackhawk Down' incident in Somalia, Charles Taylor's crimes in Liberia, and many other complex and often violent aspects of African history, it is imperative that they first examine the period before colonisation and 'the scramble for Africa', and then examine the *impact* of the arrival of Europeans. As Nigerian author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie put it in her TED Talk, 'The Danger of a Single Story':

> *Start the story with the failure of the African state and not with the colonial creation of the African state and you have an entirely different story.*[10]

Yet the legacy of conquest by European states is insufficient to explain why genocide took place in Rwanda in 1994. The Belgians, strongly influenced by the faux-science of eugenics, assigned ethnic identity cards to the people of Rwanda in 1933, the same year Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. It is well known that eugenics led to the mass murder of the disabled in the Nazis' so-called 'Euthanasia' programme, codenamed Aktion T-4, but it is less widely known that it had an immense impact on nations such as Rwanda as well. The minority, who were judged through measurements to bear a greater similarity to Europeans and thus to be racially superior, were deemed 'Tutsi,' while the remainder, approximately 85 per cent, were made 'Hutu.' What had once denoted social status had been transformed overnight into a fixed racial hierarchy, with privilege in all spheres of society, from employment to education, being granted to the Tutsi minority.

This connection with events in Europe invites reflection and, in the context of certain historical enquiries, could be valuable for students to explore. Eugenics was not a 'Nazi idea' but rather originated in England in the nineteenth century and by the twentieth century was influencing policy in many parts of Europe and the United States. The two genocides – the Holocaust and Rwanda – though separated by decades and occurring in different continents, thus have common points of reference in Western thought. The exporting of European cultural values (and prejudices) to Africa could be said to have had a significant impact on Rwanda.

In 1959, the majority Hutu, who under Belgian rule had been mistreated and oppressed, rose up and drove many Tutsi out of the country. Within a few years, the Belgians had disappeared, Rwanda was independent and the Hutu were in control. In the years that followed, Tutsis exiled from Rwanda staged a number of attacks from neighbouring countries, hoping to remove the Hutu government of President Gregoire Kayibanda. These attacks often led to large-scale killings of Tutsis within Rwanda. When Kayibanda was deposed in 1973 by his Defence Minister, Juvenal Habyarimana, who would remain in power until his assassination in April of 1994, anti-Tutsi policies persisted, and a series of quotas were put in place to limit Tutsi involvement in all public spheres.

In 1990, a group of Tutsis in exile who called themselves the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) fought southward from Uganda and engaged Habyarimana's forces, the *Forces Armed Rwandese* (FAR) in a civil war. It was the brokering of a peace agreement to end this civil war that brought the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR) into the picture in 1993. They remained to monitor the peace agreement.

On the night of 6 April, 1994, genocide was *sparked* by the assassination of President Juvenal Habyarimana, as well as President Cyprien Ntaryamira of neighbouring Burundi. This was not, however, what *caused* the genocide to take place. In reality, preparations had been in the works for many months, as weapons were imported and cached, militias trained and propaganda from both RTLM (radio) and *Kangura*, a newspaper perhaps reminiscent of Julius Streicher's *Der Sturmer* in its exceedingly narrow and hateful focus, had incited prejudice and violence on a wide scale. Upon the assassination of the president, roadblocks went up around Kigali, barring escape for the victims. The Prime Minister, Agathe Uwilingiyimana, considered a 'moderate Hutu', was murdered along with the ten Belgian UN Peacekeepers who were protecting her, and an interim government consisting of military officials complicit with the genocide was put in place. The response of Belgium, whose forces made up more than half of UNAMIR, to the slaying of its soldiers, was to call for full withdrawal. Although General Dallaire refused the legal order to pull out, he was eventually left with a token force of volunteers, a tenth the size of his original command. Over the next hundred days, chaos reigned in Rwanda and the civil war continued alongside the slaughter of a million civilians.

On 4 July, the RPF took control of Kigali and, on 17 July, they secured the rest of the nation, ending the genocide. In the months following, thousands of Tutsi exiles were repatriated to Rwanda from neighboring nations. The killing had ended. The uncharted task of rebuilding a nation, however, was just beginning.

Of course, as with the history of any nation, there is no limit to how deeply it can be examined, and time is rarely in abundance. Establishing the fact that there was a pre-colonial Rwandan kingdom, the impact of colonisation, and the practices that led to a great rift amongst the different groups of people, eventually leading to civil war, will provide students with the necessary overview for understanding how and why horrific violence broke out in 1994. Ultimately, students must begin to understand Rwandan history as that of a nation as complex and storied as their own, rather than a stereotypical eruption of extreme violence on the dark continent so far away.

A game of numbers

One benefit of the gradual and unhurried approach to the implementation of Holocaust education around the world

was that, in many instances, things were better sorted by the time they reached the classroom. One example of this might be the figure '9 million', which is attributed to the number of dead in an early French film entitled *Night and Fog*.[11] By the time teaching about the Holocaust became commonplace in the classroom, the figures used in texts and by teachers reflected more modern scholarship. Yet for the classroom teacher, shocking statistics are not an effective teaching tool. Students cannot relate to the victims of genocide by counting pennies or paperclips, but they can begin to understand by recognising that they share humanity itself with the victims of genocide, that they have more in common than to divide them and that like themselves, the victims were once part of the present, not merely part of history.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum encourages those teaching about the Holocaust to 'translate statistics into people,' suggesting:

> *...show that individual people – grandparents, parents, and children – are behind the statistics and emphasize the diversity of personal experiences within the larger historical narrative.*[12]

This is important practical advice for teachers. It may be made easier, however, by the fact that there is no *credible* debate around the number of Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The number six million is firmly established and widely accepted. While the principle of emphasising individuals is sound and certainly applies to Rwanda as well, the question of how many died in 1994 is far from laid to rest.

In the case of Rwanda, a heated debate has come about over time, and continues both to inspire discussion and to create turbulence. The official survey conducted in Rwanda in 1996 broke the victims down as having lived in one of 11 prefectures, and then again by commune. Adding the number of victims in each commune, and then adding the total number of victims in each prefecture, ultimately the Rwandans arrived at the number 1,364,020.[13] 'The account of victims does not include those who died after because of HIV or those who were thrown in the Nyabarongo River, Kivu lake, and other rivers...' notes Aloys Mahwa, the Executive Director of the Interdisciplinary Genocide Studies Commission located in Kigali.[14] Neither, however, does it include those who might have been thought dead in 1996 but who have since been repatriated, though this number is likely very low and understandably difficult to estimate.

In Rwanda today, when speaking of the genocide, official publications, newspapers, teachers, scholars, politicians and citizens alike all generally use the figure 'one million'. This figure will appear in *The New Times*, Rwanda's daily English-language newspaper, and will be heard on television as well as the radio. The web page of the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre states, 'In 100 days, more than 1,000,000 people were murdered.'[15] The official website of the Government of Rwanda states similarly:

> *On 1 October 1990, the RPF launched an armed liberation struggle … and ended the genocide of more than one million Batutsi and massacres of moderate Bahutu who opposed the genocide.*[16]

Figure 4: A banner at Ntarama, a community in which a massacre took place inside a church, reads, 'If you knew me, and you knew yourself, you would not have killed me.' (Photo taken in 2008)

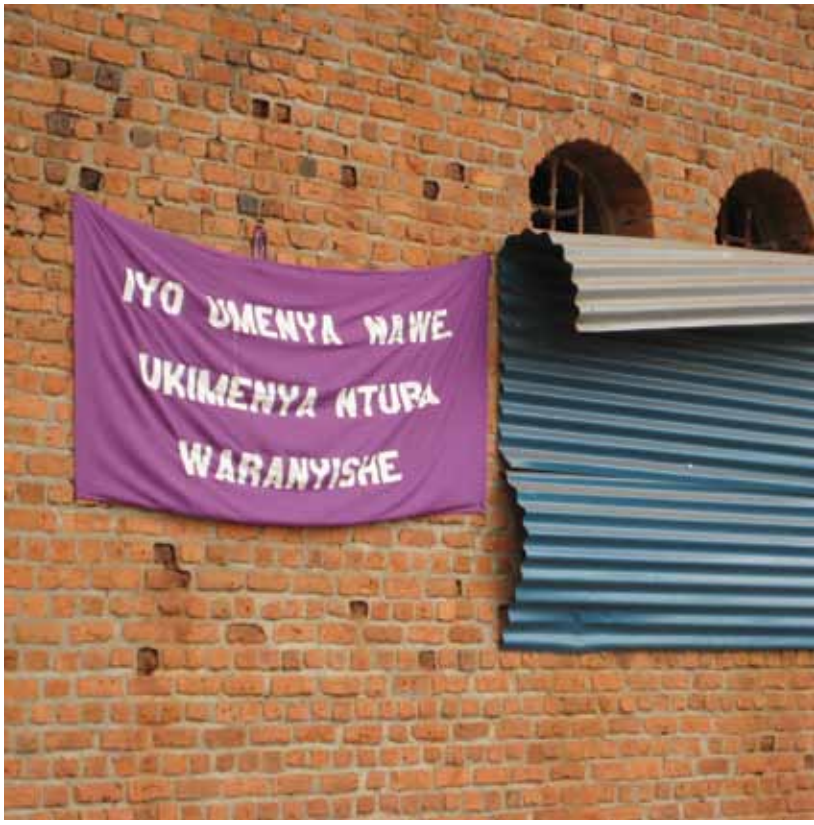
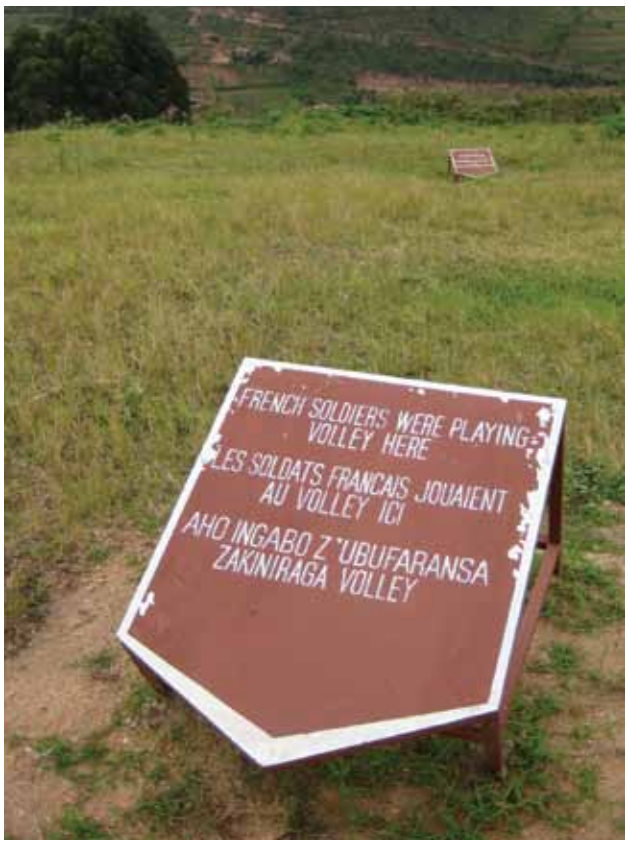


Figure 5: At Murambi, a school and the site of a massacre in the south of Rwanda, a sign indicates where French soldiers from Operation Turquoise set up a volleyball court above a mass grave. (Photo taken in 2011)



Of course, the round figure of a million is imprecise, and not necessarily held by everyone, but it reflects a common understanding. In short, the people of Rwanda share a general agreement about how many of their own dead they were forced to bury in the months and years that succeeded the end of genocide in 1994.

Outside of Rwanda, however, a very different picture is often painted. Since shortly after the genocide in the mid-1990s, Western sources ranging from textbooks to institutions have often utilised the number 800,000 in reference to the number of victims in 1994. These sources range from the BBC to the United Nations, and use the number 800,000 without any explanation of their deviation from the figure used in Rwanda.[17] Similarly, most history textbooks designed for the secondary classroom use the number 800,000 as well, and offer no insight into the discrepancy.

Teachers must not allow students to define Rwanda, the nation, and all of her culture, society, geography, economy, history and people, by their worst one hundred days.

The Survivors Fund, or SURF, a UK-based charity, states:

> *An estimated 800,000 to 1 million Tutsis and some moderate Hutus were slaughtered in the Rwandan genocide. A recent report has estimated the number to be close to 2 million.*[18]

The report that SURF refers to was released in 2008 and published in *The New Times*. It was conducted by AERG, the Student Genocide Survivor's Association, and includes data from more than 390 memorials surveyed.[19]

Though the estimate of two million is undoubtedly too high, others are wont to err in the other direction and an alarming trend has arisen. While David Irving and others have become infamous for questioning the number slain in the Holocaust, the assignment of the more diminutive number '500,000' has been likened by some to genocide denial in Rwanda.[20] In this instance, however, the 'deniers' are even more prominent than the un-credentialled historian Irving. In an 17 August 2010 press release, the United States Africa Command (AFRICOM), an official part of the U.S. Military, stated, 'More than 500,000 Rwandans, mostly ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus, were killed in Rwanda's 1994 genocide.'[21] Other prominent news organisations using a number half that of what Rwandans claim to be true, include the *New York Times* and, in many instances, the Associated Press.[22]

Of course, to students in a media centre gathering data about Rwanda, any of these sources could easily appear credible, and go unquestioned. Instead of unequivocally accepting the statements made by any source, it is a valuable exercise for students to access a variety of sources, attempt to synthesise them, and come to some conclusions through dialogue and investigation. Teachers need to assist students first to work through the evidence on their own in a scholarly fashion, and second, to move beyond statistics to look at the lives of the people, individual human beings all, who make up the immense numbers – regardless of which statistic is being used.

The bloody end

A degree of ambiguity around how the genocide ended has begun to emerge, in spite of the fact that there is no controversy about the matter so far as historical evidence is concerned. Most textbook passages do not go into enough depth to examine the RPF, and therefore cannot credit the cessation of the genocide to their military victory, made final on 17 July 1994. Yet in the simplest terms, this is precisely what happened; the RPF under Paul Kagame invaded Rwanda from the North, driving the killers southward and into Zaire, ending the genocide (see timeline in Figure 3). Students, however, are often left without a firm grasp of how the genocide concluded, and this in turn may lead them to make false assumptions. While many in western states, not least the UK and the US, encourage students to view the role of their respective nations in regard to the Holocaust as that of 'liberators,' little opportunity exists for such ideology in regard to the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda, as the vast majority of expats and foreigners were successfully evacuated within a few days of the onset of the massacres in Kigali.

One element likely to cause confusion for students is the presence of the French military in Rwanda in 1994. 'Operation Turquoise' was the name given to a French military operation that eventually occupied the southern province of Rwanda during and after the genocide. It may seem logical to students to assume that, if a Western nation occupied parts of Rwanda in 1994, then this action must have led successfully to the end of genocide. In the case of Rwanda, however, this would be far from accurate.

The role of the French in 1994 is still widely debated. The French military did train and supply the FAR (Rwandan Armed Forces) prior to 1994, and many members of the FAR, including high-ranking military officials, became very involved in the killing. In 2008, the Mucyo Commission Report was released in Rwanda, formally condemning the French – all the way up to then-President Francois Mitterand, much of his cabinet, and many high-ranking French military personnel – for their role in the genocide.[23] In *The French Betrayal of Rwanda*, Kroslak writes:

> *The French government still insists, despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, that it bears no responsibility for the genocide in Rwanda.*[24]

Furthermore, the manner in which the narrative unfolds in many history textbooks leaves much to be desired, often being too brief to tell the story, and in many instances guilty of blatant inaccuracies. Prentice Hall's *America, Pathways to the Present*, offers a brief explanation of the 1994 genocide, and concludes with the line, 'Finally, in June, a French-led UN force moved in to stop the bloodshed.'[25] The passage ends there. Yet the presence of French forces is controversial to say the least, as highlighted in 2008 in the Mucyo Commission Report. Writes

Martin Meredith in *The Fate of Africa*, 'Many prominent genocidaires, including Colonel Bagosora, passed through the French "safe haven" but the French made no attempt to arrest them.' Said one French soldier, 'This is not what we were led to believe. We were told the Tutsis were killing Hutus.'[26] Whether the intent of Operation Turquoise was indeed to stop the bloodshed, or whether instead they had a more sinister purpose of assisting the *genocidaires* they had trained for years to escape into Zaire (today the Democratic Republic of Congo), the message of the textbook passage is clearly to credit the French with ending the 1994 genocide, an idea that cannot be supported by evidence and which most credible scholars, especially those in Rwanda, would find offensive to say the least. Yet if this message can find its way into a widely-distributed secondary school textbook in the United States, then students run a major risk of ingesting misinformation if not carefully guided by knowledgeable instructors.

Selecting resources for teaching about Rwanda

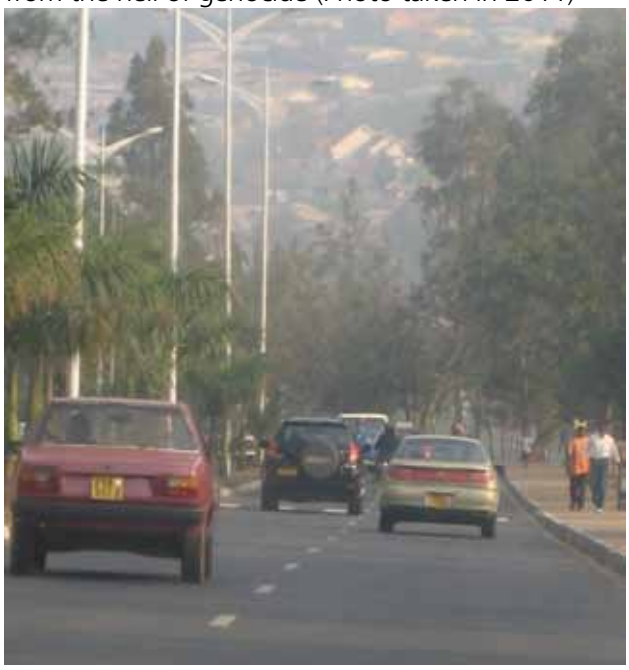
Perhaps one of the greatest barriers that stands in the way of educators who aim to successfully teach their students about the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi is a general lack of resources. This is not to suggest that there are no resources available but, rather, to spotlight the shortage and to illuminate the problematical nature of some of the most popular ones. But while the resources available may be limited in some respects, there are certainly enough good ones to enable teachers to address the topic accurately using materials that possess integrity and authenticity.

Compared with the Holocaust, few survivor testimonies are available from Rwanda. This, of course, will change over time, as more survivors find the courage and energy to put their experiences in writing. Progress is currently also hindered by the fact that, for most Rwandans, English is a third language after Kinyarwanda and French. The relatively recent promotion of English to the national language, however, and the efforts of many to help tell these important stories, is leading to the release of more and more survivor testimonies which will undoubtedly find their way into the classroom over time.[27]

Perhaps one of the greatest difficulties is the fact that the best known film about Rwanda, *Hotel Rwanda*, and the book on which it is based, *An Ordinary Man* by Paul Rusesabagina, have since been revealed to be grossly inaccurate, often referred to now as myths.[28] When first released, both film and book were widely acclaimed and widely used, and brought an important spotlight on an event that seemed to be rapidly fading from memory. However, over time, it came to be understood that the movie, filmed largely in South Africa without the supervision of any eye witnesses save for Rusesabagina himself, told a story that was largely falsified and that made a hero out of a man who is sometimes today regarded as more of an opportunist. On this point, many Rwandans are quietly indignant. Ndahiro and Rutazibwa, in their co-authored *Hotel Rwanda, Or the Tutsi Genocide as Seen by Hollywood*, explain their problem with admirable candor:

> *We refuse to allow the entertainment industry, the machine for making money out of the misfortunes of humanity that is the Hollywood film business, to impose on the minds of an unfortunately ill-informed public stereotypes that may guarantee the commercial success of a work of fiction, but distort and even deliberately pervert the truth about the genocide of the Rwandan Batutsi.*[29]

Figure 6: Today Rwanda is expanding its infrastructure to accommodate growing industries while her citizens attempt to model how to emerge from the hell of genocide (Photo taken in 2011)



Journalist and scholar of the genocide Melvern expresses similar sentiments:

> *It is not only survivor testimony that could call Rusesabagina's version of events into question – although this may be damning enough, for he is accused of extorting money from hotel guests for rooms and for food. The cheques he accepted for rent were cashed in Gitarama, where the interim government had established its premises.*[30]

The suggestion here is that Rusesabagina was in league with the interim government, a government led by men who would later be convicted of the crime of genocide in tribunals held in neighboring Tanzania. The consensus seems to be that while the story is engaging and uplifting, it is not true; it simplifies and falsifies a complex history and while fiction often makes enjoyable cinema, such a fairy tale will do more harm than good to understanding in a classroom.

This problem, however, does not leave the secondary teacher without excellent films with which to supplement lessons about Rwanda's genocide. Two movies filmed in Rwanda and with at least partial Rwandan casts include *Sometimes in April* and *Shake Hands with the Devil*.[31] These two films are generally regarded by the Rwandan people and educational communities as more true to the circumstances of 1994. In addition, an excellent documentary offering context and an overview of the genocide entitled *Ghosts of Rwanda* is available from PBS, and has a very useful accompanying web page that can be found at pbs.org as well.[32]

The books and survivor testimonies that are available range greatly in regard to quality, accessibility and content. Teachers seeking to use the testimony of survivors will find numerous short essays available on the website of the Kigali Genocide Memorial.[33] For younger audiences as well as English language learners, the UN has produced a graphic novel entitled *Let's Unite* which can be downloaded free of charge from their web page, while numerous organisations from SURF to the USC Shoah Foundation to the USHMM offer lesson plans, testimony, pod casts and other resources, materials and ideas.[34]

Conclusion

I no longer use *Hotel Rwanda* when I teach my students about 1994. Sometimes I use other films, though in truth I favour lugging my coffee pot into my classroom, grinding some Rwandan beans brought fresh from my last trip, and sharing a cup of coffee and a conversation about the Rwanda I know, the Rwanda I have grown to love, Rwanda as it is today. Of course, we eventually come around to the conversation of genocide and how it happened, but not before taking the necessary time to appreciate the country, its beautiful people, and the culture they call their own. Only once we begin to value Rwanda and its people for all they are, can we begin to discuss and meaningfully comprehend the tragic losses of 20 years ago.

Whether the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi can find a place as a stand-alone study in the secondary classroom, or whether it is inextricably bound to the Holocaust by common elements may yet be determined. Just as Holocaust education is taking time to evolve, employing trial and error, requiring great sensitivity and demanding bravery from teachers and students alike before becoming well developed and well nuanced in its curricular possibilities and in its pedagogy, so, too, will Western education in relation to Rwanda require such time and care. It may be helpful to understand what is being done today as the pioneering stages of an important movement, a movement that will evolve further over time, developing new approaches, reaching new conclusions and expanding in ways that today we cannot imagine. It is equally important to recognise the great complexity of the topic, and although it is unlikely that teachers in western states will ever teach about Rwanda outside the context of genocide, it is essential that these lessons do not begin or end in 1994.

Students often ask, 'Why didn't we do anything?' While typically born of justified indignation and a desire to be better, this is nevertheless the wrong question. 'We' (the West) did all kinds of things. France, Belgium and the United States put a combined force of nearly 2,000 soldiers on the ground within 72 hours of the onset of killing with the mission of evacuating tourists, journalists, and diplomats. Combined with a UNAMIR force of over 2,500, there was more than adequate manpower to stop the killing immediately. What there was not, however, was political will. Over the course of one hundred days, 'we' had numerous conversations, press conferences and meetings, and even approved large shipments of armoured personnel carriers to protect fleeing Tutsi from the *genocidaires*. They never arrived. Ultimately, the west, and the UN, did all kinds of things during this period of one hundred days, none of which was equal, whether alone or combined with other efforts, to stopping the bloodshed. In the end, had Paul Kagame's RPF not been victorious, it might be fair to conclude that the Tutsi people of Rwanda would be no more.

What was effective in saving lives, even if to a limited extent, were the heroic acts of bravery by caring individuals: Rwandans such as Damas Gisimba who saved children at his orphanage; foreigners such as Carl Wilkens and Phillipe Guillard who refused to abandon the people who had first taken them to the Land of a Thousand Hills and UN soldiers such as Romeo Dallaire and Mbaye Djiang who stayed on despite tremendous personal risk and outside pressure to abandon their mission and, in so doing, collectively saved the lives of thousands. It was individuals, not nations, who made some difference in Rwanda in 1994. Just as individuals swung machetes, individuals also saved lives. In the context of a secondary classroom, there is perhaps no more important message than this to convey to a class that is also made up of individual human beings.

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