

A Postcolonial Reflection on the Rwandan Genocide Against the Tutsi and its Legacy – April 2021,
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We affirm the integrity of Rwanda and the Rwandan people – torn asunder by the German and Belgian Abazungu – their governments and the Belgian White Fathers for whom a morally perverted form of religion and destructive colonialism went hand in hand - working together in arrogance and willful ignorance of Rwandan culture and civilization - with their bigoted, racist ideologies - when they forced themselves upon Rwanda during colonization.

The Belgian colonizers ruled Rwanda particularly catastrophically and ruthlessly, building upon imperial Germany's racist policies in Rwanda, cultivating division and hate in Rwandan society. They employed a divide and conquer strategy of invasion, conquest, discrimination, and persecution that helped lay the groundwork for mass murder and genocide.

They destroyed Rwanda's physical and spiritual integrity, freedom, and independence – politically, religiously, culturally, and socially. They exploited Rwandans to fight in their wars only to betray Rwandans following their ultimate sacrifice with ingratitude and malice. They destroyed an indigenous culture and form of governance that integrated Hutus and Tutsis into diverse clans, instead cultivating artificial and foreign notions of essentialized and racialized Hutus and Tutsis. Rwanda today rightfully rejects these racialized and racist Belgian efforts, knowing the horrific consequences of this coercive Belgian reconstruction of Rwandan social and political identities in the service of dividing Rwandans and alienating them from one another to advance Belgian colonization and its pernicious aims.

Rwanda neither asked for nor needed Europeans to meddle in its affairs and offer false promises, but the Germans and Belgians did not ask – they felt entitled. Rwanda lives with the murderous consequences of their colonization and racism and the mass resentment, jealousy, and violence it begot every day.

The Belgian government - with its relentless history of colonization in not only Rwanda but also in Burundi and Congo and Belgian racism against Rwandans – both Hutus and Tutsis, and since 1959, directed against Tutsis – owes an infinite debt to the Rwandan people and particularly to Rwanda's Tutsi minority. The Belgian government conveniently and narcissistically imagined the Congolese, Burundians and Rwandans as savages – projecting its own brutality, moral primitivism, and utter ignorance, stupidity and the evil of its racist theories onto the peoples Belgium oppressed and subjugated. Belgium has yet to acknowledge its moral and legal responsibility for its unconscionable crimes in Africa in any meaningful and significant way and to advance reparative justice for its crimes.

To the colonial Belgian barbarians who thought they arrived in a dark continent laden with jungle and any who sympathize with them we say, never and never and never again shall you bring your moral darkness and the jungle of your uncultured conscience to dominate, discriminate, dehumanize, devalue, and divide - not in Congo, not in Burundi, not in Rwanda, and not anywhere in Africa. Better for Belgium to develop its as yet unmastered skill of effectively self-governing a population divided between the Flemish and Walloons, with little love lost between them and dysfunctional, discoordinated governance a hallmark of contemporary Belgium that causes real harm to the rights and welfare of Belgium's citizens and their ability to enjoy quality government services.

Belgium's reckless and arrogant sense of entitlement brought violence and destruction on a scale and scope that Rwanda, Burundi and Congo never experienced prior to the arrival of

Europeans. Whatever heart of darkness Belgium's colonizers thought they encountered in Africa was their own and remains their own as many still celebrate and honor the Belgium's sadist king, Leopold, who killed and tortured over one million Congolese.

When Congo won its independence from Belgium in 1960 - as Tutsis were being massacred in Rwanda, and Belgium began the first of its many collusions between 1959 and through 1994 with an exterminationist Hutu supremacist regime in Rwanda - Belgium's then king, King Baudouin, spoke of the murderous King Leopold, calling him a 'genius,' in a racist and condescending speech laced with lies about Belgium's purported colonial altruism. King Baudouin said that Belgium came "not to conquer to but civilize" – a comment of staggering poverty of morality, honesty, and integrity. His speech seemed aimed at humiliating the Congolese, but ultimately he humiliated and dishonored Belgium and Belgians, for it revealed the utter lack of self-awareness and insight of colonial perpetrators of the gravest human rights violations, and the contempt with which Belgium viewed Africans. Belgium – with extensive European and American governmental and intelligence collusion would later murder Congolese Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, dismember his body, and dissolve it in sulfuric acid. That was the clearest expression of Belgium's 'civilizing mission' in Congo.

As to civilization, like Congo, Rwanda knows that Belgian so called 'civilizing mission' all too well. It was the Belgian government who insisted that identity cards define Rwandans as Hutu, Tutsis, and Twa – and it is that racialized identity reflecting a European obsession with race, pathological European notions of white Christian European superiority to Africans, and racism that enabled Hutu Power and the murder of Tutsis during the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. It was those same identity cards that determined who would live and who would die at roadblocks during the genocide. Anyone the Belgian government had categorized as Tutsi was murdered.

Belgian colonial authorities depicted Tutsis as foreign to Rwanda. As a consequence of this perverse notion that Tutsis are not genuinely Banyarwanda, and are somehow 'less Rwandan' than their Hutu and Twa co-citizens because of their purported skin color, height, and facial features, Tutsis suffered discrimination, resentment, and persecution as a result of this Belgian defamation and othering. During the genocide, thousands of Tutsis who were slaughtered had their bodies dumped into the Nyabarongo River. Hutu supremacists would say in the midst of the killing of Tutsis beside the Nyabarongo River that in this way Tutsis would forcibly be returned by the flow of the river to Ethiopia, the foreign country from which the Belgian colonizers claimed Tutsis hailed. Hutu supremacists had internalized Belgian racism and fueled it with genocidal hatred and intent and a seething, sadistic, violent resentment.

As Scholastique Mukasonga writes of the Belgian colonizers in Rwanda, "The Bazungu had unleashed all the insatiable monsters of nightmares on the Tutsis. They held up the distorting mirrors of their untruths, and in the name of their science and their religion, we were made to see ourselves in the malevolent double their fantasies had given birth to... those words would bring death to so many of us."

It was the Belgian government and the United Nations and their mutual perfidiousness in 1994 that enabled the slaughter of more than two thousand Tutsis at the ETO – Ecole Technique Officielle in Kigali willfully and deliberately, and with full knowledge of the consequences of withdrawing their soldiers during the genocide and leaving the Tutsis to the machetes of the Interahamwe and to certain death as they were marched to Nyanza and massacred there. It is the Belgian government today that has yet to be held legally to account for this complicity, which Belgian courts have whitewashed in an example of the legal and moral corruption of Belgium's courts and their complicity in the Belgian's government's enabling of the genocide against the Tutsi.

Belgium harbors and protects genocidaires within its borders and enables their impunity and as such violates the 1948 Convention on the Crime and Punishment of Genocide. Belgium's racist contempt for Tutsi lives continues today and must be confronted and rejected for its violations of the rights and dignity of Rwanda's Tutsi minority and of Rwandan genocide survivors.

Today there is a memorial garden of peace in Nyanza. But there is no peace there, because the Belgian government denies Rwanda's genocide survivors justice and has denied its role in that massacre and defended its actions. While Rwanda honors the memory of the Belgian peacekeepers savagely murdered by the Hutu supremacist genocidal regime with a dignified memorial, Belgium shows contempt for Rwanda's genocide survivors in refusing them justice. The dead and the living know the truth – and no amount of lies, denials, evasions, distortions, and half-hearted apologies will remove the stain of innocent blood that Belgium helped to spill in Rwanda and which it still covers up.

We remember the accomplices of the Belgian government's racism in Francois Mitterrand's genocidal French government. In 1994 Rwanda's Tutsi population did not experience the purported Egalite, Liberte, and Fraternite of France or the alleged concern for the disadvantaged of Mitterrand's socialism – it experienced one thing and one thing only, genocide, genocide, genocide.

We recall that the former President of France, Jacques Chirac, after 50 years of France refusing to acknowledge its responsibility for the murder of over 70 thousand French Jews during the Holocaust, finally issued a powerful and honest accounting of France's culpability for participating in the genocide against the Jews, without prevarication. We demand the same honest accounting and moral and legal responsibility from the French state for its role in the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi.

These words which President Chirac said in 1995, just one year after the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi, resonate with Rwandan survivors. So I repeat them here today as a reminder to the French state of what it owes Rwandan survivors, of what it owes you:

The criminal madness of the Nazi occupier was seconded by the French, by the French state. Those black hours soiled our history forever... France, the homeland of the Enlightenment and of the rights of man, a land of welcome and asylum, on that day committed the irreparable. Breaking its word, it handed those who were under its protection over to their executioners.

Speaking of the Jewish victims, Chirac said, *"we owe them an everlasting debt."* Finally, he said,

"To recognize the errors of the past and the errors committed by the state and not to hide the dark hours of our history, that is plainly the way to defend a vision of man, of his freedom and dignity."

Indeed. The criminal madness of the Hutu Power movement was seconded by the French, by the French state. Those black hours soiled France's history forever. France committed the irreparable in Rwanda in 1994. It handed the Tutsis to their rapists, torturers, and murderers, it trained the genocidaires, supported them militarily and diplomatically, provided them with weapons, enabled them to kill in Bisesero under the disguise of humanitarian intervention in Operation Turquoise when the French duplicitously claimed to be there to protect the Tutsi, and provided the genocidaires with a safe route of escape to Congo from where they would continue to terrorize Rwanda and kill Tutsis and Hutus who rejected genocidal racism in Rwanda. France supported the Hutu Power supremacist regime before, during, and after the genocide.

Like its neighbor, Belgium, the French government gave and gives safe haven to genocidaires in France and chooses not to prosecute them for political reasons. In this way it perpetuates the legacy of the genocide every day and remains genocidaire in its policies; its justice department and several other branches of French government are utterly compromised by complicity with Hutu supremacist genocidal philosophy, despite President Macron's insisting that France rejects that evil ideology which it supported for so long. Under international criminal law and international human rights law France is acting in a criminal way by providing protection to genocidal leaders and preventing their prosecution. Like Belgium in this way, France violates the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide with absolute impunity. The horror of the Rwandan genocide against the Tutsi was only possible because of France's support for and participation in it. France owes Rwanda's survivors an everlasting debt, redress, justice, and an ongoing apology.

To all the governments of the countries of the world – the British and the German and Russian and the Chinese and the European – and including our own here in the United States who stood by as the genocide against the Tutsi unfolded and Queen Rosalie Gicanda, queen of all Banyarwanda and a Tutsi, was killed on April 20th of 1994 - as the genocide that began on April 7th of 1994 spread to southern Rwanda and the UN and world powers made no effort to stop it and it engulfed the entire country and indeed withdrew UN peacekeepers which enabled the genocide — listen closely.

The words of Shakespeare's 'A Winter's Tale' should serve to prick your long dormant conscience and remind you – you who are referred to here – quite rightly, as tyrants of the most rank and bitter hypocrisy - of the depth of your depravity and its eternal legacy of suffering, loss,

pain, persecution, and grief you have wrought through your indifference to and complicity in the genocide against the Tutsi of Rwanda in 1994.

Shakespeare warns of the limits of remorse and apology, of the impossibility of forgiveness for certain crimes whose destructiveness, devastation, and evil allow no absolution to the perpetrators and their accomplices. To comprehend the destructive impact of the killing of Queen Rosalie Gicanda, Shakespeare can help us empathize across time and space, language and culture, to express the horror of the shattering grief and loss that followed and follows from it, and the haunted moral and spiritual torment it should cause those who enabled it and the genocide of which her murder was one of one million individual acts of murder for which they share moral and legal responsibility.

The queen, the queen, the sweetest, dearest creature dead. O thy tyrant, do not repent these things, for they are heavier than all thy woes can stir; therefore betake thee to nothing but despair. A thousand knees, Ten thousand years together, naked, fasting. Upon a barren mountain and still winter, in storm perpetual.

You, the survivors, are the Tutsi fighters of Bisesero and they are your proud heritage. You are Simeon Karamaga of blessed memory of Bisesero who valiantly defended his people and who lost his wife and eight children and the vast majority of his community because no one came to rescue them and when the French soldiers allied to the Hutu supremacist genocidal regime came during Operation Turquoise – claiming to be undertaking a humanitarian effort - they deliberately looked away and in so doing helped the killers kill the few remaining surviving Tutsis.

You are all the resilient and extraordinary Tutsi widows of Nyamata and Kibuye and Cyangugu and Butare, you are the Tutsi of Butare and the unbowed Bagogwe, you are the Tutsi

were made to live in the Bugesera in a place selected and calculated so that you would starve and suffer and die in its unfertile land of marshes and flies and snakes.

But you did not die.

And today that land is not barren.

It is fertile, it blossoms and blooms with life.

You – the Tutsi targeted for genocide between April and July of 1994 and living within Rwanda's borders at that time – you were and are invincible and incredible inkotanyi in your resilience, your strength, and in your survival – in who and what you had to face during the genocide and what you face everyday as survivors and what you experienced through decades of discrimination, persecution, hostility and humiliation.

You had no country in which to find refuge – temporarily or permanently - you had no place to escape to. You lived as a persecuted minority within Rwanda never knowing when the next massacre would take place. You only knew that there would be no justice for Tutsis, no equality, and no freedom and that your safety was never assured, your rights never respected. Your bravery is beyond description. You fought during the genocide and you fight today without arms and without conventional forms of power but with the weapons, the wisdom, the courage and the strength of the spirit. And you are no less invincible for the wisdom of your spirit being the source of your strength.

As Churchill thundered in British Parliament during World War 2, 'We will never surrender.'

And you don't surrender and you never will.

I salute the way you stand tall, proud of who you are, your heritage, and your hopes and dreams – always in generosity and never in malice, but also demanding justice – including reparative justice - as is your fundamental human right protected by international human rights law to which

Rwanda is signatory which no one has the right to violate or ask you to forfeit. Anyone who does so betrays survivors, discriminates against them as Tutsis and against Tutsis as a whole, and undermines the unity of Rwanda and your ability and the country's ability to heal, rebuild, and flourish. Unity and social cohesion can only be built from respect, affirmation and inclusion of survivors who were persecuted and still experience persecution because they are Tutsis. The marginalization and downplaying and denying of survivor history and current vulnerabilities is a form of divisionism that amplifies the suffering and injustice of survivors and must be rejected.

It is long overdue that aid agencies such as USAID enable the fulfillment of the human rights of survivors as a small exceptional minority of aid agencies and NGOs have rightly and honorably done – such as Britain's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office and ActionAid. Other NGOs working in Rwanda such as World Vision, CARE, Save the Children, Oxfam, Heifer International, Women for Women International, and the Clinton Foundation should all be regularly assessed by the extent to which they respect and fulfill the human rights of genocide survivors and held accountable when they fail to address their vulnerability and disadvantage and when they marginalize them, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Currently, they are failing, and in failing they are sustaining and exacerbating the impact of genocide on its survivors. The same is true for many of the national aid agencies working in Rwanda and for UN aid agencies who show little consciousness and responsibility by being indifferent to the fate and welfare of survivors and in so doing are discriminating against Tutsis and engaging in divisionism in violation of Rwanda's Constitution, laws, and government policies. To them we say, shame on you. Where is your conscience, your decency, your justice, and your compassion?

Despite the horrors of the malice and cruelty you have faced – you, the survivors, are unvanquished and you stand unintimidated and we stand with you. You, the survivors, are our living

link to Gihanga who preceded the German, Belgian and French governments by hundreds of years and whose legacy will long outlive their evil acts and you are his children and his emissaries. Today your ancestors, your mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, cousins and friends are with us in spirit. They give us strength as we remember. We promise them that not only do we remember them and honor their dignity and infinite worth, but we remind those who want to forget them of their humanity, of their will and right to live, and how this was so brutally assaulted and destroyed during the genocide because they were Tutsi. We honor them as individual human beings and we honor them for the very reason they were murdered, for being Tutsi.

Justice and human rights cannot be built on denial of hard realities, your realities.

You, the survivors, have rights to consultation, participation, representation, inclusion, rehabilitation and reparation and these must be respected.

You, the survivors, are a sacred remnant.

You, the survivors are the living testimony of your parents and grandparents.

August Wilson, the African-American playwright said about African-Americans and it speaks to survivors too,

“We’re still here, still managing through it all to find a way to live life with dignity and a certain amount of nobility.”

You who were hated for being tall stand tall as ever.

You who were hated with ferocious jealousy and resentment for your beauty are beautiful as ever and always will be. Nothing and no one will ever change that.

You who were hated for your dignity are dignified as ever and no one will ever be able to take that dignity away from you.

May the Biblical prophecy of all living at peace under the shade of a fruit tree, and the vision of the prophet Micah that all should love peace and do justice come to define a self-reliant and sovereign Rwanda for all its diverse inhabitants whatever their faith, background, and identity on the basis of freedom, equality, and justice as guaranteed by Rwanda's Constitution.

Let us remember the words of warning and admonition of Primo Levi, a survivor of the genocide of the Jews of Europe whose words cry out to us today and everyday and who echo an ancient Jewish prayer, "You who live safe, in your warm homes. You who find, returning home in the evening, hot food and friendly faces, meditate that this came about. I command these words to you. Carve them in your hearts, at home, in the streets, going to bed, rising, repeat them to your children."

Remember. Remember Murambi and Bisesero and Nyamata and Ntarama and Nyanza.

Reverien Rurangwa, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, who in reflecting on his own writing and advocacy for and with survivors says that it is,

'For my Tutsi people on earth and in heaven.'

Yes, Reverien, our commitment, our teaching, our demand for justice which we will express and amplify indefatigably, our commemoration today and everyday grows and endures like saplings planted in what will become a vast and beautiful forest and an orchard one day in which we will walk – together - and whose fruit and bounty survivors will enjoy.

Like Reverien, we dedicate ourselves with deepest love to his Tutsi people on earth – to everyone who stood to defend the equal rights of Tutsis as Rwandans and as rights bearing human beings possessing infinite dignity and worth and sometimes made the ultimate sacrifice in so doing - including the tens of thousands of Hutus murdered alongside their fellow Banyarwanda Tutsi for refusing genocidal racism and defending equality and human dignity.

And to beloved Queen Rosalie Gicanda, whose memory serves as a beacon of hope and light, who was Queen of all Rwanda and all Rwandans and who valued peace and mutual respect. She famously welcomed Rwandans of every background with kindness and courtesy and was killed while in prayer, saying the rosary. That was the very same prayer the Belgian Catholic White Fathers brought to Rwanda when they began to sow their division and destruction and despair, when they tried to replace Gihanga and Imana and to rob Rwandans of their country, their culture, their religion, identity, their unity, their faith, their peace and their way of life.

But Imana and Gihanga are irreplaceable and they are very much still present, and no Abazungu can take them away from you because they are Rwandan and you, you are Banyarwanda. Like the queen in Shakespeare's Winter Tale, Queen Rosalie miraculously lives: because she lives in you and your children, because her people live.

You, you the survivors, you the witnesses of humanity's depravity and savage indifference are the testament of the purest courage and most beautiful and dignified resilience, you and your children are eternal and you are strong, unbreakable, and precious. We will protect you and guard you with love and vigilance - as a mother and a father protect their children and as a mother bear and a mother lioness protect their cubs and prevent anyone from getting between them. We will never be separated from you - and you are a great blessing for all of Rwanda.

May the waters of Rwakibirizi bring you peace and wellbeing and may they flow gently but generously all the days of your lives.

Today, Queen Rosalie Gicanda can look down on you and be proud just as we remember her extraordinary dignity and grace with love and pride and carry her in our hearts. No longer must you say her name quietly, for fear of punishment as though, God forbid, you should be ashamed of her and of who you are.

Scholastique Mukasonga, one of the only survivors in her family of Tutsis, writes of the very special opportunity to visit Queen Rosalie when she was a girl, but of the need to do so furtively, fearfully, under a racist regime that sought to diminish her and humiliate, harm, and kill her Tutsi people. Today you can say her name in confidence. You can walk to Nyanza, head held high, unbowed, both physically and in your hearts and know that her spirit will meet you there, and her doors will always be open. And you can walk to her and fall into her outstretched motherly arms for comfort and rest.

I think of her so very often and though I never met her I gather strength from her love for all Banyarwanda, for her heart was vast and encompassed all of Rwanda's children in her reassuring embrace. When tears run down my cheeks and I feel heartbroken for all that survivors endure every day and for everyone that you lost, I remind myself that she has never left us and she never will. I hold her memory closely, as a source of hope and comfort and strength. I believe that like Rachel in the Bible who weeps for the exiled Israelites, Rosalie weeps for and with her Tutsi people, as a mother weeps when she sees her children suffering, and Queen Rosalie accompanies you still.

But I also know that alongside her sorrow is awe and hope and admiration, and yes, pride, because she has so much to be proud of. I know that she smiles upon you, at who you the survivors are, and who you have become and who you will be, that her embrace of survivors is close,

unbreakable, and eternal. She holds you now, she holds you together as a mother gathers her children protectively, gingerly, gently, and we stand here today sheltered under the canopy of her ever-present love, care, and compassion. She comes to help you wipe away your tears, like every mother. She always does. She always will.

She is with you when you sing lullabies to your children to bid them peaceful good night. She is with you in your sorrow and when your heart and voice cry out in terror and you wake up at night from a nightmare and hear and see the Interahamwe with their machetes, pursuing you with their terrible cries, and you are startled and afraid. It is her voice and her hand that come to reassure you when you suffer sadness and depression.

She was with you in the marshes when you were escaping the Interahamwe as they chanted their terrible songs and killed those around you and sought to kill you. She was with you when you were hiding throughout Rwanda and terrified that you would be found, tortured, and killed. She was with you when the RPF rescued Tutsis during the genocide often at great personal risk, and when they ended the genocide and liberated the country and you emerged tentatively from hiding, unsure if it was safe and if you had any surviving family and friends and a home to return to if it was still standing and had not been stolen or destroyed. She was with you when exceptional Hutu rescuers hid you under their protective wings, often risking their lives in so doing.

She is with you when you rise in the morning to face a new day and you are unsure if you have the faith and energy and will to do so or you are simply tired – as you have every right to be – and she is with you in consolation when you find the remains of your family members and you bury them with dignity and love and respect and sorrow. She is with you in Nyamata and Nyanza and Murambi and Bisesero and Kigali, guarding both the dead and keeping her spirit with the living, to accompany you so that you are never alone. Like all the mothers and fathers lost in the genocide, her

love is present and abiding despite her physical absence. It will never be silenced and it cannot be buried because it is alive and it is life-sustaining. It endures and is enduring.

Turi kumwe our beloved Queen Rosalie who vanquishes and banishes hate and is the Banyarwanda transcendent spirit of peace and love that unifies all Rwandans. Turi kumwe to each and everyone who perished in the genocide. Turi kumwe to the rescuers who protected precious life and turi kumwe to the survivors, to you. Together we remember and affirm one million Tutsi people and tens of thousands of Hutus who stood in solidarity with them and refused hatred and genocide. Banyarwanda mothers and fathers, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters. Queen Rosalie's Banyarwanda people, her Tutsi people, *your* Tutsi people in heaven. Turi kumwe.