

17.523: Ethnicity and Race in World Politics-Fall 2005

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Lecture 21: In – Class Screening: “Ghosts of Rwanda” (PBS Frontline Series) 11/28

Rwanda

- Many students saw “Hotel Rwanda.”
- Rapid genocide that required close proximity killing.
- Student: the people who were being slaughtered weren’t really resisting. Not much resistance on the part of the Tutsis.
- There was the common perception that Rwandan society was obedient.
- Both killers and victims followed orders.
- What happened seemingly caught the world unaware.
- In hindsight, the world looks back and can see the indicators leading up to the conflict.
- 800,000 people killed over three months
- The Tutsis are in the minority.
- Many moderate Hutus were killed as well
- Ended in mid July when the RPF took over the government.
- History of Rwanda is important.

History of Rwanda

- Colonized by the Belgians
- Most famously known for their colonization of the Congo by King Leopold
- Belgians favored the Tutsis
- According to conventional historical accounts: very few distinctive cultural markers between the Hutus and the Tutsis: shared language, same culture, etc.
- Hutus tended to be land people and Tutsis were herd people.
- There isn’t a long history of ethnic tension

Note: the following notes are a synopsis of the documentary film and do not represent the views of Prof. Nobles or her students.

Movie: *Ghosts of Rwanda*. Frontline (PBS) co-production with BBC. Writer, producer, and director: Greg Barker.

- 800,000 people slaughtered by government.
- The entire world turned away.
- International community claimed they didn’t know what was going on.

August 1993

- General Romeo Dallaire, commander for UN
- The rebels were mostly Tutsis.
- Persecuted for decades.
- The Hutus had ruled since independence from Belgium in the 60s.
- Under the peace accord, the Hutus were required to share authority with the Tutsis.
- Only 2500 armed troops were sent by the UN. The commander was ill prepared.

- Mysterious riots and assassinations occurred.
- There were reports of a third force, but they couldn't figure out who it was.
- Dallaire wasn't allowed intelligence capabilities so couldn't figure out.

January 1994

- From inside the third force, an informant emerged
- Hutu extremist were plotting to derail the peace agreement and exterminate the Tutsis.
- They were planning to kill some of Dallaire's forces who were Belgian.
- They hoped the UN and Belgium would pack up and leave.
- Dallaire wanted to raid the militia's supplies and briefed the UN.
- Kofi Annan was skeptical
- Ordered Dallaire not to take action and share the information with the Rwandan government who had ties to the extremists.
- Annan told Dallaire that he wasn't allowed to raid the arms caches. Annan didn't want to use force.
- 18 American soldiers were killed in Mogadishu 3 months earlier in Somalia when a black hawk helicopters had been shot down.
- This incident changed America's reaction to Rwanda

March 1994

- The official line from the UN was that Rwanda was still safe.
- There was a sense of security because of the large UN presence.
- Hutu extremists imported machetes and composed a death list
- People tried to tell the US Embassy of the meticulously planned genocide.

April 6, 1994

- In central Kigali, group gathered at Laura Lane's. US diplomat.
- Huge explosion.
- Someone had fired a missile that shot down the Hutu president's airplane.
- No one knows even now.
- UN commanders summoned for emergency meeting.
- Hutu extremist, Dismas Nsensiyaremye, was in control and chairing the meeting.
- Said he wanted to launch an apocalypse
- Dallaire wanted Madame Agathe Uwilingiyimana more moderate to take his place.

April 7

- Dallaire ordered not to intervene and avoid armed conflict.
- Dallaire sent troops to guard Madame Agathe but not allowed to use force.
- Dallaire tried to find extremist leader.
- Rwandan troops stormed prime minister's house.
- At gunpoint, the UN troops surrendered their weapons
- 10 Belgian troops taken hostage.
- The Ghanaian troops were released.

- Prime minister was murdered.
- Dallaire was searching for extremist leaders and was on his way to the meeting
- He didn't know about the prime minister.
- Dallaire demanded to know what happened to his troops, but didn't take any physical action to rescue the troops.
- In the corner of the morgue was a pile of potato bags, they turned out to be bodies.

April 8, 1994

- In the wake of Somalia, Rwanda triggered an immediate response by Washington.
- Clinton administration ordered an immediate evacuation of all American citizens in Rwanda.
- Couldn't risk their lives by waiting it out.
- Laura Lane coordinated evacuation.
- Lane wanted to stay at US embassy so it could serve as a safe haven for those not causing the violence.
- All embassies in Kigali were closed.
- Polish priests were taken as hostages and chopped apart with machetes.
- There were 150 people in the church.
- Most were attacked with machetes.
- These were ordinary men, women, and children and were targeted simply because they were Tutsi.

Northern Rwanda

- The Tutsi rebels were preparing to respond.
- Paul Kagame-Rwandan Patriotic Front.
- Rebels declared the peace process dead.

April 9, 1994

- 1,000 French and Belgian paratroopers came into Rwanda and weren't under UN command. Their mission was to get the expatriates out. They took control of the airport.
- Tutsis emerged from a hospital building and Tutsi told the troops that they were surrounded by militia.
- When it was clear the soldiers couldn't help, the Tutsis appealed to the journalists.
- All western troops were ordered to not evacuate any Rwandans.
- Basically came down to evacuating all light skinned people and leaving the dark skinned.
- With the airport taking fire, the US evacuated the embassy employees by car.

April 10, 1994

- Karl Wilkins-an Adventist was the only American who stayed in Rwanda.
- Belgium was a country in crisis. 10 Belgian soldiers dead
- Belgium wanted out, but didn't want to face embarrassment of pulling out.
- Asked Warren Christopher, US Secretary of State, understood why Belgian government wanted out.

- Christopher requested that Madeleine Albright (UN ambassador) to pull out troops
- In listening to the African delegates, Albright thought we were wrong.
- Albright argued over how many troops to pull out.
- US demanded withdrawal.
- UN instructs Dallaire to shut down peacekeeping mission..
- Henry Anyidoho, Deputy UN commander didn't think it should be shut down.
- Anyidoho said Ghanaian peacekeepers would stay. Not many troops or well equipped, but good troops.
- So Dallaire stayed. Thought it was morally corrupt to leave.

Nyarubuye, Rwanda

- As UN debated whether to stay in Rwanda, the Hutu extremist wanted to exploit the cultural obedience of the Tutsi
- Propaganda emerged telling Hutus that Tutsi abused Hutus for a long time.
- Extremist radio stations told Hutus to eliminate their neighbors.
- "Kill them like rats."
- When the war began, people changed. People fled from their homes.
- Valentine, 12, went to a Catholic Church in Nyarubuye along with 5,000 other Tutsi. Her parents thought the church would be safe. No one would be killed in a church. They thought.
- On April. 15, Hutus found out about the Tutsis hiding in the church.
- Soldiers shot at the people in the church.
- Hutus said: All those that were there should be killed and no one should survive.
- They started killing and hacking with machetes.
- They didn't kill Valentina because she hid under dead bodies.
- She waited among the dead for a long time; the dogs came to eat the bodies during the night.
- She stayed in a small room for 43 days.
- Tutsi rebel army pushed south towards the capital and found villages of massacred people.
- Extremist Hutus accelerated killings when they found out about the Tutsi rebels
- Jakabanda replaced the Prime Minister Madame Agathe.

Red Cross hospital, Kigali

- Extremist Hutus referred to wounded Tutsi survivors as those "not finished off."
- The Red Cross never left Rwanda.
- Rwandan troops stopped a Red Cross caravan and 6 patients were killed.
- Red Cross decided to make this public, BBC, etc.
- The publicity embarrassed the troops and gave the Red Cross safe passage throughout Rwanda.
- Philippe Gaillard, International Committee of the Red Cross head of delegation in Rwanda from 1993 to 1994, cultivated a relationship with the extremist that he believes saved 65,000 lives.