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978-1-107-03933-9 - From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda

Elisabeth King

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From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda

This book questions the conventional wisdom that education builds peace by exploring the ways in which ordinary schooling can contribute to intergroup conflict. Based on fieldwork and comparative historical analysis of Rwanda, it argues that from the colonial period to the genocide, schooling was a key instrument of the state in contributing to the construction, awareness, collectivization, and inequality of ethnic groups in Rwanda – all factors that underlay conflict. The book further argues that today's post-genocide schools are dangerously replicating past trends. This book is the first to offer an in-depth study of education in Rwanda and to analyze its role in the genesis of conflict. The book demonstrates that to build peace, we cannot simply prescribe *more* education, but must understand who has access to schools, how schools are set up, and what and how they teach.

Dr. Elisabeth King is a Fellow at the Balsillie School of International Affairs in Waterloo, Canada. She holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Toronto (2008) and was a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at Columbia University (2008–2012). Dr. King works on issues at the intersection of conflict, peacebuilding, and development in Sub-Saharan Africa. She has published articles in *African Studies Review*, the *Journal of Genocide Studies and Prevention*, and the *Journal of Development Effectiveness*, and she has contributed chapters to several edited volumes. Dr. King has conducted fieldwork in Croatia, India, Kenya, Liberia, the Philippines, Rwanda, and Tanzania. She has worked with nongovernmental organizations on the global landmine crisis, world literacy, and community-driven development, and she is currently working on several development impact evaluations. She uses a variety of research methods to examine how development and peacebuilding efforts really work (or not) for people in the Global South.

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To the children of Rwanda

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ELISABETH KING

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Preface and Acknowledgments

When I was a student in the French-language school system in Ontario, Canada, I learned history from a different perspective from my friends attending English-language schools. In my education, for example, the 1759 battle on the Plains of Abraham, after which French troops had to relinquish New France (Québec) to Great Britain, was presented as a pivotal moment in our country's history. Many friends studying in English-language schools could barely remember the Plains of Abraham. In pondering our country's conflict between Anglophones and Francophones, it struck me as important that I had a different understanding of where we had been as a country from the many Anglophones who became my university classmates. I wondered about similar situations in countries that suffer even more acute conflict, especially violent ethnic conflict. When I later had the opportunity to visit Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of my NGO work on the landmine issue, a local colleague pointed out two schools, at the end of a road, one for Croats and one for Bosniaks, in a place where there had been one before the war. I intuitively felt that this move was in the wrong direction. During graduate school, when I pursued my strong interest in post-conflict peacebuilding, I was surprised by how schooling was left out of most political science texts on the subject, and how, when it was included, it was often mentioned in passing as an important part of rebuilding a society after conflict, without details or questions. As I became interested in Rwanda, which was, then and now, undertaking significant educational reform, I realized that a study such as the one undertaken here could make an important contribution. When I present this book, people often approach me to discuss how it resonates with their personal experiences in places as different as Afghanistan, Israel, and the United States. I approach this book as a great believer in the power and promise of education.

Thank you, merci, and *murakoze*, to the many people who helped bring this book to fruition. This project would not have been possible without the

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generosity of the many Rwandans who agreed to share their experiences with me. I will always remember the warm welcome and long conversations with the Rwandans who opened their homes to me, introduced me to their families and friends, took me for my first goat brochette, and helped me make my way through the hills of Rwanda. Officials at the Rwandan Ministry of Education also helped make this study possible. Several Rwandan-Canadians were invaluable in helping me plan my research and fieldwork. I promised all of these participants anonymity and thus cannot thank them by name.

My research in Belgium was aided by the members of *Mémoires du Congo* who helped me track down missionaries and administrators who had served in Rwanda's colonial period. The conversations I had with these individuals, to whom I also promised anonymity, were fascinating and greatly enriched my analysis.

This book began in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto. I became intrigued by Africa and especially Rwanda thanks to Richard Sandbrook; committed to peacebuilding thanks to Robert O. Matthews; and dedicated to further exploring education thanks to Kathy Bickmore. The manuscript took shape at Columbia University, working under the mentorship of Macartan Humphreys, from whom I learned a great deal. The book was published while I was based at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, thanks in large part to support and guidance from David Welch. Each of these institutions, and the people based there, provided welcome and thought-provoking environments in which to forward this work. Throughout the research, writing, and publication process, Séverine Autesserre, Dana Burde, and Ian Spears provided especially careful reading, ideas, and friendship. I was also fortunate to benefit from conversations and advice from many other generous scholars and practitioners including Monisha Bajaj, Lili Cole, Peter Coleman, the late Alison Des Forges, Danielle de Lame, Tad Homer-Dixon, Jean-Damascène Gasanabo, Herb Hirsch, Mahmood Mamdani, Karen Mundy, Karen Murphy, John Mutter, Catharine Newbury, Filip Reyntjens, Alana Tiemessen, Katherine Reilly, Marc Howard Ross, Jack Snyder, Scott Straus, Susan Thomson, Jenn Wallner, Peter Uvin, Sarah Warshauer Freedman, and Harvey Weinstein. Contributions from discussants, co-panelists, and audience members at numerous conferences and workshops also improved this book. In writing a book about education, I do not underestimate the impact of all these teachers on me and my work.

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A long list of family and friends also helped make this book possible and I am grateful to them all. I especially acknowledge my parents and sister, Ann, Chris, and Jessica Farrell; my uncle and aunt, Ken and Danuta Kitay; my parents-in-law, Shannon and Lloyd Noseworthy; and my dear friend Tara Bedford. Thanks finally to my husband, David Noseworthy, who supported me in so many ways and who asked me on innumerable occasions "tell me more about Rwanda," and to our beautiful one-year-old daughter, Ella Josephine, who already loves books.



FIGURE 0.1 Map of Rwanda.