Introduction

Rutagarama's Story

Rutagarama, a Tutsi survivor from Rwanda's Southern Province, survived an apocalyptic attack at Mugina parish. After withstanding the militia for several days, he, alongside other Tutsi, was ordered to evacuate the church where they were hiding, remove his clothes and sit in the grounds. The Tutsi women were told to leave while the men sat undressed, each with a militiaman 'behind them carrying a machete'.[1] On the leaders' whistle blow, the killers began to slaughter the Tutsi men, hacking them down with their machetes. A blow to the head left Rutagarama unconscious. He later woke up among corpses. When he tried to stand, he kept falling back to the floor, realising that his assailant had tried to cut his body 'into two pieces'. As he lay among the cadavers, waiting for someone to come and finish him, someone stole 100 Rwandan Francs from his underwear (the equivalent of 60 US cents).[2] Eventually the *Interahamwe*[3] arrived to search the corpses and Rutagarama begged one of them to kill him: 'Please, use anything. I feel dead but I'm not. Get something and just hit my head', he pleaded. The man went off to search the bodies for money but did not return.

Some other people came to bury the corpses, one of whom noticed that Rutagarama was still alive and covertly warned him to leave or

[1] All testimonies cited in this book come from the Genocide Archive of Rwanda. Retrieved from: www.genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/ (accessed 4 December 2017).

[2] According to Marie Béatrice Umutesi, during the genocide 500 Rwandan Francs were worth $3. Marie Béatrice, *Fuir ou mourir au Zaïre: le vécu d'une réfugiée rwandaise* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), p. 57.

[3] Literally 'those who fight together', the *Interahamwe* began as the youth wing of former President Juvénal Habyarimana's political party, the Mouvement Révolutionaire National pour le Développement (MRND), but became the primary militia group involved in killing Tutsi during the genocide.

risk being buried alive. Unable to walk, Rutagarama crawled to a nearby sorghum plantation, looking, as he describes it, 'like a wild animal'. After crawling around, he notes how 'blood mixed with mud on my clothes while crawling through the soil … I was a frightful sight. Everyone who saw me was in shock. They would stop and stare and wonder, "Is this an animal or a human being?"' Tutsi men were dehumanised to such an extent that when a policeman saw Rutagarama in this state, his reaction was not one of compassion, but of fear as he warned others around saying: 'Be careful. This person may be an *Inyenzi* [Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) soldier] in disguise'. By this point, Rutagarama 'had completely lost all hope'. 'Life was over for me', he concedes.

Burizihiza's Story

Burizihiza is from Sahera Sector which is also in the Southern Province. When the killers started arriving in her area, she found a hiding place at the University Hospital of Butare. But she was eventually picked up by the local Burgomaster who enslaved her. Instead of killing her, the Burgomaster explained that it would be Burizihiza's 'special' task to witness how the Tutsi would die. She was told that, once this 'work' was finished, they would kill her too. At the time, Burizihiza had her three children with her – the extremists killed her daughter and threw her two sons to be eaten by dogs. She later found her sons who had been severely mauled by the dogs, but were still alive. She hid them near a cowshed in a large pot used for brewing Rwandan beer.

Living at the Burgomaster's house, Burizihiza saw the brutal torture and killing of many people. Her brothers were killed and she was forced to drink their blood. Her mother was laid out naked and stabbed in the vagina with a sword which was then used to stir her insides. Burizihiza saw one woman raped by a group of men, who then put hooks inside her body and pulled out her intestines. Another woman, who was heavily pregnant, was speared in the uterus. The spear was pushed in so deep it came out of her mouth.

Throughout the genocide, Burizihiza was kept by the Burgomaster as a sex slave. One day, she was attacked by some Hutu women who believed that she was kept alive because of her sexual value. These women tried to force dried herbs into her vagina to destroy her sexuality so that the Burgomaster would have to kill her. She was saved

by another Hutu man, but only in exchange for him raping her. Eventually, the Burgomaster, along with other perpetrators, fled the area to escape the advancing forces of the RPF and Burizihiza was able to survive.

A Gendered Genocide

It would be difficult to overestimate the scale and impact of the 1994 Rwanda genocide. In a period of just three months as many as one million people were brutally murdered, leaving a legacy of destruction, fear and distrust. Although the violence committed during the genocide affected all Rwandans, women and men suffered in different ways. Indeed, the genocide was as much a crisis of gender as it was one of ethnicity.[4] There had been an expansion of cash crops over the course of the twentieth century, which deprived Tutsi and Hutu men of potential land for cultivation.[5] In the late 1980s when the global price of coffee collapsed, economic downturn resulted in high unemployment and exacerbated the problems of overpopulation, land scarcity and incompetent governance. Although ethnicity conditioned access to resources such as government jobs, education and land, as Villia Jefremovas observes, 'for most peasants, both Hutu and Tutsi, the privileges accorded by ethnicity were meaningless. It was still a minority within the elite group that profited from ethnic affiliations'.[6] According to Marc Sommers, drought, displacement and food and land shortages combined with the invasion by the RPF and ensuing civil war 'made poor, unemployed male youth easy pickings for those organising the genocide'.[7] Exploiting the weaknesses of young Hutu men, the orchestrators of the genocide were able to persuade them to participate by promoting the *Interahamwe* through idealised masculinities and by referring to the killing as 'work'.[8] The need for employment among Hutu men was so great that the concept of work

[4] Adam Jones, 'Gender and Genocide in Rwanda', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 4. 1 (2010), 65–94 (p. 66).
[5] Ibid., pp. 66–7.
[6] Villia Jefremovas, *Brickyards to Graveyards: From Production to Genocide in Rwanda* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 74.
[7] Marc Sommers, 'Fearing Africa's Young Men: The Case of Rwanda', *Conflict Prevention & Reconstruction, World Bank Social Development Papers*, 32 (2006), 8.
[8] Jones, 'Gender and Genocide in Rwanda', pp. 67 and 68.

even governed the way the genocide was carried out. As Adam Jones highlights, killers kept a 'strict regimen' and would carry out the massacres during the same hours that governed the labour of the formal economy.[9]

While Hutu men suffered from unemployment, insecurity and the remnants of an inferiority complex created during the colonial period, Tutsi masculinity was also in crisis by April 1994. The invasion of the Tutsi-led RPF rebels in 1990 had spawned a climate of fear and vengefulness. This anger was targeted primarily at Tutsi men who came to be perceived as the enemy within and became the objects of a witch hunt.[10] As Alison Des Forges writes, following the invasion of the RPF, the 'elite worked to redefine the population of Rwanda into "Rwandans", meaning those who backed the President, and the "ibyitso" or "accomplices of the enemy", meaning the Tutsi minority and Hutu opposed to him'.[11] In propaganda, the RPF Tutsi rebels and their 'Tutsi accomplices' were depicted as 'creatures from another world, with tails, horns, hooves, pointed ears and red eyes that shone in the dark'.[12] Although Tutsi women were targeted by genocidal propaganda and violence, they were actually considered 'less Tutsi' than Tutsi men because of the patrilineal transference of ethnicity.[13] Women could, therefore, be 'liberated' from their ethnicity through rape and forced marriage. According to Erin Baines, while women and girls were often 'spared' until the final stages of the genocide, 'Tutsi men and boys, including male infants, were among the first to be killed' because they 'represented the future enemy'.[14] Indeed, in Jones's view, the extermination of males served as a kind of 'vanguard for the genocide as a whole, an initial barrier to be surmounted and "threat" to be removed, before the remainder of the community is consigned to violent death'.[15] This was certainly the case in Rutagarama's story where the women were spared so that

[9] Ibid., p. 90.
[10] Ibid., p. 70.
[11] Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (Human Rights Watch Report, 1999), p. 3.
[12] Gérard Prunier, *The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 1997), p. 141.
[13] Jones, 'Gender and Genocide in Rwanda', p. 75.
[14] Erin K. Baines, 'Body Politics and the Rwandan Crisis', *Third World Quarterly*, 24. 3 (2003), 479–93 (p. 487).
[15] Jones, 'Gender and Genocide in Rwanda', p. 70.

the killers could proceed to execute the men. He reports the killers saying they would not kill women. 'But', he continues, 'this was a lie. They wanted to … [first] rape them'.

Tutsi women and girl children were not killed in as large numbers as Tutsi men, but they were targeted for their gender. In Christopher Taylor's view, the genocide was an attempt to re-establish the ideal Hutu state as imagined through the idealised image of the 1959 Hutu revolution.[16] In part, it aimed to reclaim patriarchy and male dominance in rejection of the political and social advances that had been made by women during the 1980s and early 1990s. In Taylor's opinion, Hutu extremists held ambivalent attitudes towards Tutsi women. On the one hand, Tutsi women were loathed for 'their potential subversive capacity to undermine the category boundary between Tutsi and Hutu'.[17] On the other hand, Taylor suggests that as a result of old colonial stereotypes of Tutsi superiority, Tutsi women were irresistible to Hutu men.[18] This cognitive dissonance harboured by Hutu men, in combination with the desire to restore patriarchy, resulted in a form of 'sexual terrorism' reserved for Tutsi women.[19] Thus while men were mostly killed outright, women were frequently raped and tortured sexually. As sexual violence became incorporated into the genocidal programme, *Interahamwe* known to be infected with HIV were often summoned to commit this act. As in Burizihiza's story, sexual violence also took on a symbolic meaning. Women's bodies were mutilated, their breasts cut off, their vaginas pierced with sharp objects or burnt with acid and their faces disfigured. Pregnant women had the foetuses cut from their bodies. Like Burizihiza, many women had their lives saved in exchange for

[16] Christopher Taylor, 'A Gendered Genocide: Tutsi Women and Hutu Extremists in the 1994 Rwanda Genocide', *Political and Legal Anthropological Review*, 22. 1 (1999), 42–53 (p. 42).

[17] Taylor observes how Tutsi women were seen as the permeable boundary between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups. It was much more common in pre-genocide Rwanda for Tutsi women to marry Hutu men than for Hutu women to marry Tutsi men. Official ethnic identity (as marked on the identity cards) was determined by the father and therefore the children of a Hutu man married to a Tutsi woman would be considered Hutu and would thus benefit from having Hutu citizenship despite being considered racially impure by Hutu extremists. Taylor, 'A Gendered Genocide', p. 50.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

becoming 'wives' or sex slaves to Hutu men. Because of their commodified value as sexual objects, however, fewer women than men were killed in the genocide.

Can Living through Genocide Lead to Positive Change?

The examples of Rutagarama and Burizihiza are but two of the thousands of stories of horror and tragedy lived by Rwandan men and women in 1994. It may seem abhorrent to suggest that anything good could result from such disaster and yet, positive changes can be observed in both of their testimonies. A term commonly used to describe positive changes following a traumatic event is 'post-traumatic growth', where individuals establish new psychological constructs and build a new way of life that is experienced as superior to their previous one in important ways. This process is thought to arise from the need to adapt one's worldview in order to accommodate traumatic experiences that violated previously held beliefs.[20] It should be made clear that the notion of post-traumatic growth does not imply the absence of distress, pain or suffering.[21] Indeed, for most survivors, growth and pain coexist. Post-traumatic growth should also be distinguished conceptually from related notions such as resilience and recovery.

According to Georges A. Bonanno, 'many people are exposed to loss or potentially traumatic events at some point in their lives, and yet they continue to have positive emotional experiences and show only minor and transient disruptions in their ability to function'.[22] Such an 'ability to maintain a stable equilibrium' following a violent or life-threatening experience is what Bonanno refers to as 'resilience'.[23] Similar to resilience is the concept of 'recovery'. According to Bonanno, this notion 'connotes a trajectory in which normal functioning temporarily gives way to threshold or subthreshold psychopathology (e.g., symptoms of

[20] Lawrence Calhoun and Richard Tedeschi, *Facilitating Posttraumatic Growth: A Clinician's Guide* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. 1999), p. 2.
[21] Ibid., p. 20.
[22] George A. Bonanno, 'Loss, Trauma, and Human Resilience: Have We Underestimated the Human Capacity to Thrive after Extremely Aversive Events?', *American Psychologist*, 59. 1 (2004), 20–8 (p. 20).
[23] Ibid., p. 20.

depression or post-traumatic stress disorder [PTSD]), usually for a period of at least several months, and then gradually returns to pre-event levels'.[24] The concept of post-traumatic growth differs from both resilience and recovery. Like recovery, it often involves a period in which functioning is significantly disrupted, but post-traumatic growth is not simply a return to a pre-trauma state. Instead it refers to the experience of subjectively higher levels of psychological or social functioning. Such a concept, by no means, legitimises the violence and trauma caused by the genocide, but it does recognise the capacity of humans to adapt and change in times of adversity. To illustrate the differences in the ways people respond to trauma, Stephen Joseph draws on the metaphor of a tree in a storm:

> The tree is buffeted by the wind, but it stands firm and unbending. When the storm has passed, it appears not to have been affected. Some people, too, seem to weather stressful events, emerging unscathed emotionally. They are like the tree that stands unbending in the wind. Such people are said to be *resistant*. Another tree bends in the wind. It does not break, and when the wind dies down, the tree returns to its original shape. In much the same way, there are people who bend with the strain of life adversity, but quickly bounce back to their original state. In other words, they *recover* … A third tree bends in the wind. But instead of springing back to its original shape when the wind abates, it is permanently changed. Lashed by the winds, this tree has been altered, and its shape will never be the same again. In time, it grows around its injuries, and new leaves and branches sprout from the trunk where old growths were severed. Scars, gnarls and misshapen limbs give the tree a unique character for the rest of its life span. It is no less of a tree than it used to be, but it is different. There is a group of people who, like the third tree, grow following adversity. They may remain emotionally affected, but their sense of self, views on life, priorities, goals for the future and their behaviours have been reconfigured in positive ways in light of their experiences.[25]

Such positive reconfigurations may be observed in Rutagarama, Burizihiza and many of the other men and women whose testimonies form the corpus studied in this book.

[24] Ibid.
[25] Stephen Joseph, *What Doesn't Kill Us: The New Psychology of Posttraumatic Growth* (London: Hachette Digital, 2011), pp. 71–2 (emphasis in the original).

Corpus and Methodological Considerations

In the aim of identifying how the genocide affected the lives of genocide survivors, this book examines a total of forty-two audio-visual testimonies (including nineteen men, twenty-three women) recorded in Kinyarwanda and translated into English and sometimes French. All the corpus testimonies come from the Genocide Archive of Rwanda which was established by the Aegis Trust in association with Rwanda's National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG).[26] The Aegis Trust is a Nottinghamshire-based non-governmental organisation which works to prevent genocide. It runs the UK Holocaust Centre and was selected by the Rwandan Government to establish and run the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre, which opened on the tenth Anniversary of the Rwandan Genocide in April 2004. The Genocide Archive of Rwanda forms part of the Memorial Centre and is located on the same site. With the collaboration of Ibuka (Kinyarwanda for 'Remember'), the umbrella group for genocide survivor organisations, the testimonies were collected by the archive from survivors wishing to volunteer to give their testimony. Participating men and women come from a range of geographical locations and vary in age and profession. Besides a requirement of being able to read and write in order to understand and sign the release form prior to giving their testimony (a factor which could indicate a certain level of education and therefore socio-economic status), the archive maintains that there are no criteria for selecting survivors. It could be argued, however, that survivors who come forward to testify are exceptional in some way. For instance, those who found the mental strength and narrative abilities to translate the psychological and physical violence they suffered into words could be more likely than others to exhibit post-traumatic growth. Other survivors may experience very little or even no post-traumatic growth. On the other hand, the principle concern of this book is to examine how – not how much – post-traumatic growth occurs in Rwandan survivors. Therefore, even if survivors in the corpus have experienced relatively high levels of growth compared to others, this does not directly affect the validity of the study.

[26] For the Genocide Archive of Rwanda website, go to: www.genocidearchiverwanda.org.rw/ (accessed 4 December 2017).

The survivors who testify for the Genocide Archive of Rwanda may also be exceptional because they do so through a medium overseen by Ibuka and the Aegis Trust; a factor which could imply that the testimonies are skewed ideologically in favour of the government. Many scholars are critical of the Rwandan government for its authoritarian regime and the lack of free speech in Rwanda, particularly the freedom to criticise the government.[27] It is well-documented that dissident Hutu politicians and members of civil society have been killed, arrested or removed from leadership positions.[28] The lack of free speech has also been observed among Tutsi genocide survivors who, according to Filip Reyntjens feel that they have become 'second-rate citizens who have been sacrificed by the RPF'.[29] For example, genocide survivor, Joseph Sebarenzi, was formerly the Speaker of the National Assembly but resigned on 6 January 2000 under pressure from certain members of the RPF. He then fled the country, fearing for his life.[30] Tutsi survivors involved in civil society have also faced

[27] Timothy Longman and Théoneste Rutagengwa, 'Memory, Identity, and Community in Rwanda', in *My Neighbour, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity*, eds. Eric Stover and Harvey M. Weinstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 162–82 (p. 162); Gérard Prunier, *From Genocide to Continental War: The 'Congolese' Conflict and the Crisis of Contemporary Africa* (London: Hurst Publishers Ltd., 2009), p. 23; Filip Reyntjens, 'Rwanda, Ten Years On: From Genocide to Dictatorship', *African Affairs*, 103. 411 (2004), 177–210 (p. 208).

[28] Alison Des Forges and Timothy Longman, 'Legal Responses to Genocide in Rwanda', in *My Neighbour, My Enemy*, eds. Stover and Weinstein, pp. 49–68 (pp. 61–2); Helen Hintjens, 'Reconstructing Political Identities in Rwanda', in *After Genocide: Transitional Justice, Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Reconciliation in Rwanda and Beyond*, eds. Phil Clark and Zachary D. Kaufman (London: Hurst and Co., 2008), pp. 77–99 (p. 88); Timothy Longman, 'Limitations to Political Reform: The Undemocratic Nature of Transition in Rwanda', in *Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence (Critical Human Rights)*, eds. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), pp. 25–47 (p. 30); Longman and Rutagengwa, 'Memory, Identity, and Community in Rwanda', p. 162; Susan Thomson, 'Whispering Truth to Power: The Everyday Resistance of Rwandan Peasants to Post-Genocide Reconciliation', *African Affairs*, 110. 440 (2011), 439–56 (p. 442); Lars Waldorf, 'Instrumentalising Genocide: The RPF's Campaign against "Genocide Ideology"', in *Remaking Rwanda*, eds. Straus and Waldorf, pp. 48–66 (pp. 52 and 57–8).

[29] Reyntjens, 'Rwanda, Ten Years On', p. 180.

[30] Sebarenzi was not technically a 'survivor' as he left Rwanda in 1992 to join the RPF but he is considered an 'interior Tutsi' rather than a former Tutsi refugee. Reyntjens, 'Rwanda, Ten Years On', p. 181.

government intimidation and harassment. In the in the late 1990s, Ibuka became increasingly critical of the Rwandan government's neglect of genocide survivors, particularly the lack of economic opportunities for survivors.[31] Following these criticisms, the former prefect of Kibuye Prefecture was assassinated in 2000 and his brother, Ibuka's vice president, Josué Kayijaho, tried to leave the country but was detained by government officials.[32] He was eventually permitted to leave the country and was then joined by another of his brothers who was the executive secretary of the Fond d'assistance aux rescapés du genocide (FARG) along with Bosco Rutagengwa, the founder of Ibuka, and Anastase Muramba, Ibuka's Secretary-General. According to Timothy Longman, a member of the central committee of the RPF, Antoine Mugesera, subsequently took over the presidency of Ibuka and the organisation has since 'largely followed the RPF line'.[33] As Paul Gready notes, many civil society organisations now 'act as mouthpieces for the government' and have become 'monitory and control devices' used to 'prevent independent civil society from emerging'.[34] Reyntjens goes so far as to say that '"civil society" is controlled by the regime'.[35]

Given that it was chosen by the Rwandan government to establish and manage the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre and the Genocide Archive of Rwanda, the Aegis Trust also has to toe the government line if it is to maintain its relatively privileged position.[36] Such a position must be taken into account when analysing the testimonies collected by the organisation. However, the archive is given a degree of autonomy from governmental control as the primary purpose of the testimonies is to provide survivors with an outlet through which they may express themselves without coercion or intimidation from others. Although survivors with dissenting views may be more reluctant to come forward, this is not imposed by the archive. Indeed many survivors appear willing to criticise the government in their testimonies

[31] Longman, 'Limitations to Political Reform', p. 30.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Ibid., p. 31.
[34] Paul Gready, 'Beyond "You're with Us or against Us": Civil Society and Policymaking in Post-Genocide Rwanda', in *Remaking Rwanda*, eds. Straus and Waldorf, pp. 87–100 (p. 90).
[35] Reyntjens, 'Rwanda, Ten Years On', p. 185.
[36] For example, the exhibition in the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre is consistent with the government's official narrative of the history of the genocide.