

November 2007

Editor's Introduction

Samuel Totten

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gsp>

Recommended Citation

Totten, Samuel (2007) "Editor's Introduction," *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal*:
Vol. 2: Iss. 3: Article 2.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/gsp/vol2/iss3/2>

This Editorial is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal* by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

Editor's Introduction

Fourteen years have passed since the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, during which an estimated 500,000 to 800,000 (or more) Tutsis and moderate Hutus died at the hands of extremists Hutus. Rwanda is still in the process of recovering from the genocide, which not only resulted in vicious and mass murder but virtually destroyed the country's infrastructure. Like any nation reconstituting itself in the aftermath of genocide, Rwanda is experiencing growing pains. Survivors continue to suffer the ill effects of what they were subjected to, witnessed, and lost. Many of the women who were raped now have AIDS. Those who gave birth to what are commonly referred to as "rape babies" face additional psychological turmoil and, in many cases, are ostracized by neighbors, friends, and family members. Many of the babies have been maltreated, neglected, and even left to their own devices to eke out an existence on the streets. Orphans fill orphanages, where many of the youngest children are raised by the "older" (often teenage) orphans. Groups of widows have banded together to provide mutual support and get back on their feet while dealing with the absence of beloved husbands and children. Many individuals are so scarred by what they experienced and witnessed that they are not able to function and carry on normal lives. The medical and social-services communities are stretched so thin in attempting to provide assistance to those in need that people often fall through the cracks or simply do not receive the treatment they need in order to fully regain their health (whether physical or psychological). Some 100,000 alleged perpetrators still remain in Rwandan prisons. Three different court systems—the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (Arusha, Tanzania), the national courts of Rwanda, and *gacaca* (the adaptation of precolonial mediation and reconciliation processes to try, today, those who are suspected of having carried out the killing and mass rapes) are currently in operation.

At the same time, Rwanda has made a remarkable comeback. The country is, for the most part, peaceful, and the people, for the most part, seem to get along, even if their daily dealings with one another—particularly between those who considered themselves Tutsi and those who considered themselves Hutu during the genocide—are often tentative, if not tenuous. The national government has mandated that Rwandan citizens are no longer Tutsi, Hutu, or Twa, as they were prior to and during the genocidal period, but "simply" Rwandans. Some, and possibly many, look askance at such a mandate, considering it naïve at best and repressive at worst, but many others seem to believe that, over time, it may be the best way to prevent future incidents of mass violence. Time will tell.

Over the past fourteen years a massive amount of scholarship (including journal articles and books) has been published on various facets of the Rwandan Genocide. Some of it has provided a clearer understanding of how genocide unfolds—in particular, how masses of people are induced to take part in the bloody and brutal killing of former neighbors, friends, and even loved ones.

This special issue on Rwanda includes three articles based on field research conducted in the hills, fields, and towns of Rwanda. The first, "A Calamity in the Neighbourhood: Women's Participation in the Rwandan Genocide," is by Reva Adler, Cyanne E. Loyle, and Judith Globerman; the second, "Interethnic Marriages,

the Survival of Women, and the Logics of Genocide in Rwanda,” is by Anuradha Chakravarty, a PhD candidate at Cornell University; the third, “The Dynamics of Genocide,” is by University of Wisconsin at Madison political scientist Scott Straus.

Adler (Clinical Associate Professor in the Department of Medicine at the University of British Columbia), Loyle (a graduate fellow in the University of Maryland’s Department of Government and Politics), and Globerman (an associate professor at the Institute for Health Promotion Research at the University of British Columbia) focus on why women assaulted or murdered targeted victims during the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. During the course of their study, the three researchers found that four experiential pressures, in various combinations, shaped the female perpetrators’ decisions to participate in the 1994 genocide: “disaster mentality; fear of the new social order; confusion or ambivalence about events on the ground; and consonance and dissonance *vis-à-vis* gender roles.”

Chakravarty discusses the gendered dimensions of the genocide in Rwanda. In doing so, she seeks to explain why Tutsi women married to Hutu men appear to have had a better chance of survival than Tutsi women married to Tutsi men or even Hutu women married to Tutsi men. Based on data from a field site in southwest Rwanda, her findings and insights draw on the gendered, racial, and operational dynamics of the genocide as it unfolded between April and July 1994.

In “The Dynamics of Genocide,” Straus delineates some of the many key findings of his research in Rwanda, findings that constitute the heart of his new book, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (Cornell University Press, 2006). *The Order of Genocide* raises critical questions about previous assumptions about the 1994 genocide (many of which have been taken at face value), and also provides new insights into a variety of significant issues, including how the killing process spread across Rwanda and why. Three specialists on the Rwandan Genocide—Lars Waldorf, who is currently Lecturer in International Law and Human Rights at the University of London and is writing a book on Rwanda’s *gacaca* process; Thierry Cruvellier, a journalist and justice expert who has written a book on the ICTR; and Lee Ann Fujii, a political scientist at George Washington University, who is in the process of completing her own book on the 1994 Rwandan Genocide—were asked by the editor to write succinct critiques of Straus’s research and findings, noting key strengths, any weaknesses and gaps, and the likely ramifications of the findings.

Linda Melvern, an investigative journalist and the author of two notable works on the 1994 Rwandan Genocide—*Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide* (Verso, 2004) and *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda’s Genocide* (Zed Books, 2000)—contributes a provocative and insightful piece titled “The UK Government and the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda.” More specifically, Melvern focuses on the role of the British government of John Major during the period of the genocide (April to July 1994), noting, and then discussing, the fact that in the United Kingdom neither Parliament nor the press has attempted to account for Britain’s policies toward Rwanda, and there seems to be an ongoing reluctance to do so.

This issue also includes a commentary by long-time Africanist Gerry Caplan. In his contribution, “Rwanda (and Other Genocides) in Perspective,” Caplan examines a host of issues but keeps circling back to one question: “What good has the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide done?” He also argues, and understandably, that “so long as the Permanent Five (P5) of the UN Security Council have no will to intervene, or interest in intervening, in potential or actual genocides, all the UN conventions, reports, and articles aren’t worth much at

Introduction

all.” In turn, Caplan prods us to ponder the real value of the proliferation of studies, reports, journal articles, and books on genocide. It is an issue worthy of ample thought: one genocide precedes another like clockwork in our world, and little or nothing has yet been created, let alone implemented, to halt, let alone prevent, the one that always seems to be just around the corner.

Undoubtedly, over time, many more studies will be conducted and many more articles and books will be written and published about various facets of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Those who undertake to write about Rwanda in the future would do well to treat the subject as seriously and with as much care as those whose work is represented in this special issue.

Samuel Totten
GSP Co-editor

Notes

1. Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 12.