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A Companion to the Anthropology of Death

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Accountability for Mass Death, Acts of Rescue, and Silence in Rwanda

Jennie E. Burnet

Nearly 25 years after the 1994 genocide of Tutsis, Rwanda still struggles with the long-term consequences of mass death and destruction. Between April 6 and July 4, 1994, an estimated 800,000 Rwandans lost their lives in a state-sponsored genocide that targeted ethnic Tutsis (United Nations Security Council 1999).[1] Accountability for the innumerable individual and collective acts that constituted the genocide has been sought through an ad hoc international tribunal, foreign courts, Rwandan courts, and a transitional justice mechanism known as the Gacaca tribunals. This accountability for death sought to mete out justice to the hundreds of thousands of accused perpetrators and planners who had engaged in criminal acts ranging from theft to rape and mass murder.

The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), created by the UN Security Council on November 8, 1994, was set up with the intention of prosecuting the genocide's architects, who had fled the country. Rwandan views of the ICTR were not always positive. Rwandans, including government spokespeople, criticized the ICTR because those prosecuted by it faced lesser penalties than those tried inside Rwanda and enjoyed comparatively "luxurious" prison conditions. They condemned the vast resources consumed by the ICTR, which could have been used to rehabilitate Rwanda's legal system and police force. The ICTR moved slowly and prosecuted only 28 defendants during the first 10 years of its operation.[2]

In Rwanda the new government, led by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a rebel group that stopped the genocide when it seized power, attempted to hold accountable every single perpetrator from national leaders down to lowly, subsistence farmers (Waldorf 2006: 3). In 1995 the first genocide trials began in courts that had originally been modeled on Belgian courts in the postindependence period. These early cases resulted in the first and

only public executions of convicted genocide perpetrators in April 1997. The approach of maximal prosecutions constituted a radical departure from precedents in other postconflict countries and overwhelmed the justice system. The government eventually turned to a novel solution by reinventing a conflict resolution mechanism, known as *gacaca*, that had been used since the precolonial period to resolve community conflicts.[3] Beginning with a pilot phase in 2001, a nationwide rollout in 2005, and numerous revisions and adjustments to the law and procedures, the Gacaca tribunals tried over 1.9 million cases and found guilty verdicts in over 1.6 million cases (Gacaca Community Justice 2017). Upon the courts' closure and the repeal of the laws creating them in 2012, thousands of unclosed cases were transferred to the country's ordinary courts.

Outside Rwanda, foreign governments prosecuted Rwandans for genocide crimes under universal jurisdiction. In 2001 Belgium prosecuted two Roman Catholic nuns for genocide crimes and found them guilty along with two men (BBC News 2001). In the United States of America, whose legal statutes do not allow for such prosecutions, the government prosecuted genocide perpetrators for immigration fraud. In 2012 Prudence Katengwa was convicted of immigration fraud, perjury, and obstruction of justice in Boston for lying to enter the United States and seek asylum status (US Immigration and Customs Enforcement 2012). In 2013 Beatrice Munyenyezi was sentence to 10 years in prison for lying to US government officials while seeking citizenship (Tuohy 2013).

These legal attempts to prosecute and punish genocide perpetrators constitute a kind of accountability for death. Yet, they are necessarily partial because they can only pass judgment on criminal acts. They do not encompass the moral culpability of those who failed to defend Tutsis against their attackers (often called "bystanders" in genocide studies); of the UN peacekeepers who abandoned Rwandans seeking shelter at UN compounds; or of the UN secretary-general who refused to expand the peacekeepers' mandate so that they could use force to protect civilians. From a humanistic perspective, this legal accountability does not encompass an accountability for life. Should we not investigate the opportunities, motivations, and actions of those who attempted to protect or to save lives during the genocide?

In this chapter I attempt to account for the acts of rescue and the moments of good that occurred in the midst of mass death and evil of genocide. In addition, I try to understand the factors that distinguish between rescuer behavior and rescuers. I use the term "rescuer behavior" to describe actions taken to protect, evacuate, or otherwise assist Tutsis. I apply this terms regardless of whether the people providing assistance may also have participated in the genocide. Rescuer behavior was very common in the Rwandan genocide even though genocide architects intentionally sought widespread popular participation. Many people resisted participating in the genocide for weeks or even months by refusing to take part in security patrols or by staying home, feigning sickness, to avoid participating in mob violence. I refer to this behavior as "genocide resistance" and to the people enacting it as "genocide resisters." Although I do not discuss this category at length in this chapter, the majority of non-Tutsi Rwandans fell into this category. Many of them assisted Tutsis and other people targeted for killing for as long as they were able. Furthermore, the majority of perpetrators fell into this category for days, weeks, or even months before they succumbed to the polyvalent pressures to participate. Even the most enthusiastic perpetrators sometimes helped Tutsi kin, friends, neighbors, classmates, or even strangers. In some cases, participating in the genocide increased a person's ability to save other people. I reserve the term "rescuer" for those who protected or evacuated Tutsis, or made other efforts to save them and who did not participate in the genocide whether by killing, raping, destroying property, or looting. Rescuers were exceptional. They required not only the impulse to help

but also the persistence to make the decision both to rescue and not to participate repeatedly over time. I draw on interview data and ethnographic observation in eight communities conducted in Rwanda in 2011, 2013, and 2014 with my coinvestigator, Hager El-Hadidi, as well as data collected in my earlier ethnographic research in Rwanda between 1997 and 2002.[4]

I first describe what Primo Levi called the moral "grey zone" of genocide. I assert that the grey zone forms the context for the morally complex decision-making of ordinary citizens, including not only victims but also certain perpetrators, bystanders, and even rescuers. In this section, I also summarize what we already know about perpetrator behavior in the Rwanda genocide and elaborate a theoretical framework for understanding rescuers and rescuer behavior. Next, I describe the acts of rescue, opportunities, motivations, and decision-making of rescuers in the Rwandan genocide. I conclude by describing the ways in which these stories of rescuers have been silenced in Rwanda and the implications of this silence for genocide survivors, their rescuers, and society as a whole.

THE MORAL GREY ZONE

As Holocaust survivor and author Primo Levi (1989: 58) wrote about concentration camps in Nazi Europe, genocide produces a moral grey zone "of ambiguity which radiates out from regimes based on terror and obsequiousness" and where "the network of human relations … could not be reduced to the two blocs of victims and persecutors" (Levi 1989: 37).[5] Levi describes the ways in which concentration camp prisoners participated in their oppression and debasement through complicit acceptance of the situation, initiation into the social hierarchies that determined who lived (longer) and who died, or active collaboration as a camp leader or member of the squads who ran the gas chambers and crematoria. Levi elaborates:

> terror, ideological seduction, servile imitation of the victor, myopic desire for any power whatsoever, even though ridiculously circumscribed in space and time, cowardice, and finally, lucid calculation aimed at eluding the imposed orders and order. All these motives, singly or combined, have come into play in the creation of this grey zone, whose components are bonded together by the wish to preserve and consolidate established privilege vis-à-vis those without privilege. (Levi 1989: 43)

In other words, camp prisoners found themselves faced with innumerable, impossible decisions in the pursuit of survival that, nevertheless, almost certainly ended in death. Levi concludes that the moral ambiguity of this space must be explored and recognized even if the prisoners do not bear the moral culpability of the SS soldiers running the camps or of the "very structure of the totalitarian state" that produced this evil system (Levi 1989: 42–43). In his deployment of the concept, Levi reserves the term "grey zone" mainly for concentration camp prisoners who collaborated with the Nazi guards and SS officers running the camp. Levi implies that the concept could be extended to Nazi guards who assisted prisoners by, for example, trading food for gold or valuables. He writes: "it is a grey zone, poorly defined, where the two camps of masters and servants both diverge and converge" (Levi 1989: 42). Crucial to the concept as Levi defines it is the moral ambiguity of decision-making in the grey zone. While certain Nazi guards may be included, the camp commander would be excluded, as would SS soldiers who carried out their duties without reticence or who did not recognize prisoners as human beings deserving of respect, mercy, or assistance.

Taking the moral grey zone of the concentration camp and applying it to the Rwandan genocide, where ordinary citizens were mobilized to participate, illuminates the ways in which individuals – whether as potential victims, rescuers, bystanders, or perpetrators – faced complex and morally ambiguous decisions on a daily, sometimes even a minute-by-minute, basis. Within genocide studies, the categories of victim, perpetrator, bystanders, and rescuers have become fairly standardized. As Fujii points out, however, these categories "can obscure as much as they reveal" (2011: 145) because they reduce a person, with their often contradictory beliefs and actions, to an expected set of behaviors. Furthermore, it hides the reality that many people may pass from one of these categories to another over the course of a genocide or during mass atrocities. By shifting the focus away from these categories alone and concentrating instead on "acts of genocide" and "acts of rescue," we can understand the ways in which complex decisions and behaviors emerge in the dynamic set of social, political, and economic processes that constitute a genocide.

From the perspective of categories, it may appear obvious that rescuers do not operate from a morally ambiguous position and thus should not be considered as part of the grey zone. If, instead, we focus on an individual's many different actions over the course of a genocide, we begin to see that they are constantly faced with decisions made in morally ambiguous positions. We found several cases where rescuers denied assistance to someone in order to ensure the protection of others. In one case an orphanage director was protecting hundreds of orphans, including hundreds whose parents had already been killed in the genocide (interview by author, Kigali, March 2014). Three priests from the parish church took refuge on the grounds of the orphanage but they had been seen entering by a neighbor, who informed the militias and the local police. The orphanage director explained to the priests that they were not safe at the orphanage and that they were endangering the children by remaining there. The director feared that the police would enter to search for the Tutsi priests and then allow the militias in to attack the children and orphanage staff. The priests left voluntarily but were then killed in another hiding place nearby. As he recounted the story, the orphanage director was clearly emotionally tormented by his moral complicity in the priests' deaths, yet he was certain that allowing the priests to stay would have made it impossible for him to continue to protect the children and the orphanage staff. As I shall explain in more detail, the concept of the moral grey zone, combined with a focus on the acts – whether of genocide, resistance, or rescue – committed by individuals, can help us understand the complex interplay between internal and external factors shaping the decision-making of ordinary citizens during mass violence.

A nearly universal explanation of motive given by participants in communal violence or genocide is that they were simply obeying orders (Hinton 2005: 276–277). Stanley Milgram's (1974) obedience studies in the 1960s highlighted the willingness of average people to inflict pain on strangers by obeying the instructions of research study personnel. Similarly, Hannah Arendt (1963) argued that extremely evil acts could be perpetrated in a "banal" manner if situational constraints were strong enough. This obedience explanation "highlights a key dynamic involved in genocide. In some situations … perpetrators are heavily pressured … to obey orders" (Hinton 2005: 279). In this context, resistance or refusal to participate is an exception (Andrieu 2011: 495). Yet, explanations based on obedience are only partial as they ignore the "intense rage" or "hatred" that might accompany it and cannot explain the "patterns of violence" that often emerge in genocide (Hinton 2005: 279). The leveling effects and political psychology of crowds play a role in shaping individuals' behavior so that they behave in unexpected ways, engaging in scapegoating and jubilant destruction (Tambiah 1996: 266–296). Genocidal priming and

genocidal activation make genocide possible at the societal level, creating a context that shapes the decision-making of individual perpetrators (Hinton 2005).

The individual decision-making of mid- and low-level perpetrators has been well researched in Rwanda. Straus (2006) and Fujii (2009) reject the predominant explanatory theory of genocide: people kill out of ethnic hatred. While high-level perpetrators, what Rwandans call *Interahamwe z'interahamwe* (Interahamwe of the Interahamwe), went on a murderous rampage during the first five days, the genocide did not become a national policy until April 12 (Guichaoua 2015: 242; Straus 2006: 50). Average citizens, who were mobilized during organized phases that occurred later, made calculated decisions about whether or not to participate. The ongoing civil war between the Rwandan government and the RPF provided the "essential rationale for mass killing: security" (Straus 2006: 8). Average civilians who participated found it morally tolerable to kill because they believed they were protecting their family's, the community's, or the nation's security. Second, Rwandan state institutions penetrated deep into local communities, making it possible for centrally ordered commands to be carried out in rural communities throughout the country (Straus 2006: 8). Finally, the established social category "Tutsi" identified the targets of violence once the massacres started. In the years leading up to the genocide, extremist propaganda promoted the idea that all Tutsis were allies of the rebel RPF. During the genocide, Rwandan national radio and extremists in control of the government continued to equate "Tutsi" with "enemy," and declared that "the enemy must be eliminated" (Straus 2006: 9).

The lowest-level participants, whom Fujii labels "joiners," are the most puzzling subcategory of perpetrators because they "had the most to lose and the least to gain from participating," and they were the most affected by the genocide's destruction (2009: 16). Fujii concludes that local ties – defined as kinship, economic exchange, shared workplace, political affiliation, or education – and group dynamics mediated individual choices and actions at any given moment during the genocide. This approach makes it possible to explain why the same individual or family may have killed Tutsis at a roadblock at the same time as they hid and protected Tutsis in their home. The standard analytical categories of genocide (perpetrator, victim, bystander, and rescuer) are limited because an individual may simultaneously occupy two or more categories, or their categorization may change over time as they make decisions based on the situation in the moment (Fujii 2009: 8). Time is a final important factor in understanding perpetrator decision-making and behavior (Fujii 2009; Hinton 2005). Individual perpetrators' motivations do not remain constant over time. Even if a perpetrator first participates because of extreme structural constraints, he or she may later become desensitized to the "psychosocial dissonance" resulting from breaking moral prohibitions against harming other humans (Hinton 2005: 288). Or perpetrators may kill certain targets at roadblocks while sheltering other potential victims in their homes (Fujii 2009, 2011).

Two competing theories of rescuer behavior dominate research on the issue. One school of thought based primarily on analyses of rescuers during the Holocaust emphasizes intrinsic, individual features of moral behavior such as character, identity, and personality (see Monroe 1996, 2004; Oliner and Oliner 1988, 1995; Oliner et al. 1992). Based on her analysis of life history interviews with Yad Vashem-certified "Righteous," Monroe (2004: 241) argues that "ethical political behavior flows naturally from our perceptions of self." Her theory posits that "ethical acts emanate not so much from conscious choice but rather from deep-seated instincts, predispositions, and habitual patterns of behavior that are related to our central identity" and that are "effectively preset for most adults" (Monroe 2004: 241). The other school of thought based on comparative analysis of rescuers in World War II, the Armenian genocide, and Rwanda focuses on extrinsic features affecting

rescuer behavior such as geography, proximity to victims, presence of other minorities, details of genocidal policy, and opportunity (see the collection edited by Sémelin, Andrieu, and Gensburger 2008, 2011). From this perspective, rescuers "do not necessarily have a stable 'personality'" (Andrieu 2011: 499), and constraints of time, space, and context, instead, play just as important a role as internal moral character. As I shall elaborate, this research demonstrates that a complex interplay between extrinsic and intrinsic factors structured the behavior and choices not only of rescuers but also of genocide resisters, bystanders, victims, and perpetrators.

In the Rwandan genocide, rescuers, just like perpetrators and victims, operated in a moral grey zone, making impossible choices innumerable times each day or night. The empirical data in Rwanda are clear: some perpetrators killed people while they simultaneously hid or protected others at home or smuggled them to safety (Fujii 2009, 2011). In some instances perpetrators participated in mass violence in groups, but as individuals they helped kin, neighbors, or even strangers escape the slaughter. In other cases, participating in the genocide provided a sort of shield that enabled them to save people.

As a Muslim man, Ali,[6] who had confessed to genocide crimes, explained:

> Those who survived, in my mother's family, sought refuge at our home. They were able to survive and they are still there. There is one who was at our home while another one was at my big brother's place. We had shared them among us. We said that if there was a chance for us to survive, we would have at least one of the members saved, to keep the whole family from perishing. (Interview by author, Gisenyi, October 2013)

Ali was 20 years old at the time of the genocide. Born to a Hutu father and Tutsi mother, he was harassed and faced intense pressure to participate in the killings because he was a young man and because his parentage made the Interahamwe and Hutu Power supporters suspicious of him. As Ali continued:

> During that period of the Genocide, there were people who were called *ibyimanyi* [crossbreeds]. people who were born from a Hutu and a Tutsi. At that time [people like me were] harassed. When they went on their rounds [security patrols] through the neighborhoods, they would look for people who didn't share their ideologies and they would say that those crossbreeds were not people one could trust completely. They used to wake me up at night and say that there was no way they would spend the night watching while a Tutsi slept. They used to tell me that I was indeed my mother's son but they said I was not my father's son. They used to say "look at how tall he is! Look at his nose." And check all the characteristics they used to check and see me as … I don't know. They viewed me as someone who didn't share their ideologies. They would then make me get up and make rounds, saying that there was no way they were going to watch over me as I was sleeping. (Interview by author, Gisenyi, October 2013)

Beyond the harassment he faced from the Interahamwe in the streets or in his own home, Ali's father advised him to go on security patrols as a way to protect himself and the family. Ali clarified:

> [my father] told me, "Get up and be with them, do not kill if they do. Just go with them and sit where they sit, to show them that you're with them. If they keep on saying that you are an accomplice they will kill you as well." So … I would go with them … Sometimes when they came to wake me up, [my father] would give me money they called "flashlight fees" to buy batteries for the flashlights they would use at night. That was money they bought alcohol with … he would give them like 5,000 francs to buy me a night off. (Interview by author, Gisenyi, October 2013)

At the time of the genocide, both Ali and his family understood his actions as a way to avoid participating in the genocide while giving the appearance of compliance to local officials and Interahamwe militias. In an interview in 2011, Ali had insisted that he had not participated in the genocide. Instead, he claimed that he had confessed as a way to reduce his sentence and leave prison. In 2013 he understood his actions in a new light. As he explained:

> I was accused and put in prison … Then, I listened to what the Government came to teach us in prison about admitting crimes. I told them, "Given that I didn't kill anyone, what shall I confess to?" But because I listened to what they taught us, I finally understood that genocide crimes are not about getting a machete and killing only. Genocide is a collective crime. Some people were accomplices. Others contributed to the planning and did the deed itself, but even the fact that you were standing all three together made the one who was killing confident because he knew that he was with you. That made the one you had gone to kill weaker and kept him from defending himself. What might he have done if there had been one killer? But because we were three, it made the killer strong. (Interview by author, Gisenyi, October 2013)

The evolution in Ali's thinking illustrates the influence of national narratives and state-building practices to promote reconciliation. These efforts compel perpetrators and bystanders to accept their legal and moral complicity in the genocide. Furthermore, Ali's story as a whole illuminates the terrible complexity of the moral grey zone. As elaborated on later, Ali's geographic location in a neighborhood dominated by Hutu Power politicians and Interahamwe militias afforded him little opportunity to escape their coercive power.

ACTS OF RESCUE

In the midst of the mass death, some courageous people refused to participate in the genocide. Propaganda by Hutu extremists blaming Tutsis en masse for the ongoing civil war and the economic problems of the country had transformed social norms in the years leading up to the genocide. Once the genocide began, the Hutu Power movement quickly mobilized the Interahamwe and Impuzamugambi militias to attack and kill Tutsis. Over the span of a few weeks, they attempted to engage the entire population in its genocidal project. They transformed everyday mechanisms for mobilizing the adult male population, like nightly security rounds and monthly communal labor (*umuganda*), into enforcement mechanisms for the genocide. Through these means, average civilian men who were reluctant to join in the killing were initiated into the violence, first by participating in searches for people in hiding, then by participating in mob violence, and later by participating in killings. Sometimes coercion was used to get people to comply. In this context, the simple act of refusing to participate can be viewed as a courageous one.

Beyond refusing to participate, many people, including Hutus, Twa, and even Tutsis, engaged in rescuer behavior by assisting people who were being targeted. They hid Tutsis in their homes and stables or elsewhere on their property. After being summoned to public meetings, they warned people about search parties or imminent attacks. They negotiated the sparing of Tutsi lives using money, cigarettes, beer, or other goods. They hid or protected children whose parents had been killed or whose families asked them to protect them. They smuggled Tutsis across the border. They gave people in hiding food, water, clothing, or other assistance. They helped Tutsis flee. In some places where people sought protection, in churches, mosques, schools, or government buildings, they fought against attackers and died alongside Tutsis. At a mosque in a rural community in eastern Rwanda,

Muslims and Christians took refuge in the mosque (Viret 2011). When the Interahamwe militias came to attack them, they asked the Hutus to leave. They refused to do so and fought against the militiamen with their Tutsi neighbors (Viret 2011: 492). Most of them died. In Gisenyi, a town in northwestern Rwanda on the border with Zaire, Félicité Niyitegeka, a lay minister in the Catholic Church, gave Tutsis shelter at the Centre Pastorale de St. Pierre and helped them to flee across the border at unofficial crossings at night (interview by author, Gisenyi, February 2014). Niyitegeka's brother, a colonel in the Rwandan army sent her a message asking her to stop her activities and leave so that she would not be killed. She refused and was taken with approximately 40 Tutsis to the infamous "Commune Rouge" massacre site, where she was murdered along with the others (multiple interviews by author and by El-Hadidi, Gisenyi, October 2013 and February 2014). Many rescuers, like Niyitegeka, who hewed closely to their deeply held moral convictions died as martyrs. By refusing to bend their rectitude to the moral ambiguity required of the grey zone and to make decisions that may sacrifice some while saving others, they became genocide victims alongside those they sought to protect.

Numerous external factors constrained the opportunity to rescue others, as well as the likelihood that these actions would be successful. Perhaps the most important of these were opportunity and proximity (Sémelin, Andrieu, and Gensburger 2008, 2011). In Rwanda most people had the opportunity, even if only fleetingly, to provide assistance to someone targeted for killing. Hutus and Tutsis lived interspersed throughout Rwanda, especially in the cities, although some regions had higher percentages of Tutsis than others. In southern Rwanda, Tutsis constituted 14 percent to 21 percent of the population in Butare Prefecture (now part of Southern Province). Administrative officials and the majority of the population in Butare resisted participating in the genocide for weeks, even though in the neighboring prefecture of Gikongoro, which had a similar number of Tutsis, killings began immediately. In Butare, killings did not begin until the governor was removed from office and soldiers and Interahamwe were bused in from neighboring prefectures to initiate the violence. In Butare Prefecture, the majority of the population supported opposition political parties that were opposed to the Hutu Power coalition of extremists who prepared and organized the genocide. Furthermore, the region had a high rate of intermarriage between Hutus and Tutsis. These factors made much of the population harder to mobilize for the genocide project.

In northern and western Rwanda, where the Hutu Power movement was very strong, the population was more quickly mobilized. Killings in Gisenyi town started on the morning of April 7, as soon as Interahamwe and Impuzamugambi militia members organized attack squads to search neighborhoods and set up roadblocks. In Gisenyi (now part of Western Province) and Byumba prefectures (now part of Northern Province) Tutsis constituted 1 percent to 7 percent of the population and in Ruhengeri (now part of Northern Province) they were less than 1 percent of the population in 1994 (Guichaoua 2015: x). In these communities, people had few opportunities to rescue potential victims. Yet, the lack of Tutsis did not keep the population from participating in the killing. Men were mobilized to go and attack Tutsis in neighboring communities. In a rural community in the highlands, one perpetrator, Jean, explained how he went with a group of about 30 men to attack a homestead down near the shore of Lake Kivu:

> The way Satan came that day: it's as a young man from down there, where that person died. He told me that there was a cow somewhere, which he was going to sell me at a low price. I used to be a butcher at that time. When I heard that I was buying a cow at a low price, I went. When we got there, the cow was that side, they untied it. I left with the cow, the others stayed behind.

That person [who lived there, who owned the cow] stayed behind, too. Those who stayed behind attacked him and they killed him. (Interview by author, Kayove district, Western Province, October 2013)

In this community where fewer than a handful of Tutsis lived in 1994, local men were recruited to attack squads that went elsewhere to kill. Thus, geography played a structuring role in the violence as well as in rescue.

The border provided great opportunities for rescue, although they were also used to trap Tutsis evading the death squads. In Gisenyi segments of the border were open in 1994. Many properties on the border were used as smuggling routes and they became routes to evacuate people during the genocide. Many traders who engaged in smuggling as part of their business used the same means and methods to smuggle Tutsis across the border. Two *indakemwe* saved the lives of dozens of Tutsis in this way. An old woman in Gisenyi smuggled Tutsi children across the border in broad daylight. She took the children one by one across the border, telling the police and border guards that they were her grandchildren.[7] She crossed the border and left the children with relatives in Goma and then returned to Rwanda at a different border crossing. With these means, she saved the lives more than seven Tutsi children whose parents had been killed in her neighborhood. She took these actions despite her daughter's objections.

In other communities, physical geography provided escape routes from massacre sites or banana plantations, forests, or marshes as places to hide. In communities along the shores of Lake Kivu, the local population used boats for fishing and trade across the lake. During the genocide, many used their boats to evacuate Tutsis across the lake to Zaire, to Gisenyi, where they could continue on to Congo, or to Kibuye, where many of them subsequently perished. In Mugandamure in southern Rwanda, its history as a Swahili camp during colonialism made it easy for residents to erect roadblocks to close the neighborhood off to outsiders.[8] Residents then smuggled in Tutsis and hid them in their homes. On at least one occasion, a group of Interahamwe accompanied by soldiers forced their way into the neighborhood searching for specific people whom they knew were hiding in the neighborhood. These people were taken to a public square and killed. Nonetheless, the community succeeded in saving an unknown number of people in this way.

Local histories of communal violence between 1959 and 1973 and genocide priming in the early 1990s further shaped the unfolding of the genocide in communities across the country. In Nkora and Boneza in Western Province, many Tutsi genocide survivors recounted how Tutsis had been targeted during periods of ethnic violence in 1959, 1963–1964, and 1973.[9] During those episodes, mobs came down from the mountains to steal their cattle, destroy their property, and physically assault or even kill them. In the week after the RPF invasion in 1990, groups of men again attacked Tutsi homesteads in Boneza. The pattern continued in 1994 during the genocide with massacres in these communities being initiated by bands of Interahamwe coming down from the mountains. In Gisenyi town, genocide priming played a significant role. Within days of the RPF invasion of Rwanda in October 1990, there were instances of mob violence targeting Tutsis in Gisenyi. Gisenyi was also the stronghold of the Hutu Power movement within the dominant, state political party (MRND) and of a Hutu extremist party (CDR). Virtually all adult men in Gisenyi were members of either the MRND or the CDR. Male youth were under extreme pressure to join the Interahamwe. Killings of Tutsis began in Gisenyi as early as 10 a.m. on the morning of April 7, 1994. Killings also began in the capital city, Kigali, in the early hours of April 7, within hours of the president's plane being shot down.

In southern Rwanda, on the other hand, killings did not start until April 21 or 22, 1994. The governor of Butare, as well as the mayor of Nyanza, were opposed to the genocide and refused to implement it. On April 20, 1994, the interim president gave a speech in Butare and then replaced the governor. The genocide began the next day. In Nyanza, the killings started on April 22, after groups of soldiers were brought in on trucks the day before. On the first day, the Nyanza mayor was publicly lynched, which created an atmosphere of terror. Although the genocide was fierce and swift once it had begun, the RPF rebel group seized the region quickly, bringing the genocide to an end within a few weeks. In nearby Mugandamure, the RPF's swift arrival allowed Muslim residents who had hidden and protected Tutsis to succeed in their acts of rescue.

Community structure and social networks significantly shaped individuals' behavior during the genocide. Research by Fujii (2011) and McDoom (2014) has found that Rwandans who had more social connections with perpetrators were much more likely to become genocide perpetrators. In two communities where I conducted interviews in western and southern Rwanda, a history of communal activities among Muslims played a structural role in individual acts of rescue and in organized efforts among certain social networks to rescue Tutsis. During feast days in these communities, the local Muslim population included their non-Muslim neighbors in their celebrations and shared meat with them. In addition, the local Muslim population organized the feasts, thus creating social relationships and patterns of cooperation. These social relationships led to coordinated efforts among Muslims in these communities to hide and protect Tutsis in the south or to hide and evacuate Tutsis to Zaire in the west. In Gisenyi, on the other hand, Muslims were closely tied to the political elites who became the primary architects of the genocide. Virtually all Muslim men we interviewed in Gisenyi town said that they were members of the MRND political party in 1994, whereas Muslim men elsewhere in Rwanda indicated that they had not joined any party because Islam forbade it. Muslims in Gisenyi, particularly young men, faced enormous social pressure to join in the violence (as illustrated by Ali's story).

People who tried to help or save Tutsis indicated that they had the opportunity to do so. Virtually all genocide survivors described people who could have helped them but refused. Thus, beyond simple opportunity, rescuers drew on an internal moral compass that guided their decisions. Most widely, genocide survivors and rescuers themselves described rescuers as people "who have a good heart" (*bafite umutima mwiza*), a Kinyarwanda phrase that encompasses a person's mind, character, and spirit. As one Muslim woman who, at the age of 21, saved several Tutsi lives explained:

> The reason why some people saved people while others didn't … it went with the person's heart; the one who had a beastly heart didn't save the person but, the one who had a merciful heart which understood that a human being is a human being, saved that person. That's how we saved people. (Interview by author, Nkora, October 2013)

A female genocide survivor who was 15 years old at the time of the genocide explained that having a good heart was not enough: "It requires courage for people to help others despite the risk. There is also a good heart, but it is courage" (interview by El-Hadidi, Biryogo, November 2013). Another female genocide survivor who was only nine years old in 1994 explained that greed was one of the factors that separated perpetrators from rescuers:

> People rescued victims from personal compassion. In general terms people who got involved in the violence were mostly motivated by material possessions they could get from the victims.

> They perceived the victims' death as an opportunity to get access to their things/property. On the positive side, there were people who were not interested in the victims' material possessions and preferred to rescue them because they were also convinced that the victims were innocent. (Interview by El-Hadidi, Nkora, October 2013)

These internal moral orientations – having a good heart, being courageous, and eschewing material possessions – were cited frequently among interviewees who were asked about the motivations of rescuers. While any of these human impulses could be based in religious belief, Rwandans distinguished between these general moral orientations, based in an understanding of a common humanity, from explicit religious faith and practice.

Because the major religions in Rwanda, including Christianity and Islam, forbid murder; people assume that religion should have discouraged participation in the genocide. Nonetheless, people of all faiths, and even the clergy and religious leaders, were among the perpetrators. Christian "churches were a key factor in encouraging public involvement" in the 1994 genocide because they helped "make participating in the killing morally acceptable" (Longman 2009: 306). The Roman Catholic Church had close ties to the state in Rwanda. Thus, when Catholic leaders failed to issue "a prompt, firm condemnation of the killing campaign" and, instead, expressed support for the new regime controlled by Hutu extremists, government officials and propagandists could "assert that the slaughter met with God's favor" (Des Forges 1999: 246). In the absence of any other clear message from the church, many Christians concluded that participation in the genocide, or their "defense of the nation," which was how they perceived their actions, was the will of God. The broad participation of Christians was not due to an insufficient conversion or adherence to doctrine; rather, the church's historical integration with and support of the patrimonial networks of the Rwandan state implicated it in the state's genocide project.

People of all faiths were also among the victims. Unlike many other instances of communal violence or genocide, such as the Holocaust in Europe or the civil wars in Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, or Bosnia-Herzegovina, religion did not serve as "an ascriptive identifier to single out" individuals to kill in the 1994 genocide in Rwanda (Longman 2009: 306). Christian churches became key massacre sites as ethnic Tutsis, and others targeted in the genocide, gathered in them to seek sanctuary from the killing. In previous instances of communal violence in 1959, 1962, 1963, and 1972, churches had served as places of refuge, and perpetrators of violence had not dared desecrate them. In 1994 the extremist Hutus who planned and carried out the genocide used this history as a strategy to concentrate their victims and make it easier to dispatch them en masse. They encouraged Tutsis to gather at these sites for their own protection and then brought in soldiers, militiamen, and the local population to kill them. Mosques rarely became massacre sites, because the imams closed them during the genocide and instructed Muslims to pray at home (interviews by author and El-Hadidi, various locations, Rwanda, 2013).

Islam did not arrive in Rwanda until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, around the same time as European colonialism and Christian missionaries (Kagabo 1988: 17). European colonizers were generally hostile to Islam (Kagabo 1988: 18), but they allowed "Arabs" from East Africa (usually Muslim Africans or descendants of traders who had migrated to East Africa from the Middle East or India) to establish commercial outposts in the new colony (Ruanda-Urundi). These economic centers became sites of Islamic conversion thanks to economic ties forged between Arab, Indian, and Swahili traders and the local population (Kagabo 1988: 60–84). Yet, Muslims in Rwanda, whether they were foreigners, immigrants and their descendants, or local converts, lived largely apart from the rest of the Rwandan population in Muslim neighborhoods in commercial centers around the country.

Because of their distinct language (Swahili), style of dress, foods, and habits, Rwandan Muslims were perceived as foreigners in their own country (Kagabo 1988). The anti-Islamic teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and Catholic schools in Rwanda caused Rwandan Muslims to be poorly perceived by their compatriots (Kagabo 1988: 45). Non-Muslim Rwandans traded with Muslims but otherwise avoided them. Despite this marginalization, Muslims were perceived as wealthy because of their control of trade goods and more European lifestyle. In eastern and southern Rwanda, some Tutsi nobles married their daughters to Muslim men. This pattern of Tutsi in-marriage continued into the postcolonial period. As a result, many Rwandan Muslims had Tutsi mothers. Negative perceptions of Rwandan Muslims continued in the postcolonial period. Few Muslims achieved a formal education beyond primary school unless they found the means to continue their studies abroad (Kagabo 1988: 218; Kasule 1982: 41, 138–141).

Religion featured prominently in some explanations of rescuer behavior and the distinctions between people who joined the genocide and those who refused to participate. Both Muslim and Christian rescuers depicted a fear of God as part of their motivation for trying to help Tutsis, or characterized their actions as purely being an instrument of God's will. As one Muslim rescuer explained:

> Our religion, Islam, doesn't allow people to spill our neighbors' blood. We looked and we only saw brothers here. You could not think about killing this person, because he was a brother, someone who would have rescued you too, if you needed help. (Interview by author, Mugandamure, July 2013)

Another Muslim elder who saved many Tutsis during the genocide explained, "I'm so poor in this life, how is it possible to lose both heaven and earth in this lifetime?" Another Muslim rescuer clarified, "It was not me; it was Allah who protected them" (interview by El-Hadidi, Gisenyi, October 2013). In response to being asked why he saved people, a Catholic man said, "God and my Christian belief" (interview by El-Hadidi, Gisenyi, November 2013). A Pentecostal man who was a soldier in the Rwandan army explained:

> I was a soldier inside Rwanda. I was a Christian from ADEPR. Following my beliefs and how I saw other religions, the true believer didn't participate in the Genocide. I mean the true faith is not about religion. Whether it is a Muslim, a Catholic, an Adventist, and my fellow Pentecost, those who were true believers never got involved. I am among those who rescued people, and among those who did not participate. (Interview by El-Hadidi, Nyanza, August 2013)

The moral grey zone created in the chaos of genocide, along with the moment-by-moment decision-making necessitated by the complex and constantly evolving situation, resulted in rescuer behavior being quite common but rescuers being exceptional. Being a rescuer or perpetrator is not a binary or static identity. Rather, rescuer behavior was formed by a complex interconnection between extrinsic and intrinsic factors that impacted an individual's choices, decisions, and opportunities to resist genocide. To be a rescuer, a person needed the personal conviction or moral compass that impelled them to behave morally, but they also needed the opportunity and the skills and resources to make their actions successful. Most importantly, they required the patience, persistence, and fortitude to make the right decisions many times each day over several weeks or even months. To become a participant in the genocide only took one momentary decision, for example, putting one's family's or their own safety ahead of those whom they were protecting. In short, becoming a rescuer meant making the decision to rescue over and over again and not only once.

Silence

In the immediate aftermath of the genocide, many survivors felt compelled to recognize the courageous individuals who had helped save their lives. Yet, they found that the political context made it too risky. As a national representative of the genocide survivors' association, Ibuka, explained: "There have been moments when it has been impossible to talk about rescuers during the genocide. Immediately after, many of us tried to [publicly] recognize the people who saved us, but we discovered it wasn't wise. The government didn't want to hear about it" (author's interview with Ibuka national representative, Kigali, October 2013). In the immediate aftermath of the genocide, the new government led by the former rebel movement and army, the RPF, was focused on locating and imprisoning genocide perpetrators. The majority of these suspects were Hutu, especially young Hutu men. As a result, the government was not interested in publicly recognizing Hutus who had rescued Tutsis. Furthermore, the phenomenon of the "killer-rescuers," those who had killed some while rescuing others, was coming to light (Fujii 2011). Thus, rescuers themselves were reluctant to be known publicly for fear of becoming suspected of genocide crimes.

When I conducted research in Rwanda in the late 1990s, few people talked openly about the 1994 genocide (Burnet 2012: 79). While the reasons for their silence were numerous, principal among them was fear of attracting attention that could lead to accusations of genocide crimes. Rescuers, in particular, remained silent. A Hutu man explained:

> I tried to save someone. He stayed here in my house for four weeks. He climbed over the rear wall [pointing to the compound wall behind the house]. We didn't know him … I kept him here … Then, we decided to flee. We could not bring him with us. I don't know what happened to him … I do not say these things because people can misunderstand or twist my words to say that I am the one who had him killed. (Interview by author, Kigali, 2011)

Despite its official policy of national unity, Rwandan government practices of national memory and genocide commemoration in the late 1990s and early 2000s politicized victim-hood and globalized blame on Hutus (Burnet 2009: 80). During this period, the government exercised tight control over public representations of the genocide. The annual genocide commemoration ceremonies often included public recognition of people who had risked their lives to save Tutsis in the genocide. In most instances, a genocide survivor would give testimony and present the person who had helped them. The rescuer would then say a few words about why they had done what they did. National Heroes Day recognized stories of rescue among other types of national heroes. For example, Félicité Niyitegeka, who saved scores of Tutsis in Gisenyi and died with others whom she refused to abandon, is among the national heroes. Such stories of rescue, performed as part of government-sponsored commemoration activities, contained these narratives in official, public discourse and ensured that they did not create public heroes who could become potential political rivals of the RPF party or its candidates.

Stories of rescuers promoted outside of official Rwandan government channels often faced public opposition. Internationally perhaps the best-known rescuer is Paul Rusesabagina, the hotel manager who saved people at the Hôtel des Mille Collines, as portrayed in the film *Hotel Rwanda*. His story was first recounted by the journalist Philip Gourevitch in his 1998 book, *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*. This story caught the attention of writer and director Terry George, who then researched Rusesabagina's story and wrote and directed the film, which was released in 2004. In 2005 Rwandan journalists began a smear campaign against Rusesabagina.[10] The campaign begun

by journalists was then taken up by politicians, culminating in President Kagame condemning Rusesabagina by name during the twelfth national genocide commemoration ceremony on April 6, 2006 (George 2006). The campaign against Rusesabagina has continued in the Rwandan and international media.[11] Rusesabagina is but one example of a rescuer who gained public attention outside of Rwandan government channels and then found himself or herself the target of a smear campaign or other forms of coercion. These examples encouraged rescuers in Rwanda, as well as genocide survivors who wanted to recognize them publicly, to remain largely silent.

Once the Gacaca courts completed their work in the late 2000s, public discourse opened slightly on the question of rescuers. In 2009 the national genocide survivors' association Ibuka launched a pilot research project to identify people it called *indakemwa*, meaning "those who are morally beyond reproach." The definition of *indakemwa* was largely based on the state of Israel and Yad Vashem's designation of "Righteous Among the Nations," to recognize non-Jews who risked their lives, freedom, or safety to save one or more Jews during the Holocaust without any financial compensation or other reward (Tevosyan 2008: 186). Ibuka defined *indakemwa* as people (1) who had saved one or more Tutsis during this genocide; (2) who had not received any compensation for their actions; (3) who had not participated in the genocide by killing, physically assaulting, tracking or hunting, denouncing or revealing Tutsis in hiding, or by stealing or destroying property; and (4) who testified about the genocide and did not spread genocide ideology (Kayishema and Masabo 2010: 22–24). This last requirement extends infinitely into the future, meaning that a person who qualifies as *indakemwa* can lose their status if they say or do something perceived as spreading genocide ideology. In this pilot study, Ibuka identified 372 people around the country whom it designated as "presumed *indakemwa*" (Kayishema and Masabo 2010: 25). The organization has not yet found funding to continue its research or to create a permanent process for identifying and verifying *indakemwa* (interviews by author, Rwanda, 2014–2016). These ongoing efforts to recognize rescuers in a formal and public way have the potential to provide models of behavior and decision-making that oppose genocide in both ideology and action. Accounting for the good amid the overwhelming evil of genocide provides some survivors with hope and a renewed faith in humans.

Rescuers, especially those who survived the genocide, were exceptional. Like many others, they had the compulsion to save others. Rescuers had "good hearts," were "courageous," and did not succumb to greed, but these internal moral orientations were not enough. What set rescuers apart from those who resisted for days or weeks and then participated in the genocide was that rescuers persisted in this conviction over long periods of time and succeeded in their efforts to rescue Tutsis. Thus, the internal features of moral behavior – character, identity, personality, religious belief, or self-perception – do not on their own distinguish rescuers from genocide resisters, bystanders, or perpetrators. Nor can the external features that affect rescuer behavior – geography, timelines, proximity, or opportunity – account for these distinctions. Being a rescuer or a perpetrator was not a static, unchanging identity. The complex interplay between personal conviction, moral compulsion, and religious orientation, along with external factors, makes it possible for some people to choose to rescue, to refuse to participate in genocide, to persist in these choices and to make them repeatedly, and to succeed in making their conviction reality. They demonstrated enormous courage and great ingenuity by providing water, food, clothing, or shelter; by warning people of search parties or attacks; by negotiating for people's lives in exchange for money, cigarettes, beer, or livestock; by hiding or protecting children whose parents had been killed; and by smuggling people to safety. In these acts, rescuers faced the grey zone of genocide where they were forced to make morally ambiguous

decisions. Sometimes, in order to succeed in their attempts to rescue, rescuers had to abandon someone they had helped, to turn people over to soldiers or police who carry a warrant even though they are likely to be killed, or to ask someone to leave.

Notes

1   Estimates of how many people died in the 1994 genocide range from 500,000 (Des Forges 1999: 15) to 1 million (MINALOC 2004: 21). For more on the numbers of dead and their politicization, see Scott Straus (2006: 51).
2   "Achievements of the ICTR," http://69.94.11.53/ENGLISH/factsheets/achievements.htm (accessed September 15, 2007).
3   I use "Gacaca" to refer to the Gacaca courts instituted to adjudicate genocide cases and *gacaca* to refer to the informal, traditional conflict resolution mechanism.
4   This research was supported by the University of Louisville Research Foundation and Department of Anthropology and the National Science Foundation under Grant Nos. 1230062 and 1550655. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this material are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.
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6   All interviewee names are pseudonyms. Human subjects protocols granted all participants anonymity.
7   Interview by author, Gisenyi, 2013.
8   Interviews by author and El-Hadidi, Mugandamure, 2013.
9   Interviews by author and El-Hadidi, Nkora and Boneza, 2013.
10 The film's director, Terry George, defended the version of events recounted in the film and explained the timeline of the smear campaign against Rusesabagina in a *Washington Post* opinion editorial in May 2006 (George 2006).
11 See, e.g., Melvern 2011.

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