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From the Ground Up: The Historical Roots of *Umuganda* in Rwandan Economic and
Political Development

By

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Abstract

Umuganda, the ritual of communal labor practiced in Rwanda since pre-colonial kingdoms, has a long and varied history of implementation. Once an integral part of the patron-client relationship, *umuganda* originated as the exchange of cattle for feudal protection; currently, it is a system of mandatory labor being utilized for post-genocide political and economic development. *Umuganda* has been championed by both past and present presidential administrations as the foundational centerpiece of progress, yet it also served as an instrumental tool in mass participation during the genocide. This paper will focus on the historical roots and transformation of *umuganda* in order to deconstruct its current use as encouraging economic and political development.

Introduction

The historical process will dictate that *umuganda* has a bleak and destructive discourse deeply imbedded in the peasantry and agricultural economic system of Rwanda. However, the general consensus among current policy makers and international donor organizations sees *umuganda* as the essence of rebuilding the country's economy, nationalism, and spirit. Forced manual labor under *ubureetwa* was one of the strongest dividing factors of Hutu and Tutsi in colonial Rwanda, and yet *umuganda*, a "communal," though mandatory, manual labor system is considered instrumental in building inclusion and developing nationalism in post-genocide Rwanda. How can *umuganda*, fresh in collective memory as a method that drove people to commit acts of genocide, be incorporated to promote prosperity and rebuild trust?

There are various linguistic interpretations of the word *umuganda*. Traditionally, it is considered to be a translation of "contribution" and "cooperative communal labor." Rwandan linguist Dr. Eugene Shimamungu (2005) gives a historically detailed definition of *umuganda* as "a piece of wood that is driven into the ground in order to serve as pillars for a house...When neighbors were building, each person would bring a piece of timber to assist in building and in that mutual self-help context the term 'umuganda' means community self-help."

However, the definition of *umuganda* reflects its political and economic utility over time. For example, as Verwimp (2000) confirms *umuganda* is a "Kinyarwanda word for the wood used to construct a house..." he proceeds to qualify that it "...was one of Habyarimana's favorite speech topics and one of the regime's most influential policies" (p. 344). During the genocide, radio stations would use *umuganda*

euphemistically to call people to collective action through “a thinly veiled code referring to ‘work’ instead of killing” (Li, 2004, p. 12). Whereas, the contemporary Rwandan government administration states that *umuganda* translates to “We work together” (Agbor, 2011). It is clear the historical roots of *umuganda* demonstrate a call to collective action, yet it is the context of this action that varies based on societal and political needs.

Scholarship on the Rwandan genocide has predominantly focused on causation, particularly on the ethnic development and distinction of Hutu and Tutsi, in addition to the gradual distrust between these groups as rooted in the pre-colonial and colonial state (Des Forges, 1972; Lemarchand, 1970, 1994, 1995; C. Newbury, 1989, 1995; D. Newbury, 1994). Jefremovas (1997) has cited this debate to be one of a “meta-conflict,” or “a conflict about the nature of conflict” (p. 92). Whereas, revisionist scholarship has marked Hutu and Tutsi as economic distinctions (Mamdani, 2001), these various interpretations of history center on “the shaping of ethnic antagonisms” and “what it means to be Rwandan” (Jefremovas, 1997, 93). The research gives a thorough examination of the animosities that were cultivated; however, it focuses minutely on socioeconomic status and, furthermore, how this status explains mass participation in the genocide. Mamdani (2001) outlines the academic investigation into this phenomenon as two predominant discourses: “one focuses on society, the other on the state” (p. 199).

In fact, the causation debate highlights the distinctions between the political situations surrounding the genocide in Rwanda and those that influenced the mass killings and genocide in neighboring Burundi in 1972 and the early-mid 1990s. As Lemarchand (1994) notes:

It is important to stress that Rwanda and Burundi cannot be understood independently of each other. Historically, and to this day, ethnic strife in the former has had a profound impact on the destinies of the latter, and vice versa. Just as the Hutu-led revolution in Rwanda has contributed directly to the sharpening of ethnic polarities in Burundi, so the assassination of that state's first popularly elected President, Melchior Ndadaye (a Hutu), at the hands of the all-Tutsi army, on 21 October 1993, provides the indispensable backdrop for an understanding to the Rwanda genocide. (p. 585)

The historiography of these two nations has traditionally treated the cultural distinction of Hutu and Tutsi as "fixed," while considering political actors and governmental systems as evolutionary (Newbury, 2001, pp. 258-59). In fact, political structures of Rwanda and Burundi are not detached from social distinctions of Hutu and Tutsi, rather they underscore the differences in government structure as independence ushered in a Hutu-dominated republic in Rwanda and a constitutional monarchy in Burundi (Lemarchand, 1994, p. 581).

Therefore, as the historiography dictates, if ethnic motivations cannot be entirely legitimized, how does history account for mass participation in the genocide? A popular, and easy, answer is to assume all Rwandans are socially predisposed to obedience (Prunier, 1995, p. 141-142). This is not entirely as problematic or simplistic as it sounds considering the majority of the Rwandan citizenry was uneducated and had a long tradition of living under authoritarian control. Yet, this obedience to authority can be further analyzed through an examination of *umuganda*. Rather than focus on ethnic

identity and obedience as the motivational source of conflict, mass participation can be accounted for through the use and stimulus of *umuganda*, collective action that all Rwandans were historically familiar with.

The study of *umuganda* brings the focus on the peasantry, whereas the traditional concentration has been on the roles of the state and leadership elite. Rural society is an integral, arguably the most important, component in Rwandan development. Though the term “peasant” is problematic in Rwanda¹, it is precisely this large portion of the population that serves as an economic and political necessity in building a sustainable state immersed in the world market. In an entirely agriculturally-based economic system, the peasants are the foundation for future development.

President Juvenal Habyarimana understood this, as does current President Paul Kagame. Peasant ideology is “rural romanticism,” and control of the population is one that leadership elites continue to seek and maintain. Yet, the subaltern model receives little attention in deconstructing the historical context of the genocide, as Newbury & Newbury (2000) note:

The dominant vision of Rwanda’s history emphasized political homogeneity, ethnic distinctions, and the power of the state. In so doing, it sublimated alternative visions, which expressed regional particularity, diverse forms of identity (based on kin, class, occupation, and friendship networks), and the interaction of local agency with elite policy. (p. 833)

¹ Peasants are traditionally subsistence agriculturalists, though in Rwanda this is more closely associated with the label “Hutu” (Ryan, 2010, p. 3). As the terms ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ will be deconstructed in Chapter 1, the term ‘peasant’ will be used to denote any Rwandan citizen who comprises the 90% of the population that work as subsistence agriculturalists, of Hutu or Tutsi origin, with the consideration that these terms are now illegal in Rwanda.

In an economy based entirely on agriculture and a development model based entirely on the input and cooperation of the peasantry, it is worth examining the genocide through this same lens. The following is a historical examination of *umuganda*, how it was used to incite mass participation in the 1994 genocide, and its contemporary role in Rwandan economic and political development.

Pre-Colonial Systems of Labor

The historical roots of *umuganda* are found by examining the ideological development of Rwanda's labor force. The socioeconomic structure of Rwandan society is obtusely triangular with roughly 90% of the population living in poor, rural areas. However, *umuganda* is structured as a top-down program, as the public works necessities are driven by the demands and needs of those in leadership positions (Verwimp, 2000, p. 346). As the relationship between elite leaders and the civilian population is a reliable indicator of how society functions as a whole, the development of this relationship is essential in providing a context in which *umuganda* is currently being instituted.

The rapidity and mass mobilization during the genocide is often attributed to an innate obedience on the part of the Rwandan people, often qualified by the use of the media, or more specifically, the radio. Yet, *umuganda*, a labor system that has been institutionalized in Rwanda history, plays an often overlooked and vital role.

The Development of the King's Labor Force

Rwanda is currently a country roughly the size of Switzerland, minute in comparison to the vast states that make up the majority of its neighbors. Prior to German exploration at the turn of the twentieth century, however, the Rwandan kingdom was considered to be one of the most powerful in the region. Rwanda's very name can be translated to "Great Expansion" (Kagame, 1972, p. 50), but the extent of power is a prime interpretational target for many African historians, primarily those concerned with the divisive development of Hutu and Tutsi as ethnicities. As David Newbury (1994) notes in his exhaustive study on the dynastic chronology of Rwanda, "while as independent

polities [are] assumed to be culturally autonomous, source material from one is often drawn on to fill in the gaps of others...[this is] especially common where there were powerful kingdoms whose political boundaries were assumed to be rigid and inviolate” (p. 191). These scholarly assumptions are based on the records of oral tradition, and the exact determination of dates and regions where leaders were said to have governed can vary from historian to historian (see Table 1). Though the structure and lineage of the Rwandan monarchy can be traced to antiquity, for the purpose of this examination, the discussion will be confined to the relationship of the kings to their citizens immediately leading up to German exploration.

Table 1

Rwanda Royal Chronology per various authorities

	Kagame	Vansina	Rennie	Nkurikiyimbura
Ruganzu Bwimba	1312-1345	1458-1482	1532-1559	1468-1470
Cyilima Rugwe	1345-1378	1482-1506	1559-1586	1470-1520
Kigeri Mukobanya	1378-1411	1506-1528	1586-1588	1520-1543
Mibambwe Mutabazi	1411-1444	1528-1552	1588-1593	1543-1566
Yuhu Gahima	1444-1477	1552-1576	1593-1603	1566-1589
Ndahiro Cyamnatere	1477-1510	1576-1600	1603	1589-1600
Ruganzu Ndori	1510-1543	1600-1624	1603-1630	1600-1623
Mutara Semugeshe	1543-1576	1624-1648	1630-1657	1623-1646
Kigeri Nyamuhesha	1576-1609	1648-1672	1657-1684	1646-1669
Mibambwe Gisanura	1609-1642	1672-1696	1684-1711	1669-1692
Yuhu Mazimpaka	1642-1675	1696-1720	1711-1738	1692-1715
Karemwa Rwaka		1720-1744	1738-1756	1715-1731
Cyilima Rujugira	1675-1708	1744-1768	1756-1765	1731-1759
Kigeri Ndabarasa	1708-1741	1768-1792	1765-1792	1769-1792
Mibambwe Sentabyo	1741-1746	1792-1797	1792-1797	1792-1797
Yuhu Gahindiro	1746-	1797-1830	1797-1830	1797-1830
Mutara Rwegera	-1853	1830-1860	1830-1860	1830-1860
Kigeri Rwabugiri	1853-1895	1860-1895	1860-1895	1860-1895
Mibambwe Rutarindwa		1896	1895-1896	
Yuhu Musinga	1897-1931	1897-1931	1896-1931	
Mutara Rudahigwa	1931-1959	1931-1959	1931-1959	

Source: Newbury, 1994, p. 217

The Rwandan dynastic cycle centered around *Imana*, or the “dynamic principle of life and fertility” (Coupez & d’Hertefeldt, 1964, p. 460). Rulers utilized this divine connection for the production of food and the prosperity of the people through traditional rites and rituals. The patron-client relationship evolved over time, as the state became more centralized. “The state of Rwanda emerged as did many a state in the region, through the amalgamation of several autonomous chiefships into a single nuclear kingdom, under the leadership of a royal clan” (Mamdani, 2001, p. 62). During the 14th and 15th centuries, the *mwami* had authority that more closely resembled that of a priest or shaman with little to no power over the population and even less over production. The main power seemed to rest in the lineage heads, who organized and distributed lands in return for fealty (usually in the form of food or beer) from the clients (Jefremovas, 1997, p. 93).

It was not until the 16th century, as threats from bordering states increased, that the *mwami*’s power was expanded to create a permanent military organization. “Power was based on the control of men, not the control of land” (Jefremovas, 1997, p. 94). This control of men contributed to the modern development of patron-client relations; the transmission of fealty transitioned from *umuheto*, the giving of cattle from the client to the patron in return for protection, to *ubuhake*, the patron’s use of one of the client’s cows (Des Forges, 1972, pp. 5-6; Mamdani, 2001, p. 65). The nature of the relationship between the king and his subjects shifted dramatically; whereas, once the ownership of the cattle had belonged to the client, the cattle were now for the *mwami* to take at his discretion. This shift is significant in understanding the dynamic between the leader and the extent of his control over his subjects. The relationship developed from reciprocal to

authoritarian and, eventually, this exhibition of despotic dominance and demand over the population contributed to *ubureetwa*, the indentured servitude of mainly the Hutu population during the 19th century.

The practices of *ubureetwa* and *umuganda* are directly related. Whereas, *ubureetwa* required the peasants to work a certain number of days a week on the land, in relative serfdom, the enforcement of this manual labor system evolved with *umuganda* in the 20th century, a mandatory contribution to public works and infrastructure, including but not limited to, land cultivation and agriculture.

The Economic Distinction between Hutu and Tutsi

It is seemingly impossible to discuss any part of Rwandan history without acknowledging the development of the Tutsi and Hutu, both as economic groups and separate ethnicities. In fact, the majority of literature surrounding Rwanda concentrates mainly on these two groups² and the historiography is seemingly divided. Early historians had two differing viewpoints regarding the power structure of pre-colonial Rwandan kingdoms: either the state was relatively hierarchical with a system of patronage³ or it was considered exploitative with a concentration on the ethnicity of Hutu-Tutsi. However, contemporary scholarship concentrates on the ever-changing nature of pre-colonial history, primarily focusing on the development of ethnicity in Rwanda. Although it serves as an integral part of the region's history, the irony "is that ethnicity is hard to define in Rwanda, because people have the same culture, language, religion, share a

² The Twa, the third Rwandan social group, are often overlooked in discussions of ethnic development because they did not play a large role in the genocide and comprise less than 1% of the population.

³ The debate can be extended regarding the equity of the client-state relationship.

common history, live together and intermarry...Ethnicity is a very malleable category” (Jefremovas, 1997, pp. 92-3). Ethnicity is considered by many to be the invention of colonists, using the designations of Tutsi and Hutu to describe an economic and agricultural status. Simply, the Tutsi were pastoralists, a minority of the population considered to center their modes of production around the use of cattle. The Hutus, comprising the majority of the population, were subsistence farmers and cultivators. This relationship evolved over time. Davidson (1992) states:

The general nineteenth century move toward more emphatic forms of centralized power had developed the dominance of a minority group, the Tutsi, over a Hutu majority. But the manner of this nineteenth-century dominance was mild, and was regulated by ‘lord and vassal’ relationships, which had some resemblance to the simpler forms of European feudalism.

(p. 249)⁴

There is also an academic concentration on the exploitation of the Tutsi rulers against their Hutu majority.⁵ The notion of client-state relations, in which the Tutsi has dominant governing lineage and the Hutu are the subservient majority, is later reinforced and perpetuated by colonial administration.

⁴ This explains how the Germans and Belgians saw the relationship, as Tutsi king to Hutu subject, with little regard for any regional or cultural variations.

⁵ In fact, this historical (mis)perception was exploited and turned into a major catalyst for “Hutu Power” propaganda after independence and in leading to the 1994 genocide.

The modern conception of Hutu-Tutsi relations, clientship, and ethnicity can be attributed to the rule of *mwami* Kigeri Rwabugiri, who reigned from 1853/1860-1895 (Newbury, 1994, p. 217).⁶ As Mamdani (2001) states:

He further centralized the state structure, but through a series of reforms that had a contradictory outcome: at the same time as it expanded Hutu participation in the army from nonmilitary to fighting roles – and appointed Hutu to administrative positions while taking on the power of uppity Tutsi aristocratic lineages – these reforms debased the social position of the Hutu outside the army and administration and further polarized the social opposition between Hutu and Tutsi. (p. 69)

Rwabugiri was responsible for solidifying the Hutu as the dependent peasant population and the Tutsis as the lineage heads of land and state. This is not to say that there were not Tutsi peasants, nor Hutu elite. In fact, the majority of the Tutsi were commoners and had more in common with their fellow peasants than with the ruling elite. It was the Hutus that had risen to elite status (*kwi hutura*), through marriage, fealty, or control of land, who proved to have little in common with the masses that they exploited (Jefremovas, 1997, p. 96). These Hutus could essentially shed their Hutu roots and acquire Tutsi status⁷ as the categories of Hutu and Tutsi evolved over time. “There was a great deal more individual mobility and interchange than any static model of some collective ‘Rwandan past’ can account for...region was more important than royalty in defining identity, and ecology more influential than ethnicity in molding people’s lives” (Newbury & Newbury, 2000,

⁶ Kagame believes that Rwabugiri began his kingship in 1853, while other Rwandan historical authorities cite 1860 as his first year of administration. Refer to Table 1.

⁷ Though simplified, this is one justification for viewing Tutsi and Hutu as political and/or economic status, rather than separate ethnicities.

p. 840). However, this qualifying factor in economic identity disappeared under colonial authority.

The relationship of the king to the masses shifted as Rwabugiri centralized state and administrative control and solidified population divisions as European colonialism began. It is acknowledged that Rwabugiri was “good and generous to the people” (Pottier, 1986, p. 222) and even his granary was called *rutsindamapfa*, “conqueror of famine” (Smith, 1998, 744). However, there was also widespread resistance to the aggressive expansion of the Rwandan kingdom during his reign.

The intensification of conflict between Tutsi and Hutu during this period was due rather to the multiplication of aristocratic lineages, their violent competition for power at the expense of the monarchy, the expansion of cattle herds, and the adoption of American crops fostering population growth, which created land scarcity and enabled aristocrats to exploit the peasantry more ruthlessly. (Iliffe, 2007, p. 190)

It is not surprising that Rwabugiri is seen as the last legitimate Rwandan king, and it is his policies that the colonists would interpret as the establishment of Hutu and Tutsi class distinctions. German colonial authorities (assisted by anti-Tutsi uprising between two clans, the Abeega and the Abanyiginya) replaced Rwabugiri’s successor, Mibambwe Ruarindwa with Yuhi Musinga (Mamdani, 2001, pp. 70-1; Smith, 1998, pp. 744-5). In the face of their new king, Rwandans revolted. The illegitimacy of his rule was only compounded by the need of Germany authority and arms to suppress these uprisings.

Under Colonial Authority, 1895 – 1962

The Industrial Revolution and the onslaught of technological innovations in Europe during the 19th century sparked a lively debate among philosophers and social scientists regarding the existence and use of colonies. As many European countries sought cheap sources of labor in new colonial enterprises, the discussion centered on justifying this exploitation. How did the indigenous peoples fit into policies of expanding capitalist ventures and the liberal, bourgeois lifestyle? African peoples were viewed as a raw resource in dire need of refinement and civil-ization, treated as a cog in the vast industrial machine. Seeing as race science was “all the rage in Europe” at the time, creating a colonial bureaucracy based on racial ideologies was the easiest form of implementation and manipulation (Gourevitch, 2005, pp. 198). Through religion and science, European authorities would use both conventional and modern means to rationalize colonization.

Religious justification, dominantly through the Hamitic hypothesis, appealed to European morality of the day. Originating from the Judaic and Christian Old Testament, the story of Ham begins with an inebriated Noah lying naked and incapacitated. While Noah’s other sons averted their eyes from the scene, Ham did not. The myth follows that the descendants of Ham, full of sin for not acknowledging his father’s shame, were to become Negro Africans.

While Genesis says nothing about the descendants of Ham being black, the claim that they were cursed by being black first appeared in the oral traditions of the Jews when these were recorded in the sixth-century

Babylonian Talmud; that same myth depicts Ham as a sinful man and his progeny as degenerates. (Mamdani, 2001, pp. 80-1)

Ham, depicted as Caucasian, is considered the father of the peoples that moved into modern-day Egypt and Ethiopia;⁸ this group eventually migrated south to invade and conquer the land that was inhabited by Bantu tribes. Pre-colonial Rwandan history dictates this movement as that of the Tutsi; in correlation with finding available land for their grazing cattle they migrated into Hutu territory. The colonial classifications of Hutu and Tutsi are therefore rooted in the Hamitic hypothesis. In fact, the growing field of race science would provide deeper distinctions and racial undertones for the growing animosity between these groups, manipulating traditional distinctions of pastoral Tutsi and cultivating Hutu.

The history of the two groups mirrored the religious justification for their racial differences; because it was believed that Hamitic descendants were once Caucasian, or at least had closer ancestry to Europeans, Tutsi dominance was established in the eyes of the Germans and then Belgians.⁹ In fact, kings and leaders at the time of colonization were Tutsi, which only supported colonial claims of Tutsi superiority. Therefore, the “real” Africans were the Hutu, descendants of the migrating Bantu tribes and seen as the original inhabitants of the land. Langford (2005) comments:

This viewpoint...emanates, with its various religious, biological and cultural variants, from the writings of an English colonial explorer, John Speke, who came to Africa in search of the source of the River Nile. When he entered

⁸ Mahmood Mamdani delivers an extremely detailed account of the various versions and mutations of the Hamitic hypothesis in *When Victims Become Killers*, p. 76-87.

⁹ The Belgians gained control of the Rwandan territory as a result of German defeat in WWI.

the Great Lakes region, he was moved to make a comparison between the kingdoms of this region and those encountered on his previous visit to Somalia. From this comparison, there emerged the ‘theory’ of an aristocracy of pastoralists of Abyssinian origin falling within the wider colonialist vision that all traces or elements of civilisation in Africa were the result of external and non-indigenous people or influences. (p. 23)

Religious and scientific justification worked in conjunction to fully exhibit the black African as the “other.”

Although it began with German colonialism, the Belgians exacerbated scientific racism. Eugenics was supported by tangible evidence and not just religious or historical myth. Measurements of nose and torso length, forehead width, skull sizes, even average heights and bone structure, were calculated, recorded, and used as a determining factor in the categorization of Hutu and Tutsi for those whose familial lineage was unclear.¹⁰ Aside from the overt racist nature of such practices, by modern standards this “exact” science was untenable at best; generations of intermarriage and dominant/recessive genetics make it highly unlikely that either group had remarkably distinct features as to warrant such segregation. By forcing all of the Rwandans into a specific group, it created a “distinct internal homogeneity” in which the group would “reproduce itself from within itself” (Langford, 2005, p. 2). In addition to the 1926 institution of identity cards stating which ethnic category one belonged to,¹¹ all areas of daily life, including the school system and local administration, would reinforce the racial differences.

¹⁰ Erin Baines (2003) writes a compelling essay regarding these practices and the “body politics” of the genocide.

¹¹ Identity cards would not be eliminated from Rwandan life until after the genocide, 63 years later.

Colonial Practices of Forced Labor

With colonialism came a new form of European-styled bureaucratic administration. “Force was integral to the process of exploitation - particularly *forced labor*” (Mamdani, 2001, p. 95). The Belgians transformed the power structure in Rwanda with the ultimate goal of deflating the power of the monarchy and increasing the power of local chiefs who were more efficiently manipulated (furthermore, centralizing the power of the chiefs). Prior to colonization, the “trinity of chiefs” consisted of the *chief of pastures* (a Tutsi), the *chief of the land* (a Hutu), and the *chief of men* (usually a Tutsi) (Mamdani, 2005, p. 90). It was a system which had “served to protect the [Ba]hutu peasantry against undue exactions” (Lemarchand, 1970, pp. 119-20). However, Belgian administration unraveled the Rwandan system at its core. Animosity and distrust developed between the Hutu and Tutsi as colonists redirected support from one group to the other; Europeans attempted to play the Hutus and the Tutsis against one another, while subjecting both groups to an increasingly despotic state.

That is not to say, however, that the Rwandans were so easily manipulated. As Des Forges (1999) writes:

Rwandan officials were not helpless pawns but rather real players in the game of administrative reform. Politically astute, they understood how to evade the intent of European orders even while apparently conforming to them. Chiefs and sub-chiefs seemed to accept the reduction in numbers of officials, but in fact kept on using unofficial representatives out on the hills who continued living off the local people. As a result, the density of administration and consequent customary burdens on the people diminished

little, if at all, in the central part of the country, while in the north and southwest, they actually increased because of the installation of resident officials. At the same time, the chiefs and sub-chiefs—and later other administrative agents—enforced a series of wholly new demands imposed by the colonialists as part of their effort to integrate Rwanda into the world economy. They often found ways to turn these new requirements, such as building roads or planting cash crops, to their personal profit. (p. 33)

Yet, the majority (if not all) of these aforementioned positions belonged to the Tutsi. With the disparities in education and jobs in the colonial bureaucracy awarded to the Tutsi, the Hutus were consistently marginalized.¹²

In 1924, Belgian authorities reinstated Rwabugiri's *ubureetwa*, requiring that the Rwandans work for 42 days a year, though it was hardly a regular occurrence. There are reports that in some areas it was upwards of 142 days a year of forced labor (Mamdani, 2001, p. 97). This practice was required of Hutu only, and “more than any other, it testified to the existence of Tutsi privilege in colonial Rwanda and highlighted the social separation between the *petit* Tutsi and the average Hutu” (Mamdani, 2001, p. 98). Labor practices proved to be a significantly divisive element between these two groups, as it became the physical reinforcement of Tutsi superiority coupled with the consistent subjugation of the Hutu majority. How the colonial authorities perceived the Hutu and Tutsi, and the way in which they utilized and exploited these differences, created a

¹² Lemarchand (1994) states that “although [Burundi] shar[ed] a similar ethnic map – with Tutsi pastoralists said to represent approximately 14% of the total population, Hutu agriculturalists 85%, and Pygmoid Twa 1% -- only in Rwanda was Tutsi overrule highly institutionalized. Burundi society was characterized by greater complexity and fluidity, with power gravitating into the hands of a princely oligarchy (the so-called *ganwa*) whose identity was separate from that of either Hutu or Tutsi. Which helps explain why Burundi acceded to independence as yet untouched by the revolutionary upheavals during 1959-62 that brought the Hutu in Rwanda to power.” (p. 581)

relationship of oppression that would be the breeding ground for generations of animosity.

Over the following 30 years, the Hutu became restless and resentful towards both the colonial government and their Tutsi counterparts. “To consolidate the growing Hutu social movement towards ‘equality,’ Hutu intellectuals reproduced colonial histories of the ‘alien’ Tutsi and the ‘indigenous’ Hutu” (Baines, 2003, p. 481) reinforcing the idea that the Tutsi were “outsiders” who had migrated into Hutu land. The Hutus were politically and economically marginalized (Newbury, 1995, p. 12) and as their resentment began to transform into a growing social movement, the Belgian authorities shifted policies to favor the Hutu (including replacing *uburetwa* with taxation in 1949) (Mamdani, 2001, p. 116). Boudreaux (2009) notes, “these reforms may have been an attempt, on the part of the Belgians, to lessen ethnic tensions or it may have been a way to promote loyalty in a group that then might favor a continued Belgian presence in the country” (p. 3). Either way, the Tutsis resisted the change. Rather than embracing the principles of unified self-determination, as was the catalyst for many independence movements across the colonial world, Rwanda was a nation divided.

Tensions came to a head in 1959. A group of educated Hutu documented their intentions and beliefs in the Hutu Manifesto, a written presentation of the situation in Rwanda revolving around racial ideologies of Hutu superiority. The writers of the Manifesto created the Party of the Hutu Emancipation Movement (PARMEHUTU), a political party formalized on the notion of returning Rwanda to its “original” state, one in which the Hutu, as its first inhabitants and the majority of the population, were central to the leadership, governance, and future; a state which would be devoid of Tutsi. In

response, the Tutsi committed to maintaining their leadership through the continuation of the monarchy after independence, formed the Rwanda National Union (UNAR) party.

Langford (2005) notes that these two political parties:

...[and the] form of the post-colonial nation-state was, therefore, linked to the outcome of a struggle between two racial groups. This struggle was resolved through the ‘social revolution’ of November 1959, a ‘spontaneous’ Hutu uprising which expelled the Tutsi king, chiefs and administrative cadre from Rwanda, and situated the PARMEHUTU as the dominant representative of the Hutu people.” (p. 5)

Thousands of Tutsis fled the country, and the UNAR (later to become the Rwandan Patriotic Front, or RPF) were operating in exile. In the following four years, Rwanda would experience a state in flux coupled with great violence. The now ruling Hutu were determined to maintain their power, no matter the cost to the people or land.

***Umuganda* in the First and Second Republics, 1962-1985**

Under the auspices of establishing a nation-state in which the Hutu were political, socially, and economically more powerful than their Tutsi counterparts, independent Rwanda was born. Gregoire Kayibanda, the leader of the PARMEHUTU and the President of the Republic, was determined to maintain Hutu superiority at the expense of multi-partyism and ideological separation from the colonial state. For example, Kayibanda and the First Republic maintained the use of identity cards in order to assure a clear demarcation between those who were Hutu and those who were Tutsi; rather than

build a sense of Rwandan nationalism after independence, this continued division encouraged a new nation built on racial identity. “In this manner, the First Republic maintained an essential continuity with the previous colonial system through its racial demarcation of the people who composed its nation-state” (Vidal, 1995, pp. 16-17 as quoted in Langford, 2005, p. 6). All prospects of a multi-party democracy were gradually abolished as continued invasions from organized Tutsi refugees occurred through the 1960s. These invasions gave Kayibanda reason to peg the Tutsi as true “outsiders” and served to reinforce the idea of Hutus belonging to Rwanda, while the Tutsi were merely trying to force themselves upon the nation. Any indication of Tutsi entrance into the political system was perceived as an “invasion” into governance; therefore Rwanda was increasingly a de facto single-party state under the PARMEHUTU.

After independence, the rural peasantry did not see any drastic change in their daily lives. The Hutu elite began to enjoy the luxuries once only afforded to Tutsi and colonial authorities, yet the majority of the Rwandan peasantry remained impoverished. It was during this time that Kayibanda, the former head of Trafipro (a national coffee cooperative), began to institute coffee as “Rwanda’s major export and the primary source of foreign currency” (Kamola, 2007, p. 580). Kayibanda, a businessman from the southern region of Gitarama, concentrated his development efforts in his home region, supplying jobs and appointments based greatly on patronage and nepotism. This regionalism developed divisions within the PARMEHUTU. “Ironically, the Kayibanda regime faced growing criticism in the 1960s that it had not done enough to advance Hutu representation in civil society” (Mamdani, 2001, p. 135). These criticisms of both education and employment came from Hutu (predominately living in the northern regions

of the country) and posed as the basis for a successful coup d'état led by Kayibanda's cousin General Juvenal Habyarimana in 1973.

Habyarimana continued Kayibanda's development efforts by economically focusing agriculture on the production of coffee. One of the main differences between Kayibanda's administration and that of his successor was that Habyarimana understood the need to utilize all Rwandans as a work force. In order to do so, he would have to reclassify Tutsi to be a legally viable source of production.

The key change from the First to the Second Republic - a change that seems to have gone unnoticed by many an observer of Rwandan politics - was a shift in the political identity of the Tutsi from a race to an ethnic group. While the First Republic considered the Tutsi a 'race,' the Second Republic reconstructed the Tutsi as an 'ethnicity' and, therefore, a group *indigenous* to Rwanda...As a 'race' under the First Republic, the Tutsi had been confined to the civic sphere and barred from the political sphere; as an 'ethnicity' under the Second Republic, however, they were allowed participation in the political sphere, but limited to a scope said to befit their minority status. (Mamdani, 2001, p. 138)

Habyarimana's political party, Mouvement Revolutionnaire National pour le Developpement (MRND), became the political party of all Rwandan citizens. While the one-party state was an attempt to create a form of unity and nationalism among Rwandans, a quota system in which all state apparatus would be proportional to the population (89% Hutu, 10% Tutsi, and 1% Twa) maintained that the Hutu would remain firmly in control (Langford, 2005, p. 9-10).

Habyarimana made *umuganda* the centerpiece for Rwandan development. (Re)Established in 1974, *umuganda* made the peasantry responsible for ensuring Rwanda was an economically, self-sufficient nation. Rwanda was to serve as a role model for newly independent nations across the African continent, and the glorification of the peasantry under *umuganda* demonstrated their importance in this venture. Philip Verwimp (2000) discusses the stress Habyarimana placed on participation in manual labor, as well as the policies that were instituted to support and create growth among the labor force, which included the dissolution of any family planning programs — “more people means more peasants and thus a larger supply of labor” (p. 343). In addition, coercing all Rwandans to work achieved another aim — peasants felt triumphant as intellectuals were aptly humiliated and forced to join in with the manual laborers. Quelling dissent among the most educated through the implementation of *umuganda* reinforced then-current interpretations of “development ideology,” mainly that Rwanda was a poor rural society; in addition, keeping Rwandan intellectuals on the same playing field as their uneducated counterparts ensured that Habyarimana stayed in power (Boudreaux, 2009, p. 9).

The institution of *umuganda* maintained that the peasantry, Hutu and Tutsi alike, shared social and economic responsibility under the auspices of the MRND single-party state; as Habyarimana states in a 1973 speech, “one who refuses to work is harmful to society” (Langford, 2005, p. 10-11). While *umuganda* created a stable social order, three conditions emerged that would be contributing factors to the future development of the country: the refocus of a monetized economy towards a physical labor system, the

promotion of nationalism and inclusion (though within the ethnic delineations of their group), and efficient mobilization of the population.

First, as the economy refocused away from the “monetization” that occurred under colonialism it moved towards a rudimentary system based on physical and tangible labor. Although a self-proclaimed champion of the peasantry, Habyarimana was fearful of slums and encouraged civilians to take up residence in the highlands on their own farms, rather than migrate towards the major city centers. In addition, *umuganda* promoted nationalism through a “return to ancestral values” and to “engage one’s self” in working towards the collective good (Verwimp, 2000, p. 345). If people were living in relative isolation, then mandatory labor would provide an opportunity for community and the promotion of Rwandan identity.

Finally, *umuganda* became a way to efficiently mobilize the peasantry. A call to work was ingrained in the habitual actions of each Rwandan citizen. This became exceptionally important during the genocide as the peasants were called to kill their neighbors, to contribute to *umuganda*, and work towards the collective good of ridding Rwanda of the Tutsi and any Hutu dissidents.

The main focus of the economy under the Habyarimana regime was coffee production, although *umuganda* was also utilized to build infrastructure, including roads, schools, and hospitals. Coffee, its high international demand combined with the fertility of Rwandan soil, became the focus of agricultural production across the country. Rwanda gained the ability to compete fairly with large coffee-producing nations in the worldwide market as a formal member of the International Coffee Organization (ICO) established in 1962. However, the production quotas established by the ICO resulted in a

growing environmental crisis for the country. Kamola (2007) notes, “quotas locked many African countries into small, inflexible market shares during a period of increased international demand” (p. 581). The ability of Rwandans to produce coffee under the auspices of *umuganda*, in addition to high international demand, resulted in an increased GDP under the Habyarimana regime.¹³

However, while the majority of land was being designated for coffee production, less was being used to produce food; the stress on the land was severe considering the Rwandan population was growing at an exponential rate. When the coffee economy collapsed in the 1980s, Rwandans were left in an acute and life-threatening situation; this economic vulnerability of the Rwandan peasantry allowed the Habyarimana regime to tighten its control and set the stage for genocide.

Collapse of the Economy

The collapse of global coffee prices, famine (resulting from years of environmental degradation), and the required implementation of a Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) by international aid organizations further enforced anti-Tutsi rhetoric stemming from the Habyarimana administration. Initially, Habyarimana’s forced implementation of *umuganda* made important achievements, such as “the development of infrastructure (roads in particular), in the expansion of schools and health centers, in reforestation programs, and in attempts to promote increased agricultural production”

¹³ See Table 3 on p. 44

(Newbury, 2005, p. 14). However, this initial success would soon become the by-product of a global economic crisis due to a number of factors:

...First, Rwanda was heavily dependent on export revenue from the sale of coffee and tea and the prices for both commodities fell sharply during this period. [In addition,] ‘coffee export receipts fell from \$144 mio (*sec*) in 1985 (an exceptionally good year) to \$30 mio (*sec*) in 1993.’ Second, after 1990, the government diverted its limited resources to the war effort, fighting the invading Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)...Habyarimana diverted upwards of 40 percent of the national budget to military purposes between 1990 and 1994. And third, in 1990 the government agreed to a structural adjustment program that led to 40 percent currency devaluation, higher prices, higher taxes, and increased fees for a variety of services (education, health, etc.). (Uvin, 1997, p. 106; Cannon, 2005, p. 6, as quoted in Boudreaux, 2009, p. 4)

The history of the peasantry and the use of *umuganda* are directly related to the (over)use of land and environmental degradation that occurred during the 1970s and 1980s, as forced labor coincides with environmental practices (Newbury & Newbury, 2000, p. 870). The colonial policies of treating the land as small, separate spaces rather than in one large ecological context were transferred into post-colonial human-environment interactions. For example, “burning the fields was outlawed, complicating the maintenance of pasturage. Reforestation entailed planting eucalyptus trees...[which] were deleterious to the productive system...the toxicity of their roots makes them unsuitable for intercropping” (Newbury & Newbury, 2000, p. 871). Since decades of soil

degradation made much of the Rwandan countryside unsuitable for sustaining a variety of agriculture, people turned to the steep slopes to plant their crops, cattle were scarce, and “mobility was reduced so that people no longer had access to valley or forest resources” (Newbury & Newbury, 2000, p. 871).

To further compound the agricultural situation, Habyarimana’s resistance to any implementation of family planning resulted in a surge in the Rwandan population. Under the auspices of his pro-peasant ideology, deregulating birth control meant that there would be more workers for, and therefore more production of, collective works projects. In retrospect, “these policies were in fact virulently anti-peasant...Rwandan women had the highest birthrate in the world...[and] from the perspective of the dictator, people are production forces, which are used to produce coffee and to supply labor to ‘collective works’ (*umuganda*)” (Verwimp, 2000, pp. 341-343). Verwimp (2000) notes that Habyarimana publicly recognized the population issue facing Rwanda, though he had a tendency to blame over-population and the ensuing famine in the late 1980s on the Tutsi, all which reinforced “the message [that] Rwanda had space for only one ethnic group” (p. 344). *Umuganda* allowed the leaders to profit while the peasantry became paupers (Bezy, 1990 as quoted in Smith, 1998, p. 746). In fact, many scholars consider ecological resource scarcity coupled with one of the highest population growth rates a root cause of the genocide; “Rwanda is often considered a perfect example of this hard Malthusian argument” (Uvin, 2001, p. 82).

The global economic crisis of the late 1970s hit the developing world especially hard. International aid organizations, such as the World Bank, created an “array of small-farmer and community-level projects” that proved to be unsuccessful (Bates, 2008, p.

113). In examining the failure, the World Bank laid the foundation for future Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) that would be implemented throughout much of the developing world. Bates (2008) notes:

In its famed “Berg Report,” the Bank documented the tendency of Africa’s governments to adopt policies that distorted market prices and undermined economic incentives and so crippled growth and development. In addition to being a financier of projects, the World Bank then became an advisor to governments...Sectoral programs soon gave way to country programs and to conditionality, as the Bank sought to strengthen further its leverage over policymakers in debtor nations and to sharpen the incentives for policy reform. (p. 114-115)

As a way to hold government officials accountable for instituting these policy reforms, an addendum to financial aid would require African leaders to take steps towards multi-partyism, usually in the form of open elections.

The plummet of global coffee prices in the late 1980s (dropping by roughly 50%), forced income to fall from “\$144 million in 1985 to \$30 million in 1993;” not only was the average coffee farmer negatively affected by the decrease in exports but also by the “sharp devaluation of Rwandan currency” following the implementation of the SAP in 1990 (Mamdani, 2001, pp. 147-8). The World Bank regarded the failures to eliminate coffee subsidies and reduce the budget deficit as breaking the contractual agreement so they “refused to provide the second tranche of structural adjustment credit” (Mamdani, 2001, p. 148). Economically, the Rwandan government was already in dire straits;

however, the political situation would further erode any development efforts over the course of the next four years.

The SAP design for Rwanda included a number of stipulations that would theoretically decrease the influence of the MRND and encourage the development of a multi-party system.

This programme entailed the removal of MRND one-party state control over the economy (abolition of taxation, tariffs, and quantitative restrictions on international commerce, reduction of state spending and privatization of state enterprises) coupled with devaluation of the national currency. It was to be combined with a marked contraction of both personnel employed by the state and of revenues available to the state. (Langford, 2005, p. 24)

However, the invasion of the Rwandan Patriotic Front in October of 1990 “enabled the MRND one-party state to discard its previous discourse of development and to present the reassertion of its authority in an overtly racial discourse in which the state was represented as a Hutu state threatened by internal and external enemies” (Langford, 2005, p. 11).

The RPF were heavily outnumbered within the first week of invasion after the sudden death of their leader, Fred Rwigema. They retreated back across the border into Uganda to regroup. For Rwandans, the invasion resulted in heavy, long-term increases in military spending as the MRND and government forces prepared for any future onslaught (Marysse, *et al.*, 1994, p. 36). Shortly thereafter, in yet another violation of the SAP agreement, the Habyarimana regime began to accept aid directly from Belgium and France. The MRND would forgo any move towards multi-partyism by further

consolidating its control and this unintended consequence meant the end of any hope for international diplomatic aid.

Contrary to the assumption that all the Rwandan peasantry unquestionably obeyed government elites, there were a number of resistance movements, both organized and unorganized, that developed in the early 1990s across the countryside. Smith (1998) comments, “in the period from 1989 to 1993, the state had much to fear” (p. 746). One calculated act of resistance towards the current economic and political climate came in the form of 300,000 burned coffee trees (Pottier & Nkundabashaka, 1991, p. 151), of which many were planted by *umuganda* (Longman, 1995, p. 19). In fact, the resistance movements had become so widespread that even “*umuganda* and political animations became passé, simply because people refused to participate any longer” (Smith, 1998, p. 746). The refusal to participate in *umuganda* is significant, primarily because first, it is the ultimate rejection of the economic and government system under Habyarimana and second, an exercise in the only effective threat that the Rwandan peasantry could harbor against the administration.

The consequences of prolonged social and economic tensions were also impacted by the waves of refugees that crossed over Rwandan borders, both coming and going, from the late 1950s through the early 1990s. There were three major periods of exodus for Rwandan Tutsis: 1959-1961, 1963-1964, and 1973; the first came after the revolution, the second was “triggered by the repression that followed each major *inyenzi* attempts to restore Tutsi power through armed attacks,” and the third as a result of the internal political crisis and the transition from the First to Second Republic (Mamdani, 2001, p. 160). General estimations place between 400,000 and 600,000 Tutsi refugees in

neighboring countries during this period of time (Human Rights Watch, 1994, p. 8). Refugee status remained in flux in most neighboring countries; changing laws and legislation regarding who was considered to be an official refugee forced many into vulnerable situations, including displacement, deportation, and the onslaught of xenophobic attacks from local civilians.

The planning of genocide occurred before April of 1994; organized, state-sponsored massacres of Tutsi in 1990 and 1991 were the answer to Habyarimana's problem of civil unrest. The invasion of the RPF caused much disorder and rebellion — the MRND needed to restore its authority:

In the northern communes...[there were] localized massacres of the Tutsi population (October 1990, Kibilira and Mutara; January 1991, Bagogwe region). The importance of these massacres rests upon the manner in which they were organized and directed by local officials of the MRND...Although these massacres were carried out in the context of continuing conflict with the RPF in the northern prefectures, they demonstrated the capacity of the MRND to direct, and for its local officials to implement, a programme of killings. (Langford, 2005, p. 12)

The ability to efficiently practice the mobilization of citizens is the rationale for these massacres prior to the genocide. Mamdani (2001) notes “the civilian Hutu population was urged and organized to defend itself against an expected massacre by the RPF and its civilian collaborators” (p. 192). In fact, many scholars suggest that the structural organization for the genocide was well in place as early as 1992:

It involved four distinctive levels of activity or sets of actors: (a) the *akazu* (“little house” in Kinyarwanda), that is the core group, consisting of Habyarimana’s immediate entourage, i.e. his wife (Agathe), his three brothers-in-law (Protee Zigiranyirazo, Seraphin Rwabukumba and Elie Sagatwa), and a sprinkling of trusted advisors (most notably Joseph Nzirorera, Laurent Serubuga and Ildephonse Gashumba); (b) the rural organizers, numbering anywhere from two to three hundred, drawn from the communal and prefectural cadres; (c) the militias (*interahamwe*), estimated at 30,000, forming the ground-level operatives in charge of doing the actual killing; (d) the presidential guard, recruited exclusively among northerners, and trained with a view to providing auxiliary slaughterhouse support to civilian death squads. (Lemarchand, 1995, 10)

The Use of *Umuganda* in the Genocide

The genocide began on April 7, 1994, the day after President Habyarimana’s plane was shot down while returning from peace talks with the RPF in neighboring Arusha, Tanzania. The Arusha Accords were an attempt to develop a system of power sharing within the Rwandan government between the MRND and the RPF, or symbolically, between the Hutu and the Tutsi. Lemarchand (1995) remarks:

...the RPF would have a total of five cabinet seats out of a total of 21, and eleven seats in the transitional national assembly out of a total of 70, putting it on par with the ruling MRND. Compromise, likewise, was the

name of the game in the restructuring of the armed forces: 40 per cent of the troops and 50 per cent of the officer corps would consist of RPF elements. (p. 9)

Following the aforementioned localized massacres, the genocide was to ensure that there would be no compromise or power sharing with the RPF, or the Tutsi in general.

Amid chaos and confusion, the plane crash was blamed on the RPF and Tutsi forces both within and outside of Rwanda. While current scholarship reports that Hutu extremists are most likely responsible for the assassination of the President, Radio Rwanda and the independently owned Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines (RTL) implicated the Tutsi *inyenzi* as the culprits. Radio was an extremely effective communication medium for the rapid implementation of genocide; “hate media” and the publication of the Ten Hutu Commandments after the first RPF invasion solidified and reinforced Hutu extremism.

Invoking a sense of biblical duty, the Ten Hutu Commandments were repeatedly broadcast across the nationally-sponsored Radio Rwanda and extremist RTL:

1. Every Muhutu should know that a Mututsi woman, wherever she is, works for the interest of her Tutsi ethnic group. As a result, we shall consider a traitor any Muhutu who:
 - marries a Tutsi woman,
 - befriends a Tutsi woman,
 - employs a Tutsi woman as a secretary or a concubine.
2. Every Muhutu should know that our Hutu daughters are more suitable and conscientious in their role as woman, wife and mother of the family. Are they not beautiful, good secretaries and more honest?
3. Bahutu women, be vigilant and try to bring your husbands, brothers and sons back to reason.
4. Every Muhutu should know that every Mututsi is dishonest in business. His only aim is the supremacy of his ethnic group. As a result, any Muhutu who does the following is a traitor:
 - makes a partnership with Batutsi in business,

- invests his money or the government's money in a Tutsi enterprise,
 - lends or borrows money for a Mututsi, gives favours to Batutsi in business (obtaining import licences, bank loans, construction sites, public markets...).
5. All strategic positions, political, administrative, economic, and military and security should be entrusted to Bahutu.
 6. The education sector (school pupils, students, teachers) must be majority Bahutu.
 7. The Rwandese Armed Forces should be exclusively Hutu. The experience of the October [1990] war has taught us a lesson. No member of the military shall marry a Tutsi.
 8. The Bahutu should stop having mercy on the Batutsi.
 9. The Bahutu, wherever they are, must have unity and solidarity, and be concerned with the fate of their Hutu brothers.
 - The Bahutu inside and outside Rwanda must constantly look for friends and allies for the Hutu cause, starting with their Bantu brothers;
 - They must constantly counteract the Tutsi propaganda;
 - The Bahutu must be firm and vigilant against their common Tutsi enemy.
 10. The Social Revolution of 1959, the Referendum of 1961, and the Hutu Ideology, must be taught to every Muhutu at every level. Every Hutu must spread this ideology widely. Any Muhutu who persecutes his brother Muhutu for having read, spread and taught this ideology, is a traitor. (Munyaneza, 1999, 37)

Through the use of radio, the invocation of *umuganda*, and the euphemism of “work” incited killings: family members, neighbors, average, non-militant people committed murder. Li (2007) states, “ RTLM’s notorious use of ‘work’ as a euphemism (with machetes as ‘tools’) needs to be understood in the context of development, with participation (manning roadblocks, taking part in night patrols, conducting house searches, clearing fields) being likened to *umuganda* on a number of occasions” (p. 96).

This overt use of “existing discourses of development” played into the collective conscious of national survival — the Tutsis must be eradicated in order to further progress Rwanda economically, politically, and socially (Li, 2007, in Thompson, 2007, p. 96). The mass exile of Tutsis since independence allowed for prejudice to increase

developmentally. Radio often manipulated already engrained fears regarding the return of these refugees: one broadcast stated, “When you kill the rat do not let the pregnant one escape...We made the mistake thirty years ago of letting them flee into exile, this time none will escape” (Isbister, 1998, p. 133).

As discussed, it is problematic to assume that all Rwandan citizens are open to manipulation; yet, one must not underestimate the influence of radio as the primary source of communication to citizens nor how it impacted a strictly programmed and scheduled population:

In contemplating the question of obedience in the genocide, it is important to note that the capture and mobilization of state resources by its orchestrators mirrored a gradual appropriation of the cornerstones of collective life for the purposes of the killing. The genocide extended beyond bureaucracies to other everyday routines and contexts...Radio, which bookends and punctuates the daily routine of many ordinary Rwandans, continued to do so during the genocide. RTL M did not simply whip Hutu into a frenzy to channel fear and anger into sudden attacks. Rather, through the daily diet of informational updates, operational details (not to leave bodies on the road in view of Western journalists, for example), and encouraging monologues, it contributed to the framing of schedules and the routinization of “work.” (Li, 2004, p. 20)

The discourse of Rwandan history and development, steeped in collective action, was exploited. As Li (2004) comments, “active participation in the genocide [was] broader than simple hatred or fear [because of] the context in which euphemisms such as ‘work’

and ‘cockroaches’ could be easily understood” (p. 13). Young people, the target audience for the independent RTL, believed that in killing Tutsis and Hutu dissidents, they were working for the development of the country. The glorification of the peasantry created the foundations of a killing force, generated and enforced by young Hutu militants (*Interahamwe*) eager to contribute. “Chilling broadcasts invited listeners to join in the killing, as if this were an appeal to patriotism: ‘The grave is only half-full. Who will help us fill it?’ (Mamdani, 2001, p. 212). The use of radio to incite genocide as an act of *umuganda* reinforced an already established organizational structure for mass murder; during the 1980s, the MRND made a number of decisions regarding *umuganda* that directly relates to the organization of the genocide, in which Verwimp (2000) has chronicled in Table 2.

Table 2

Comparison of decisions regarding Umuganda

A) Decisions of November 12, 1982	Organization of the genocide
1. Members of the National Umuganda Commission: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The secretary-general of the MRND (President) - Ministry of Planning - Ministry of Public Works - Ministry of Agriculture - Ministry of the Interior - Vice President of the CND - Secretary-general of the Chamber of Commerce 	1. The highest authorities of the country including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The President - President and secretary-general of the MRND - All MRND ministers and important army officers together with the brothers of Habyarimana organize genocide in Rwanda from 1990 to 1994
2. At the level of the prefecture, a Commission in charge of Umuganda composed of MRND officials is installed	2. MRND officials given orders to execute massacres in the 1990-1994 period. They lead the population in the execution of the genocide
3. Rehabilitation of manual labor and	3. National and local officials use the word

obligatory nature of Umuganda	Umuganda to describe the killing
4. Local officials have to feel concerned about the political weight of the Umuganda institution, serve as an example and manage the population	4. The population should act like one person to destroy the forces of evil
5. One should allocate the task in a proportional way in order to appreciate the work of each group objectively	5. Individuals are forced to kill, implicate most Hutu in the killing. Refusal to kill is a death warrant
6. For the Communal Works of Development, each participant must bring his own equipment. Only heavy or collective material will be given by the Cell	6. Machetes, an agricultural tool most Rwandans own, is the main instrument used in the killing. Firearms are used by officials in case of resistance
7. Accumulation of unfinished projects or not useful projects must be avoided Umuganda projects have to be harmonized with national programs	7. Propaganda calls upon peasants to finish the project, meaning that nobody should escape
8. The militants must be informed on the results of the Communal Works for Development, the destination of the products of the harvest and on the evolution of Umuganda in other parts of the country	8. Members of the genocidal government tell peasants not to hesitate to kill because killing is already going on in the rest of the country
B) Decisions of June 27, 1984	Organization of the genocide
1. Decision the hours of work for Umuganda and on the radio broadcasting for Umuganda	1. At public meetings and on the radio, government officials incite the Hutu population to do a special Umuganda
2. Umuganda will take seven hours starting from the place of work	2. Genocidal government decides who shall be killed first and who next
3. The official responsible for Umuganda at the level of the Cell will decide when Umuganda finishes, but one should not leave the place before 10 o'clock	3. Local officials determine the start and the end of the killing. <i>Interahamwe</i> ("those who work together") kill day and night
4. In order to strengthen the sensitization for Mille Umuganda, the Central Committee has decided that Radio Rwanda will provide broadcasting on Umuganda and animation	4. Radio Rwanda and Radio Collines provide false information on the RPF and incite killing
C) Decisions of April 10, 1986	Organization of the genocide
1. A price of 1,000,000 FRW will be given to the Commune ranked first in the Umuganda activities. This price will be inscribed on the	1. Various incentives used to implicate people in the killing, from giving free beer, the chance to loot the house of the killed person, to extract

budget of the MRND presidency	cash from victims and grab a plot of land
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Source: Verwimp, 2000, pp. 352-353

With its roots in the creation of a stable social order in order to enforce the importance of the Rwandan peasantry, *umuganda* was utilized and exploited in the efficient mobilization of these very same peasants to commit acts of genocide. The structural development of the MRND's genocide machine helps to dismantle one prominent ideology of the Rwandan peasantry — they are psychologically pre-dispositioned to obedience, so if they are ordered to kill, they kill. “The obedience explanation is very popular because it nicely complements the popular elite manipulation model,” Uvin (2001, p. 84) notes. Ultimately, this dynamic demonstrates that the leaders, rather than the followers, are guilty.

Placing the ultimate blame on those in charge also helps to explain the role of reluctant Hutus, of which there were many. Punishments, “ranging in severity from the destruction of personal property to incarceration and death” were broadcast over RTLM and “communicated repeatedly in consciousness-raising meetings, speeches, songs, and slogans, all couched in terms of a communal or national duty” (Bhavnani, 2006, p. 666). It is this national duty, coupled with the threats of punishment that drive mass participation. The blanket assumption that all Rwandans are merely obedient ignores the methodical organization and influence of the elite and dilutes the blame onto each individual citizen. However, incorporating the institutionalization of *umuganda* supports the theory of elite manipulation, while dismissing the assumption that every Rwandan is merely subservient.

The Role of *Umuganda* in Post-Genocide Development

Following the genocide that left close to 800,000 people dead, Rwanda was destroyed; infrastructure was burned to the ground amongst piles of corpses that clogged waterways and were haphazardly thrown into mass burials. The RPF defeated the MRND in July, just three months after Habyarimana's plane was shot down. General Paul Kagame, complete with a British education and U.S. military training, understood that "given the state of the nation's distribution and transportation networks...infrastructural development" was one of the first points of rebuilding (Ryan, 2010, p. 14). Once again, *umuganda* would become the center of state development planning.

It was important for Rwanda to move towards building a sustainable future after the initial reliance on humanitarian aid in the years following the genocide. *Vision 2020* became the government's first major development planning document and continually emphasized the role of the peasants and *umuganda*. The main goals included:

1. Reconstruction of the nation and its social capital anchored on good governance, underpinned by a capable state;
2. Transformation of agriculture into a productive, high value, market oriented sector, with forward linkages to other sectors;
3. Development of an efficient private sector spearheaded by competitiveness and entrepreneurship;
4. Comprehensive human resources development, encompassing education, health, and ICT skills aimed at public sector, private sector and civil society. To be integrated with demographic, health and gender issues;
5. Infrastructural development, entailing improved transport links, energy and water supplies and ICT networks;
6. Promotion of regional economic integration and cooperation. (MINECOFIN, 2000, pp. 4-5)

Referred to as the Six Pillars, the goals of *Vision 2020* placed much importance on the cooperation of all Rwandan citizens in post-genocide development. Collaborative work environments could help to ease collective memory and promote social and political inclusion while also generating economic prosperity. In the promotion of a knowledge-based economy, heralded as “the most important engine” of Rwanda’s economic machine, *Vision 2020* points to the use of *umuganda* and the “plentiful supply of cheap labour...making it easy to build infrastructure” (MINECOFIN, 2000, p. 9). The orchestration of *umuganda* would be initiated by government elites in the early stages of development, though the IMF (2000) notes in their Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, “the tradition of *umuganda*, community labour, needs to evolve from a top-down to a participatory mode in which communities take responsibility for the provision and maintenance of those local public goods which the state cannot finance” (p. 9). For example, Rwanda faced major environmental challenges in the late 1990’s; deforestation and soil erosion left the countryside and agricultural cultivation at serious risk. In 2000, the Rwandan government “launched a program of afforestation under which 65,000 hectares of forest [were] to be planted. About 80% of the costs are to be covered by *umuganda*” (IMF, 2000, pp. 27-28). *Umuganda* would not just rebuild the infrastructure and economy, but it would continually provide opportunities for interaction with both the state and fellow citizens:

At the local government level, the key issue is of building trust and tolerance among and between individual citizens, ensuring greater empowerment and participation of citizens who are recovering from a legacy of no or partial participation in decision making and constrained

access to services. Activities suggested include sensitising and training all district, sector, cell & *umudugudu* leaders about unity and reconciliation, empowering districts to set up clear guidelines and principles for employment, recruitment and access to services; setting up unity clubs in all districts; facilitating the use of *umuganda* to discuss progress and constraints to achieving unity and reconciliation. (MINECOFIN, 2000, p. 87)

According to government and international organization documents, the purpose of (re)implementing *umuganda* can be deconstructed to exemplify the significance of promoting inclusion through the rebuilding of infrastructure. The citizenry will reconnect to the state and one another by being a part of the development process; however, there are a number of questions that this policy strategy poses: can it be demonstrated that *umuganda* promotes social, political, and economic inclusion and development? Are these three areas of rebuilding independent or interdependent on one another? According to the World Bank Development Indicators (2011), Rwanda has made improvements in several areas since 2000: Gross Domestic Product has quadrupled (\$1.74 billion in 2000 to \$5.63 billion in 2010), infant mortality rate has nearly been cut in half (105.7 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2000 to 59.1 in 2010), and the percentage of children who complete primary school has doubled (22% completion rate in 2000 to 54% completion rate in 2010).

It is evident that by building a sustainable economic system immersed in the world market, Rwanda is getting closer to one of the government's primary goals —

freedom from foreign aid. If looking at the growth of GDP alone, the implementation of *umuganda* has a direct impact, as demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3

Gross Domestic Product, Rwanda, 1960-2010



Source: World Bank Development Indicators, 2011, <http://data.worldbank.org/data-catalog/world-development-indicators>

When Habyarimana touted *umuganda* as central to the development plans instituted in 1974, the national GDP rose steadily from \$309 million to \$2.6 billion in 1990, before the implementation of SAPs and internal political conflicts adversely affected the whole of the Rwandan economy. Similarly, using *umuganda* as the primary source of labor for the rebuilding of infrastructure in post-genocide Rwanda, the growth rate has been impressive.

However, hindsight demonstrates that GDP cannot be the sole indication of sustainability. There are (at least) three different measures of “development:” economic growth, political development, and human development; GDP speaks solely to economic

growth but fails to measure other important activities, such as “the construction of democratic institutions, the establishment of a performing banking system, the rule of law and an independent judicial system, a free press, and access to health care and education” (Verwimp, 2000, p. 329).

If we can assume, based on GDP alone, *umuganda* is encouraging economic growth, how does it fare in other areas of development, namely human and political? There is an obvious poetic notion in the concept of Rwandans, of all ages, socioeconomic, and political status, working collectively one Saturday a month to rebuild the nation’s infrastructure; side-by-side constructing roads, schools, and hospitals while leaving the ethnic distinctions of Hutu and Tutsi presumably in the past (enforced through the illegality of these terms).¹⁴ However, scholarship is divided as to the level of direct impact that *umuganda* has on social and political progress. Verwimp (2000) suggests that dictators like economic growth as it “gives them more resources to satisfy the elite’s desire for consumption...thereby increasing the dictator’s power” (p. 333). Based on this, current use of *umuganda* can be viewed a political maneuver to solidify the elite’s control of the peasants, much in the same way it was utilized under the Habyarimana administration.

Umuganda can serve as ideal venue for the state to communicate with its citizens and implement other development goals. One such example is family planning. As Africa’s most densely populated country, Rwanda is considered to be a quintessential Malthusian dilemma. An unregulated population will negatively result in environmental degradation, and therefore, famine, disease, and war. Legitimately, the Rwandan government is wary

¹⁴ There are controversies surrounding the ability to be exempt from *umuganda*, especially if you are a member of the political elite.

of an expanding youth bulge — in order to potentially avoid problems of the past, the young men (and women) of the country need to be kept occupied and incorporated into the economic system.

One key difference between the use of *umuganda* under the Habyarimana regime and that of the Kagame administration is the regulation and institution of family planning practices. As noted earlier, in his glorification of the peasantry, Habyarimana ignored the implementation of any forms of population control. More people meant more labor, which in turn, meant more production and wealth. Yet, uncontrolled population growth has had devastating consequences that Rwandans are currently confronting.

In comparison, the contemporary implementation of *umuganda* may be no different than how citizens, women specifically, were exploited as the main contributors to the Rwandan labor force for many decades. According to Baines (2003), “the state, community, and family were highly dependent upon women to carry out free labour, and to reproduce the population. Social control was maintained by regulating sexuality, in addition to denial of basic citizenship rights — such as land ownership” (483). Though “regulating sexuality” is one aspect of the government control, it serves as an interesting vignette to the family planning conversation. Rwanda’s population has doubled since the genocide, 5.8 million people in 1995 and 10.6 million in 2010 (World Bank, 2011). Family planning initiatives are an integral part of development, however, not an easy task. Anicet Nzabonimpa, Family Planning and HIV Integration Coordinator for Rwanda’s Ministry of Health, stated, “It was very difficult to talk about family planning after the genocide...people wanted to replace those who died” (Rosen, 2010).

There are multiple efforts to keep Rwandans from perpetually reproducing, including condom distribution and education and the implementation of the Standard Days Method, a system in which Rwanda women and their partner are able to keep track of her fertile window using CycleBeads, a hand-held system of beads and rings. According to Blair, Sinai, Mukabatsinda & Muramutsa (2007):

The woman or her partner move a black ring along their CycleBeads daily, one bead each day. The position of the ring...conveys whether the woman is in her fertile window (days 8-19 of the cycle). When the band is on a white bead (representing a fertile day) the couple avoids unprotected intercourse to prevent pregnancy. They can use a barrier method or abstain from intercourse on these days...the majority of respondents, male and female, found that CycleBeads were easy to use and interpret. (64)

The instruction and discussion regarding family planning education initiatives takes place in the communal meetings following *umuganda*, since it is regarded as the primary time in which to speak to the whole community (national and local) regarding additional projects of development. Other methods of communication, namely the media, are intensely regulated by the current Rwandan administration given the role of independent radio and newspapers in inciting the genocide. In essence, *umuganda* serves multiple ends; there are the tangible products that result from physical labor (infrastructure) and there are the intangible products that are the result of using *umuganda* as a means for the government to share information with all of the public. It can be determined that the state is benefiting from *umuganda*, though scholarship is divided on the positive impact for the citizenry.

According to the Rwandan government, *umuganda* has been successfully incorporated into the Rwandan development scheme; in order to stimulate the economy and create sustainable (in) tangible infrastructure, *umuganda* is considered essential. President Kagame (2011) commented:

The way to avoid dependency and indignity is for Rwandans to value work, to work together, as is the practice with *umuganda*, and to do the right thing, including planting trees, productive agriculture, building schools for Rwandan children, subscribing to community health insurance...and to promote commerce and business in order to generate wealth. (The New Times)

The direct impact of *umuganda*'s role in Rwandan political development remains to be clear. Fisley (1998) states, "the idea that social hatreds and inclusions arise and fall historically in conditions where political power is consolidated and deployed," therefore inclusion in "Rwanda civil society rests...on political will" (p. 17). The "political will" can come in the form of public participation in the democratic system or it could be the implementation of a development dictatorship.

There is an increase in research suggesting "semi-democracies are most likely to erupt into violence — certainly more likely than both authoritarian regimes and established democracies"¹⁵ (Uvin, 2001, 93). The current state of Rwanda's political climate is seemingly stable, though poverty, unemployment, and its sizable population make Rwanda susceptible to these possible "eruptions" that Uvin speaks of. It can be

¹⁵ Uvin (2001) also suggests that the Rwandan genocide was a product of international pressure to democratize under the auspices of SAPs in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

argued that, in theory, *umuganda* plays an integral role in creating participation and inclusion in a democratic state. Ideally, *umuganda* would provide an avenue in which members of the local community, under the guise of the national one, collectively discuss the state of their union. This collaboration would serve as an integral foundation for the democratic system at the grassroots level; citizens would be involved in the decision-making process choosing *umuganda* projects that are specific to their community needs. Research into the impact of *umuganda* in the democratic process is minimal, though one field study regarding the Rwandan inter-organizational development network suggests that *umuganda* is not serving the needs of the peasants, and in fact, structurally resembles the *umuganda* of previous administrations. Although, “*umuganda* projects are often generated by residents’ demands/feedback,” typically “project-related *umuganda* activities seemingly flow from the top-down, as national leaders set development targets that trickle down to *umudugudu* [community]” (Ryan, 2010, pp. 21-22). Projects are chosen by bureaucratic officials who attempt to balance the available resources and goals of President Kagame’s development plans with local demand. Ryan (2010) suggests “that peasants have limited input into the selection of *umuganda* projects” yet it serves as “a source of inspiration for young leaders, including many college students” (pp. 23-24). The extent to which *umuganda* is truly serving the needs of the peasants while also providing democratic inclusion in increasing economic development requires further research.

Concluding Remarks

On one hand, *umuganda* is no more than a system in which to exploit peasant labor and highlight the frustrations of the young men who were the “most vulnerable to the kind of ethnic appeals that led to genocide” in the first place (Uvin, 1998, p. 137). Yet, in comparison, it is a “tradition that served as a driving force for positive change...based on the idea that every individual must contribute to and feel responsible for the community’s well being” (Agbor, 2011). President Kagame recognizes how some Rwandans do not feel that *umuganda* is serving their direct interests noting:

I have yet to understand this — all our children are in school, we care for the health of all Rwandans and are working for their welfare, for food security, good nutrition; providing access to new technology, including computers for our school children so they can communicate with whomever they want and Rwandans can access all the information they want; Rwandans choose the leaders they want to work with; we do everything to promote citizens’ development. But after listing all this, the conclusion of some is that Rwandans don’t have space to express themselves. (The New Times, 2011)

Regardless, the role *umuganda* plays in Rwandan economic and political development is deliberate and indicative of how integral the peasantry is to rebuilding efforts. Rwandans are collectively cooperating in the physical labor of constructing their nation by utilizing the same ritual that laid the foundation for mass participation in the genocide.

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Appendix

Glossary of Kinyarwanda Terms

akazu – small house, hut

ganwa – royal, elite social class

Imana – God

interahamwe – those who attack together

Interahamwe – Hutu youth militia that was perpetrator in 1994 genocide

inyenzi – cockroach

kwihutura – to cease being a Hutu, by gaining wealth in pre-colonial Rwanda

mwami – king

rutsindamapfa – royal granary

ubuhake – traditional contract of cattle loaning

ubureetwa – traditional feudal land distribution system based on labor

umuheto – bow; military service

umudugudu – collection of homes, the smallest administrative grouping

umuganda – communal work, national service