

THE BEAUTIFUL COCKROACH: HOW HUTU POWER IDEOLOGY NORMALIZED VIOLENCE AGAINST TUTSI WOMEN DURING THE 1994 RWANDAN GENOCIDE

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Rwanda's 1994 genocide was not the country's first case of ethnic violence during the twentieth century, as similar tensions erupted in the early 1960s and 1970s. What made the most recent episode so distinct, however, was the sexual brutalization of an estimated 500,000 women.¹ Although Hutu Power ideology pushed for their extermination, hyper-sexualized propaganda designed to warn Hutu men against Tutsi women resulted in a violent sexual fascination with them. Looking back on the failures of the 1959 social revolution, the Hutu elite flooded Rwandan society with gendered, anti-Tutsi propaganda for four years in order to save the Hutu nation and purify Rwanda entirely of the Tutsi. Using radio, print media, and ethnic stereotypes, Hutu extremists launched a propaganda campaign between 1990 and 1994 in order to change norms and taboos about the use of violence against Tutsi women who they perceived as viable targets after the 1990 October War.² Although politicized sexual violence did not begin until the spring of 1994, between 1990 and 1993 many Hutu began to view Tutsi women as hyper-sexual

¹ Throughout this article the terms *sexual brutalization* and *sexual assault* encompass the following acts: rape, genital mutilation, sodomy, rape with foreign objects, forced marriages, forced incest, and intentional infection of HIV/AIDS.

² Throughout this article, the term *norm* will be used as a technical term to describe behavior that a social group expects or accepts of an individual. Norms can form intentionally or develop inadvertently and can be formal or informal. A *taboo* is any action that society has deemed deviant or forbidden.

accomplices of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) and therefore targets of deviant behavior and punishment.

While many scholars study sexual violence during the Rwandan genocide, few discrepancies arise as two theories largely dominated the historiography. The first, the strategic rape theory, grew in popularity during the late 1990s in the wake of the sexual violence witnessed in Yugoslavia and Rwanda as well as the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) where rape was first established as a crime of genocide.³ Also referred to as genocidal rape, strategic rape theory emerged from Susan Brownmiller's 1975 feminist work, *Against My Will: Men, Women, and Rape*, and grew during the 1990s.⁴ Upon witnessing the widespread occurrence of sexual assault in Rwanda and the conclusions of the ICTR, many scholars, journalists, and activists assumed that the events in Rwanda neatly satisfied the criteria of strategic rape theory. Many of the studies written by the Human Rights Watch and others based on their findings present Rwanda as a textbook example of applied strategic rape theory. Although they study pre-genocidal Hutu propaganda and note its gendered anti-Tutsi message, few understand the Hutu elite's intent. Enthusiasts of strategic rape theory assume that sexual brutalization was executed with genocidal intent since: a) sexual assault occurred during the course of the genocide and b) genocidal intent was evident through the direct call for the extermination of the Tutsi. Many reject the possibility that the two concepts could be mutually exclusive and make assumptions about the intentions of the Hutu elite. Strategic rape theory can only apply if sexual brutalization was specifically designed or ordered "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group."⁵ Since intent remains critical to Article II of the genocide convention, one cannot simply study statistics during the Rwandan genocide but instead uncover the intentions of the Hutu elite as expressed in Hutu Power propaganda. If sexual violence arose unintentionally in any manner or was not specifically encouraged by Hutu leaders at a specific stage of the genocide, strategic rape theory could not apply since sexual brutalization would lack the genocidal intent necessary to satisfy the criteria laid out by the genocide convention. Most importantly, strategic rape theory fails to consider social

³ "Rwanda: Genocidal Rape Conviction," *Off Our Backs* 29, no. 1 (1999); Patricia Viseur Sellers, "The Cultural Value of Sexual Violence," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting*, Vol 93: 312.

⁴ Jonathan Gottschall, "Explaining Wartime Rape," *The Journal of Sex Research*, Vol 41: 131.

⁵ United Nations General Assembly, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime and Genocide*, Resolution 260 (III), 1948, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/convention/text.htm>, (accessed April 22, 2012).

factors, such as norms and taboos, that help or hinder the execution of sexual violence in pursuit of genocidal objectives and falsely assumes that orders for strategic rape are always followed.

The other theory that dominates the historiography rejects the strategic rape theory and offers a chronological explanation. Some like Human Rights Watch's *Leave None to Tell the Story* and Adam Jones's "Gender and Genocide in Rwanda," argue that the genocide was characterized by phases and that women only became victims of murder and sexual violence in mid-May, 1994. Based on survivor testimony, they conclude that the first phases of the genocide were overwhelmingly targeted at Tutsi men and only later were women, the elderly, and young girls targeted once no more Tutsi men remained or once official policy was released ordering their deaths. This argument implies that the genocide was chaotic and poorly planned with no specified purpose. It ignores the hyper-sexualized nature of pre-genocidal propaganda and assumes that chaos and fear were enough to motivate the general Hutu population to commit heinous acts against women for the first time in their nation's history. Both the strategic rape theory and chronology argument misunderstand the intent behind pre-genocidal Hutu propaganda and offer inaccurate explanations as a result. Most importantly, both theories ignore the importance of norms and taboos and fail to grasp the time and effort required to shift them. This paper will address both of these issues and will pay particular attention to the intent of gendered Hutu Power propaganda as well as the Hutu elite's efforts to shift societal norms for their genocidal purpose.

Years before the 1994 Rwandan genocide, the Hutu elite conspired to change cultural norms through propaganda for political purposes. They organized a genocidal plan to use murder as a means for strengthening solidarity in the Hutu nation in order to maintain unilateral power after the 1990 October War and Arusha Accords in 1993. Although widespread violence did not begin until 1994, Hutu extremists used propaganda from 1990 to 1993 in order to shape norms about violence toward the entire Tutsi population. Blaming the October War of 1990 on the failures of the 1959 Social Revolution, Hutu extremists conceived a permanent solution in which all Tutsi, regardless of sex, would be exterminated. Widespread sexual violence arose as an inadvertent byproduct of this genocidal plan and remains inseparable from Rwanda's political history. In order to understand how attitudes about sexual violence and norms about ethnic violence shifted as a result of propaganda, one must first examine Rwanda's political and ethnic history in its entirety,

since the events and ideologies of the 1990s remain linked with those of the 1959 Social Revolution.⁶

Political and Cultural Background

The events of the 1959 social revolution and the 1994 genocide stemmed largely from Rwanda's colonial past. Even though the Tutsi and Hutu maintained socio-economic differences in pre-colonial Rwanda, the arrival of German colonialists triggered a pivotal change in the state's cultural history. Recognizing a patron-client relationship between the Tutsi and Hutu, German officials established Rwanda's political system on the basis of racist ideology which formed a long-lasting divide between the two ethnicities.⁷

Europeans developed the Hamitic theory as a way of explaining the development of non-white civilizations. Racial ideology of the twentieth century centered on the theory that "wherever in Africa there was evidence of organized state life, there the ruling groups must have come from elsewhere."⁸ Europeans believed that black Africans were biologically inferior and incapable of advancement. The Hamitic thesis argued that a non-African race had long-ago invaded portions of Africa and remained responsible for pockets of civilization that developed, to include Egypt and Rwanda. Because the Tutsi held a higher socio-economic status when the Germans arrived, they assumed that the Tutsi were members of the biologically superior race of Ham and that the Hutu were of the subordinate African race. While Rwandan society perceived the Tutsi-Hutu divide as fluid and social, the Germans perceived it as a permanent due to racial and biological differences between the two groups. Using colonial policy, the Germans (and after World War I, the Belgians) solidified the Tutsi-Hutu divide and polarized the population by granting significant political advantages to the Tutsi until the 1950s when they became difficult to control.

⁶ Although Europeans redefined Hutu and Tutsi as racial labels, they are fundamentally ethnic in nature. For this reason, the Hutu and Tutsi conflict will be discussed as an ethnic issue rather than a racial one.

⁷ Inequality between Hutu and Tutsi in pre-colonial Rwanda manifested itself in the patron-client relationship with an oligarchic form of government. Clients who received land from patron chiefs were known as Hutu while the cattle-holding lineages were Tutsi. Hutus who received land were obligated to work two out of every five days for the patron in a labor service known as *uburetwa*. For more information see Villia Jefremovas, "Contested Identities: Power and Fictions of Ethnicity, Ethnography and History in Rwanda," *Anthropologica* (January 1997): 94-96.

⁸ Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 80.

Rwanda hoped to gain independence in the spirit of democratization during the Cold War. Although the Tutsi had traditionally enjoyed favor from their European handlers, “tension within the Catholic Church, along with the demands for self-government by the Tutsi elite, alienated the colonial and Church establishments.”⁹ Feeling threatened by their former protégés and hoping to retain control longer, Belgium began favoring the cooperative Hutu majority during the 1950s although the Tutsi monarchy remained.¹⁰

The 1959 social revolution was the most important event in Rwandan Hutu history and came as the country struggled to gain independence from Belgium. In the mid-1950s the Tutsi elite implemented a number of reforms aimed at appeasing Hutu complaints as the country approached democracy. While they did little to resolve issues, the taste of reform “convinced the Hutu intelligentsia that nothing less than radical change was likely to bring an end to the social plight of the Hutu.”¹¹ As discontent mounted, Hutu ideology fundamental to the 1959 social revolution began to develop.

The most significant movement of the 1959 revolution, *Mouvement Social Muhutu* began in June of 1957 and was responsible for publishing “Le Manifeste des Bahutu.”¹² Arguably the most dramatic event of the year, the Hutu Manifesto argued that Rwanda’s fundamental problem was “not that of Tutsi-Belgian, but that of the Hutu versus Tutsi, arguing that it was then unbearable to live under the unjustifiable domination of a group that made up only 14% of the population.”¹³ The Hutu Manifesto was responsible for laying the groundwork for the 1959 social revolution by establishing the issue as a Hutu-Tutsi problem to be played out in the political realm. By absolving Belgium of any blame, Hutu leaders garnered additional support from their European handlers but also polarized ethnic groups as the country approached independence.

In October 1959 the leader of *Mouvement Social Mahutu* established the political party Parti pour l’Emancipation Hutu (MDR- PARMEHUTU) whose aim was the political and social liberation of Rwandese Hutu. PARAMEHUTU ideology came from the *Mouvement Social Mahutu* and found its basis in the tenets of the 1957 Hutu Manifesto. Divided into three parts, it refuted objections against the

⁹ Aimable Twaglimana, *The Debris of Ham: Ethnicity, Regionalism, and the 1994 Rwandan Genocide* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2003), 61.

¹⁰ Josias Semujanga, *Origins of the Rwandan Genocide* (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003), 147.

¹¹ Mamdani, *When Victims Became Killers*, 115.

¹² Twaglimana, *The Debris of Ham*, 67.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 62.

promotion of the Hutu, stressed the inherent racial problem between the Hutu and Tutsi, and offered drastic solutions.¹⁴ Rather than reversing ethnic stereotypes inherited from colonialism, PARMEHUTU ideology embraced them in order to justify the Hutu nation as Rwanda's most democratic form of government.¹⁵ Magnifying the Hamitic thesis, PARMEHUTU ideology claimed that the Tutsi, as members of the Hamitic race, were foreign invaders from Ethiopia and were therefore not Rwandan. In this way, Hutu elites were able to justify political dominance in the newly independent state.

Hutu leaders twisted the history of the 1959 revolution into a story of liberation and democratization. The PARMEHUTU argued that the Tutsi "has dominated the Hutu 'race' for a long time . . . therefore, an egalitarian republic is out of the question; a Hutu republic where the Rwandan nation is identified with the Hutu 'race' would be the only solution."¹⁶ After decades of Tutsi domination, Hutu leaders balked at the idea of unrestricted politics devoid of ethnic advantage. While the Tutsi called for a "Rwandanese" and "nationalistic" government, Hutu leadership claimed to be "Hutu" and simultaneously "democratic."¹⁷ To the Hutu elite, ethnic majority was essentially the same as democratic majority.¹⁸ While Hutu leaders could use the Hutu majority to gain political advantage in a democracy, Tutsi presence undermined the realization of a "Hutu" nation. As a result, anti-Tutsi sentiment became fundamental to the Hutu nation and formed a significant portion of the PARMEHUTU ideology of 1959 and of the PARMEHUTU-Cederism ideology that would appear in 1990.

After gaining independence and formal political control on July 1, 1962, the Hutu elite began a campaign to ensure the realization of the Hutu nation. As a result of the PARMEHUTU ideology, the Tutsi continued to be viewed as a dangerous threat to the Hutu and to the accomplishments of the Social Revolution.¹⁹ Although many Tutsi had already fled from Rwanda during the 1959 revolution, PARMEHUTU made exile official policy into 1962. Josias Semujanga wrote that "the only solution offered to the Tutsi at the time of the Hutu state was expulsion . . . which consisted

¹⁴ Ibid., 151.

¹⁵ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 104.

¹⁶ Josias Semujanga, *Origins of Rwandan Genocide* (Amherst, N.Y.: Humanity Books, 2002), 153.

¹⁷ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 121.

¹⁸ Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*, (Washington, D.C.: Human Rights Watch, 1999), 39.

¹⁹ Semujanga, *Origins of Rwandan Genocide*, 241.

of renting trucks to carry some people toward neighboring countries.”²⁰ The Hutu usually sought to expel the Tutsi rather than to destroy them, and by 1963 about 10,000 Tutsis had been exiled.²¹ Those that remained in Rwanda were forced into the position of second-class citizens.²² During the 1990 October War, Hutu extremists would lament that these policies of the 1960s led to later invasions by exiled Tutsis and that their biggest failure during the Social Revolution was in not killing all of the Tutsi.

During and after the 1959 revolution, Tutsi that remained in Rwanda were often attacked for their supposed link with exiled Tutsi. In general, those that remained inside of Rwanda between 1959 and 1963 were “considered, as a whole, to be suspect and accomplices of enemies from the outside – justification for taking them hostage and legitimizing retaliation against them.”²³ Believing the PARAMEHUTU ideology, many Hutu continued to see all *ethnic* Tutsi as a threat to the newly independent Rwandan state, regardless of their personal activity. Violence was further exacerbated by episodic attacks from Tutsi exiles attempting to reenter Rwanda. Although only one attack in December 1963 seriously threatened the Republic, Hutu leaders used the attacks to strengthen Hutu solidarity against the “oppressive” Tutsi enemy, bent on subjugating the Hutu.²⁴ Massacres took place in 1960, 1961, and especially in 1962.²⁵ When Tutsi exiles attacked from the southeast in December 1963, Hutus went to Tutsi refugee camps in Bugesera and “between 22 and 23 December, all able-bodied men and male adolescents who were present were killed.”²⁶ Even though violent reprisal attacks left some women dead, the Hutu elite focused on the most dangerous threat to the Hutu nation: Tutsi men.

Every Tutsi male became a viable target because of his ethnic membership, regardless of his action or inaction. A 1964 *Washington Post* article stated that the Hutu government “assertedly [killed] only those who had connived with the refugees from Rwanda in an effort to overthrow the government.” However, numbers remain too high to make this claim true.²⁷ In the first few years after decolonization, as many as 20,000 Tutsi

²⁰ Ibid., 243.

²¹ Alison Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999), 39.

²² Semujanga, *Origins of Rwandan Genocide*, 179.

²³ *The Media and the Rwandan Genocide*, Allan Thompson, ed. (Kampala: Pluto Press, 2007), 69.

²⁴ Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 39.

²⁵ Semujanga, *Origins*, 155.

²⁶ Ibid., 186.

²⁷ “Rwandan Toll Exaggerated, Envoy Says,” *The Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 1964.

were killed in retaliation for similar attacks, accused of being accomplices to their Tutsi brethren.²⁸ Retaliation massacres became episodic in Rwanda through the decades as Tutsi exiles periodically attempted to return.²⁹ Although violent reprisal was effective in Rwanda, Hutu leaders found other ways to realize the anti-Tutsi ideology of PARAMEHUTU.

In addition to violence, Hutu leadership used politics to marginalize the domestic Tutsi population between 1963 and 1990. In 1972 Hutu leadership implemented a new system of ethnic quotas called *equilibre ethnique* in order to curb Tutsi domination of schools and administration. This system reserved ninety percent of placement in schools and public employment to Hutu and left just nine percent for Tutsi.³⁰ By denying just one Tutsi generation education, Hutu leadership hoped to permanently exclude them from management power in the independent state, thereby ensuring that only Hutu would be qualified to rule in the future. Although relative peace had existed since 1963, the Hutu elite reignited Hutu-Tutsi violence in 1973 when they organized violent purges within the Rwandan government and schools in order to enforce *equilibre ethnique*. Taking advantage of the confusion and fear, the minister of defense, General Juvénal Habyarimana staged a coup and established the Second Republic under a single-party system.

Economically successful, the Second Republic ushered in a decade of relative peace and prosperity; however, internal divisions among the Hutu began appearing during the 1980s due to regional and economic conflict. In 1990 dissention became public as individuals and publications accused Habyarimana of blatant favoritism for northern Hutu.³¹ Thirty- three political leaders, intellectuals, and journalists in Rwanda called for political reform and were backed by donor nations that saw multiparty democracy as a stepping stone to economic progress.³² Under both internal and international pressure, Habyarimana's "former single party opened the door to a power-sharing arrangement with four opposition parties . . . from the 'political' south."³³ The Hutu elite feared that internal strife posed a threat to the Hutu nation established after the 1959 social revolution and saw anti-Tutsi ideology as a means of reestablishing Hutu solidarity. Seeing an opportunity to unite the Hutu through anti-Tutsi sentiment, the new Hutu political parties adopted ideologies very similar to

²⁸ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 130.

²⁹ Lisa Sharlach, "Gender and Genocide in Rwanda: Women as Agents and Objects of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research* (1999): 391.

³⁰ Twaglimana, *The Debris of Ham*, 68.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 92.

³² Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 47.

³³ Twaglimana, *The Debris of Ham*, xix.

those of 1959 Rwanda.³⁴

Facing internal strife and decreased anti-Tutsi

sentiment, Hutu leaders relied on the national memory of the 1959 social revolution to overcome internal divisions and warned that the Tutsi would try to regain control of Rwanda and reverse the progress made since 1959. When Tutsi exiles attacked in the October War of 1990, they seemingly confirmed the predictions of the Hutu elite and strengthened Hutu solidarity.

The RPF invasion presented Hutu leadership with an opportunity to reunite Rwanda in the face of the Tutsi threat. Habyarimana's government attempted to discredit the rebels and exaggerated their military threat in an organized propaganda campaign.³⁵ To the government media, "the invasion by the RPF from Uganda was an attempt to roll back the social and economic progress made by Hutus since the Social Revolution of 1959."³⁶ Although Habyarimana strongly opposed the RPF's demands, he entered into peace negotiations at the Arusha Accords in 1990 under international pressure. The Arusha Accords stipulated that power be shared between Hutu and Tutsi and affirmed that some Hutu in the administration would lose their jobs. Because the president was guaranteed security in his position, many accused him of being a traitor to Hutu democracy in exchange for power.³⁷ Disgusted with Habyarimana's involvement in the negotiations, many Hutu leaders turned away from his administration to form the radically conservative party Coalition pour la Defense de la Republique (CDR) in 1992.

The formation of the CDR was arguably the most significant political event of 1992. Designed as an ultra-conservative party, the CDR "accused [Habyarimana] of failing to defend the 1959 Hutu Revolution against the Tutsi threat."³⁸ By deliberately drawing a link between the Arusha Accords and the 1959 Revolution, the CDR implied that the peace negotiations signaled the reversal of gains made during the Social Revolution. Set to lose much from power-sharing arrangements, the leaders of CDR hoped to derail the talks by appealing to the "Hutu constituency in the same way in which PARMEHUTU had appealed to it in 1959."³⁹ Rather than making it an issue of multiparty democracy, the CDR hoped to stir up anti-Tutsi sentiment in order to make the Arusha Accords a racial and social issue, rather than a political one, just as

³⁴ Ibid., 82.

³⁵ Ibid., 24.

³⁶ *The Media*, 74.

³⁷ Eugenie Mukeshimana, Founder and Executive Director of Genocide Survivors Support Network, interviewed by author, February 1, 2012.

³⁸ Twaglimana, *The Debris of Ham*, 103.

³⁹ Ibid., 84, 104.

PARMEHUTU had made independence a Hutu-Tutsi issue in 1959. Recognizing the power of PARMEHUTU ideology in 1959, the CDR adapted it slightly to meet its needs.

Although anti-Tutsi sentiment of the early 1990s resembled the PARMEHUTU ideology of 1959, the CDR adapted its platform and added provisions in order to strengthen its contemporary appeal. The new ideology, known as PARMEHUTU-Cederism, or Hutu Power, argued that “the Hutu and Tutsi were racially different groups, that the Tutsis as a group were cunning and untrustworthy, and that the [domestic and exiled] Tutsi were the cause of all the problems in Rwanda at the time.”⁴⁰ Hutu Power accused the other political parties of conspiring with the Tutsi in exchange for power in the new government and argued that the CDR was the only defense of the Hutu nation.⁴¹ Like the MDR-PARMEHUTU in 1959, CDR claimed to represent the Hutu majority and proposed immediate solutions to the “Tutsi problem.”

The CDR blamed the October War of 1990 on the failures of the Social Revolution of 1959. Propaganda called the Tutsi “cockroaches, who were ruminating their defeat in 1959-1962 and [were] lurking to reconquer power by force, helped by the Tutsi who had not taken the path to exile.”⁴² As in the 1960s, the enemy was defined as, “Tutsi inside or outside the country, who are extremists or nostalgic for power . . . persons who give needed support to the enemy.”⁴³ Although the Hutu saw the 1959 Revolution as their shining achievement, they believed that the October War of 1990 arose from their failure to exterminate the entire Tutsi population. Extremists lamented that the Social Revolution had been left unfinished since “the Tutsi were ‘allowed to escape’ abroad, and their children [were] now returning.”⁴⁴ Such messages became increasingly frequent and radical throughout 1992 and 1993 as the Arusha Accords progressed and as the CDR found itself excluded from the transitional government.⁴⁵

Growing more and more desperate, the CDR began advocating for violent measures as they claimed that the Tutsi invasions were proof of their harmful intent and that “the Bible instructs you to kill a snake, lest it

⁴⁰ Luke Fletcher, “Turning Interahamwe: Individual and Community Choice in the Rwandan Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* (2007): 26; Twaglimana, *The Debris of Ham*, 139.

⁴¹ Twaglimana, *The Debris of Ham*, 138.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 74.

⁴³ African Rights, *Death, Despair, and Defiance* (United Kingdom: African Rights, 1995), 39.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Twaglimana, *The Debris of Ham*, 114.

kill you.”⁴⁶ CDR utilized a highly effective propaganda program to lay the foundation for their definitive solution to the “Tutsi problem” by inciting fear for the survival of the Hutu nation and the protection of Hutu lives. As a result of their propaganda campaign, advocates of Hutu Power normalized genocide against the Tutsi and ethnic violence against women for the first time.

Propaganda

Propaganda served as the most powerful weapon of the CDR and was directly responsible for the normalization of genocide against the Tutsi and targeted ethnic violence against women. Although ethnic violence was not new to Rwanda, its magnitude and form were unprecedented and indicated the formation of new norms about the use of violence against the Tutsi.⁴⁷ As one Rwandan explained, CDR’s propaganda was “too well managed to leave us room for any other feelings.”⁴⁸ Particularly impressive and horrifying is the fact that the genocidaires successfully established new norms that directly conflicted with Rwanda’s traditional taboo of ethnic violence against women. The violence of the Rwandan genocide proves that “social norms are indeed reversible – that, under ruthless compulsion, ordinary people can engage in violence en masse.”⁴⁹ In order to understand how the CDR gained the trust and participation of the general population, one must first understand its propaganda machine.

In her article “Transforming the Moral Landscape: the Diffusion of a Genocidal Norm in Rwanda,” Lee Ann Fujii argues that first step in reshaping norms was to spread the genocidal message of Hutu Power far and wide through the use of propaganda.⁵⁰ The message of Hutu Power resonated with the population due to four critical factors of CDR propaganda: “repetition, reach, monopoly of the discursive space, and skillful use of evidence that lent credibility to the story.”⁵¹ Educated outside of the country, leaders of the propaganda movement understood how propaganda worked and used it effectively.⁵² Although widespread

⁴⁶ African Rights, *Death, Despair, and Defiance*, 42.

⁴⁷ Ravi Bhavnani, “Ethnic Norms and Interethnic violence: Accounting for Mass Participation in the Rwandan Genocide,” *Journal of Peace Research* (2006): 652.

⁴⁸ Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season: the Killers in Rwanda Speak* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2005), 22.

⁴⁹ Bhavnani, “Ethnic Norms,” 667.

⁵⁰ Lee Ann Fujii, “Transforming the Moral Landscape: The Diffusion of a Genocidal Norm in Rwanda,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 6, no. 1 (2006): 100.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Eugenie Mukeshimana, Founder and Executive Director of Genocide Survivors Support Network, interviewed by author, February 1, 2012.

violence did not begin until April 1994, Hutu Power propaganda began in December 1990 and gained momentum through 1993. Newspaper and radio were the most influential forms of propaganda and fulfilled Fujii's four criteria.

As in the Social Revolution of 1959, published propaganda in the early 1990s shaped the development of Hutu extremist ideology and of the corresponding political party. Published in the Hutu newspaper *Kangura*, the "Hutu 10 Commandments" signaled a new wave of Hutu extremism rooted in the beliefs of PARMEHUTU ideology and preceded the development of the CDR. Single-handedly the most important publication of the 1990s, *Kangura* brought the Rwanda of the 1990s back to its 1957 version, when Hutu leaders wrote the Hutu Manifesto.⁵³ While not officially endorsed by President Habyarimana, it enjoyed financial and logistical support from high level officials including Felicien Kabuga, financial advisor to the president and Ferdinand Nahimana, the future President of the Board of Directions for Radio Television Libres des Mille Collines (RTLM).⁵⁴ Although newspapers were expensive, political parties often bought newspapers and sent them to supporters throughout different communities.⁵⁵ *Kangura* reportedly enjoyed a circulation of approximately 10,000 and after April 1991 was printed free of charge by a national printing company.⁵⁶ By financially and logistically supporting *Kangura*, members of the CDR increased the reach of their propaganda. They also achieved a monopoly on the discursive space by making *Kangura* sensational and by using intimidation techniques against opposition newspapers. According to Eugenie Mukeshimana, Founder and Executive Director of the Genocide Survivors Support Network, "people would read [*Kangura*] because the language was unheard of culturally before. Political cartoons were very popular; people would buy it just for the cartoons because it was so different."⁵⁷ Even though literacy rates were very low, leaders of CDR and *Kangura* understood Rwandan culture and found ways to spread their Hutu Power propaganda.

Only some sixty-six percent of Rwandans were literate at the time of the genocide but those who could read were accustomed to reading for others.⁵⁸ It was normal for men to go to the bar after work to read or

⁵³ Thompson, *The Media*, 62.

⁵⁴ Article 19, *Broadcasting Genocide: Censorship, Propaganda, and State-sponsored Violence in Rwanda* (International Centre Against Censorship, 1996), 64.

⁵⁵ *The Media*, 81.

⁵⁶ Article 19, *Broadcasting Genocide*, 64.

⁵⁷ Mukeshimana, interview by author.

⁵⁸ *The Media*, 81.

collectively listen to *Kangura*.⁵⁹ In addition, political cartoons served to underscore the written word and were so graphic in most cases that misinterpretation was impossible.⁶⁰ The CDR ceaselessly wrote about the Social Revolution of 1959 and the implications of the October War of 1990 and Arusha Accords as evidence of Tutsi aggression. Although *Kangura* could not entirely normalize Hutu Power and genocidal violence to the degree that radio could, it reintroduced the concepts of PARMEHUTU ideology and helped to form Hutu Power ideology. In addition, *Kangura* normalized certain attitudes about the Tutsi and made open discussion about genocidal solutions to the “Tutsi problem” possible.

While *Kangura* served as the first medium for Hutu Power propaganda, radio remained much more effective and became the CDR’s most powerful weapon. Before the genocide, “radio ownership in Rwanda was high by African standards, nearly 60% in urban areas and close to 30% in rural . . . the Rwandan people [spent] all their time with a receiver struck to their ear.”⁶¹ Leaders of the CDR knew that radio was a central part of Rwandan life and used stations like Radio Rwanda and most notably, RTLM, to reach their audience and monopolize the discursive space. Oral tradition dominated Rwanda and “the impact of the spoken word is often much more compelling than written tracts. Poetry and song are particularly effective.”⁶² Independently owned but government approved, RTLM offered lively music and entertainment that appealed to the general population as relief from the formal and mundane government station, Radio Rwanda.⁶³ RTLM played “songs that could not be played on state radio, such as the virulently anti-Tutsi songs by pop star Simon Bikindi. The station would play these songs 10 to 15 times a day so that listeners could not help but learn them by heart.”⁶⁴ RTLM in particular made the concept of Hutu Power and genocidal violence normal by continually airing its propaganda through various forms of entertainment. Understanding the popular appeal of RTLM and the creative license of an independent station, Hutu leaders used *Kangura* to bolster listenership of RTLM. In Issue #46 of *Kangura*, an article entitled “RTLM: No Chance for the Tutsi” announced the arrival of RTLM, declaring it a “symbol of solidarity . . . a voice to arouse awareness in the majority of the population

⁵⁹ Mukeshimana, interview by author.

⁶⁰ *The Media*, 81.

⁶¹ Fujji, “Transforming the Moral Landscape,” 104.

⁶² African Rights, *Death, Despair, and Defiance*, 75.

⁶³ *The Media*, 113; Dina Temple-Raston, *Justice on the Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists, Their Trial for War Crimes, and a Nation’s Quest for Redemption* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 162.

⁶⁴ Fujji, “Transforming the Moral Landscape,” 104.

and protect their interests,” and implying that Radio Rwanda could no longer serve as the Hutu’s primary information resource.⁶⁵

Although the message began subtly, Tutsi and Hutu listeners remarked that RTLM focused heavily on the 1959 Revolution and:

emphasized the similarity between what was happening in 1994 and what had happened in 1959. It was a choice of going back to the slavery that had preceded 1959 or rising up and protecting one’s freedom, even one’s life . . . one could not trust any Tutsi civilian because it was not possible to know how deeply the RPF had infiltrated such people.⁶⁶

Appealing as a legitimate news source, radio ignited fears and called the Hutu people to action by continuously highlighting the October War of 1990 as evidence of Tutsi aggression. Although RTLM did not begin its broadcasts until 1993, radio further heightened the frenzy of Hutu Power and brought CDR propaganda to those unaffected by *Kangura*.

Women

To identify when and how attitudes toward women shifted as a result of propaganda, one must first examine how and why the original ones formed. Although Hutu and Tutsi women arguably had more in common than their male counterparts, Tutsi women held an exclusive place in society and experienced the genocide differently as a result. In Rwanda’s patriarchal society, men were responsible for the actions of their families, including female relatives.⁶⁷ Women, regardless of age, were dependents of their male relatives and were expected “to be protected, and managed, by their fathers, their husbands, and even their male children.”⁶⁸ Women had little importance politically and economically and were mainly cherished for their ability to bear children. Motherhood was the most critical social identity for women and their bodies were controlled as

⁶⁵ “RTLM: No Chance for the Tutsi,” *Kangura*, no. 46 (July 1993).

⁶⁶ *The Media*, 112.

⁶⁷ Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak*, Linda Coverdale, trans. (London: Picador, 2006) 108; Dina Temple-Raston, *Justice on the Grass: Three Rwandan Journalists, Their Trial for War Crimes and a Nation’s Quest for Redemption* (New York: Free Press, 2008), 34.

⁶⁸ African Rights, *Death, Despair and Defiance* 34.

“sexual and cultural markers of national boundaries.”⁶⁹ Sexuality was tightly regulated by male society but rarely discussed. Attitudes toward rape and other forms of violence against women reflected the extreme sexism of Rwandan culture as women were blamed for their victimization and were often forced to marry their rapist in lieu of legal recourse. As in most cultures, “there has always been violence against women however the cultural code was that they brought the violence upon themselves . . . if a woman was raped it was because she was at the wrong place, wrong time, and probably attracted the action because she did not dress appropriately.”⁷⁰ As a result of such intense social stigma, rape and other forms of gender violence were rarely reported since women could not marry once they were no longer virgins.⁷¹ Although sexual violence existed in Rwanda prior to the 1994 genocide, it is impossible to know how common it was since social pressure shamed most women into silence.

Even though sexual violence existed in Rwandan culture prior to the 1994 genocide, it transformed in its magnitude and form as a direct result of Hutu Power propaganda. Prior to 1994, Rwanda was not “characterized by a high incidence of rape—quite the contrary.”⁷² When ethnic hostility erupted during the 1960s and 1970s, women were generally spared from violence, although some were killed along with male relatives. During the 1959 Revolution in particular, Tutsi men were killed while their wives were spared and escorted to the border.⁷³ It is possible that sexual violence did occur during the ethnic violence of the 1960s and the 1970s and merely remained unreported; however, sexual violence in 1994 remained noticeably different even if this were the case. As one woman put it, sexual violence in 1994 “was extreme . . . [and before] it wasn’t widespread, it wasn’t done in the open.”⁷⁴ In order for behavior to change so radically in just twenty-years there had to be a distinct social change that allowed for former taboo behavior to become acceptable. This change can be attributed to propaganda which redefined ethnic boundaries and stripped Tutsi women of their traditional protection.

Traditionally, Tutsi women were protected from widespread ethnic violence due to their distinctive position in Rwandan culture. In

⁶⁹ Erin K. Baines, “Body Politics and the Rwandan Crisis,” *Third World Quarterly* (2003): 480, 482.

⁷⁰ Mukeshimana, interview by author.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Christopher Taylor, *Sacrifice as Terror: The Rwandan Genocide of 1994* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1999), 157.

⁷³ Mukeshimana, interview by author.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

pre-genocidal Rwanda, wars were carried out between men only. Women were not systematically raped or killed during times of violent unrest since they were ethnically “invisible” and were able to move around society freely.⁷⁵ According to Victor Karega of the Rwandan Ministry of Gender, Family, and Social Affairs, women were “always a link, a linkage, between different categories of people, because they were marrying from, or to, both sides.”⁷⁶ In such a patriarchal society, Rwandan women were perceived as sexed rather than ethnic and had little political value.⁷⁷ To the Hutu of the 1960s and 1970s, women were not worth killing since they held no ethnic or political value, although some women were sometimes killed alongside of male relatives.

Even though Tutsi women did not wield political or ethnic power, they did gain some leverage from sexualized myth. When the PARMEHUTU embraced and reinforced the racial policies of colonialism they accepted all aspects of the Hamatic Myth including perceptions of Tutsi sexuality and superiority.⁷⁸ Tutsi women were believed to have slender, long figures, smooth skin, polished appearance, and to hold the secrets of sexual gratification.⁷⁹ Marriage to Tutsi women symbolized status since it indicated that a Hutu man had acquired wealth in bovine capital, the most predominant form of wealth in Rwanda.⁸⁰ The limited availability of Tutsi women coupled with the fact that Europeans often became romantically involved with Tutsi rather than Hutu women reinforced the desirability and status of Tutsi women.⁸¹ Throughout Rwandan history, a Tutsi woman’s greatest asset was her sexuality but during the 1994 genocide it became her biggest curse and was responsible for her unique victimization.

Gendered Propaganda

Although gendered propaganda began in earnest in 1990, political action in 1983 provides the first example in which Tutsi women came under scrutiny for their sexuality. To many in Rwanda, gender relations in the 1980s were becoming decadent as many women began breaking out of

⁷⁵ Evelyn Gerda Lindner, “Gendercide and Humiliation in Honor and Human Rights Societies,” *Gendercide and Genocide* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 47.

⁷⁶ Sharlach, “Women as Agents,” 393.

⁷⁷ Baines, “Body Politics,” 487; Mukeshimana, interview by author.

⁷⁸ Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 177.

⁷⁹ Hatzfeld, *Machete Season*, 110, 219.

⁸⁰ Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 167.

⁸¹ Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 171; Mukeshimana, interview by author.

their traditional roles and participating in public life.⁸² Rwandan society looked down on women who tried to gain access to resources through lovers or who tried to establish themselves independent of men and labeled them “loose women.”⁸³ Observing an alarming amount of independence from urban women, the Hutu elite emplaced reform programs aimed at these “loose women.”

While the Second Republic was best known for its economic reform, it was also responsible for a “Moral Revolution” that included the establishment of reform centers called *ingorora muco* (“morals straightening-out-centres”) in 1985.⁸⁴ Young urban women who dressed too fashionably and those with European boyfriends were incarcerated under charges of vagabondage and prostitution.⁸⁵ Although not specifically aimed at one ethnicity, many of the women were in fact Tutsi as a direct result of discrimination laws that prevented them from going to school, getting jobs, etc.⁸⁶ Barred from school or work as a result of the 1973 policy of *equilibre ethnique*, many Tutsi girls went to clubs in western attire to attract European men in the hopes of attaining marriage so that they could improve their life and gain access to things such as education and medicine.⁸⁷ The morality reforms of 1983 “planted the idea in the minds of many Rwandans that single Tutsi women were likely to be prostitutes.”⁸⁸ When newspapers and radio began to spread propaganda that presented Tutsi women as prostitutes for the RPF cause, the concept was not as far-fetched as it might have appeared in the past and quickly gained credence.

Genderized propaganda appeared even before the creation of the CDR and Hutu Power ideology. In December 1990, the extremist Hutu newspaper *Kangura* published “The Hutu 10 Commandments” in response to the October War of 1990 and the start of peace negotiations. Of the ten “commandments,” four directly or indirectly pertained to Tutsi women and their sexuality. They warned Hutu men against Tutsi women who were identified as enemies of the Hutu nation and friends to all Tutsi, including the RPF. *Kangura* argued that “[t]here is no way that you can send soldiers to go and fight against Inyenzi on the borders while you left some

⁸² Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 157.

⁸³ Villia Jefremovas, “Loose Women, Virtuous Wives, and Timid Virgins: Gender and the Control of Resources in Rwanda,” *Canadian Journal of African Studies* (1991): 382.

⁸⁴ Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 161.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 161; Mukeshimana, interview by author.

⁸⁷ Mukeshimana, interview by author.

⁸⁸ Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 162.

other ones in the interior of the country. Why not search for ‘accomplices?’”⁸⁹ Radically different from previous propaganda, *Kangura* set the tone for the 1994 Rwandan genocide. No longer was the scope of violence limited to male actors in Rwanda, but for the first time, included women who were identified as clear collaborators of the RPF. Hutu leaders expressed the belief that peace in the Hutu nation was impossible so long as Tutsi women survived and could serve as accomplices of exiled Tutsi.

Following the publication of “The Hutu 10 Commandments,” propaganda denouncing Tutsi women as RPF accomplices appeared more and more frequently. The pro-Hutu media argued that Tutsi women worked in direct support of Tutsi men who did not hesitate “to transform their sisters, wives, and mothers into pistols to conquer Rwanda.”⁹⁰ Reflecting on the Tutsi attacks of the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1990s, Hutu extremists decided that total extermination was the only way to ensure long-term peace for the Hutu majority. They believed that “[t]hose women that we did not kill in 1959 raised those sons that we are fighting right now. If we had killed them in 1959 we would not be having this war now.”⁹¹ This train of thought permeated throughout different levels of society as a result of Hutu propaganda and became popular quickly.

The hyper-sexualized nature of the Hutu Power propaganda campaign spread through Rwandan society with little resistance. Playing on stereotypes about Tutsi sexuality, Hutu propaganda accused Tutsi women of working as prostitutes and spies on behalf of the RPF.⁹² Cartoonists from *Kangura* depicted Tutsi women as “prostitutes capable of enlisting Western support for the RPF cause through the use of sexual charms” and included images of General Roméo Dallaire, the Force Commander of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) with hyper-sexualized Tutsi women.⁹³ Other cartoons showed Tutsi women with European men in sexual positions and circumstances that went against Rwandan norms. In one *Kangura* cartoon “not only are [anal intercourse, cunnilingus, and fellatio portrayed], but they are also being done in a group, something foreign to Rwandan sexual norms.”⁹⁴ By using cartoons like these, Hutu leaders implied that Tutsi sexual practices, in comparison with those of the Hutu, were immoral and that Tutsi women, like prostitutes, were sexually deviant and inclined to

⁸⁹ “Appeal to the Bahutu Conscience,” *Kangura*, no. 6 (December 1990).

⁹⁰ Des Forges, *Leave None*, 75.

⁹¹ Mukeshimana, interview by author.

⁹² Sharlach, “Women as Agents,” 394.

⁹³ Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 171.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

abnormal behavior. Already shrouded in sexual mystery, the Tutsi woman came to be defined by her supposed sexual deviancy and, for the first time, loyalty to her ethnic group. Hutu leaders hoped to degrade Tutsi women by portraying them as immoral accomplices of the RPF who were using sexuality in an underhanded attack on the Hutu nation. With this propaganda campaign, Hutu leaders hoped to discourage sexual fascination of Tutsi women that had traditionally shielded them from attack in the past. Sexualized propaganda increased the sexual allure of the Tutsi female but also fulfilled its purpose as Tutsi women became favorite targets of violence.

Although Hutu propaganda targeted all Tutsi in some form, the topic of Tutsi women became dominant. For the first time in Rwandan history, “women were targets of violence as much as, if not more than men.”⁹⁵ Women became viable targets for violence as a result of their supposed collaboration with the RPF. The RTLM presented 127 broadcasts (7.05%) alleging that Tutsis of the region were helping the RPF, twenty-four broadcasts (1.33%) alleged that invalids, women, and old men supported the RPF, and 106 broadcasts (5.89%) alleged that the RPF wanted control and power over the Hutu.⁹⁶ In addition, twenty-one broadcasts (1.36%) directly specified Tutsi females as tools of the RPF and viable targets for violence.⁹⁷ Hutu leaders argued that by garnering support for the RPF cause, spying for exiled Tutsis, and harming the Hutu nation, Tutsi women became legitimate targets of ethnic violence.⁹⁸ As the most beautiful and cunning of all the Tutsi “cockroaches,” Tutsi women were to be feared more than any other group and had to be killed.

Under the newly formed Hutu Power ideology, Tutsi women became the most dangerous threat to the Hutu nation. Racial purity, rather than just anti-Tutsi sentiment, became a critical component of the Hutu identity.⁹⁹ As traditional “liminoid beings” Tutsi women were capable of undermining the categories of ‘Hutu’ and ‘Tutsi’ altogether.”¹⁰⁰ Understanding the dilemma that intermarriage presented to their genocidal scheme, Hutu extremists sought to change norms about ethnic

⁹⁵ Ibid., 176.

⁹⁶ *The Media*, 119.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 120.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 123.

⁹⁹ Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 156.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. The term *liminoid* is anthropological in nature and describes persons that lack permanent social status or rank. Women in traditional Rwandan society exchanged their father’s social status for that of their husband upon marriage and did not retain any true ethnic identity of their own. Intermarriage remained a viable option so long as women were categorized as liminoid since the ethnicity of the father mattered and not that of the mother.

membership. In the editorial “A Cockroach Cannot Bring Forth a Butterfly,” *Kangura* argued that Hutu men could no longer marry Tutsi women since the offspring of those unions retained the sneaky nature inherent to all Tutsi. Tutsi wives of Hutu men could no longer be trusted to change their nature, as their willingness to aid the RPF in the October War showed. For the first time in Rwandan history, women no longer appeared as limonoid beings. Their birth ethnicity came to be considered permanent and their loyalty to the RPF inherent to their ethnicity.

Once Tutsi women gained permanent ethnicity, Hutu leaders argued that Hutu men had a responsibility to reject these women and their sexuality for the sake of the nation. Hutu Power propaganda claimed that Tutsis used treachery to enslave the Hutu population after losing political control in 1959 and relied on their women to intermarry with prominent Hutus.¹⁰¹ Extremists called for an end to intermarriage and began advocating for the extermination of the treacherous Tutsi women. Hutu Power advocated the extermination of all Tutsi regardless of age or sex; messages that appeared in both print and radio media.¹⁰² According to one Rwandan woman, about ninety percent of propaganda targeted Tutsi women by attacking Hutu men that were associated with Tutsi women and by saying that they were accomplices of the RPF.¹⁰³ Women “worked at the bar so they would say that women were listening in on conversations at the bar to give the RPF information, that they were poisoning Hutu men at the bar.”¹⁰⁴ Although the propaganda may appear outlandish to some, many Rwandans accepted the possibility as a result of popular culture generated by western societies like the United States. Westernized entertainment often linked violence to sexuality and perpetuated messages of “[k]ill the [female] enemy.”¹⁰⁵ Many Rwandans had seen “James Bond” Cold War era films that depicted the use of hyper-sexualized female spies. These films reinforced the biblical story of Sampson and Delilah and aligned with Hutu Power propaganda.¹⁰⁶ Even though Rwandans recognized these films as fictional, they still normalized the concept of the

¹⁰¹ Des Forges, *Leave None*, 75; “Editorial: A Cockroach (Inyenzi) Cannot Bring Forth a Butterfly,” *Kangura*, no. 40 (February 1993).

¹⁰² Sharlach, “Women as Agents,” 397.

¹⁰³ Mukeshimana, interview by author.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Oystein Gullvag Holter, “A Theory of Gendercide,” *Gendercide and Genocide* (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 83.

¹⁰⁶ Mukeshimana, interview by author. For information about the importance of the biblical story of Sampson and Delilah in Rwanda and Burundi’s ethnic history see Liisa H. Malkki, *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and Naitonal Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995).

sexualized female spy or collaborator, propaganda which Hutu Power continually emphasized.

Why Sexual Violence?

In his book *Origins of the Rwandan Genocide*, Josias Semujanga asked, “[h]ow can we explain . . . the fixation of Cederist discourse upon the Tutsi woman? Would such a psychosis explain the high number of rapes during the genocide?”¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Erin Baines wrote in his article, “Body Politics and the Rwandan Genocide,” that “certain acts remain undertheorized such as why Hutu extremists raped and murdered women- persons historically conceptualized as ‘sexed’ rather than ‘ethnicised’ in Rwanda nationalist discourse.”¹⁰⁸ Although many discuss the statistics of sexualized violence and its aftermath, few attempt to explain why sexualized violence occurred in such a fashion and how it became acceptable.¹⁰⁹ By studying Rwanda’s political, social, and ethnic history, it appears that the Hutu elite intended for sexualized propaganda to dehumanize Tutsi women as prostitutes, spies, and foreign invaders, so that Hutu men would find it easier to kill them. Although Hutu Power successfully degraded Tutsi women, sexual violence arose as an unintended consequence of hyper-sexualized propaganda that inadvertently heightened sexualized fascination of Tutsi women.

Without doubt, the occurrence of sexual violence during the 1994 Rwandan genocide was widespread and exceptional in comparison with other outbreaks of ethnic violence. It could not have occurred without the October War of 1990 and the Arusha Accords of 1993, which caused fear in the Hutu community. Even though Hutu leaders pushed for the extermination of Tutsi women, sexual violence often occurred in combination with murder or in lieu of it as a result of gendered Hutu Power propaganda. Originally designed to make Tutsi women *less* appealing by highlighting their hyper-sexuality and immorality, the propaganda campaign threatened to derail its own genocidal plan as it encouraged men to participate in sexual assault rather than murder. Although motivations for sexual violence remain complex and often overlap, it is possible to identify four major motivations that encouraged men toward sexual violence: envious fascination of supposed Tutsi

¹⁰⁷ Semujanga, *Origins*, 246.

¹⁰⁸ Baines, “Body Politics,” 479.

¹⁰⁹ Sexual violence will be discussed in terms of its social acceptability rather than desirability, since Hutu Power propaganda does not explicitly indicate a desire for the mass sexual brutalization of Tutsi women and instead emphasizes the need for their extermination.

sexuality, the ability to have women who were normally unattainable, concepts about sex as the spoils of war, and the ability to kill women through AIDS or shame. Although other motivators likely existed, these four are the most common and explain the widespread use of sexual violence toward Tutsi women.

As a result of the Hamitic myth, most Hutu men had an envious fascination of Tutsi women and their sexuality. Although the Hutu propaganda program was largely successful at rewriting norms about violence toward Tutsi women, it could not “keep Hutu men from being attracted to, and occasionally establishing long-term sexual relationships with, Tutsi women.”¹¹⁰ This fascination was compounded by the fact that many Hutu men in positions of power maintained Tutsi wives even though Tutsi women presented an obvious danger to the racial purity of the Hutu nation.¹¹¹ Hutu women also believed the stereotypes about Tutsi women and often remained unopposed or supportive about the use of sexual violence on account of their jealousy.¹¹²

Although Hutu men were fascinated by Tutsi women, many also despised them for their reported arrogance toward Hutu men. Traditionally, Tutsi women only married wealthy Hutus, Europeans, or other Tutsis because of their wealth and social status, which led to the belief that they looked down upon the Hutu men. Prunier argues that a “lingering inferiority complex may partly account for the degree of sadism unleashed” by Hutu men against Tutsi women.¹¹³ Survivors recalled that many genocidaires would say, “[i]f there were peace, you would never accept me. . . . You Tutsi think you are too good for us.”¹¹⁴ These attacks also allowed men to reassert their masculinity during a period of economic uncertainty.¹¹⁵ Even though they could not inherit land or support their families financially, Hutu men were able to dominate Tutsi women, something that only successful Hutu men and Europeans had been able to do in the past. Seeing the Tutsi women as superior, sexual beings available to the common Hutu man for the first time, many saw sexual violence toward them as a spoil of war, as a reward for hard work in defense of the Hutu nation. During 1991 and 1992, Hutu men raped young women (regardless of ethnicity) as *umusanzu*, what the militia and soldiers

¹¹⁰ Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 170.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 174.

¹¹² Hetzfeld, *Machete*, 111.

¹¹³ Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 176.

¹¹⁴ Baines, “Body Politics,” 488.

¹¹⁵ Adam Jones, “Gender and Genocide in Rwanda,” *Gendercide and Genocide*, (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), 100.

called a contribution to the “war effort.”¹¹⁶ By 1994, this concept was normal to soldiers and members of the Interhamwe and explains how they came to perceive sexual violence as the spoils of war. One rape survivor commented that the soldiers “thought it was their *recompense*. For those who had done well. For if you were the head of the mob, it was up to you to choose who you rape.”¹¹⁷ Even though both Hutu and Tutsi women fell victim to this practice, Tutsi women remained more desirable for their supposed ethnic superiority and often were the first to suffer.

Although both Hutu and Tutsi women suffered episodes of sexual violence, only Tutsi women were targeted specifically to contract AIDS or to “die of shame.” Women that were allowed to live after suffering sexual violence were told “they were spared only so that they could . . . ‘die of sadness,’ either because of the AIDS they had contracted or because they would be forced to raise a child conceived in a time of treachery.”¹¹⁸ Although advocates of Hutu Power called for the extermination of the Tutsi, murder was not necessarily needed to destroy Tutsi women. Sexual violence could destroy a Tutsi woman since stigmas against non-virgins and non-mothers could leave her unmarried and alone. According to Human Rights Watch, rape was part of the strategy to exterminate Tutsi; however, “unlike in the case of killings, there is no evidence that the architects of the genocide had prepared lists of women they wanted to see raped, nor indeed that specific instructions went out to the interahamwe that they should rape women.”¹¹⁹ Since Hutu leadership did not encourage or plan widespread sexual violence as they did the murders, this strategy most likely developed on an individual basis and spread over time.

Young men with HIV/AIDS may have identified sex as a more gratifying means of murder. On a national scale, sexual fascination threatened to derail the leaders’ genocidal plan since it could motivate Hutu men to keep Tutsi women alive as sex slaves. By presenting sexual violence as a tool of genocide after sexual assault had already become widespread, leaders of the genocide were able to overcome this problem. By presenting the trend as genocidal strategy, it allowed Hutu men to satisfy their sexual curiosity without abandoning the genocidal plan of eliminating Tutsi women from Rwanda. Of the four motivators, only the last is a calculated plan for the use of sexual violence in support of genocidal strategy and is the most popular theory about sexual violence in the 1994 genocide.

¹¹⁶ Twaglimana, *The Debris of Ham*, 153; Des Forges, *Leave None*, 215.

¹¹⁷ Scharlach, “Women as Agents,” 396.

¹¹⁸ Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 155.

¹¹⁹ Des Forges, *Leave None*, 215; African Rights, *Death, Despair, and Defiance*, 750.

Adoption of New Norms

Although the crux of this article centers on the establishment and adoption of new norms, one cannot pin point when these changes occurred. Statistics help to indicate that new norms were acted upon but do not reveal how long they existed in a dormant state or when they began to shift in the first place. Many scholars overlook the fact that Rwandan society was divided geographically and technologically and, as a result, did not experience change monolithically. Genocidal violence, and the norms that preceded it, erupted in a mosaic across the country. Some urban areas began targeting women for murder and sexual assault immediately due to the high accessibility of propaganda while many rural communities only began attacking women in mid-May due to propaganda's limited availability. Although it remains impossible to pin point the development and adoption of norms in Rwanda, statistics give some indication as to the timeline of violence.

Evidence suggests that in some areas, norms about sexual violence shifted in the years prior to the genocide. Between 1992 and 1993, Tutsi women were subjected to frequent sexual harassment and some to rape.¹²⁰ Tutsi women expressed anxiety about sexual assault and often took extra precautions to avoid it; some went so far as to wear pantyhose whenever they left the house.¹²¹ As the Hutu military fought against the RPF's invasion in 1991 and 1992, Tutsi women were regularly raped as proof of their loyalty to Rwanda and as compensation for the "war effort."¹²² Even though sexual violence did not become widespread until April or May 1994, these examples show that some Hutu men were beginning to see sexual violence against Tutsi women as acceptable years before the genocide even began.

While sexual assault against Tutsi women began in the years preceding the Rwandan genocide, it appears that norms about their murder did not shift until the start of or during the course of the genocide. Although Rwanda suffered small outbreaks of ethnic violence between 1990 and 1993, violence was largely limited to Tutsi men. In some communities, this trend continued into the opening stages of the genocide. Many survivors testify that, in the beginning of the genocide, Tutsi women were spared from murder and directed back to their homes specifically because of their traditional lack of ethnicity.¹²³ These accounts show that some regions of Rwanda still clung to the old norm in which ethnicity was

¹²⁰ Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 157.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²² Article 19, *Broadcasting Genocide*, 153.

¹²³ Jones, "Gender and Genocide in Rwanda," 111.

reserved for men. Although the Hutu population took a significant amount of time to adopt new norms about the use of ethnic violence toward Tutsi women, an examination of propaganda shows that the Hutu elite intended for and encouraged the murder of Tutsi women as early as 1990. Despite their initial resistance, the Hutu majority quickly adopted and implemented new norms of ethnic violence after the assassination of President Habyarimana.

It appears that a major catalyst was needed to push Hutu men into accepting and participating in the murder of Tutsi women. President Habyarimana's assassination on April 6, 1994 served as the perfect spark, triggering mass violence against Tutsi men and women. Rampant murder and sexual assault erupted in regional pockets between early mid-April and mid-May and continued through the end of the genocide.¹²⁴ Even though murder and sexual assault began in a mosaic fashion, most accounts agree that by late May murder and sexual assault of Tutsi women had become normal through Rwanda. The development and adoption of norms allowing for the murder of Tutsi women required considerable time and effort since they directly conflicted with traditional Rwandan taboos and perceptions of ethnic membership. By comparison, sexual violence norms formed much more naturally, developing without specified effort from the Hutu elite. Given Rwanda's sexist culture and prevailing ethnic stereotypes about Tutsi sexuality, it is not surprising that it required little time and no specific effort to shift norms about sexual violence.

Conclusion

Although evidence of widespread sexual violence indicates a collaborative effort to use it as a genocidal tool, it appears that sexual violence was an indirect byproduct of Hutu Power propaganda designed to mark Tutsi women for murder. Bent on derailing the Aursha Accords by any means necessary and retaking power, Hutu leaders launched a powerful propaganda campaign between 1990 and 1994 aimed at normalizing violence toward all Tutsi regardless of age or sex in order to enact a permanent solution to the Tutsi-Hutu problem. Playing on the fears of the population, Hutu leaders enacted a contemporary version of the PARMEHUTU ideology known as Hutu Power. The extremist leaders warned that domestic Tutsi and RPF forces hoped to invade Rwanda,

¹²⁴ Mary Kayitesi Blewitt, "Survival Against the Odds," *Survivors Fund*, <<http://survivors-fund.org.uk/resources/survival-against-the-odds/>>, (accessed April 2, 2012); and Taylor, *Sacrifice*, 152.

reverse the social and economic progress of the Hutu nation, and enslave the Hutu majority.

Hutu leaders argued that the only way to established sustainable peace in the Hutu nation was by exterminating the entire Tutsi population, a move that they failed to do in 1959. Hutu Power propaganda targeted Tutsi women for the first time as members of the Tutsi ethnicity and marked them as hyper-sexual accomplices of the RPF. Print and radio propaganda warned against Tutsi women who used their sexuality to gain European support for the RPF cause and as spies against Hutu men that had relationships with them. Even though this propaganda was designed to degrade Tutsi women, as Hamitic prostitutes and immoral spies in order to normalize their murder, it also strengthened their sexual appeal and made them targets of sexual deviancy including rape, sodomy, forced incest, and group sex. Almost all Tutsi women who survived are believed to have been raped, proving that sexual violence was extremely common and culturally acceptable. Although widespread sexual violence did not begin until April and May of 1994, sexual attacks against Tutsi women occurred in between 1991 and 1993, signaling a shift in sexual norms prior to the 1994 genocide.

In general, Hutu men used sexual violence for four reasons: envious fascination of the Tutsi women's sexuality, the ability to have women normally unavailable, sex as a spoil of war, and calculated efforts to kill Tutsi women slowly from AIDS or shame. Even though sexual violence ultimately served as a highly destructive genocidal tool, it appears that its development was inadvertent and threatened to derail the Hutu elite's genocidal plan of murder. Although the Hutu elite waged a three- year propaganda campaign to normalize the slaughter of Tutsi women, Hutu men more readily accepted new norms about sexuality than about ethnic murder. Survivor testimony shows that women were not killed until April or May of 1994 whereas sexual violence began years earlier. In order to enact their genocidal plan, the Hutu elite had to directly challenge Rwandan traditions about ethnic violence and ethnic membership with intense propaganda. After studying Hutu Power propaganda, it becomes apparent that the intent was for the extermination of all Tutsi accomplices. The Hutu elite identified Tutsi women as the most dangerous group of accomplices and accused them of using their sexuality in order to pursue the interests of their ethnicity. Although Hutu Power propaganda successfully normalized ethnic violence against Tutsi women, the Hutu elite was unable to control the manner of violence used. Hutu Power's hyper-sexualization of Tutsi women through propaganda and ethnic myth heightened Hutu men's sexual fascination with the beautiful enemy, making sexual assault far more appealing than asexual murder.