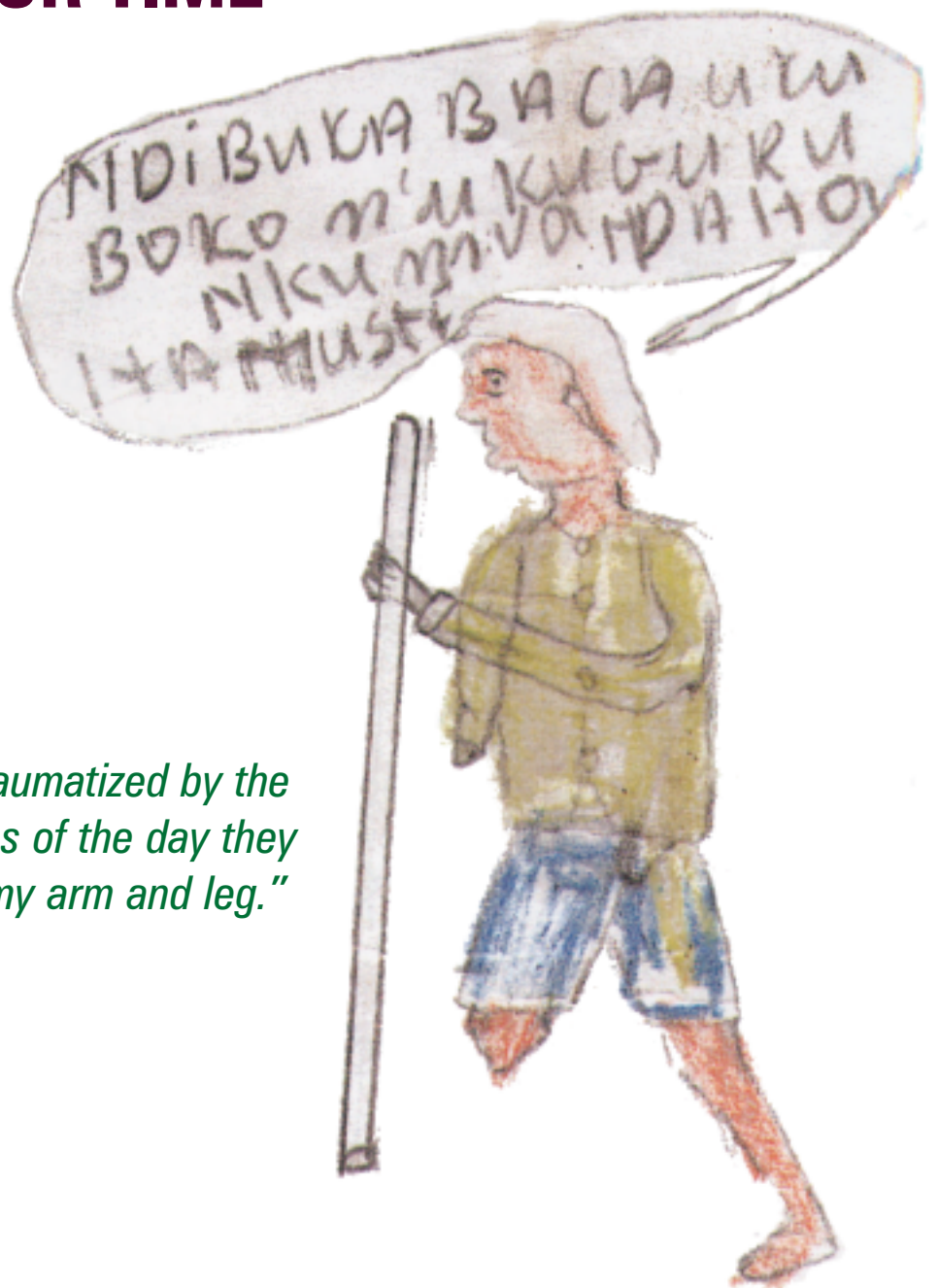


# THE RWANDA COMMEMORATION PROJECT: GENOCIDE IN OUR TIME



*"I am traumatized by the memories of the day they cut off my arm and leg."*

## ABOUT THE RWANDA COMMEMORATION PROJECT

April 7, 2004 marks a decade since the beginning of the Rwandan genocide, when nearly one million people were killed over ninety days while the international community largely stood by. The United Nations has declared April 7th as the "International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda." The Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law at American University Washington College of Law has developed the Rwanda Commemoration Project to encourage law schools, universities, NGOs, community groups and others to hold events to commemorate the anniversary of this modern-day genocide, and to use the Genocide as a lesson, reminder and warning about the persistence of genocide in our time. Genocide can happen again; it has happened and will continue to happen unless we stay vigilant and learn and apply the lessons of our recent past.



*"Where shall we flee to now?"*

## BACKGROUND ON THE RWANDAN GENOCIDE

The Hutu and Tutsi populations in Rwanda have had a tangled history. Although they often lived side-by-side as neighbors, intermarrying, and sharing a common culture, tensions between Hutus and Tutsis have flared as decolonization, ethnic tensions and civil war have taken their toll. When Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana was killed in a plane crash on April 6, 1994, it sparked the start of a well-planned, systematic slaughter of the Tutsi minority. Hutu officials throughout the country, from the Prime Minister to local and regional authorities, called for "self-defense" against Tutsi "accomplices" and "enemies" using radio and mass media to promote their message. Road blocks were set up. Within hours, an organized and systematic program for mass extermination was underway.

Each day, for over three months, Tutsis were hunted, tortured and massacred on the streets, in their homes, in churches, and in schools. Military officials were not the only perpetrators; threats and calls for violence turned neighbor against neighbor, as civilians picked up machetes and guns and slaughtered each other. By the end of the campaign almost one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus had lost their lives. Rwandan survivors and the international community were left to ask how such an atrocious thing could have happened.



*"Men killing friends"*

In the years since, evidence has shown that policymakers in France, Belgium, the United States and the United Nations were aware of the preparations for systematic extermination but chose not to intervene. The U.S., attributing the massacres to "tribal warfare," even went so far as to instruct its officials not to use the term "genocide." It was not until five years later that the international community recognized its failure to act, acknowledged steps that it could have taken to prevent the Genocide, and accepted its share of responsibility for the tragedy in Rwanda. A 1999 independent inquiry into the events in Rwanda commissioned by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan concluded that "the overriding failure in the international community's response was the lack of resources and political will, as well as errors of judgement as to the nature of the events in Rwanda."

Apologizing to the survivors in Rwanda, Mr. Annan remarked, "We will not deny that, in their greatest hour of need, the world failed the people of Rwanda."

In 1994, the United Nations established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda to prosecute those who bear the most responsibility for genocide, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law committed in Rwanda and neighboring countries in 1994. To date, 17 people have been convicted including former Ministers in the Rwandan Interim Government as well as former military, civic, and community leaders. 24 people are currently on trial, and another 22 are awaiting trial. Others are awaiting prosecution in local courts in Rwanda, but the process is slow. Rwanda is also using a process called "gacaca" (ga-cha-cha) to hold perpetrators accountable. Gacaca is based on the direct participation of each member of the community in confronting, rehabilitating and reintegrating accused perpetrators into the community. Human rights groups have praised the effort but warned that without adequate support from the government, the extra-judicial nature of these courts could lead to further injustices.

Rwanda has become a symbol of the modern-day failure of the world to end genocide. Too many times in our history have people pledged "Never Again!" only to see a similar tragedy repeat itself in another place. The tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide provides an opportunity to reflect on the universal goal of preventing genocide and to use the lessons we have learned to work towards a day when genocide will truly be a thing of the past.

## PROGRAMMING IDEAS

Below is a short list of programming ideas to commemorate this anniversary and share the lessons of the Rwandan genocide. It is our hope that your group will choose to organize one or more of the suggested programs, or use these ideas as a springboard for creating projects that make sense within your community. We encourage you to hold a combination of commemorative and substantive events in order to stress the idea that as we remember Rwanda, we must look to situations occurring in the world today and apply the lessons learned. For additional programming ideas, please see the Center's website at [www.wcl.american.edu/humright/center/rwanda/](http://www.wcl.american.edu/humright/center/rwanda/).

## COMMEMORATIVE ACTION

The following suggested activities are meant to be symbolic and will allow the community to reflect and express their feelings about the events in Rwanda in a serious and respectful manner. Each activity can be held on its own, or as part of a larger substantive program.

- **Plan a Candle Lighting/Memorial Ceremony** – Organize a candlelight vigil to pay tribute to the victims of the Rwandan genocide. Invite a survivor, a poet, or an activist to speak. Ask noted community figures to lead the group in prayer or thoughtful words that reflect upon the nature of the anniversary. Read the names of the Genocide victims aloud. Offer an "open-mike" for people to share their thoughts.
- **Coordinate a Moment of Silence** – Coordinate a moment in the day when professors, students, staff and the entire community take a moment to reflect on the Genocide and remember its victims.
- **Hold a Series of Readings** – Invite students, staff, faculty, survivors and community members to read poetry, essays or stories in a central location in the school. For ideas of appropriate readings, see the Center's website.
- **Organize a Flower/Card Collection** – Invite members of your community to bring flowers and cards to a central location and then deliver them (or have them sent) to a local Rwandan consulate.
- **Create a Memorial** – Invite students, faculty, staff and community members to display artwork, plant a tree, or dedicate a memorial (temporary or lasting) in a central location at your institution.
- **Sign a Condolence Book** – Invite your community to write messages in a condolence book which can be sent to the Ambassador of Rwanda in your country. Ask that it be presented to the President and people of Rwanda.
- **Set up an Information Table** – Set up a table in a central location at your institution with information about the Genocide. Other commemorative activities (such as a flower/card collection or a condolence book available for signatures) can be available at the information table. Having such a table at a central location will also help to promote other activities which your group may plan for the commemoration (such as speakers, films or other activities).

## SUBSTANTIVE PROGRAMS

The following are suggestions for ways to engage your community in substantive conversation about the cause of genocide, its effects on Rwanda and the world, and the need to actively prevent genocides looming in the world today.

- **Integrate the Anniversary into the Classroom** – Plan a lesson around the events of the Genocide. Review analyses of how the Genocide happened and what can be done to prevent future genocides. Encourage students to become active in a commemorative project.
- **Show a Film** – Film can be a powerful way to introduce the subject of the Genocide. Show a film early in the day to encourage people to participate in other commemorative events. Invite a speaker to talk about the Genocide after the film is shown, or organize an "open mike" opportunity for viewers to share their reactions to the events they have just seen. A list of films is available on the Center's website.
- **Organize a Panel Discussion** – Invite professors, activists or community leaders who have studied the Rwandan genocide to talk with your community about the event. If possible, invite a survivor of the Genocide in your area or a representative from the Rwandan Consulate or Embassy to speak. (Indiana and Michigan have the largest Rwandan populations in the U.S., according to the Rwandan Embassy). Possible subjects for discussions are included in this booklet.
- **Organize Action Workshops** – Create one (or a series) of workshops to teach participants about the Genocide and work together to come up with creative ideas and proposals for preventing future genocides. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's website has a variety of resources about genocide on their website for educators (see [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org)). Encourage workshop participants to come up with an Action Plan for preventing future genocides. Send this Action Plan to local community groups, the media, and elected officials.
- **Plan a Reading Group** – Organize a group to discuss readings about the Genocide. Distribute readings in advance and identify an educator or group leader to facilitate the discussion. Consider holding the reading group weekly for several weeks leading up to April 7. A list of readings is available on the Center's website.
- **Hold a Writing or Drawing Competition** – Put out a call for essays on a particular subject related to the Genocide. Topics should be selected based on their suitability for the age group of the students involved. Possible subjects include "From the Holocaust to Rwanda, Have We Learned our Lessons?" "Can There Be True Reconciliation After Genocide?" or "What is the International Community's Responsibility for Preventing Genocide?" You could also use a quotation from a poet, activist or scholar as a prompt and ask for reactions in light of the experience of the Genocide. Provide a forum to publish the winning essays or drawings, such as a newsletter, a website, a periodical or a local newspaper.
- **Host a Photo Exhibit/Display** – Classes or community groups can create exhibits with photos, stories and drawings about the Rwandan genocide. Alternatively, there are a variety of traveling photo exhibits about the Genocide available for display. Host the exhibit at a central location and invite the public. Organize a panel discussion or commemorative event around the exhibit. Invite students to write short essays about their reactions to the photos as a class project, or encourage the public to share their reflections in a book kept with the display.
- **Raise Money to Support Survivors and Programs to Heal Victims** – There are a variety of charities that aid survivors of the Genocide. Your group can raise money to donate to such organizations.
- **Conduct a Letter Writing Campaign to the United Nations** – On January 26, 2004, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan called for the establishment of a UN Committee on Preventing Genocide and the nomination of a Special Rapporteur who would monitor "massive and systematic violations of human rights and threats to international peace and security." Encourage your community to write letters urging world leaders to support and adopt the Secretary General's proposal. More information and a sample letter is provided on the Center's website.



*"Why am I being killed?"*

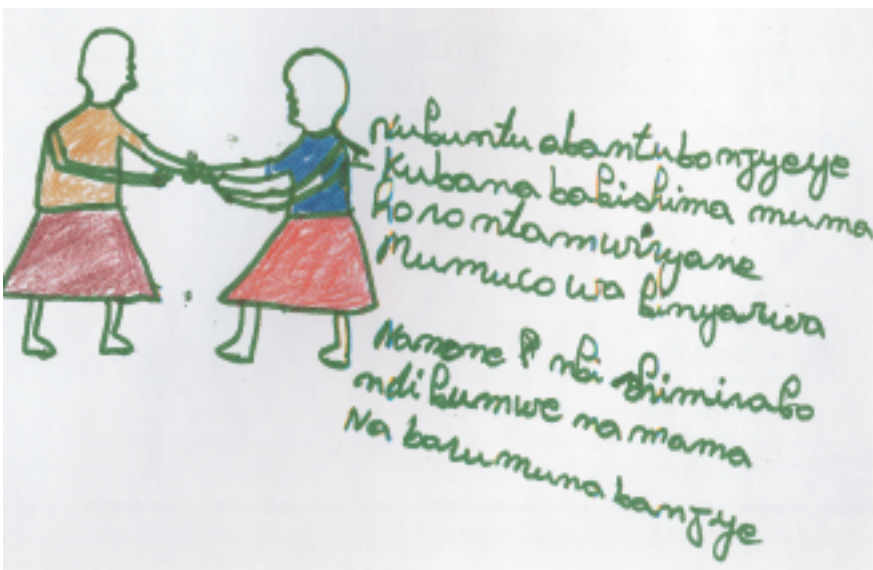
## SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- ◆ Rwanda: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow (A Historical Look at Rwanda's Political Landscape) ◆ Sudan, Congo and Chechnya: Looming Genocides in the World Today ◆ Surviving Genocide: A Survivor's Story
- ◆ The International Community's Role in Preventing Genocide ◆ The Justification of the Rwandan Invasion of Congo ◆ The Role of Non-State Actors in Genocide ◆ Accountability: War Crimes Tribunals and Truth Commissions ◆ The Gacaca Process ◆ Local vs. International Justice ◆ Hate Speech and Incitement
- ◆ The Role of the Media in Inciting Violence ◆ Chances for Reconciliation Following Mass Atrocity
- ◆ Religion, Ethnicity and Genocide ◆ The "Banality of Evil" ◆ Neighbors and Friends: Saviors or Enemies?
- ◆ The Role of Decolonization, Redrawing of Borders and the Division of Communities in Inciting Violence in Africa

## OUTREACH TO THE COMMUNITY

In planning events around the tenth anniversary, try to involve not only your own community, but also other groups who may be interested in helping to commemorate the Genocide. Planning events to commemorate the Genocide is a great opportunity to forge coalitions. The following is a list of suggestions for getting others involved.

- **Build Coalitions To Promote Events** – Meet with other community groups and ask them to co-sponsor commemorative events. By building coalitions and soliciting co-sponsors, more people will be encouraged to attend and become involved in your events. This will help build consciousness about your initiatives and will create an opportunity to forge relationships with others in your area concerned with similar issues.
- **Involve the University Community and Student Groups** – Work with faculty, deans and school administrators to create meaningful events. Use professors as resources for panels and discussions. Extend events into classroom discussions. Also, be sure to take advantage of the time and energy of student groups. Encourage student groups to organize events or co-sponsor events.
- **Work With Local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)** – Work with NGOs such as local sections of Amnesty International, churches, mosques, synagogues and other community groups to organize events and to use their networks to encourage greater participation in your events.
- **Involve the Rwandan Community** – There are thousands of Rwandans who live in the United States and Canada. If there is a community of Rwandans in your area, invite them to take part in your events.



*"I am glad that people have once again begun to live together with no conflict. I am also glad that I am still together with my mother and my sisters."*

- **Invite Communities of Survivors** – Unfortunately, there are a variety of communities of survivors of genocide and mass atrocity in our midst today. In addition to the events in Rwanda, there are survivors of the ethnic cleansing campaigns in Bosnia of the 1990s, the Killing Fields of Cambodia of the 1970s, and the Holocaust of World War II. Invite and involve survivors in your commemoration events.
- **Publicize Your Events Widely** – Be sure to publicize your events widely. Make local media aware of the events you are organizing by sending out press releases and making follow-up press calls. In addition, post notices of your events on electronic listserves and websites. Students and volunteers can help create a list of media contacts and place press calls. See the Center's website for a sample press release.

# SAMPLE DAY OF PROGRAMMING

## Throughout the Day:

Set up an information table in the lobby of the school with a Condolence Book available for members of the community to sign. Provide information about the Genocide on the table.

Draw attention to the table with a large poster or display nearby and by playing appropriate music.

Keep a memorial candle burning throughout the day.

Staff the table with members of various student groups and faculty.

## Lunch Time:

Organize a speaker to discuss the history and modern implications of the Rwandan genocide at a brown-bag lunch or screen a film.

## Afternoon/Evening:

Hold a Memorial Ceremony led by the University Chaplain, students, faculty and community members. Bring the Condolence Book to the event and encourage more people to sign it. Read a sample of excerpts from the

Condolence Book (if appropriate). Follow the commemoration with a panel discussion by experts discussing genocide, accountability and reconciliation. Publicize the event widely and invite the public.



"Genocide"

## RESOURCE LIST

*This is only a partial list of available resources. Please see the Center's website for more information and a broader list of resources. [www.wcl.american.edu/humright/center/rwanda](http://www.wcl.american.edu/humright/center/rwanda).*

### Web Links

WCL Center for Human Rights and Humanitarian Law:

[www.wcl.american.edu/humright/center/rwanda](http://www.wcl.american.edu/humright/center/rwanda)

WCL War Crimes Research Office:

[www.wcl.american.edu/warcrimes](http://www.wcl.american.edu/warcrimes)

Vision Television's "Remembering Rwanda" Project:

[www.visiontv.ca/RememberRwanda/index.htm](http://www.visiontv.ca/RememberRwanda/index.htm)

US Holocaust Museum Committee on Conscience:

[www.ushmm.org/conscience](http://www.ushmm.org/conscience)

International Campaign to End Genocide:

[www.genocidewatch.org](http://www.genocidewatch.org)

The Aegis Trust:

[www.aegistrust.org](http://www.aegistrust.org)

Prevent Genocide International:

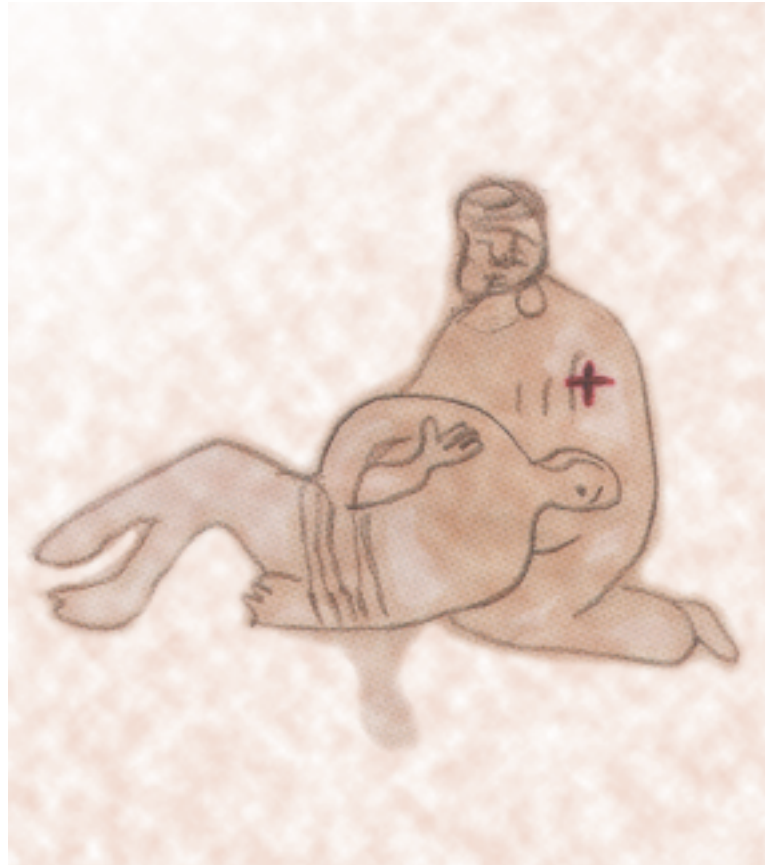
[www.preventgenocide.org](http://www.preventgenocide.org)

Human Rights Watch:

[www.hrw.org](http://www.hrw.org)

Amnesty International:

[www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org)



### Books, Articles and Publications

[We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda](#), Philip Gourevitch, Picador USA, ISBN: 0312243359, 1999.

[A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide](#), Samantha Power, Perennial, ISBN 0060541644, 2003.



*"Don't miss her! Shoot!"*

[Witness to Genocide : The Children of Rwanda : Drawings by Child Survivors of the Rwandan Genocide of 1994](#), Richard A. Salem and Hillary Rodham Clinton, Friendship Press; ISBN: 0377003301, 2000.

[Shake Hands with the Devil : The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda](#), Romeo Dallaire, ISBN: 067931178, 2003.

[Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda](#), Alison Liebhafsky Des Forges, Human Rights Watch, ISBN: 1564321711, 1999.

[The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide](#), Gérard Prunier, Columbia University Press; ISBN: 023110409X, 1995.

[A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide](#), Linda Melvern, Zed Books, ISBN: 185649831X, 2000.

[Eyewitness to a Genocide: The United Nations and Rwanda](#), Michael Barnett, Cornell University Press, ISBN: 0801488672, 2003.

[The Key to My Neighbor's House: Seeking Justice in Bosnia and Rwanda](#), Elizabeth Neuffer, Picador USA, ISBN: 0312302827, 2002.

## Films

**A Good Man in Hell: General Romeo Dallaire and the Rwanda Genocide** available free from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. Contact Bridget Conley at [bconley@ushmm.org](mailto:bconley@ushmm.org).

**Gacaca** – [www.frif.com/new2002/gac.html](http://www.frif.com/new2002/gac.html)

**100 Days in Rwanda** – [www.100daysinRwanda.net](http://www.100daysinRwanda.net)

**Itsembatsemba: Rwanda One Genocide Later** – [www.hrw.org/iff-97/filmae/corditse.html](http://www.hrw.org/iff-97/filmae/corditse.html)

**Valentina's Nightmare** – [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/rwanda](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/rwanda)

**The Triumph of Evil** – [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil)



*“Whenever I play with other children,  
I try to forget the things I saw.”*

## Photo Exhibits

Through the Eyes of Children: The Rwanda Project

This traveling exhibition is the result of continuing photographic workshops for children who live at the Imbabazi Orphanage in Gisenyi, Rwanda. Many of the children were orphaned by the 1994 Genocide. Provided with disposable cameras and a chance to express themselves through photography, the children's work provides the viewer with a window into their lives. [www.rwandaproject.org](http://www.rwandaproject.org)

Tears in the Green

Summarizing three years from the Genocide to the rebuilding of the new Rwanda. Erez T Yanuv Barzilay, Shai Lah Productions. [www.AidWithoutBorders.org](http://www.AidWithoutBorders.org)

### Additional Resources Available on the Center's Website ([www.wcl.american.edu/humright/center/rwanda](http://www.wcl.american.edu/humright/center/rwanda))

- ◆ Suggested readings/poems for memorial service
- ◆ A sample press release for commemorative events
- ◆ An expanded list of resources (books, films, articles, website links)
- ◆ A checklist for event planning
- ◆ A sample letter to UN and world leaders

### Contact Information for Rwandan Diplomats in the United States:

Embassy of Rwanda to the United States  
1714 New Hampshire Avenue, NW  
Washington DC 20009  
Telephone: (202) 232-2882; Fax: (202) 232-4544  
E-mail: [rwandemb@rwandemb.org](mailto:rwandemb@rwandemb.org)  
URL: <http://www.rwandemb.org/>

Permanent Representative of the Rwandese Republic  
to the United Nations  
124 East 39th Street, New York, NY 10016  
Telephone: (212) 679-9010/9023/9024  
Fax: (212) 679-9133

Booklet and Project Concept: Hadar Harris

Ideas and Contributions: Laura Rotolo, Sarah Hymowitz, Shazia Anwar, Justine Mbabazi

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The drawings featured in this booklet are taken from the book, *Witness to Genocide: The Children of Rwanda*, edited by Richard A. Salem. The drawings are all by child survivors of the Genocide. We would like to thank Mr. Salem for generously allowing us to use this art. The book can be ordered from Conflict Management Initiatives at 1225 Oak Avenue, Evanston IL 60202. Retail cost is \$19.95 plus shipping. [www.cmi-salem.org/witness.htm](http://www.cmi-salem.org/witness.htm)

CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY WASHINGTON COLLEGE OF LAW  
4801 MASSACHUSETTS AVE, NW  
WASHINGTON, DC 20016  
[humlaw@wcl.american.edu](mailto:humlaw@wcl.american.edu)  
[www.wcl.american.edu/humright/center.cfm](http://www.wcl.american.edu/humright/center.cfm)  
PHONE: +1.202.274.4180 FAX: +1.202.274.0783

