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‘If you don’t do this, you’ll die with them’: Women Perpetrators in the Rwandan Genocide

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ABSTRACT:

In April of 1994, a small African country, Rwanda, would experience a horrific genocide that wiped out nearly one million people in one hundred days. This racial struggle between the Hutu and Tutsi people rooted in the Belgian colonization of Rwanda drew the attention of the entire world as the violence unfolded. When the genocide ended, people reported on the brutality of the events that took place and the inhumanity of the killers. The perpetrators of the genocide were almost always seen as men or young teen boys. However, few people discussed the women that were involved in the genocide, and nearly three thousand of the perpetrators were Rwandan women.¹ Through interviews of the women perpetrators that occurred after the genocide, historians started to piece together more information about the women perpetrators; however, there were many more angles to examine. Did the women participate in the genocide because they had deep connections with their Hutu identities or were they compelled to participate because of others? By sifting through interviews, it became evident that women made references gender roles as motives when discussing the acts of genocide they committed. Ultimately, women perpetrators in the Rwandan genocide controlled their actions and decided to participate in the brutal killings of thousands of Tutsi people.

¹ Nicole Itano, "3,000 Rwandan Women Await Trials for Genocide," *We News* (December 20, 2002), <http://womensenews.org> (accessed September 10, 2012).

“They sent me to a homestead while armed with rifles and when we surrounded the house I shot...people inside. I regretted it after I killed them. I knew that I had done something wrong and I felt that if I continued killing I would also die. I went home and told my husband how I had decided not to (kill again). I told him, ‘these were my neighbors, and their deaths have upset me, so I won’t repeat (killing) anywhere else.’ He told me then, ‘If you don’t continue...you will have to die also.’”²

INTRODUCTION:

As a continent of many racial groups, Africa has experienced cultural, religious, ethnic, political, and economic conflicts. Because of the colonization of different parts of Africa and poorly orchestrated ‘political boundaries’ that have been drawn, conflict has only grown more intense in modern Africa. In particular, the central African region colonized by the Belgians has witnessed great violence based from ethnic political, social, and ethnic issues.

Traditionally, Rwanda was a land of different ethnic clans in the Great Lakes region of Africa.³ The most prominent clans in Rwanda were the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa, where the Hutu was the dominant group.⁴ In 1884 after the Berlin Conference, Rwanda was colonized by Germany. This rule was more of a relaxed colonial rule where the King of Rwanda, King Rwabugiri a Tutsi, was in close contact with the Germans. During this time, the Tutsi king redistributed land to the Tutsi people, which in turn made them wealthier and more powerful than the Hutu majority. By redistributing the land and power, a rift was created between the Hutu

² Reva N. Adler, Cyanne E. Loyle, Judith Globerman, “A Calamity in the Neighborhood: Women’s Participation in the Rwandan Genocide,” *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 2, no. 3 (November 2007):225

³ Mahmood Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2002):76

⁴ Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (London: Cornell University Press):21.

and Tutsi people. The Hutu people resented the Tutsi and wanted more power in the government.⁵

After World War I, Rwanda was declared a Belgian territory. During the colonization of Rwanda, the Belgian forces created identity cards for the people of Rwanda.⁶ With the authorization of these identity cards in Belgian Rwanda, the society was divided, labeled, and exploited. These identity cards allowed for an ethnically 'superior' minority group to rise to power in the country, the Tutsi. As the Tutsi ethnic group gained more power in Rwanda during Belgian occupation, the dominant Hutu ethnic group fell in the rankings economically, socially, and politically.⁷ At the end of WWII, Rwanda was declared a UN Trust Territory and the Belgians were directed to oversee Rwanda as the country moved towards independence. In 1959, the Hutu people overthrew the Tutsi government in a 'revolution' resulting mass Tutsi murders and in many Tutsi taking refuge in surrounding countries. Shortly after this, elections were held, and Hutu official was elected to rule the country and declare independence in 1962.⁸

In 1973, President Habyarimana was elected president of Rwanda. He was a moderate Hutu and enforced moderate ethnic policies in the country. Because of these less harsh policies, Tutsis started to move back into the country.⁹ In 1990, a Civil War broke out in northern Rwanda as a Tutsi army, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) moved into the country. The Hutu militia fought back, but they did not feel as though they had proper reinforcement from the government. As more Tutsi returned to the country, Hutu extremists started to become frustrated with the

⁵ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 68.

⁶ Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (London: Cornell University Press):21.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 118

⁹ Alison Liebhafsky Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1999).

president's relaxed policies.¹⁰ This was just the start of a conflict that would continue to snowball throughout years of violence until a crisp, April morning in 1994. On the morning of April 6th, 1994, Hutu president Habyarimana's plane was shot down, and the president was killed.¹¹ To this day, the government does not know who shot the plane down. Was it the RPF because they wanted a Tutsi president? Or was it the Hutu extremist militia who wanted harsher policies enacted on Tutsi people?¹² After the plane was shot down the country of Rwanda experienced the start of the worst one hundred days in their history. This would later become known as the Rwandan Genocide.

The brutal nature of the killing was unlike any of the genocides previously studied. Through the use of machete and radio propaganda, Tutsi people, Hutu moderates, and government officials were murdered. Within one hundred days, estimates of about 800,000 people were killed.¹³ Additionally, the words of the killers provided evidence of the intent of kill on a large scale, as one perpetrator recalled, "kill and fast, that's all. There's no point on taking your time."¹⁴ Consequently, the ample number of deaths in such a short time frame demonstrated the brutality of the genocide.

Bystanders could understand the direct motive; elimination of an ethnic group, the Tutsi. The Rwandan genocide has been the only 'confirmed genocide,' since the Holocaust. Even though there have been other acts of genocide besides these conflicts, no other genocides have been considered genocides by the international community and the genocide convention. Genocide has been a very controversial subject for many countries and people because of the

¹⁰ Straus, *The Order of Genocide*, 26.

¹¹ Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide* (London: Verso, 2004):133.

¹² *Ibid.*, 147.

¹³ Greg Barker, and Julia Powell, *Ghosts of Rwanda*, DVD, (Alexandria, VA: PBS Home Video, 2004).

¹⁴ Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season: the Killers in Rwanda Speak: A Report* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005): 130.

conflict surrounding the definition given at the 1948 convention. The following was the definition of Genocide given at the 1948 Genocide convention:

Article 1: The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish. Article 2 In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.¹⁵

The vagueness of the definition allowed there to be debate about what constitutes genocide in certain situations. The debate will be important and relevant in this paper because it will show how difficult it is to define genocide, and more specifically how some women perpetrators questioned the way they were tried after the genocide. However, there was little debate that the Rwandan genocide was a gruesome. The Rwandan genocide particularly fit because of Article 2, section A: killing members of the group. As a bitter ethnic struggle between the Hutu and Tutsi ethnic groups of Great Lakes Region of Africa, the genocide would be studied and analyzed from many different angles.

Most of the people that participated in the genocide were Hutu males. Many of the men were farmers and worked next to the people they would soon kill. The genocide infected the country, and children became involved. Participants looked at killing as their 'job' for the day.¹⁶ They would leave in the morning to carry out their duties and return for dinner. With the abuse of substances such as alcohol and the perpetuation of propaganda from the RTML,* perpetrators were able to kill their neighbors and friends. The cold and brutal nature of the Rwandan genocide

¹⁵ International Humanitarian Law, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*. (New York, December 9, 1948).

¹⁶ Hatzfield, *Machete Season*, 60.

*RTML: This was a radio station in Rwanda that was used to spread Hutu propaganda. The radio station would broadcast the names of Tutsi people to be killed.

had become the focus of many historians in the late 1990s, but since the genocide was fairly recent, there were many more perspectives to explore. Because of the brutal nature, the genocide has frequently been understood as a male undertaking. By looking into the testimonies of survivors and perpetrators, it became evident that women played a major role in the genocide. The neglect to study the women who carried out the genocide remained an interesting area of research. As this paper argues, an analysis of the testimonies given by female perpetrators showed that women frequently referenced their gender when discussing their actions in the genocide which offered some explanation of why women participated.

HISTORIOGRAPHY:

Since 1994, there have been many studies completed on the Rwandan Genocide. These studies examined comparative studies, influential factors in the genocide, foreign involvement (or lack of), reports of victims, and studies on the aftermath of the genocide. This paper examines the people who committed the acts of genocide, and more specifically, the roles of women in the genocide. Some questions that were addressed are: What were women's motives for participating in the genocide? How were women penalized after the genocide? These questions will be vital in determining more specifics on the women that participated in the genocide as perpetrators. From research and analysis, my studies analyzed women gender roles in Rwanda and how this created questions about women's about their roles in the genocide. Overall, what roles did women have during the Genocide? Were these roles forced, or did the women have a choice? It was these very questions, which piloted my research.

As a modern conflict, there have been many different interpretations of the literature and sources; however, there were many more area to be explored. Through the use of memoirs, data, and interviews carried out after the genocide, there was a wealth of primary source material available. Since this conflict was relatively recent, there was media coverage, interviews, and testimonies collected to document the Rwandan genocide. Additionally, because of the modern topic, there have not been a lot of trends in the literature. Instead of trends based on timeframe, there have been categorical trends in the literature. These categorical comparisons include, reconstruction, victims and their stories, social studies of the killers, comparisons and questions concerning the international community, and general histories of the genocide.

One of the earliest trends in the literature was victim memoirs and stories. After a violent conflict, such as the Rwandan genocide, the literature seems to always focus on the victims. It would be inappropriate to focus on the perpetrators because people were mourning the loss of Tutsi victims. Many of these works were memoirs or collections of diary entries and stories from Tutsi people who fled the Hutu militia such as *Rwanda Means the Universe*, which exposed the brutal nature of the conflict.¹⁷ Some of the first literature of the survivors to have an impact was released in 1999. In one of the most popular survivor works, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* by Philip Gourevitch, testimonies of survivors were compiled.¹⁸ These testimonies included stories from survivors whose occupations ranged from hotel owners and doctors to bishops. Mixed in with the author's own accounts, these stories allowed readers to understand the destruction that was carried out by the Hutu militia in Rwanda. Similarly, there are many newspaper articles and other memoirs that account for the stories of the survivors. The survivor stories have been a main focus for historians studying Rwanda and the genocide that occurred in 1994 and have remained vital to understanding the emotional aspect of the genocide.

Another trend in the literature happened fairly early after the genocide and analyzed the general history of the genocide. Much of this literature focused on the order of events and the amount of destruction that occurred. One of the most well-known and cited histories was, *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*, by Alison Des Forges.¹⁹ This literature evolved into examining Africa as a continent of war. A ground-breaking author, Mahmood Mamdani offered an interpretation of this history in his book, *When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism,*

¹⁷ Louise Mushikiwabo and Jack Kramer, *Rwanda Means the Universe: A Native's Memoir of Blood and Bloodiness* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006).

¹⁸ Philip Gourevitch, *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families: Stories from Rwanda* (New York: Picador, 1999).

¹⁹ Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*.

*Nationalism, and the Genocide in Rwanda.*²⁰ As a well-known African historian, Mamdani offered an African account to the history which was often considered one of the most revered renditions of the history of Rwanda. *When Victims Become Killers* discussed the relationship between the Hutu and Tutsi well before the conflict, including the involvement of the Congo government. Additionally, Mamdani analyzed the political and cultural differences that parallel the history of the country. Unlike most history accounts, this scholarly book offered some insight into the conflict associated with women. However, the monograph did not go into detail about the women's roles specifically in the militia.

After general histories of the Rwandan Genocide became published, social, economic, and political histories were written. Using the history of the Rwandan genocide, scholarly work expanded the history and extended it into other African conflicts. One notable book in this line of research was Gerard Prunier's, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe.*²¹ In this work, Prunier discussed the history of the genocide and the refugees that came from the conflict. He argued that these refugees have sparked some of the violence seen in other parts of Africa. During the genocide, the Hutu militia attacked some refugees. However, after the genocide governments around Rwanda fell and therefore created a power vacuum for central African countries. This extended version of the history has been seen in more recent times, but it still added to the overall history of the Rwandan Genocide.

Another category the literature could fall under is comparisons and the international community. These works seemed to be more recent. They discussed involvement, or lack of

²⁰ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 185

²¹ Gerard Prunier, *Africa's World War: Congo, the Rwandan Genocide, and the Making of a Continental Catastrophe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

involvement, from the international community and drew comparisons between other similar conflicts. Comparisons ranged from leaders to groups of people, to acts of violence, and finally to foreign involvement. One of the groundbreaking works in this category included Samantha Power's, *A Problem From Hell*, which have discussed information about military tactics used in the Rwandan Genocide. More specifically, Power discussed a brief history of the Genocide including key events and people. However, she took a harsher look at western nations and the United States in particular. She criticized the involvement or lack thereof when it came to the US and Hutu militia. Additionally she analyzed different tools the Hutu used to carry out the genocide such as the radio broadcasts. These broadcasts were a powerful way the militia carried out the killings rapidly.²² Overall, the literature on the Hutu militia has been pretty concise as it focused on the men in the militia and key generals.

In addition, another important book in the comparison literature has been Susan Cook's work, *Genocide in Cambodia and Rwanda*.²³ Taking a more political approach and comparison of the genocides, this book offers new perspectives on issues and sources of the genocide. For instance, there were comparisons made about the "leaders" of each genocide. Within these comparisons, Cook focused on the families and policies of each country during the genocides. Similarly, she analyzed the involvement of the United Nations. This included research on how each country reacted to the aid and funding from international countries. As another new perspective, Cook described the political approaches to the trial of the perpetrators of each country. In general, her political approach and comparisons of the genocides aided the development of a new area of study relating to the Rwandan Genocide.

²² Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: The Age of Genocide*, (New York: Harper Perennial, 2007).

²³ Susan E. Cook, *Genocide in Cambodia and Rwanda: New Perspectives* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006).

Similarly, another popular trend in the literature has analyzed more of the social implications of the genocide. Questions researched within the social research have included: Why do people kill? How do people kill their neighbors? What sparks group violence? Since this paper takes a more social approach to the topic of the genocide dealing with gender and roles in the conflict, this literature will be a main focus. One work that took a social approach to the genocide was, *Becoming Evil*, by James Waller.²⁴ In his research, Waller examined the explanations for genocide. He tried to understand why groups of people were able to murder others. By using accounts from different scholars and witnesses, Waller offered some guidance as to why perpetrators carried out the act of genocide. His studies were completed after the Rwandan Genocide. Furthermore, in another work that examined the acts of killing, Ervin Staub examined psychological effects of genocide in his work, *The roots of evil: the origins of genocide and other group violence*.²⁵ His research was done before the Rwandan Genocide happened, but it had credible arguments for the violence carried out in genocide. Staub examined the psychological aspect of genocides. He studied groups of people who carried out genocides. Through these studies, he informed out the psychological implications of their acts. These scholarly works will be beneficial to this paper because they will allow for a psychological discussion. More specifically, the paper will focus on the psychological effects community genocidal acts.

Another part of the social history of the Rwandan Genocide entertained the idea of group violence and killing neighbors. Many studies have been completed on group violence in general; however, in *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda*, Fujii analyzed Rwanda in

²⁴ James Waller, *Becoming Evil: How Ordinary People Commit Genocide and Mass Killing* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

²⁵ Ervin Staub, *The Roots of Evil: the Origins of Genocide and Other Group Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

particular.²⁶ She discussed the individual actions of the perpetrators. Instead of ethnic hatred, she suggested that group ties and dynamics created the widespread violence. Through studies researched in Rwandan prisons after the genocide, Fuji was able to draw comparisons between the perpetrators' stories. Similarly, she discussed the idea of power and power struggle in Rwanda. Power struggles in Rwanda related to some accounts of perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide which fall under the social and psychological studies of the genocide. Some historians have chosen to focus on the Hutu militia. These studies included details about the militia and different tactics used to execute the Tutsi. A well-known source which discussed the Hutu militia was Jean Hatzfeld's, *Machete Season*. This source analyzed the people who carried out the killings in Rwanda. The focus in this research was on a specific group of men in the hills of Rwanda. Offering a first hand perspective of the killers, the stories in this work explain some of the reasons the Hutu militia carried out acts of genocide.²⁷

Likewise, studying psychological reasons for the genocide lead to gender based studies. Important gender studies of Rwandan women have include *Sustaining Women's Gains in Rwanda: The Influence of Indigenous Culture and Post-Genocide Politics* which examined traditional gender roles of Rwandan women.²⁸ Another important study that examined traditional gender roles was *Gender and genocide in Rwanda: women as agents and objects of Genocide*. In this study, Lisa Sharlach exposed traditional views of Rwandan women which would be used for context in my argument. However, she neglected to connect how gender was used as a defense for genocide. Nicole Hogg attempted to analyze this defense mechanism in her essay, *Women's participation in the Rwandan genocide: mothers or monsters?* yet she did not relate the how the

²⁶ Lee Ann Fujii, *Killing Neighbors: Webs of Violence in Rwanda*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

²⁷ Hatzfeld, *Machete Season*.

²⁸ Peace Uwineza and Elizabeth Pearson, "Sustaining Women's Gain in Rwanda: The Influence of Indigenous Culture and Post-Genocide Politics," *The Rwanda Project* (2009).

women were categorized which left the perpetrators to question their influence in the genocide.²⁹ The lack of connection between women's gender roles, especially the idea of male superiority, and their understanding of participation in the genocide was an area that needed to be analyzed in more detail.

Some scholars have researched the perpetrators reactions to the conflict. This approach has been less researched; however, one book in particular really tried to understand the perpetrator's point of view, *Machete Season*.³⁰ Memoirs have been an extremely important part of research because they have allowed for interpretation of primary sources. Similarly, there have been numerous testimonies recorded from the International tribunals after the genocide. These testimonies have lead to interviews conducted by different organizations such as The Red Cross and African Rights, as well as several universities. The interviews taken from women perpetrators are the central focus of this paper. Furthermore, newspaper articles and information about specific killers have been a great source for primary documents. Because of the modern technology that was around during the events of the Rwandan Genocide, many primary sources are available.

It was not until recently that studies of the perpetrators began. Much of the research focused on the male participants with almost no research surrounding women as bystanders or perpetrators. There were many women charged with crimes against humanity after the genocide. These women were placed within different categories of crime based on influence and involvement in the genocide. The ways women were sorted into categories and tried as perpetrators made women question the classification of their crimes because of the traditional

²⁹ Nicole, Hogg, "Women's participation in the genocide: mothers or monsters?" *International Review of the Red Cross* 92, no. 877 (March 2010).

¹⁷ Jean Hatzfeld, *Machete Season*

gender roles of Rwandan women. Consequently, the discussion of motives for women perpetrators has been neglected in research of the genocide. Many scholars have analyzed women as victims in the genocide; however, few have entertained the idea of women as perpetrators. Scholars and researchers have overlooked the reasons women participated, and the roles women had in the Rwandan Genocide.

Through the analysis of the literature of the Rwandan genocide, scholars have researched different areas of interest concerning the Rwandan genocide. These perspectives have grown greatly since the genocide. Considering the Rwandan Genocide was a fairly new topic, the amount of different perspectives was impressive. Within the perspectives, there were political, social, psychological, and diplomatic approaches. Because of the extensive, scholars have been able to develop even more perspectives of the genocide. Although there are many different interpretations, much of the focus remained on the victims and events of the genocide. Research dealing with the genocide has neglected to draw a large focus on the perpetrators as individuals. In this paper, I analyzed the patterns of explanations within the people who carried out the violence. While analyzing the people, it became evident that there has been great focus on men and boys as perpetrators. However, there remained virtually no research on the women. The little research that focused on women in the Rwandan genocide dealt with stories of victims. Another look at women and the spectrum of involvement may reveal some new perspectives of involvement. Through comparisons between testimonies, memoirs, and gender norms, this paper will uncover how gender based motives of perpetrators allowed women to question their classification of crimes committed in the genocide.

THE PERFECT STORM: HUTU POWA

Before understanding the actions of women in the Rwandan genocide, it was important to contextualize the events. The genocide in Rwanda did not simply occur because president Habyarimana's plane was shot down in 1994. On the contrary, many scholars have argued that the genocide was in the works as early as 1990.³¹ Because of the racial divide the Belgians had created, many Hutu people felt they needed to join together against the Tutsi minority in power. By the early 1990s, the Hutu Powa* vacuum had been created through the use of propaganda in the RTML, Kanguara newspaper, and nationalistic ideas.³² Hutu Powa ideology was, "the conviction that the Tutsi was a *race* alien to Rwanda, and not an indigenous *ethnic group*...the Hutu were not just the majority, *they were the nation*."³³ It was this very mentality that resonated in many Hutu people. One example of this extremism can be seen in the Hutu Ten Commandments* which showed the direct implications of the Hutu Power regime. These policies included instruction on social, economic, and political interaction between Hutu and Tutsi people. The nationalistic nature surrounding the some Hutu leaders perpetuated the violence in addition to other factors.

Furthermore, there was growing tension with Hutu and Tutsi relations geographically. In Uganda to the north, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a Tutsi army, grew and started to invade northern Rwanda.³⁴ This army was not only growing in numbers, but they were also exterminating Hutu in northern villages. In addition, to the south, Hutu were forced to flee Tutsi

*Hutu Powa: Originally, this term was Hutu Powa, but it was modified in its translation to the English language of Hutu Power.

³¹Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 185.

³² *Ibid.*, 189.

³³ *Ibid.*, 190.

*See Hutu Ten Commandments in the Appendix

³⁴ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 205.

in Burundi and cross into southern Rwanda.³⁵ Because of these tensions, the central and southern parts of Rwanda saw a large influx in Hutu power and immigrants. It was not surprising then, that majority of the killings in the Rwandan genocide took place in these areas of southern and central Rwanda.

Similarly, there was political tension in the country between the two ethnic groups. In both Rwanda and Burundi, there was a power struggle in politics. By the early 1990s, both governments had Hutu leaders in power.³⁶ These governments were trying to work out an idea of 'ethnic reconciliation' because of the violence that had been experience earlier in the countries' histories. However, this idea of ethnic reconciliation was abolished first in Burundi when their Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye was assassinated by the Tutsi army.³⁷ This angered many Hutu in the Great Lakes area of Africa. In 1994 when the Hutu president of Rwanda, Juvenal Habyarimana, was assassinated, the political tension in Rwanda peaked, and genocide broke out.

Additionally, social tensions were at their peak with the recruitment of children in the Interahamwe.* Throughout the early 1990s, a child base army was built by extreme leaders of the Hutu powers, and "by early 1994, some 30,000 to 50,000 youth were estimated to belong to militias."³⁸ Because these youth were infiltrated with Hutu Power ideas, they were conditioned from a young age to kill the 'alien Tutsi.' Unfortunately, much of the base of society in Rwanda, the youth, were now conditioned killers. Because of the development of Hutu Power in the early 1990s, the tension was about to peak. With social, political, and geographic tensions rising, the country was headed for disaster, genocide.

³⁵ Ibid., 219.

³⁶ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 215.

³⁷ Ibid., 215.

³⁸ Ibid., 206.

*Interahamwe was extreme Hutu militia. It was primarily made up of children and young adults.

TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES IN RWANDA

Before discussion of the roles women played in the genocide, traditional gender roles need to be analyzed to understand why women objected to their categorical classifications as perpetrators in the genocide. There has been very little documented on traditional gender roles in Rwanda due largely to the oral tradition of the region. However, recently, more research has documented these gender roles prior to the genocide. Much of this documentation has been compiled through interviews of citizens in Rwanda, which led to a general understanding of these traditional gender roles. Before the genocide, men and women experienced a division in rights and roles. Traditional gender roles for women included, “hard work without complaint, homemaking, rearing and disciplining of children, faithfulness to partners, and (for some women) making a success of subsistence agriculture.”³⁹ These accepted gender roles dated back to pre-colonial Rwanda.

Education was not a value for many women in Rwanda because it was inaccessible to many in the middle and lower class, and did not fulfill the needs of a traditional farming family. In addition, before the genocide, many women did not hold positions of power in their communities, so education was not seen as a necessity.⁴⁰ Because the male was seen as the head of the house, the woman did not need to know how to handle outside obligations. A woman would need consent from her husband to deal with issues that did not concern her family and household. Consent was needed for activities such as, “open[ing] a bank account, engag[ing] in

³⁹ Adler, “A Calamity in the Neighborhood,” 216.

*Inkwano is translated as a bride price.

⁴⁰ Adler, “A Calamity in the Neighborhood,” 216.

commerce, or enter[ing] into any agreement.”⁴¹ Because men handled business outside of the house, an education was, in a sense, not desired or valued in traditional women roles of Rwanda.

Marriage in traditional Rwanda was a complicated issue. Similar to many other African societies, the men paid a *inkwano** to the bride’s family in order to have the opportunity to marry a woman. After the *inkwano* was paid, a groom would live with the bride’s family to earn respect from the family. This practice was known as *gutahira*.⁴² If the groom won over the bride’s family, he would be allowed to marry. Marriage held important value in Rwandan society because married couples were considered of a higher status than single adults. When the couple was married, they would move to the husband’s village where the wife would be responsible for proving her worth to the groom’s family, which was known as *gutsida*. One aspect of this practice was “accepting sexual relationships with her brothers-in-law.”⁴³ If the wife or the husband refused to this, they risked being shunned from their families. In Western society, this idea has been criticized because it is looked at as ‘forcing’ a woman to participate in sexual acts; however, some women in Rwandan culture believe that this allowed them to become closer to the family. Consequently, marriage in Rwandan society was extremely important for a woman because it allowed her to gain status and respect.

Acceptance of intermarriage between Hutu and Tutsi people varied by region and village. In more progressive areas, intermarriage was accepted. However, in more remote villages, intermarriage between the two racial groups was discouraged. The best way to describe the idea of intermarriage between the groups was to look at this idea as holding ‘unseen’ tensions. When

⁴¹ Lisa Sharlach, “Gender and Genocide in Rwanda: Women as Agents and Objects of Genocide,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 1, no. 3 (1999):391.

⁴² Elizabeth Powely, “Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament,” *International Publications: Case Study Rwanda* (2005): 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 10.

asked about this idea, a Hutu woman from northern Rwanda stated, “Young people weren’t allowed to marry Tutsi, and leaders discouraged such weddings.”⁴⁴ The tension surrounding the idea of intermarriage between the groups differed from region to region.

As indicated before, the idea of sharing a woman with other men was accepted in culture as well as the idea of polygamy. Traditionally, polygamy occurred in families who were wealthy because husbands were able to provide two different houses with individual plots of land and farms. In these polygamist families, the wives had more control over their activities and the house because their husbands were responsible for multiple wives and families.⁴⁵ Even though polygamy was recently prohibited in Rwanda, it still continues in the country. There has been a shift in reasoning for polygamy. Instead, polygamy was recently seen among families of poverty as a way to increase labor.⁴⁶

In pre-colonial Rwanda much of the women’s roles dealt with family obligations. According to the Rwandan National Gender Policy*, women were, “responsible for fulfilling their respective roles and obligations within the family and the community.”⁴⁷ The respective roles for women in Rwanda provided for a division between the genders in society, politics, economics, and overall involvement in the community. Similarly, the “Family Code of 1992 officially designates husbands as the heads of households” which dictated a subservient role for women in Rwandan communities.⁴⁸ In general, women were expected to focus on child rearing and up keeping the house. This involved cleaning and cooking meals for the family.

⁴⁴ Alder, “A Calamity in the Neighborhood,” 216.

⁴⁵ Powley, “Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament,” 10.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 10.

*The Rwandan National Gender Policy was used to set guidelines that were used when dealing with policies.

⁴⁷ The National Gender Policy, (Kigali: Government of Rwanda, 2004).

⁴⁸ Sharlach, “Gender and genocide in Rwanda,” 391.

Traditionally, the men were, “respected for ‘observing much and saying little’” as the head of the household.⁴⁹ Some circumstances called for an exception to women working in the house. If the family was of a lower economic status, women also worked in the fields subsistence farming and gardening. However, specific gender roles regarding work were generally as follows, “men were responsible for more physically demanding tasks such, such as clearing bush and the initial tilling of the land while the women did the less labor-intensive tasks of planting, weeding and harvesting the crops.”⁵⁰ Similarly, an Rwandan woman stated, “boys were taught to defend the interests of the family and the nation [and] were initiated in combat techniques...Girls, on the other hand, were groomed to help their mothers in household chores. The learned obedience, respect, politeness, submission and resignation...”⁵¹ Work in Rwanda was distributed based on gender because women were expected to focus on their family, household, and childbearing traditions and therefore did not work in the fields in many cases.

Overall, gender roles in Rwanda were established long before the genocide, and many traditions can be traced back prior to colonization. The gender roles that once defined culture for Rwandan women would be challenged by the genocide in 1994. When women were interviewed about the genocide their influence in the genocide, many of the perpetrators made references to their gender.

⁴⁹ Adler, “A Calamity in the Neighborhood,” 217.

*Genocidaires were people who participated in the genocide.

⁵⁰ Powley, “Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament,” 9.

⁵¹ Hogg, “Women’s Participation in the Rwandan Genocide,” 72.

WOMEN PERPETRATORS

After the genocide, people were left to question: How did this genocide happen? How could people carry out these crimes? *Who* were the perpetrators? As with other genocides, the Rwandan genocide left the international community wondering what had happened. As a starting point, the Rwandan community focused on the *who* were the perpetrators question. This would allow for some answers and explanations from the people who carried out the genocide. Before determining who the people involved were, a vaguer definition of perpetrator was established. This definition included the idea of an accomplice as, “the person who has, by any means, provided assistance to commit offences...”⁵² When this law was updated in 2004, the definition changed and stated, “showing the killers a hiding-place is an indispensable act, inasmuch as pointing it out has enabled the killers to find the victim.”⁵³ Based on this definition, many people were possible suspects of the genocide.

Because of the vast spectrum of participation among people in the genocide, the Rwandan government established different categories in order to start to prosecute the suspects. The categories established in 2001 ranged from category 1 to category 4 and were stated as followed:

Article 51:

Depending on the acts of complicity in the offenses, to which article one of this organic law applies, and which were committed between October 1, 1990 and December 31, 1994, the person prosecuted can be classified into one or more of the following categories:

Category 1:

- a. A person, who by his criminal actions or actions of criminal complicity ranks among the planners, the organizers, the inciters, the supervisors, and the framers of the crime of genocide or crimes against humanity;

⁵² Rwanda, Gacaca Law, 2001, Article 53.

⁵³ Rwanda, Gacaca Law 2004.

- b. A person, who acting in a position of authority on the national, Province, or District level, within political parties, the army, religious, or militia groups committed these offenses or encouraged others to commit them;
- c. A murderer of great renown who was distinguished in the milieu in which he lived or everywhere he went because of the zeal that characterized him in the killings or the excessive malice with which they were carried out;
- d. A person who committed the offense of rape or sexual torture.

As the investigations progress, the public prosecutor in the Supreme Court draws up and updates the list of the persons prosecuted or accused of having committed actions that put them in the first category. This list shall be published in the *Official Gazette of the Republic of Rwanda* twice a year in the months of June and December.

Category 2:

- a. A person who by his criminal acts or actions of criminal complicity ranks him among the perpetrators, co-perpetrators, or accomplices of voluntary homicides or serious attacks against persons that caused their death.
- b. A person, who with the intention of killing wounded his victims or committed other serious violence, but whose victims did not die.

Category 3:

A person who committed serious attacks without the intent to cause the death of the victims.

Category 4:

A person who committed offenses against property.

However, the perpetrator of said offenses, who, on the date this organic law enters into force, has agreed to an amicable settlement with the victim or a public authority or in arbitration, can no longer be prosecuted for the same offenses.⁵⁴

There were many people who fit into these categories of perpetrators of the genocide. Because of the amount of people involved, the government needed to find a way to deal with all of the cases without completely overloading the court system. Consequently, the system that was devised consisted of the International Tribunals looking only at the people who fell into Category 1, and

⁵⁴ Rwanda, Gacaca Law, 2001, Article 51.

*Gacaca Courts: There was a wealth of information on the specific makeup of the courts in regards to the location, demographics, and representations of justices. However, this could be an entire paper in itself. For more information see Gacaca Law 2001 and 2004. More helpful resources include <http://www.rwandaembassy.org/discover-rwanda/the-genocide-in-rwanda.html> and <http://www.restorativejustice.org/10fulltext/ridelljennifer/>.

Categories 2-3 would be tried at more of a local level, or the Gacaca Courts*.⁵⁵ The main goals of the Gacaca Courts included:

- (i) To reveal the truth on the genocide events;
- (ii) To try the overwhelming number genocide crimes more quickly;
- (iii) To eradicate the culture of impunity;
- (iv) To help reconcile Rwandans and strengthen the unity of communities, and
- (v) To demonstrate that Rwanda is capable of solving its own problems without outside intervention or direction.⁵⁶

These courts had a tough time distinguishing crimes and sentencing those found guilty. In addition, largely they struggled to understand Category 3. Therefore, in 2004 the Gacaca law was revisited and modified. Essentially, the new Gacaca law in 2004 got rid of Category 3 and condensed it with Category 2. The new categories were as follows:

2nd Category :

- 1° The person whose criminal acts or criminal participation place among killers or who committed acts of serious attacks against others, causing death, together with his or her accomplices;
- 2° The person who injured or committed other acts of serious attacks with the intention to kill them, but who did not attain his or her objective, together with his or her accomplices;
- 3° The person who committed or aided to commit other offences persons, without the intention to kill them, together with his or her accomplices.

3rd Category :

- The person who only committed offences against property. However, if the author of the offence and the victim have agreed on their own, or before the public authority or witnesses for an amicable settlement, he or she cannot be prosecuted.⁵⁷

Still, to this day, Category 1 was tried by the International Tribunal, and Gacaca Courts have tried Categories 2 and 3.

⁵⁵ Gacaca Penal Reform, A Record of Gacaca Monitoring in Rwanda, *Penal Reform International*, (2010).

⁵⁶ C. Kavuro, "Rwandan Reconciliation Process: Outcome Analysis of the Gacaca Courts," *Rwandan Platform for Dialogue and Truth*. (September 10, 2011)

⁵⁷ Rwanda, Gacaca Law 2004.

Because there were a limited number of women who were identified as perpetrators or accomplices, there was little scholarly work analyzing women's roles in the genocide. The overall attitude on women who acted in the genocide was best understood by a statement from a Rwandan Lawyer Beradette Kanzayire:

Some women played an active role. For example, they may have killed people or been members of the CDR [an off-shoot of President Habyarimana's party, the MRND]...Others were beside their husband, for instance, when their husbands gave financial support to the militias. But the majority played a passive role, in refusing to hide their neighbors, and in particular, in showing the hiding places of Tutsi.⁵⁸

It was understood that of the nearly 3,000 women perpetrators in the Rwandan Genocide, many of the women would fall into the Category 2 and Category 3 qualifications of war crimes.⁵⁹ The breakdown of all of the categories established in the Gacaca law would help clear up distinctions between women perpetrators. However, these categories were not written with traditional women's gender roles in mind. In category two crimes, many of the female perpetrators assisted with the murder of Tutsi people. Given traditional gender roles, it became difficult to determine whether these women had a choice or if they felt compelled to obey orders to kill because of their gender roles. If the women were instructed to kill by men and educated people, many women were afraid challenge these orders. In the following section, the testimonies of women were sorted into categories regarding the severity of the crimes they committed. By sorting the testimonies, it became evident that women did not understand why they had been placed in the respective categories, especially category two, which made it hard to differentiate between the women perpetrators.

⁵⁸ Interview with Bernadette Kanzayre, lawyer, Kigali, 12 June 2001, taken from Hogg, 79.

⁵⁹ Hogg, "Women's Participation in the Rwandan Genocide," 79.

Category I Women Perpetrators:

The category one perpetrators of the genocide were those who were, “planners, organizers, instigators and ringleaders of the genocide, as well as those who occupied leadership roles in public administration, political parties, the army and religious denominations, and who committed or encouraged the genocide or crimes against humanity.”⁶⁰ These people were considered to be the leaders in the genocide. Additionally, perpetrators that fell into this category were both men and women. In total, there were 2202 people who were charged and would be tried for crimes in this category during the international tribunals. Of these 2202 perpetrators in category one, forty-seven were women.⁶¹ Even though the large number of perpetrators would seem overwhelming to many, this category had the least amount of perpetrators accused after the genocide. Overall, the women that were tried as category one perpetrators were fairly identifiable because they were either considered organizers or leaders of the genocide.

One of the subcategories of perpetrators that fell under category one of the Gacaca law was those who organized or ordered the killings in the genocide. Similarly, many of these women also personally carried out attacks against the Hutu moderates and Tutsi people. During the Rwandan genocide, many women were accused of playing a major role behind the scenes of the genocide. This included women who created lists of Rwandan people to be killed. These lists were then circulated at roadblocks, printed in newspapers, passed through the government, and reported over the radio. An example of women who would be tried as a category one perpetrator for her role in organizing the genocide was Leoncie Nyirabacumurwango.⁶² Many victims of the genocide have given accounts of her role in the organization of names of Tutsi to kill in a village. One of these accounts given by Josephine Mukarutsi stated, “Leoncie went looking for lists and

⁶⁰ Rwanda Gacaca Law, 2001, Article 51.

⁶¹ Government of Rwanda Category One List, *Genocide Archive Rwanda* (Oral Testimonies of Perpetrators, 2004).

⁶² Interviewed in Ndora, Butare, 19 July 1995, taken from African rights, 20.

communal documents to enable her to draw up an exhaustive list of people to kill.”⁶³ The fact that she drew up the lists of people was enough to charge her in category one perpetrators. By drawing up the lists, she was not only orchestrating the genocide, but she was also encouraging others to commit crimes against humanity.

Another woman that played a major role organizing the genocide was Bernadette Murkarurangwa. Before the genocide, she was a teacher and a member of the parliament.⁶⁴ As a woman in a powerful position, she influenced many Rwandan people during the genocide. Using her positions of power to orchestrate the genocide, Bernadette was seen as a major facilitator of the genocide in Ndora area of Rwanda.⁶⁵ Many people reiterated her importance in the genocide through their testimonies such as Celestin Nzabonankira, the “councilor of Munzenga” who stated, “the massacre in my sector was sponsored by Bernadette Mukarurangwa... it was very early in the morning of April 22 when she ordered certain hard-hearted Hutus to kill all the Tutsi in our sector.”⁶⁶ She continued with, “Bernadette was the one who gave out the order to kill the children” which spoke to the cold hearted nature of her actions.⁶⁷ Through the testimonies of witnesses, it became obvious that some women used their power to organize and manipulate Rwandan people.

Another important subcategory of category one crimes was the people who were considered leaders. This idea of leadership was interesting because of the way it was analyzed. According to top scholars in the field, leadership in category one crimes was distinguished based on intellect. For instance, “when attributing responsibility for the genocide, distinguish between

⁶³ Ibid., 20.

⁶⁴ African Rights, 16.

⁶⁵ African rights, 15.

⁶⁶ Interviewed in Ndora, Butare, 19 July 1995, taken from African Rights, 15.

⁶⁷ Interviewed in Ndora, Butare, 19 July 1995, taken from African Rights, 18.

the ‘ordinary; people who carried out the violence and the ‘intellectuals’ who are considered to be the masterminds behind it” which would differentiate, “between ‘ordinary women’ and women in leadership positions.”⁶⁸ The idea of leadership as it related to intellect was a re-occurring theme seen in the testimonies of perpetrators and victims. Evidently, an educated woman was a more dangerous than a woman who was not formally educated. According to Marie Harerimana:

Educated women participated, particularly in preparing for the genocide. This was apparent in the indoctrination meetings for young Hutu boys and girls. They were told that a Tutsi was so bad he was not even human but a snake. They added that in 1959*, the Hutus had made the mistake of not killing off all and so should not make the same mistake.⁶⁹

To be tried as a category one criminal in the Rwandan genocide, the perpetrator’s leadership needed to be “at a national leadership level,” and in general, these female perpetrators were educated.⁷⁰ Some of the most notable women leaders and perpetrators of the genocide were, Pauline Nyiramashko and Agathe Kanziga Habyarimana. These women have been studied in detail, but they were key women leaders in the genocide and deserve some attention here.

Agathe Habyarimana was tried as a major leader of the Rwandan genocide and violator of crimes against humanity. She was the wife of President Habyarimana and was often accused of having some involvement in his mysterious death.⁷¹ Specifically, she was accused of:

playing a key role in: the creation and support of the extremist radio station RTML as well as the extremist newspaper ‘Kanguara’; establishing and ensuring the training of the infamous Interahamwe militia, which led to the killings during the genocide; and drawing up lists of political personalities to be eliminated by the Presidential Guard following her husband’s death including Prime Minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana.⁷²

⁶⁸ Interview of Marie Harerimana, taken from Hogg, 76.

⁶⁹ Interviewed Mbazi, Butare, 1 June 1995, taken from African rights, 9.

*In 1959 there was a revolution in Rwanda where Tutsi extremists tried to assassinate a Hutu leader. This resulted in Hutu retaliation by killing tens of thousands of Hutu.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁷¹ Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, 133.

⁷² Commission des Recours des Refugies (CRR) 15 February 2007 5646776, taken from Hogg, 91.

These accusations were backed by witness testimony as well as the testimonies of government officials within the Hutu Powa movement. Obviously, she did not hold back her dislike of the Tutsi people. As understood before the genocide, “Kanziga is accused of being the ‘centerpiece’ of a system of repression, which included death squads, mafia-like economic activities, massacres and the disappearances of political prisoners.”⁷³ Instead of holding in her ideas, she voiced these opinions and viciously acted on her accusations as an educated woman leader of the genocide.

Furthermore, another well-researched leader of the genocide was Pauline Nyiramasuhuko. Many scholars considered her as a ‘right hand’ woman to Agathe Kanziga Habyarimana⁷⁴ Similar to other women accused of acting as a leader in the genocide, Pauline was educated and worked her way into a position of power within the government. Also, she reaffirmed ideas of traditional gender roles. Because of her leadership position in the genocide, there were many accounts from survivors and other perpetrators of her actions during the genocide. Based on court records, Pauline was charged with, “conspiracy to commit genocide; genocide or alternatively complicity in genocide; direct and public incitement to commit genocide; murder, extermination, persecution; other inhumane acts; and outrages on personal dignity.”⁷⁵ Some of the testimonies of her leadership have documented her physical involvement in the genocide. For instance, Prisca Mukagashugi stated:

Apart from indoctrinating, Pauline took care of the logistics for the militiamen who came from Kigali to set fire on Butare. She distributed grenades and supplied the petrol for the burning down of houses in the rural areas and distributed machetes and other useful equipment to the assassins.⁷⁶

Testimonies such as these have strongly identified her leadership in the Rwandan genocide.

⁷³ Ibid., 91.

⁷⁴ Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*, 133.

⁷⁵ Nyiramasuhuko, Amended Indictment, taken from Hogg, 92.

⁷⁶ Interviewed in Butare, 19 July 1995, taken from African Rights, 50.

Even though there were many witnesses to Pauline's actions, she continued to deny her actions in the Rwandan genocide. In one of her more disturbing statements, Pauline recalled, "I cannot even kill a chicken. If there is a person who says that a woman, a mother, killed, then I'll confront that person."⁷⁷ By stating this, she had denied her involvement, and continued the cycle of Hutu Power. Because she neglected to recognize her actions, she did not confront the issue of Tutsi oppression and her actions. Similarly, to add to the obscurity of her argument, she had suggested that there was not genocide. Instead, she had continued to make the argument that the conflict was in fact a civil war.⁷⁸ Therefore, she did nothing wrong because her country and racial group was at war with people who had invaded her country. When asked about the genocide at a camp for refugees, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko commented:

I do not believe that the Hutu people committed genocide because it is not possible. [Some of] our leaders are married to Tutsis. They are in this camp. It is true that all who are in the party of the president are said to be interahamwe. Even old people of a hundred years are interahamwe, because it's a generic name which should not be demonized. Even babies being born are interahamwe, but the name has been demonized and given to all Hutu.⁷⁹

It was evident that even after the genocide, Pauline would refuse to admit her involvement as an act of genocide. On the contrary, the genocide was a civil war. Therefore, she did not believe her involvement would categorize her as a perpetrator. Overall, her denial of the genocide made many survivors unhappy because she would not acknowledge that her ideas were wrong. As a key leader in the genocide, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko used her leadership skills and education to advance in the government.

In general, the women who were accused of committing category one crimes were assumed to be leaders or organizers of the genocide. Although there were a few women who were classified within different subcategories, the majority of women accused of category one

⁷⁷ Interviewed in Butare, 19 July 1995, taken from African Rights, 50.

⁷⁸ Interview by Lindsey Hilsum for the BBC, taken from African Rights, 57.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 57.

crimes were educated leaders and organizers. Additionally, out of all the women who were perpetrators, the smallest group was tried as category one offenders. Instead, the majority of the women accused of crimes against humanity would fall into category two and three crimes. Most likely, this was because there were less large-scale women offenders. Category one was fairly well defined; however, categories two and three were left open to interpretation.

Category II Women Perpetrators:

Under the new Gacaca reforms of 2004, category two offenders were those who “committed acts of serious attacks against others, causing death, together with his or her accomplices,” “...injured or committed other acts of serious attacks with the intention to kill them, but who did not attain his or her objective, together with his or her accomplices,” and “...committed or aided to commit other offences, persons without the intention to kill them, together with his or her accomplices.”⁸⁰ Here, the main perpetrators were those who carried out the crime of murder. Consequently, this idea was controversial because many people who were tried as Category two offenders claimed they were instructed to kill. Regardless, committing a murder or attempting to kill someone would fall into category two offences. Because of the controversy surrounding whether or not these people had a choice in their actions, there has been opposition to the categorization of criminals after the genocide. In addition, the majority of perpetrators tried after the genocide were within this category and were tried on a local level. Similarly, most women perpetrators also were categorized in this manner. One woman’s testimony stated, “I think the majority of women participated in it, but in ways different to men.” She continued with a breakdown of women criminals as:

⁸⁰ Rwanda, Gacaca Law, 2004.

1. Refusing to hide the Tutsi- for the most part, women were not interested in participating in the genocide in a positive sense, but the vast majority did not wasn't to help Tutsi either....
2. Assisting the killers- women assisted the killers by preparing the meals, fetching drinks and encouraging their men. Women brought provisions to the roadblocks and fed their men at home. No women criticized their men for being killer. This was not because they feared their husbands but because they believed in the need to kill Tutsi. Imagine the influence women could have had if they had tried to advise their husbands! One problem is that Rwandan women...were taught not to contradict men.
3. Information- women knew a lot. Their eyes were open. In particular, women exposed the hiding places of Tutsis.⁸¹

The following discussion will break down these ideas with specific testimonies of women regarding the Rwandan women perpetrators who refused to hide the Tutsi, assisted the killers, and informed the militia of Tutsis who were hiding.

While the genocide in Rwanda was being carried out, many Tutsis fled their homes in search of shelter or a hiding place. Because of their great fear of the Hutu militia and Interahamwe, many Tutsis turned to their neighbors for assistance. Unfortunately, because of the Hutu Powa machine, the Tutsis were refused by their neighbors. During the day, many of the men and children were working with the militias to hunt down the Tutsis. This meant that the majority of women stayed at home during the day. While at home, women were confronted by Tutsis who would plead for shelter and safety. Instead of allowing the Tutsis to hide out from the militias in their homes, many women turned the Tutsi families away. One account of this neglecting of Tutsi families was from a survivor who remembered Gaudence Kantwaza. The survivor recalled:

She even refused to take in a young Tutsi boy Aimable Hamamna. ...This girl only hid him for two days and then threw him out. The young man left as the girl said that she was going to alert the militiamen if he did not leave.⁸²

This story was similar to other seen in survivor testimonies which documented women who participated in the genocide. Many women threatened to call the militia if Tutsi people would not

⁸¹ Interview, taken from Hogg, 79.

⁸² Interviewed in Butare, 30 July 1995, taken from African Rights, 27-28.

leave them alone. Another common excuse documented by perpetrators was the fear that if their husbands knew Tutsis were hiding in their homes, they would be killed. Instead of standing up to the Interahamwe, many women used Hutu Powa as a threat to turn away Tutsi refugees.

Even though many women claimed that their refusal of Tutsi people was based on how their husbands and family would have reacted, there were some women who rejected Tutsi people because of their personal beliefs. In addition, some of these women pressured their husbands to neglect refugees as well. Within these situations, it became evident that the women were the main perpetrators. For instance, records have shown that, “many of them [Tutsis] were turned out of Hutu homes by women who often threatened to inform the Interahamwe if their husbands continued to shelter these women or took an additional steps to assist them” and in addition, “there were also women who turned their backs on people they knew in their hour of need.”⁸³ Turning a blind eye to a neighbor was something that was hard for much of the international community to understand. Many of these people had been living in mixed communities of Hutu and Tutsi people, yet they were able to ignore their neighbors in times of need. Consequently, the tribunals defined the act of refusal as a category two offense whether the women was directed or participated willingly.

Furthermore, many of the women charged with category two crimes informed the militia where the Tutsi people were hiding which could be related with the idea of refusing the Tutsi. Because so many women used the threat of the Hutu militia to refuse Tutsi refugees, these two aspects within the category two crimes were very closely related and rather hard to distinguish between. The distinguishing between the degrees of crime within each crime was important because it determined the punishment. An example of a woman who collaborated and informed

⁸³ African Rights, 39.

the Interahamwe of Tutsis that were hiding was Mme Suzanne. According the testimony of a survivor, Agnes, “Suzanne collaborated closely with a nurse called Priscilla Nishimwe who denounced many people and showed the killers where refugees were hiding.”⁸⁴ Showing the militia where the Tutsi were hiding was a common crime among women perpetrators. Likewise, some women informed the Interahamwe on a larger scale. This essentially became their job. For instance Solange Uwamahoro, an economics student in Kigali, has been accused of informing the Interahamwe by many of her classmates. One classmate stated, “She was an extremist and a member of the committee of Hutu students charged with sending Tutsi pupils to their deaths. She spent several nights with the soldiers negotiating and arranging for the death of the Tutsis at GSMMK.”⁸⁵ Educated women students were turning on their classmates in order to inform the Interahamwe. Additionally, a large amount of testimonies have recalled the brutal nature of the crimes because many of the murderers knew their victims or informed the Interahamwe.

Another subcategory many women had been linked to within category two crimes was assisting the Hutu militia. Assisting the Hutu militia was left with room for interpretation. In the tribunals, women have been tried because they physically joined the militia or embraced the ideas. However, it was not easy to understand exactly what the definition of assisting meant.

Some women were extremely active in the militia by taking part in the physical battles or struggles. The accounts of women who physically participated were numerous. Additionally, these accounts were very brutal in nature. For example, one survivor insisted, “She threw grenades as if she were sowing beans. I saw her on her knees shooting into us. Mme Semakuba did all this whilst she was pregnant.”⁸⁶ Many people could not believe some of the extents

⁸⁴ Interviewed in Kigali, 12 July 1995, taken from African Rights, 36.

⁸⁵ Interviewed in Kigali, 29 June 1995, taken from African rights, 37.

⁸⁶ Interviewed in Ndora, Butare, 19 July 1995, taken from African rights, 19.

women went to in order to assist the militia in the genocide. Pregnant women were physically attacking Tutsi, and other Hutu women were killing children. Libertata Muskasakindi's accounts of her experiences during the genocide were chilling as she stated:

She requested that I let her see the baby. I was afraid. But what could I have done? When she saw it was a boy, she commented 'Aha, so you have given birth to another Inyezi? You are not going to live yourself.' She picked up a stick and hit the child. He groaned only once and then he was dead. He was only ten hours old by then.⁸⁷

Women were killing other women's children just because they were "Inyezi*." Many of these children were not even old enough to understand what was going on in their country, yet they were killed because they were Tutsi. Likewise, some children were too young to participate in the genocide, but their fate was predetermined. In one example of a woman who was a category two perpetrator, Immaculee Mukakibibi, assisted the Hutu militia by giving up her own children. Ethnicity was passed through the father's bloodline.⁸⁸ Since she was married to a Tutsi man, her children were considered Tutsi. She recalled, "I had the misfortune of meeting one militiaman who asked me to leave the children behind and return to the house. There was a certain Habamenshi amongst them. He threw these two children into the Nyabarongo River...And so we returned empty handed. I didn't plead with them not to kill my children."⁸⁹ In Rwanda, women were giving up their own children to the militia if their children had Tutsi roots. This was shocking to much of the international community, and therefore, the women were perpetrated as category two offenders.

Other women took a back seat approach and assisted the militia by embracing the Hutu Powa ideas. However, by embracing the ideas, the women could be tried as category two offenders. This remained one area where women needed more explanation of categorizing

⁸⁷ Interviewed in Ntongwe, Gitarama, 10 June 1994, taken from African Rights, 32.

*Inyezi, or cockroach, was a common term used to identify Tutsis.

⁸⁸ Mamdani, *When Victims Become Killers*, 68.

⁸⁹ Interviewed in Gitarama, 9 August 1995, taken from African Rights, 29.

because it has been argued that any person in this situation would have been forced to embrace these ideas. Similarly, many Rwandan women did not stop the militia from killing Tutsi. Instead they stood by and witnessed the violence. From the testimony of one perpetrator, Zakia Uwamugira, her understanding of her role of a submissive and less powerful woman became evident as she stated, “I am accused of being there when people were being killed and singing. I admit I did this. I was there when people were being killed. Many people. I joined the animation just as I would join another choir. I did not have any idea that such encouragement would result in a genocide.”⁹⁰ Evidently, she used this excuse for her actions during the genocide. This would be a reoccurring theme in the testimonies of perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide because many women tried to downplay their role as vital in the genocide. These women would be considered category two offenders because they assisted the Hutu militia; yet, Rwandan perpetrators have contested the subjective nature of this category.

Category III Women Perpetrators

The third category of crime in the Rwandan genocide was specifically created for those accused of property crimes such as looting bodies or houses.⁹¹ Perpetrators in this category were numerous because of the less violent connotations associated with it. However, this category has come under some scrutiny because of the economic context of the country at the time.⁹² Before and during the genocide, many families were struggling due to high unemployment and a weak economy. Therefore, some women had made the argument that they had to loot the bodies in order to survive. In many cases, the Gacaca courts did not buy this argument because looting would have been considered a crime whether or not the genocide happened. Similarly, the

⁹⁰ Interviewed in Gisenyi, 30 January 1995, taken from African Rights, 39.

⁹¹ Rwanda, Gacaca Law, 2004, Article 51.

⁹² Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda*, 21.

punishment for this was less in order to accommodate the overpopulated prison system in Rwanda after the genocide. This was important for women who looted because, “In every single massacre investigated by African Rights in 1994 and 1995, every survivor- women, men and children- has commented on the fact that women and girls played a prominent role in looting the dead and the barely-living.”⁹³ Because of the vast numbers of perpetrators during the genocide, the country was not able to imprison everyone. Therefore, the categories and punishments were ranked by importance.

There have been many testimonies of women looting the bodies and houses of victims. This was because the majority of Hutu women were at home while their husbands were with the militia killing. Therefore, they would travel in groups throughout the day looting victims as their ‘job’. Survivors recalled the extent of the looting in testimonies gathered by the *African Rights* researchers. One survivor stated, “When I got home, there were two successive attacks on the house and money and valuables were taken.”⁹⁴ Homes that were left vacant during the days or nights were looted. Furthermore, other survivors have stated that women looted the bodies of the victims, “all the dead were completely undressed by the women and girls amongst the Inerahamwe.”⁹⁵ Another common testimony of women who looted was that the soldiers instructed the women to loot. For instance, one women perpetrator recalled,

The soldiers instructed us to loot: we had to pack the goods onto the back of lorries belonging to the soldiers. After that they said that women were cowards and were only good enough to finish off the ones who did not die straightaway. They gave me a big masu and told me to clean up a man who had been shot in Nsinda. I knew the man because he was from Nsinda. I had to hit him three times before he died.⁹⁶

⁹³ African Rights, 44.

⁹⁴ Interviewed in Kigali, 16 July 1995, taken from African Rights, 41.

⁹⁵ Interviewed in Kamembe, Cyangugu, 17 February 1995, taken from African Rights, 41.

⁹⁶ Interviewed in Kabuga, Greater Kigali, 27 May 1994, taken from African Rights, 41.

Testimonies such as these added to the idea that some of the women felt like they were forced to commit the genocide and should not be prosecuted. This led to some confusion and misunderstanding within Rwandan women perpetrators. However, throughout the numerous testimonies of women looting, the Gacaca law has continued to uphold any type of looter as a perpetrator in category three.

WHY DID THEY COMMIT THE CRIMES: Motivations of Genocide

As previously discussed, women played an extremely important role in the Rwandan genocide. The women perpetrators in categories one, two, and three, acted as organizers, leaders, militia women, and supporters of the genocide. Obviously, there have been numerous report and testimonies' proving the extent to which the women were involved in the genocide. Some women have argued that they should not be prosecuted within certain categories of perpetrators due to the unclear boundaries within the Gacaca laws and courts. The reasons these women argued with the courts was directly tied to why they committed the crimes against humanity. In general, many women perpetrators had, "very little moral responsibility was attached to these 'women's crimes'" and "the large majority of whom [women] did not view themselves as 'criminals.'"⁹⁷ By looking at the motivations of the women who committed genocide in Rwanda, the arguments of the women could be analyzed. Many people in Rwanda and the international community were under the assumption that women could not commit such crimes; however, testimony has disproved this theory and opened up assumptions of the motives women had to carry out their crimes. The motives were understood by the incorporation of a discussion of gender roles in traditional Rwanda.

The motivations of women perpetrators were analyzed previously and categorized, as Fear and anti-Tutsi hate propaganda by Red Cross legal advisor Nicole Hogg; however, with the emergence of new testimonies these motivations could be added on to expanded into more categories which related directly with traditional gender roles. The gender roles that will be examined as motives for the genocide are power, marriage, and the traditionally submissive

⁹⁷ Hogg, "Women's Participation in the Rwandan Genocide," 80.

nature of women in society. Additionally, some women challenged gender roles and committed crimes against humanity based on internal greed.

Lack of Power in the Home and in the Society

Traditionally, women in Rwanda, before the genocide, were viewed as less than men. Rwandan women did not have equal rights compared to men. Therefore, in traditional society, they were viewed as unimportant outside of the home life. It was not until 2003 that Rwanda adopted a gender-equal constitution.⁹⁸ Likewise, this was a society-wide understanding. Because of this, generally, women did not have jobs that resulted in a source of power. Their lack of power in traditional Rwanda society allowed women to explain their motives in the Rwandan genocide.

Women in Rwanda were expected to get married and devote their life to their husbands, homes, and families. Traditional gender roles surrounding marriage also placed an importance on following a husband's ideas and expectations. As seen in the testimonies of victims and perpetrators, many questions regarding power, could be tied back to the role of Rwandan women in marriage. As stated in the *African Rights* interviews, "another argument to minimize women's responsibilities for their own actions is to claim that women killed because they were obliged by their husbands and men folk. The strong tradition of obedience to authority in Rwanda made it easier for the architects of the genocide to encourage or follow both men and women to become

⁹⁸ Constitution of Rwanda.

murderers.”⁹⁹ Consequently, this idea was reiterated throughout testimonies especially relating to category two crimes.

Some women were terrified of their husbands during the genocide. Because they were not as exposed to outside influences, many women did not understand the extent of the genocide. Similarly, some women could not understand why their husbands were killing. One woman stated her logic of fear and lack of power by stating, “I was hiding a Tutsi woman in our house. He [my husband] was always arguing with me telling me not to feed her.... Because I was hiding her, I couldn’t argue with him about what he was doing during the day.”¹⁰⁰ Even though women understood what their husbands were doing during the day, they neglected to stop their husbands. When discussed among women perpetrators, “these women commonly said their husbands had become like ‘beasts’ and that it was ‘impossible’ to stop them. Several said that they feared their husbands would have hurt or killed them if they had tried to intervene.”¹⁰¹ This fear was rooted in the understanding of traditional gender role of Rwanda. Fear was a reoccurring theme among women perpetrators. Another woman perpetrator recalled, “when I told him he had done a bad thing, he looked at me with eyes like an animal and told me it was not proper to speak to him like that.”¹⁰² Women in Rwanda had underlying rules of marriage in which they were not equal to their husbands. Therefore, they were expected to speak to their husbands respectfully, follow their directions, and continue traditional roles. More women commented that, “women couldn’t stop their husbands from going to kill because women didn’t have any power. Women could only sometimes convince their husbands to let someone hide in their house; they couldn’t stop a

⁹⁹ African Rights, 2.

¹⁰⁰ Female genocide suspect, Gitarama prison (interview, respondent #34) 16 July 2001, taken from Hogg, 80.

¹⁰¹ Hogg, “Women’s Participation in the Rwandan Genocide,” 80.

¹⁰² Female genocide suspect, Nsida prison (interview, respondent #70), 7 August 2001 Hogg 80.

whole group.”¹⁰³ As evident here, women experienced a lack of power in their homes and could identify their lack of power as a motive for genocide. Consequently, the lack of power in the home, which many women described, could be seen in the testimonies of category two criminals.

In addition to the lack of power in homes, many women experienced a lack of power in society. Traditionally, women did not have much of a say in society. During the genocide, the Hutu militia coerced women to become active in the genocide by using this gender norm. Unfortunately, this was an effective strategy, and many women stated that their submissive role in society pushed them to participate in the genocide. One perpetrator stated, “If I wasn’t a woman, maybe I would have helped this man. Because I am a woman, I was afraid and I shouted out.”¹⁰⁴ Here, the suspect specifically identified that their gender roles played an important role in the actions taken by women perpetrators. Similarly, the majority of women perpetrators could identify that they felt society had suppressed their power because of traditional gender roles.

During the genocide, this lack of power in society could be seen in women reactions to government officials and militiamen of the Interahamwe. Similar to marriage, women would be discouraged to talk back to males and resist direction in traditional gender roles of Rwanda. Women have used this in their testimonies of the genocide to explain the crimes they committed. For instance, a Rwandan attorney discussing women’s roles in the genocide suggested, “I think that, compared to men, women are innocent. Women were mainly led by men.”¹⁰⁵ In this case, a Rwandan man, attributed gender roles as a motive during the genocide. Similarly, women would back this idea up as seen in statements such as, “I am a woman, I had no power.”¹⁰⁶

¹⁰³ Hogg, “Women’s Participation in the Rwandan Genocide,” 80.

¹⁰⁴ Interview, respondent #12, 2 July 2001, taken from Hogg, 83.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Gerald Gahia, former Rwandan Attorney General, Kigali, 3 August 2001, taken from Hogg, 82.

¹⁰⁶ Interview respondent #2, 27 June 2001, taken from Hogg, 89.

Additionally, women in society were supposed to be obedient. If a man told a woman to do something, they were expected to do it because of gender roles. In Rwanda, many women initially refused to act according to what a male Interahamwe said and they were reprimanded. In many situations, this led to the Hutu woman giving into the power of the militiamen. In one women's account, she stated, "When the told us to kill, many people refused. I was one of those who refused. The beat me up so badly with rifle butts that the baby I was carrying on my back, a two-month-old girl, died. My husband also refused. They took me to the office of the commune; the wounded were gathered outside the office. They gave you a person to finish off. I killed an old man, seventy-two-old Cyeribera, with a masu."¹⁰⁷ In a similar situation, Devota Mariya Mukaztioni recalled killing a family member, "They said I must kill my godmother. They began to insist and started beating me up. When I felt that the beating was too much, I gave in and hit my godmother with the machetewe."¹⁰⁸ In many of the accounts, women who originally tried to resist the Interahamwe were beaten or sexual abused until they gave into the militia. Even so, these women did kill Tutsis and would face prosecution in the genocide tribunals and Gacaca courts. Because of gender roles in Rwanda, women were expected to act accordingly in society and follow orders from men.

Some women in Rwanda needed explanations on how they were categorized as criminals because they saw their actions as a way to protect them and follow traditional gender roles. These women believed their involvement could be understood through analysis of their traditional gender roles. Growing up, women were taught to be submissive to men in marriage and in society. Their place was in the home. Essentially, women's lack of power because of traditional gender roles led to women questioning about their prosecution and category

¹⁰⁷ African Rights, 24.

¹⁰⁸ African Rights, 23.

placement after the genocide. Their questioning could be attributed to the ways the categories were written, with men in mind. Women's testimonies have shown how the categories apply to men. Because men had more power, the power struggle made it harder to judge women's guilt.

A Gender Influenced and Conditioned

Throughout the genocide, propaganda was as a way to spread Hutu Powa. Whether it the anti-Tutsi propaganda was spread through newspapers, radio, or flyers, it was an extremely effective way to gain support for the Hutu Powa movement.¹⁰⁹ The scale of the propaganda was immense, and many people believed what they were hearing and saying. Ideas from the propaganda were incorporated into every day life and discussion. To illustrate the scale of propaganda, the *African Rights* interviews described how,

The psychological disintegration of the Tutsi and the creation of a permanent social and psychological no-man's land between the two communities was an integral part of their vision. To this end, Hutu men were told to kill their Tutsi wives. Hutu uncles and grandfathers were encouraged to betray their Tutsi grandchildren, nieces and nephews. Hutu women married to Tutsi were ordered to execute their children or to deliver them to the killers.¹¹⁰

Not even family was safe from the propaganda. People became so caught up in the Hutu Powa movement that some resorted to killing their own family members.

Women were not left out of the propaganda movement. Many Hutu women jumped on the bandwagon and acted in the genocide due to the Hutu propaganda. If Rwandese women would have had greater access to education, some of these women may have thought differently about their participation in the genocide. Instead of agreeing with it, women would have had more tools to question the propaganda. Traditional gender roles in Rwanda discouraged women

¹⁰⁹ Power, *A Problem from Hell*, 338

¹¹⁰ African Rights, 29.

from becoming formally educated in a western sense and women were educated on home life. If gender roles had restricted women from education, perhaps more women would have rejected the Hutu propaganda.

Propaganda that targeted women was centered very harsh and extreme. Much of the concepts of the propaganda focused on painting the Tutsi women as bad people. This was done through jealousy and emotion. A prisoner in Kigali remembered why she killed the Hutus:

1. Tutsis were perceived to be associated with the RPF. Women, like men, believed the propaganda. Most women had confidence in what they heard.
2. Hutu women hated and were jealous of Tutsi women,
3. Hutu women were jealous of Tutsis' wealth. Women wanted their goods.¹¹¹

Reparations from this propaganda were seen in the testimonies of many survivors. Because of the propaganda, people thought killing Tutsis was an exciting event. In one account, a victim remembered what some women had done to her friend, "They eventually forced Kimbo to kill it [a baby] and throw it into the toilet. When this was done, the girls danced around, saying that God had sent all the Tutsi to their death."¹¹² While the women were killing they looked at their actions as an 'accomplishment.' Other women were shouting saying, "Finish off these serpents, they are very bad..."¹¹³ The extent of the propaganda was hard for much of the international community to understand. With the use of the RTML, newspapers, flyers, and oral accounts, propaganda fueled the Hutu Powa movement.

Education was seen as a key aspect of leader in Rwandan society. People would look to an educated person for direction and guidance. A women perpetrator recalled her actions in the genocide, "the leaders told us that the Tutsis had prepared graves to put the Hutus in and that we had to kill the Tutsis first before they killed us. We believed them because they were educated

¹¹¹ Interview taken from Hogg, 87.

¹¹² Interview taken from African Rights, 37.

¹¹³ Interview taken from African Rights, 25.

people...I believed them, and that is why I killed that woman.”¹¹⁴ Because so many women were formally uneducated in Rwanda before the genocide, they believed the propaganda and followed the leaders of the Hutu movement. The Rwandan Supreme Court stated during a tribunal, “Women had been conditioned by then to think it was normal for Tutsis to die. So, even if they tried to help someone, they would not resist if someone came searching for that person, and they would not risk their lives for others.”¹¹⁵ The Supreme Court looked at this from a psychological approach of the women being conditioned. The idea that women were conditioned can be related back to gender roles. Women were not thought of as intellectual people, so they were used in the genocide by the Hutu Powa movement to gain support.

Not all women were uneducated before the Rwandan genocide. Some women had access to education because of their higher socioeconomic status or educated parents. In the genocide, Hutu educated women took advantage of their knowledge and used it to persuade others. Educated Hutu women, “in leadership roles, such as teachers and radio announcers, played an important part in dissemination the propaganda among the population.”¹¹⁶ For instance, Pauline Nyiramasuhuko played a vital role in the genocide. Even in an interview after the genocide, Pauline stated, “We moved around the region to pacify. We went to pacify a little everywhere. We can show you...We wrote a pacification document saying people shouldn’t kill each other. But when the RPF arrived, people killed each other in panic. It’s war. Saying it’s genocide, that’s not true. We said we have been attacked from the outside...It was the Tutsi who massacred the Hutus.”¹¹⁷ Obviously, Pauline interpreted the genocide in a completely different view from what was actually happening. This misinformation was fed to people and used as a tool to recruit more

¹¹⁴ Interview taken from Hogg, 87.

¹¹⁵ Rwandan Supreme Court, taken from Hogg, 88.

¹¹⁶ Hogg, “Women’s Participation in the Rwandan Genocide,” 86.

¹¹⁷ Interview Pauline, taken from African Rights, 58.

women. It was also used to discourage the Tutsi people. One woman remembered that after her friend was raped, “Her torment was made worse by the extremists’ propaganda on the radio which maintained that the Rwandese army was defeating the RPF and that there was no hope for the Tutsis.”¹¹⁸ Education was used as a tool during the genocide to persuade women to believe the Hutu Power machine. During the tribunals, the educated women who perpetuated the propaganda were tried as category one perpetrators.

Because the traditional gender roles of women in Rwanda, many women were not educated to understand the difference between propaganda and the truth. In the testimonies of women perpetrators, some women describe their motivations for the crime based on the propaganda. Women have testified they acted in the genocide because they understood the propaganda to be true. Although this does not excuse the actions of the uneducated women perpetrators, it does help to understand some of the puzzlement women tried with crimes of humanity may have felt.

Defying Gender Roles: Greed

Some women acted in the genocide because they were greedy and wanted to gain power in Rwanda. These women were not motivated to commit crimes because of fear, lack of power, or propaganda. They challenged gender roles by attempting to gain power through violence and greed. Traditionally, women were not thought of as holding much power outside of their house before the genocide. There were not many accounts that explained women trying to gain power, but this greed was evident especially among the educated women in leadership positions.

¹¹⁸ Interview taken from African Rights, 48.

Greed in the genocide took many different forms. While some women craved power through manipulation, others wanted property. The most appealing aspect of the genocide was the property gained from looting. In Rwanda, the property owned directly influenced a person's status in society. For instance, one account stated, "the genocide was a chance to enrich themselves [women] by expropriating the property of their victims."¹¹⁹ Because many of the women involved in the genocide were also involved in looting, greed was a reoccurring theme in testimonies. Likewise, another way women were greedy was for personal gain or power. Some women, especially those in leadership positions saw the genocide as a way to move up within the government. Essentially, the "extermination of Tutsi" was "an opportunity to ingratiate themselves to those in power"¹²⁰ Additionally, other women increased their power by directing during the genocide. Major Anne Marie Myirahakzimana was one of these women who asked some perpetrators, "What have you done since the death of the Father of the Nation? Your greed has no limits. Kill the people first, then their goods will be yours. You are eating their cows while their owners are still alive."¹²¹ By manipulating these perpetrators, Myirahakzimana was able to gain power. Even though there were few accounts that mentioned greed directly, the underlying theme of greed was seen in testimonies from victims and perpetrators of the genocide. Consequently, many of the people who used greed as their motive were also tried as category one criminals.

¹¹⁹ African Rights, 15.

¹²⁰ African rights, 15.

¹²¹ Military Court Decision, taken from Hogg, 96.

CONNECTING THE MOTIVES AND THE UNDERSTANDING OF GENDER ROLES:

Many of the testimonies of women perpetrators place blame on outside motives. Instead of taking the blame, many women have used their traditional gender roles as a motive for the crimes they committed. After the genocide, women were categorized as criminals based on their actions and participation during the genocide. The categories were not always clearly defined which left some women to question why they were even accused of crimes against humanity. Women perpetrators placed as category two and three offenders did not understand why they were being charged with genocide. They argued that manipulation was used through propaganda to influence their actions. Likewise, this propaganda was effective because women had not been exposed to education. Another area of question dealt with the power struggle of women. Category two perpetrators believed that many of the crimes they committed were due to influences from their husbands and from society. These women referenced their gender when discussing their involvement in the genocide. As women in Rwanda, they were subservient to their husbands, educated people, and men in society. This meant that orders received from these people needed to be followed. Traditional gender roles were challenged throughout the genocide because in order to stop the genocide, women would have needed to take a stand against these roles. Actions of women perpetrators were heavily influenced by their traditional gender roles. Gender and genocide could not be separate issues when examining motives of female perpetrators in the Rwandan genocide.

OUTCOMES OF THE GENOCIDE: WOMEN AFTER THE GENOCIDE

When the Rwandan genocide broke out in 1994, many of the traditional gender roles of women were challenged. Because the genocide was widespread and encompassed many areas of Rwandan culture, women ended up questioning their traditional values. By challenging these gender roles during the genocide, gender roles in Rwandan culture would be changed drastically. After the genocide, many Hutu women were left to analyze the events that had taken place over the course of the previous one hundred days. Many of the women were left to process the idea that they were killers, or they were living with killers; their sons and husbands. However, even though the country had just experienced its darkest times, women experienced some positive societal advances because of the genocide.

During the genocide, children were used as pawns for the *genocidaires**. Instead of staying at home, many Hutu children ended up working with the Hutu Power killing campaigns. The Interahamwe recruited thousands of child soldiers, which can be attributed to the high unemployment, and lack of land for children to work on. As statistics show, “of the nearly 60 percent of Rwandans under the age of twenty, tens of thousands had little hope of obtaining the land needed to establish their own households or the jobs necessary to provide for a family.”¹²² As discussed in the previous section, providing for a family was a central value of Rwandan culture. Therefore, with high unemployment it was hard for Rwandan youth to provide for their families. Nearly all of the children recruited to the Interahamwe were males, and they were “unemployed city youth”¹²³ Because the children were not able to find work at the family homes, they had less money and ability to provide for their families. Additionally, because so much of the Hutu youth

¹²² Des Forges, *Leave None to Tell the Story*, 11.

¹²³ Waller, *Becoming Evil*, 69.

was involved in the militia, there women were alone for much of the day. This free time was now spent in the fields harvesting food, clearing brush with machetes, and farming, which challenged the original idea of women in the household.

Gender roles that dealt with work ethic and jobs changed for many women during the Rwandan genocide. Throughout the genocide, women worked along side the killers. Instead of working in the house, they were now working within the Hutu Powa movement. Some women were leaders working with military strategy and government. One of the most noted women who worked with the government during the genocide was Pauline Nyiramasuhuko, a friend of president Habyarimana and a part of the interim government after the president was assassinated.¹²⁴ Women like Pauline were gaining power from the genocide. The idea of a women in control was very different then a traditional sense of a woman's role. Other women worked as cheerleaders for the militias and looted the Tutsi bodies after they were killed.¹²⁵ Similarly, there were many women who spent their time working as Hutu informants and told the militias where Tutsi were hiding. Although not all women participated in these actions, less women were seen working in the households as traditional gender roles would call for. Because women were exposed to politics and jobs outside of their homes, more women were comfortable with becoming educated and working outside of their homes during the genocide and post genocide.

Because gender roles were challenged during the genocide, women were able to understand that there was more to them than a subservient group of people. In a way, the

¹²⁴ Carrie Sperling, "Mother of Atrocity: Pauline Nyiramasuhuko's role in the Rwandan Genocide," *Fordham Law Urban Law Journal* 33, no. 2 (Jan 2006):6.

¹²⁵ Strauss, *The Order of Genocide*, 100.

genocide resulted with a women's rights progression or movement. A common saying of women's organizations during the genocide was stated by a widow of the genocide, "The future of Rwanda is women."¹²⁶ In a way, these organizations were right. After the genocide, much of the country was looking for some new leaders in the government. A large number of these new leaders were women. As Sherlach pointed out, "in 1984, women formed zero percent of the government policy-making apparatus...women never filled more than 17 percent of the seats in the parliament."¹²⁷ Therefore, the country overall had very limited female political involvement prior to the genocide.

After the genocide, there was a time of transitional government where many women started to become involved with the government. This transitional government was put in place to try to establish a democratic and representative government for the country of Rwanda and lasted about nine years or until 2003. By this time, "the Parliament (by appointment) reached 25.7 percent and a new gender-sensitive constitution was adopted."¹²⁸ This was an acknowledgeable gain from the parliament, which was only 17 percent women prior to the genocide. Similarly, after the post-genocidal government, elections were held again in October 2003 where representation for women rose to "nearly 50 percent."¹²⁹ Consequently, it was not until after the genocide that women became recognized a people of power within their government.

Another noticeable gain for Women in Rwanda was the adoption of a new constitution and human rights. In May 2003, Rwanda adopted a constitution which "enshrined a commitment

¹²⁶ Sherlach, "Gender and Genocide in Rwanda," 392.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 391.

¹²⁸ Powley, "Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament," 154.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 154.

to gender equality.”¹³⁰ This commitment to gender equality became evident because there were many references made and cited in the new constitution that referred to different women’s organization and human rights campaigns such as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).¹³¹ In addition, more evidence for the emphasis can be seen in the constitution with one article which aimed at, “ensuring equal rights between Rwandans and between women and men without prejudice to the principles of gender equality and complementarity in national development.”¹³² Here gender equality has been blatantly stated, which showed the importance of this idea for many women. However, even though this idea of equality was written in the constitution, it has become hard to enforce and follow. For this reason, guidelines were put in place to guarantee women “‘at least’ 30 percent of posts ‘in all decision-making organs.’”¹³³ With these guidelines, Rwanda was progressive in their adoption of the new constitution. Additionally, this had opened the door for women who had been challenging and have continued to break apart traditional gender roles post Rwandan genocide.

Because of the awareness brought to women’s rights after the genocide, gender roles changed resulting in women with more power. Following the genocide in 1994, many women were forced to step up and take control of their house and communities. With the tribunals happening, many families were separated as their loved ones went on trial. It was estimated that, “in the immediate aftermath, the population was 70 percent female (women and girls)” and that “given this demographic imbalance, women immediately assumed roles as heads of household, community leaders and financial providers, meeting the needs of devastated families and

¹³⁰ Powley, “Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament,” 155.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹³² Constitution of the Republic of Rwanda, 2003.

¹³³ Powley, “Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament,” 155.

communities.”¹³⁴ After the genocide, women needed to adapt to their new and evolving situations in their home lives and community. For the women who were not summoned for tribunals, some became leaders in the new governments. Others were involved in local community structures. Particularly, women confronted the conventional views of childrearing, working conditions, family structure, and their personal power and status in society. As women’s roles and ideas evolved during the genocide, women also gained power in the Rwandan government and society. Essentially, a women’s movement was sparked during and post genocide, which resulted in the changing gender roles of many Rwandan women.

¹³⁴ Powley, “Rwanda: Women Hold Up Half the Parliament,” 158.

APPENDIX:

Hutu Ten Commandments

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
 - a. marries a Tutsi woman;
 - b. befriends a Tutsi woman;
 - c. 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 Hutu who does the following is a traitor:
 - a. makes a partnership with Batutsi in business;
 - b. invests his money or the government's money in a Tutsi enterprise;
 - c. lends or borrows money from a Mututsi;
 - d. gives favours to Batutsi in business (obtaining import licenses, bank loans, construction sites, public markets, etc.).
5. All strategic positions, political, administrative, economic, military and security should be entrusted only to Bahutu.
6. The education sector (school pupils, students, teachers) must be majority Hutu.
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.
 - a. The Bahutu inside and outside Rwanda must constantly look for friends and allies for the Hutu cause, starting with their Hutu brothers.
 - b. They must constantly counteract Tutsi propaganda.
 - c. 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 Hutu for having read, spread, and taught this ideology, is a traitor.

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