

Rape Has a Life-Altering Impact on Rwandan Women

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Abstract

This paper provides a theoretical understanding of rape during genocide and its long-term impact on women's lives. The paper also examines historical evidence from the perspective of survival and women's writing. The paper then delves into the role of the United Nations and its successful efforts to avert the genocide in Rwanda. The judiciary system in Rwanda struggles to deliver justice to victims of rape. Even after 30 years of genocide, victims of rape continue to struggle for social acceptance within society. This research will examine the extent of radical feminism's influence in the international arena.

Keywords: Radical feminism and genocide

Introduction

Genocide doesn't happen overnight; there's always an opportunity for people and the international community to intervene.

Jacqueline Murekatete is a human rights activist and survivor of the Rwandan genocide. This narrative centers on Immaculée, a genocide survivor who lives in the community of Mataba, close to the Kibuye district in western Rwanda. She, like many other million survivors, lost her entire family during the genocide; however, she grew up in a relatively prosperous family of six, including her mother, father, and three brothers, all of whom went on to lead successful lives. Despite all the obstacles in her path, Immaculée persevered and earned her degree in math and science, fields traditionally associated with men. The next Easter morning, when Immaculée was in the middle of her graduation, Rwanda was engulfed in genocide. She was caged in a small bathroom with six other girls for nearly two and a half months, after her father and brothers managed to hide her in one of their neighboring houses, a moderate Hutu. Later, when word spread that the French army was sending aid, she had the chance to learn French and English from the washroom itself, and she moved to the French camp, where she met thousands of other survivors and led a life that is unimaginable to most. Millions of stories like Immaculée exist in Rwanda, but very few of them are within our reach. (Immaculee Ilibagiza)

The Rwandan genocide was different because of the uneven population distribution of the two main ethnic groups, the Hutu and Tutsi, with the former making up 84% of the population and the latter only 14%. However, Tutsis are considered an elite group due to their possession of all the top powers. However, Tutsis are known as an exceptional group because they possess all of the greatest powers. The Hutu position in the government and the growing strength of the Tutsi people led to the first war between these two groups in 1959; this is why the Hutu people referred to it as the "Hutu peasant movement" and the "social movement" after the war ended and the Tutsi people lost their dominance in the government. The series of genocides in Rwanda forced numerous local Tutsi community members to relocate to

neighboring countries such as Burundi and Zaire, according to "The Embassy of the Republic of Rwanda in Washington, DC, USA." An unidentified assassin shot down General Juvenal Habyarimana's plane on April 6, 1994, killing the moderate Hutu leader. Cyprien Ntaryamira, Burundi's president, was among the passengers aboard the aircraft who perished in the crash and returned after the signing of the Arusha Accords. The Hutu militia groups known as the Interahamwe ("Those Who Attack Together") and Impuzamugambi ("Those Who Have the Same Goal"), along with members of the Rwandan armed forces (FAR), started killing Tutsis and moderate Hutus with impunity. "Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew who worked as a jurist within the emerging field of international law, coined the term "genocide" in Rwandan history, marking the beginning of the genocide in Rwanda. Raphael Lemkin combined the Greek word "genos" (race or tribe) with the Latin word "cide" (to kill). In 1994, there was widespread full-scale slaughter, but for many women, this genocide was the most terrible and enduring experience of their lives. Rape is the most common tool during the genocide. Like any other war, whether it was the world war or the Bosnian genocide, nearly 100,000 and 250,000 women were raped during the three months of genocide in 1994. Rwandans consider women to be at the bottom of the family hierarchy. The Family Code of 1992 designated husbands as the official heads of households, limiting the rights of women within their families (U.S. Department of State, 1997). Many women suffered attacks that left them with scars on their faces or mutilated genital organs, permanently reminding them of the horror of genocide. Two elements make up the definition of genocide: the physical element, the acts committed, and the mental element, the intent. Intent is the most difficult element to determine." The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide addresses this issue. The isolation and survival of some individuals profoundly impacted their mental health. During the genocide, some scars are visible and some are invisible. Attackers raped those who survived the genocide, and when they sought medical attention, they discovered they had HIV/AIDS. Forced marriage and slavery were also prevalent during that time, which led to unintended pregnancies. Since abortion is illegal in Rwanda, some women opted to perform abortions at home, posing additional challenges for doctors. (watch, 1996) the first part of this article will provide a historical account of the genocide that occurred in Rwanda. The second part will examine through the perspective of radical feminist theory, the reasons of the culture of rape that existed throughout the genocide. In addition, the report sheds light on the ways in which Rwanda's judicial system failed to bring justice to victims of rape, leaving them in tears in the society that didn't accept them. After the genocide, a great number of women were confronted with significant health problems, nevertheless the health care facility in the Rwanda were even more inadequate due to the fact that the majority of population lived in poverty.

Historical context

Before colonization, Rwanda was under clan rule, and partition was based on three factors: military, land, and cattle. The Tutsi people constituted the governing elite. In 1899, Germany established Rwanda as a colony and exercised control over it. However, after losing World War I, Germany had to hand over Rwanda to the League of Nations, under Belgian governance. The Belgian administration granted all Tutsi groups higher positions in the administrative hierarchy, further dehumanizing Hutu groups, despite their shared culture and language. The Belgian government introduced the ID card system in 1935, marking the beginning of the country's discrimination against the two groups. Locals were required to carry their ID cards at all times. Rwanda's fight for independence from Belgian domination intensified in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Hutu and Tutsi violence was part of these conflicts as they fought for dominance.

Following a revolution in 1959–1962, the country became independent, and Hutu leaders took over as the ruling class. The ruling government depicted the Tutsis as threats to Rwanda, which led to their killing or forced exodus from the country. The anti-Tutsi sentiments behind these attacks influenced the conditions for the genocide that occurred 32 years later. (Maron, 26 June 2019) More than 1.7 million people fled to bordering countries; another 2 million were internally displaced. During the exile period, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) emerged as a rebel group. Displaced in Uganda, they yearned to return to their homeland. When the RPF invaded Rwanda in 1990, they insisted that the ruling government share power with them. In return, the Rwandan government granted permission to radical groups that opposed the Tutsi and viewed them as traitors, leading to increased crime and killings of Tutsis. Media outlets disseminate false information about RPF forces and demand accountability for their crimes. The president of Rwanda openly referred to the Tutsi people as "cockroaches" on the radio, triggering outbursts among radical groups involved in the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda and highlighting the crucial role of the media in the genocide. The genocide ended in 1994 when President Kagame overthrew the Hutu government and established his own party in Rwanda. During the 100 days of slaughter, Rwanda attempted to garner international attention, but to no avail. Due to the US's failure in Somalia and the loss of its own military army, the US was hesitant to provide any assistance to Rwanda during the conflict, a reluctance that was also shared by the UN (Farrell). On August 4, 1993, in Arusha, Tanzania, after nearly three years of civil conflict between the Rwandan Republic's government and the rebel troops of the RPF, the Arusha Accords laid the groundwork for the UN peacekeeping mission. The goal of the Accords was to cease hostilities and prepare the ground for a democratic transition, with the UN force serving as a key stabilizing force (Matloff, 2000).

Radical feminist perspective on Rape

Women understand "rape" in a single word. An act of rape (against our will) is a criminal offense when a woman makes the decision to refrain from having sexual relations with a certain male, and the man then chooses to proceed against her will. Early research suggests that the nature of rape has evolved over time. The term "rape" has evolved over time; for instance, early case studies and research only associated it with coerced sexual interactions and women who were considered to be asexual partners. The end of the 20th century coincided with the start of women's open discussion of their sexual demands, which some males misunderstood as a sign that they had "asked for it." "Donat & D'Emilio" referred to this as a "medicalization of rape" because of the physiological behavioral changes that occurred during World Wars I and II. Rape became more than just a sexual act; it merged with savagery. Rape becomes a prize for the perpetrator, who constantly abuses women as weapons in battle.

According to the radical/liberal feminist perspective, "rape is fundamentally an aggressive rather than a sexual act, and its motivation and dynamics arise out of hostility rather than sexual need." Melani and Fodaski. The more violently he rapes, the more power he obtains. Rape is both a manifestation of power and an instrument of demonstration. War allows men to express their disdain for women in the ideal psychological setting. The military reinforces men's long-held belief that women are second-class citizens, unimportant in the real world, and mere observers of the action taking place in the center ring. This belief is reinforced by the military's inherent masculinity, which is characterized by the spiritual bonding of men at arms, the masculine discipline of giving and obeying orders, and the simple logic of hierarchical command (against our will). Tragically, rape can sometimes bring immense pleasure to the perpetrator. For instance, a perpetrator may rape a woman in front of her five sons and husband, potentially forcing

them to witness the incident or possibly leading to their death. Therefore, this situation challenges men's masculine strength by using a woman's body; MacKinnon describes the rape of female civilians as "a humiliation rite for the men on the other side who cannot, in terms of masculinity, 'protect' their women." Rape during a genocide differs from rape in everyday life because it involves politics. During a genocide, rape is intended to eliminate a specific ethnic group by killing off their generation. Rape during a genocide affects women not only physically but also mentally throughout their lives, leading to issues like forced pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and other chronic illnesses. As Sarah Clark Miller observes, rape is an extraordinarily effective genocidal strategy since it "corrupts women's roles as caretakers of relationships, conveyors of cultural practices, and sustainers of meaning... In these ways, genocidal rapists twist the way in which women are pivotal to the life of a community, rendering them pivotal to its destruction" (Miller 2009, 513– 514).

"We need to treat sexual violence in conflict as the war crime that it is; we can no longer treat it as an unfortunate collateral damage of war." Ms. Zainab Hawa Bangura is the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

Long-term impact

According to Catherine A. MacKinnon's book, "Rape, Genocide, and Women's Human Rights," the sexual crimes committed in Rwanda are well-known and are viewed in relation to their nationality, ethnicity, color, or religion, not as what they are, which is rape as genocide—rape directed toward women. According to Catherine A. MacKinnon's work, "Rape, Genocide, and Women's Human Rights," the sexual crimes committed in Rwanda are well-known. These crimes are often perceived in relation to their nationality, ethnicity, color, or religion. Even before the 20th century, women's virginity was considered the property and pride of the father, as rape is associated with the honor of the family. As a result, rape is frequently considered to be more disgraceful than killing. Genocide primarily results from conflicts between two large groups inside the same nation, with the primary goal being the eradication of a single ethnic group. During genocides, people often use rape as a weapon to limit the growth of the targeted society, as it is the most straightforward method to eradicate an ethnic group.

Physical consequence

Those who have survived sexual assault during wartime often have infections and diseases like syphilis, hepatitis, and HIV. Diabetes, asthma, and arthritis are among the chronic and acute illnesses that survivors are disproportionately prone to suffer from. Physical grievances, particularly inexplicable stomach pain, are prevalent among individuals who have survived sexual assault attacks (David DiLillo, George C. Tremblay, and Lizette Peterson). HIV/AIDS diagnoses range from 70 to 90% among Rwandan rape survivors. With over 500,000 women raped, this epidemic has resulted in an alarming health disaster. Protest organizations assert that the 1994 genocide never ceased, and they continue to claim victims.

Stigma of Rape

Women who were fortunate enough to survive the genocide had numerous challenges, including health issues, post-traumatic stress disorder, and social rejection due to their sexual abuse. Thousands of women in Rwanda are still waiting for justice. Her brother-in-law sexually assaulted Dianne, who was 15 years old at the time. She became pregnant with her sister's spouse when she was just 15 years old. This is just one of the thousands of survivors' stories; there are thousands more. It is impossible to fathom the

difficulty that the rape victim must go through in order to fulfill their day-to-day requirements. Over a period of time, Hutu militias in Rwanda sexually assaulted between 250,000 and 500,000 Tutsi women and girls, leading to the birth of between 10,000 and 20,000 children as a result of the abuse. Due to their lack of knowledge about their father and family history, children born as a result of rape have struggled with their sense of self. Additionally, since forced sexual relations preceded the child's birth, the child does not receive love from their mother. Some women gave up their child, and those who kept it said they could never love them because the child would always bring up the horrific memory.

Conclusion

Rape in times of warfare is frequently ignored by governments and international media. Because the UN initially refused to recognize the Rwandan genocide as such and provided no assistance to the Rwandan Tutsi's, its involvement during the genocide was always in doubt. There are countless stories of women who wait for the government to give them justice and never show any signs of getting it. More than 120,000 people were imprisoned and charged with crimes in the years that followed the genocide for allegedly taking part in the killings. Three tiers of judicial response were explored to cope with the large number of offenders: The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the national court system of Rwanda, and the Gacaca courts. Gacaca is a hybrid of ancient and modern judicial systems that permits everyone to heal while also letting the community determine the appropriate punishment following an offender's vocal confession. The main setback of Gacaca court is delay in justice also voice of moderate Hutu's were unheard by the government. A social acceptance of rape victims is still an unattainable mission for the Rwandan government. Additionally, they should address the demand for counsellors for every woman who has experienced such trauma because of the genocide.

"In their greatest hour of need, the world failed the people of Rwanda." Kofi Anna

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