

## **What Do The Dead Say? The Architecture of Salvific Discourses in Post-Genocide Rwanda**

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### **Abstract**

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Few scholars analyze the problem of national meaning-making after mass atrocities. Whether the leaders in power after atrocity were perpetrators or not, they must simultaneously make sense of a tragic past while ruling through state institutions likely implicated in those mass atrocities. This sense-making dilemma leads to “salvific discourses”: narratives founded through memorialization of the victims of mass atrocities which produce an ongoing mythic conflict between saviors and villains that only enduring authoritarianism can contain. Analyzing “post-genocide” Rwanda, we exhume how Rwandan genocide memorials shape the remembrance of the dead and of the genocide within Rwanda. Genocide memorials, as a form of public anamnestic reasoning, create the myth of the genocidal Hutu nation by establishing the “facts” of the genocide as well as specific histories and interpretive frames for those “facts.” The facts and frames combine into “salvific discourses” justifying the practices of authoritarian rule of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF)-regime: mass Hutu incarceration in the context of discredited domestic and international pressures for mass electoral participation. In other words, these memorials generate a discourse that simultaneously criminalizes all Hutu males and indicts Catholic Churches as complicit, while paradoxically positing foreign Tutsi governance as post-ethnic, salvific, and cleansing.

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Scattered throughout Rwanda are ruined and abandoned church buildings – structurally weakened by grenades, riddled with bullet-holes, and stained by blood. All of the congregants of these churches are dead. In some of these churches the bodies are strewn where they fell; in others, the lime-covered bodies are carefully arranged to clearly reveal machete wounds, while the corpses of women have been positioned – legs splayed – to demonstrate that they were raped before they were brutally killed (Longman and Rutagengwa 2006, 141).

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These ruined churches and their dead congregations are not mere remnants of a terrible crime. They are state-sponsored memorials commemorating the Tutsi slaughtered within those churches, during the state-sponsored 1994 Rwandan Genocide. Historically, churches in Rwanda, particularly Catholic churches, had served as sanctuaries for those who were fleeing persecution and violence. Instead of finding refuge, the gathered Tutsi became the targets of a mass murder that, in some places, were aided and abetted by clergy responsible for that parish. The clearest example of this practice occurred at the Nyange Church in the Diocese of Nyundo. Allegedly, the parish priest, Father Athanese Seromba, “encouraged Tutsis to seek refuge in the church. Once they were inside, he allegedly worked with the [Hutu] army and militia who threw grenades through the church’s windows, maiming and killing hundreds of people.” (Smith and Rittner 2004, 196). These charnel-house churches are perhaps unique in the way they memorialize the site(s) of a mass atrocity. The dead are buried in Auschwitz, and the city of Hiroshima has been transformed from a wasteland with a “river overflowing with corpses, smashed abdomens, un-rescued infants, disfigured bodies, [and] charred corpses” into a beautiful city filled with tranquil gardens and parks (Yoneyama 1999, 139). These disparate forms of memorials serve to remind the living to never again allow such terrible events and crimes to occur. How do the Rwandan genocide memorials shape the remembrance of the dead and of the genocide in the public memory of Rwanda? Why did Rwanda sponsor memorials filled with the dead unburied and unhidden?

We argue that the specific architectural forms of the genocide memorials in Rwanda are the basis of a salvific discourse that supports, founds, and stabilizes the national identity of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), an ethnic minority-dominated single party regime. Due to the unusual manner in which in the post-genocide regime established military and political hegemony, the regime relies heavily on these sites and the discourses surrounding these sites to produce an “architecture” of national memory in Rwanda. By stabilizing a specific memory of the genocide event that brought them to power, the RPF is attempting to stabilize its own ideological foundation through a salvific discourse about the necessity of continued authoritarian (repatriated Tutsi) governance for the salvation of Rwanda. This architecture of this salvific discourse simultaneously criminalizes all Hutu males and indicts Catholic Churches as complicit, while paradoxically positing Tutsi governance as post-ethnic, salvific, and cleansing (Amnesty International 2010). In this article, we discuss how states and regimes shape discourses and processes of public memory in the wake of collective trauma – what we call the problem of meaning-making after mass atrocity.

Second, we link meaning making discourses to an earthly, post-metaphysical salvation, which emerges out of a historically specific ingredients borrowed from post-colonial Catholicism, through anamnestic reasoning designed to arrange “thoughts and actions” to prevent a recurrence of the tragedy (Adorno 2003, 365). This anamnestic reasoning coalesces into “salvific discourses” that make possible radical disjuncture from the past in nationalist mythologies. Finally, before offering concluding thoughts, we use the architecture of genocide memorials to illuminate the salvific structure of Rwandan public memory: “The Hutu are bad”, “We are all Rwandan now”, “Churches, particularly the Catholic Church, are responsible for creating ethnic conflict in Rwanda” and “The RPF, as an institution, and not the Catholic Church, as an institution, possesses the capacity to be a true moral voice in Rwanda.”

## **2. Mass Atrocity and the Problem of Meaning-Making**

Postcolonial nations, like public memories, are made through concurrent interactions between “high” and “low” political contests over meaning, public memory and national identity (Chatterjee 1993). The historian John Bodnar’s description of this process regarding the mechanics of public memory illustrates the constitutive aspects of these interactions: Public memory is a system of beliefs and views that is produced from a political discussion that involves the fundamental issues relating to the entire existence of a society: its organization, structure of power, and the very meaning of its past and present [...] The ideas and symbols of public memory attempt to mediate the contradictions of a social system: ethnic and national, men and women, young and old, professionals and clients, leaders and followers, soldiers and their commanders. The competing statements of reality expressed by these antinomies drive the need for reconciliation and the use of symbols, beliefs, and stories that people can use to understand and dominate others (Bodnar 1994, 75-76). Political or cultural institutions create competing statements about the nature of reality for specific and constitutive purposes. Some of these competing statements are produced by the same institution and can work at cross-purposes, while other statements are only intended to contextualize and define rival institutions. The interplay between these competing statements structures the “arena” of public discourse and forms the “architecture” of national memory.

In this conception of collective memory, the drive to reconcile or abnegate these competing statements about reality forms the basis for the production of identity and the self-understanding of a culture. Although nationalist discourses do not exhaust the kinds of sense-making projects postcolonial states pursue, nationalist mythologies are often the core of regimes' ideological justifications for rule. According to Eric Hobsbawm and Terrence Ranger, in the postcolonial period, African state-building elites deploy nationalist symbols and rhetoric drawn from a mythical, invented, pre-colonial past (Ranger and Hobsbawm 1983, 211-263). Restoring this pre-colonial past was often once the central animating missions of the first wave of post-independence regimes. Capitalizing on these invented traditions was a multi-pronged strategy, involving educational reforms, state media monopolies, and triumphant public ceremonies. Despite the plenitude of potential actors and subjects in these postcolonial nation-making processes, like Hobsbawm and Ranger, we choose to focus on how postcolonial states and regimes attempt to make nations. Not focusing on the state and regime's role in nationalist meaning-making would obscure important processes of governance: Many postcolonial states often found themselves attempting to foster regime-centered territorial loyalties while developing the institutions that cultivate such devotion. To paraphrase Miguel Centeno (2003), many postcolonial states were creating the faith of nationalism while building the cathedral of the nation-state. Mass atrocities marked the birth of many postcolonial states and new regimes in postcolonial states, creating structural peculiarities in how post-atrocity regimes articulate nation-hood, linking nationalist identity to the appropriate and continued remembrance of the event (Khalili 2007; Stevenson 2014). For instance, reflecting on life after genocide, Elie Weisel argues that forgetting both silences and forgives.

Remembering, therefore, is to give voice to the victims and preserve a place for them in the nationalist mythology.<sup>3</sup> Although most works connecting commemoration and public memory to nationalist mythologies usually focus on war dead and national heroes, critical investigation of genocide memorials and commemorative monuments in Rwanda will show that as speech acts genocide memorials are the foundation of a salvific discourse about how to overcome the sins of the past.

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<sup>3</sup> Here we are thinking of the Rwandan genocide memorials as well as those of the Jewish Holocaust and the mass killings of Pol Pot, which always seem to discredit a particular regime while shoring up another. See: Novick. (2000); Zertal (2005); Cook (2004).

Theodor Adorno, musing on the need for a critical salvation after the Holocaust, similarly expounds the remembering-creates-democratic practice story: the genocide birthed a “new categorical imperative [from] Hitler upon unfree mankind: to arrange their thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself, so that nothing similar will happen.” (Adorno 2003, 365)

### **3. Remembering Unto Salvation**

1 October 1990 was a turning point in Rwanda’s history. Unbeknownst at the time to political observers, the RPF’s invasion of Rwanda from southwestern Uganda began a civil war that culminated in the 1994 genocide (Mandami 2001; Straus 2006). The RPF was an unlikely rival for the incumbent Hutu government in Kigali: the vast majority of its members were Tutsi refugees from Rwanda who had lived in Uganda most, if not all, of their lives. The RPF, therefore, was foreign-born as well as composed mostly of members of the ethnic minority of the state. This unlikely group of Tutsi refugees, however, defeated the incumbent government and ended one of the most lethal mass killing campaigns seen up to that point in time. As an ethnic minority ruling party that came to power through violent regime change, the RPF does not possess many of typical strategies for shoring up its authority and increasing its popular support. As returnees born elsewhere, creating a shared mythical national past that would shore up their authority to rule was difficult for the RPF; the RPF identity as survivors of genocide and as the military force that defeated the genocidaires did, however, give the RPF a claim to governance (Mandami 2001).

The tragic past, not the mythic one, would serve as the ideological justification for the regime. Memories, however, can fade over time and identities can shift over time as new experiences accrue. Attempts to codify memories into state-sponsored commemorative sites and memorials are attempts to slow this process of re-contextualization. Jurgen Habermas (2002), utilizing the terminology of the theologian Joseph Metz, refers to the process of re-contextualization and deliberation as anamnestic reasoning. Events recalled are events saved from the dangers of irrelevance and re-contextualization that are the realities of historical life. Anamnestic reason creates specific national histories, and through articulating those national histories, introduces the possibility of a “post-metaphysical salvation” to critical theorists within those nations.

Here “salvation does not mean simply liberation from individual guilt,” but also “collective liberation from situations of misery and oppression.” (Habermas 2002, 130) This salvation contains “a political element as well as a mystical element.” (Habermas 2002, 130) The political element emerges dialectically out of the mystical through “those impulses towards freedom [that characterize] modern European history.” (Habermas 2002, 130) As we will show contra-Habermas, collective redemption need not be democratic, but does, as Habermas indicates, found stable political orders.

Anamnestic reasoning, therefore, is central to the salvific discourses emerging from state-sponsored nationalisms after atrocity. Salvific discourses are: anamnestic, political narratives that articulate how a people or nation may overcome situations of misery and oppression induced by historical legacies or outside forces. These narratives form a discursive phenomenon that evokes the guilt through remembrance, and from guilt offers a path to salvation. In the Rwandan case, this path to salvation is public support of the RPF regime. Salvific discourses are politically important because they make possible radical disjuncture from the past in nationalist mythologies. Metaphysically, the narrative provides a lens through which a nation can understand and recognize its own misery and oppression as such. Politically, salvific discourses provide a program of action by which the participant can be removed from or overcome the miserable and oppressive situation through identification with the goals of particular political groups. In other words, the narrative provides a mechanism, and often an agent, of salvation. By thematizing a given political situation in terms of the actions of saviors and villains contesting over the direction and governance of polity, the sites and practices in which salvific discourses are produced become commemorative public battlegrounds. Salvific discourses are important to religious studies because salvation does need not be otherworldly; it can find expression within political action.

The salvation aspect of salvific discourse is the transformation of the “experience of the negativity of the present into the driving force of dialectical reflection. Such reflection the power of the past over what is to come.” (Habermas 2002, 134) This sort of salvation is historical. Indeed, it is salvation from the apparent necessity of history. If the past can be contextualized as the source of present misery and oppression, escape from its determination becomes an imperative.

#### **4. Genocide Memorials: Constructing Rwanda's Post-Genocide Architecture of National Memory**

The claim of any given salvific discourse is that by submitting to the governance of the saviors, the benighted collective's undesired condition is fundamentally transformed and abjured. More specifically, in Rwanda, the claim of the RPF's salvific discourse is that when citizens of Rwanda undertake specific acts of pilgrimage to genocide memorial sites, participate in re-education camps, disavow ethnic identification especially for the purposes of partisan mobilization, and accept the inherent criminality of the Catholic Church and the Hutu (male) population, these citizens are fundamentally transformed from a society always already tempted by genocide into a tolerant, post-ethnic orderly population. The RPF's use of the ruined churches as genocide memorials brings the need for a radical disjuncture from the past in Rwanda sharply into focus. If the mere historical fact of stopping the genocide was the central justification of RPF rule, as the genocide becomes more distant for those who do remember it, the RPF's ability to maintain single party rule and authoritarian political order would become increasingly fraught.

Opposition parties would demand a seat at the table, human rights groups would continue to catalog grievances against the regime, and churches would once again assert their networks of governance and mobilization. Genocide memorials located in burned out churches and mass gravesites respond to and silence these opponents. By both responding and demobilizing, the regime renews its ideological capacity to justify its rule. The physical space of site of genocide reveals the "truth" that this atrocity has occurred; the arrangement of the actual genocide memorials that crafts a historical narrative about why and how genocide occurred. Through state-sponsored commemoration, the memorial becomes the locus of a genocide's meaning. The brute facts of mass killing do not reveal the "truth" of a genocide. "Truth" is revealed by the manner which the living commemorate the dead. What's striking about the RPF's strategy to increase their political authority is not simply that they want Rwandans to remember the genocide, but that they want Rwandans to remember the genocide in very specific ways.



**Table 1: State-Sponsored Genocide Memorial Sites in Rwanda**

Name	Location	Site Information	Buried (in Hundreds)
Bisessero	Karongi District, Western Province	Cemetery/ Garden dedicated to Tutsi resistance	270
Gisenyi	Gisenyi Peripheries (DRC border)	Cemetery and Museum. Collaboration between IBUKA (genocide memory lobby group based in Kigali) and the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture; First Memorial Built	120
Gisozi	Kigali (Urban)	Cemetery and Exhibition/ Library	3000
Murambi- Nyamagabe (Butare)	Butare (Southern Province)	Technical School with preserved bodies	8.5
Ntarama	Bugasera (Rural)	Church with bones, clothing strewn about	Unknown
Nyamata	Bugasera (Rural)	Church with bodies, focused on rape, HIV	Unknown
Nyarubuye	Kirehe District, Eastern Province	Church/Convent with Bones	110
Nyanza-Kicukiro	Kigali (Urban)	Garden with Wooden Crosses in Ground	50
Nyarubuye	Kirehe District, Eastern Province	Church/Convent with Bones	110
Rebero	Kigali (Urban)	Hospital Garden and Exhibition	144

**Sources:** <http://www.cnl.gov.rw/site-list.htm>, maintained by the National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide. See also: <http://www.kigalimemorialcentre.org/old/centre/other.html> and <http://www.safariswanda.com/rwanda-genocide-memorial-sites/>

The spatial details of states-sponsored mass murder become emblematic of the evil itself.<sup>4</sup> These Rwandan memorials accomplish these goals by commemorating the deaths of the Tutsi victims, rather than their lives. Of memorials to martyrs and heroes, we ask: "Who was this person? How did they live?" Of these Rwandan genocide memorials we can only inquire: "Why did this occur? What can be done to prevent this crime from being committed again?" The violated corpse of a Tutsi woman does not evoke memories of her life, but rather the calculated, brutal, and categorical violence of her death.

<sup>4</sup> "Genocide Memorial Day" falls on April 7<sup>th</sup> of each year. The week following "Genocide Memorial Day" is a national week of mourning. Briggs, Philip; Booth, Janice 2006, 61.

It did not matter whether she was rich or poor, whether she was a mother and/or a sister, what she loved or hated; all the particularities of her life are obscured by her violent death. The only remnants of her existence and history are her lime-soaked remains, and the crimes committed against her. Moreover, she is not alone. Her body rests near some number of other butchered men, women, and children. She is but one victim among 500,000 to 800,000 other victims united in their anonymity in both the violence of the killings and their/its remembrance. Preserving her body in a position that highlights the crimes committed against her in the midst of a host of other such victims lends a sense of inevitability to her fate. She is one victim of a crime horrific in scope and categorical in nature. All the possibilities of her life are circumscribed in one moment of terrible brutality. The fact of their deaths demands a response from the living; the cost of which is erasing the particularity and the humanity of the dead.

## **5. The Salvific Discourses of Post-Genocide Rwanda**

In order to define the Catholic Church as the colonial institution responsible for the creation of ethnic categories and the degradation of primordial Rwandan unity, the RPF had to “remember” a utopian Rwanda that was corrupted by the Church. Who were the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa before colonialization? Retelling the past creates the trajectory of future possibilities. By providing an answer to this question that does not depend on ethnic categories, the RPF can offer a vision of what a unified Rwanda might be like. Highlighting the culpability of the Church as an institution externalizes the guilt of the genocide, ‘they enabled/made us to do it,’ and limits the power of the Church, as an institution, within public memory, ‘we won’t be bamboozled by them again.’ Within this narrative the genocide memorials become the embodiment of the RPF’s reality defining statements in public memory – each stage of the story leading inevitably towards genocide. The original racist ideology of the missionaries had two deleterious effects on Rwandans: they first introduced the idea of ethnicity to the Rwanda, creating ethnic self-consciousness; secondly, the racialization of the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa removed any socioeconomic movement that was previously present in their social system. “Tutsi [ethnic] self-consciousness [is] an explanation of ‘physical difference’ in terms of ancestral migrations – for which there is no firm empirical basis – and the made all Tutsi superior, all Hutu inferior. Twa formed the bottom group in the hierarchy.” (Pottier 2002, 112) The missionaries taught the Tutsi that they were better than the Hutu and Twa; consequentially, the Tutsi began to think of themselves as better than the Hutu and Twa.

The Catholic Church exacerbated ethnic tension first by favoring the Tutsi and then by favoring the Hutu. Ethnic tension was sparked when the Church created the Tutsi, falsely teaching them that they were superior to their fellow Rwandans. Ethnic tension became explosive when the Church began to favor the Hutu majority. After WWII, there was an influx of new Catholic missionaries came to Rwanda influenced by liberation theology and ideas about social justice. "These newer missionaries were appalled by the by the exclusion and the poverty of the Hutu, and they began to favor Hutu for education and employment. Catholic missionaries fostered a Hutu 'counter elite' that pushed for greater rights for Hutu." (Longman and Rutagengwa 2006, 134) These missionaries were able to do this because ecclesiastical institutions controlled the social and educational services within colonial Rwanda.

There is an abundance of tragic irony in the RPF's historical narrative. The Hutu were poor because of the racism of early clergy. It was the Church's racist ideology that concentrated "power and wealth in the hands of the Tutsi" in the first place. Then the Church inflamed ethnic tension by attempting to solve a problem that they created themselves – the Hutu. As a result the Hutu majority revolted against the Tutsi elite. "In 1959, Hutu rose up in revolt against Tutsi chiefs attacking some and driving others from their posts. Although few Tutsi were killed at this time, thousands fled into exile, and Hutu took over their offices." (Longman and Rutagengwa 2006, 134) The descendants of these Tutsi exiles in Uganda became the RPF, and the new Hutu government later began the 1994 genocide. Lest any forget, these memorials also remind those who view them that all Hutu are wicked, all Tutsi are victims, and the churches are complicit in the terror of the genocide. These are the foundational "truths" of the post-ethnic Rwandan identity that are threatened by historical life. Yet, there is a tension here: The RPF created statement – 'all Hutus are responsible for the genocide of the Tutsi of Rwanda' – needs to be reconciled with another RPF statement – 'after the Rwandan genocide, there are no more Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa; all are Rwandan now.' The drive to reconcile these competing statements about reality forms the basis of the production of memory about Rwandan national identity. Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda, makes the salvific discourses we are detailing rather explicit in his 2014 speech given to commemorate the Rwandan genocide.

The most devastating legacy of European control of Rwanda was the transformation of social distinctions into so-called “races”...whatever differences existed were magnified according to a framework invented elsewhere...This ideology was already in place in the 19th century, and was then entrenched by the French missionaries who settled here...This was the beginning of the genocide against the Tutsi... With the full participation of Belgian officials and Catholic institutions, this invented history was made the only basis of political organisation, as if there was no other way to govern and develop society. The result was a country perpetually on the verge of genocide...Twenty years ago, Rwanda had no future, only a past... Rwanda was supposed to be a failed state...But we did not end up like that. What prevented these alternative scenarios was the choices of the people of Rwanda...When we passed an inclusive constitution that transcends politics based on division and entrenched the rights of women as full partners in nation-building, for the first time — we were choosing to be together.

(Kagame 2014) Outside forces, specifically the colonial interests of the Catholic Church, created and imposed the racial structure that not only made the genocide possible but also unavoidable. Rwanda, in Kagame’s own words, was a nation “perpetually on the verge of genocide.” Ostensibly, the French missionaries not only made the Hutu, they made them inherently criminal. Even before the genocide, the Hutu are marked by the stain of genocidal ideology because they are marked as Hutu. It is easy to imagine that just like biblical Cain and Abel the Hutu were set on a course to murder the Tutsi and to be marked in perpetuity by that terrible crime. The RPF-sponsored salvific discourses are redolent with the vestiges of the myths brought to them by the Catholic Church: sin, the consequences of that sin, and, ultimately, salvation from that sin. This appropriation is doubly clever. It both draws upon a framework of meaning known to both the colonized and the colonizer and reminds those who listen that this tragic outcome is a logical outcome of that very framework of meaning.

How can there be surprise that brother kills brother – that Hutu kill Tutsi – when those who teach such stories are also the ones organizing the people? The Catholic Church, it would seem, brought with its missionaries the seeds of this crime. There was no other way because they knew no other way. The past created by the missionaries was not even a past native to Rwanda. The Hutu were in much need of saving from themselves and the Church who created them.

The RPF provides the path to this salvation. Kagame preserves the categories of Hutu and Tutsi even as he disavows them. In his speech, the salvation, the future of Rwanda is one of unity and overcoming, but a unity that must constantly be reminded of its previous disunity. The genocide must be consistently presented and represented. The genocidal stain of the Hutu becomes the material reason for their mass incarceration and reeducation. Rwanda may overcome its genocide, but for the RPF's offer of salvation from racial categories through a unified national identity to remain compelling, it may never forget it. Kagame's speech illuminates the power and importance of anamnestic reasoning. Two interdependent strands of discourse about history emerge from the specific retellings of the genocide and the memorials that embody new nationalist narratives that condemned Hutu-ness as incompatible with a unified, non-genocidal Rwandan nationalism. The first set of statements concerns the majority Hutu population vis-à-vis the RPF's minority leadership. The second set of statements concerns the place of ecclesiastical power in relation to the political authority of the RPF.

### 5.1 "The Hutu are bad."

In this re-telling, all adult Hutus are implicated in the genocide of the Tutsi in the ideology of RPF. There can be no doubt that there was (large and undeniable) civilian, military, and elite participation during the 100 days of genocide. The interahamwe, a Hutu civilian militia, coordinated targets and logistics with the military in order to prosecute genocide. While it is known that many adult Hutu joined the interahamwe, the percentage of the population is contested. Some current Rwandan officials (RPF) claim that three million Hutus participated in the genocide – a figure that effectively criminalizes the entire adult Hutu population at the time of the genocide. Indeed, some officials openly claim that the entire adult Hutu population took part directly or indirectly in the genocide. In the words of one official, when the rebels took power in 1994 and formed a government, they faced a "criminal population." (Straus 2006, 125) The ascribed, collective guilt of the entire Hutu population is one of the statements about reality in the Rwandan public memory. The effective criminalization of the Hutu population is the first move in the RPF's ideology to establish the legitimate authority over the majority Hutu population.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Rwanda has the third highest incarceration rate in the world, after the United States and Russia, respectively. (Drumbl 2005). (Zorbas, 2004).

"If adult Hutus are genocidaires or they were indoctrinated in an 'ideology of hatred' and thereby can easily become genocidaires, then the threat of genocidal violence remains – all that has changed is the leadership controlling the state." (Straus 2006, 125) In this view, all Hutu are either wicked or weak-minded. Either the Hutu willingly participated in the rape and murder of an entire people, cruelly butchering the Tutsi with machetes in the streets and churches where they fled, or they were easily bamboozled into supporting institutions that affected these policies. This view occludes the narratives of the Hutu who sheltered and protected their Tutsi neighbors, at great personal risk and cost.<sup>6</sup>

These memories, these histories, have no place in the state-sponsored recollections of the RPF. For if all Hutu are wicked or weak-minded, then only the government controlled by the RPF can protect the Tutsi from further Hutu violence and protect the Hutu from themselves. The material effect of this aspect of Rwanda's salvific discourse manifested in the internationally-sanctioned mass incarceration of the adult Hutu male population. International organizations, led by the UN Security Council, established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda to prosecute those responsible for mass killings during the 1990-1994 war. Concurrently, the RPF combined national courts and community-based courts, called the Gacaca Courts to process the approximately 120, 000 suspects awaiting trial in overcrowded detention conditions (International Center for Prison Studies 2002), as only around 50 lawyers remained in Rwanda's judicial system by 1997 (Tiemessen 2004, 57-76). The jurisdiction of the Gacaca Courts were only limited to the perpetrators of genocide against the Tutsi, and the roughly 12,000 of these Gacacca tried more than 1.2 million cases throughout the country (Amnesty International 2004). An unknown number of Hutu prisoners died from torture or at the hands of their jailers during incarceration, while an estimated 11, 000 of them died between 1994 and 2001 due to deplorable prison conditions (Amnesty International 2004, 4; Tertsakian 2008, 2011: p. 214) The final report of the National Service of Gacaca Jurisdictions (SNJG) summarized by the Republic of Rwanda states that 1,958,634 trials were heard leading to 1.6 million suspects convicted and 270,000 acquitted (Reyntjens 2012) Rwandan population in 1994 7,775,000; of which 3,900,000 [50%] were males of which 3,500,000 [90%] were Hutu of which 1,600,000 [45%] were adults.

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<sup>6</sup> The historian Johan Pottier records the transcript of an interview of a Tutsi woman who survived the genocide by fleeing with her two daughters to Zaire. A Hutu woman was instrumental in preserving the life of her daughter. This is but one example of many of Hutu-Tutsi solidarity in the face of a terrible evil. These memories must be reconciled or abnegated with the idea that all Hutu are to blame for the genocide in public memory. (Pottier 2004, p. 209).

(Reyntjens 2012) This means that number of persons convicted represents almost 70 percent of Hutu males who were adult in 1994, effectively making the Hutu as a whole guilty of genocide from the point of view of the criminal processing system (Reyntjens 2012).

## 5.2 "We are all Rwandan Now"

This is the second strand of discourse emerging from the genocide memorials. The leadership of the RPF can "redeem" their fellow Rwandans by overcoming ethnic categories. In fact, the "Government of National Unity," the government established by the RPF, "includes representatives of predominately Hutu political parties, and ministerial positions were evenly divided between Hutu and Tutsi." (Longman and Rutagengwa 2006, 137). Unity is the new creed in post-genocide Rwanda. Ethnic identity is abnegated by national identity: there are no more Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa; there are only Rwandans. These narratives of a united national identity are disseminated in "solidarity camps." Solidarity camps are "reeducation programs that politicians, entering university students, returned refugees [...] attend for one to three months [...] the camps spend much time discussing Rwandan history and the genocide, as participants are led to embrace the government interpretation of the past." (Longman and Rutagengwa 2006, 241) The promise of unity through a national instead ethnic identity is the RPF's guarantee that the sins of the past will never be committed again. The genocide memorials commemorate the atrocity of ethnic violence; a crime that cannot be repeated when there are no longer ethnic divides.

There is an interesting tension within this first set of statements in the public memory. The subordinate position of the Hutu majority population vis-à-vis the Tutsi elite, represented by the RPF, is justified by the Hutu's collective crime of genocide. The Tutsi, as represented by the RPF, are portrayed as innocent. The government rejects the claims that it is guilty of systematic human rights abuses, despite "abundant evidence [that] implicates the RPF for carrying out massacres as it advanced across Rwanda in 1994, after taking power, and its two military incursions into the Congo." (Longman and Rutagengwa 2006, 242) This claim to innocence and victimhood is vital to the RPF's narrative concerning its moral authority. The RPF advances that Hutu must be controlled, for their own good, because if they are not they would return to their genocidal practices. The Tutsi, on the other hand, possess the moral fortitude to both govern the Hutu and overcome ethnic divides.

The tension between the statements of Hutu guilt and Rwandan national identity reifies ethnic conflict even as it attempts to overcome it. Not only does this mimetic tension within the foundation of the RPF's authority ossify the ethnic tension it aims to dissipate, but it also motivates Rwandan society to search for an external scapegoat as the source of that tension. This tension necessitates that true responsibility for the 1994 genocide cannot be placed on either the Hutu or the Tutsi in public memory. Some institution or force external to Rwanda must be responsible for the genocide for the RPF's ideology to cohere. It is this need that links the RPF's narratives of Hutu guilt to the deleterious effects of the Catholic Church on Rwanda.

5.3 "Churches, particularly the Catholic Church, are responsible for creating ethnic conflict in Rwanda."

According to the RPF, the categories of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa originally represented occupations rather than ethnicities. It is only due to the influence of the Catholic Church that these categories became reified as ethnic identities (Longman and Rutagengwa 2006, 134). This idea will be expanded in the next section, but it is important to note that the genocide and its causal factors are attributed to colonial institutions such as the Catholic Church by the RPF in public memory. Without ethnic categories there would have been no ethnic violence and no genocide of the Tutsi. This narrative asserts that the Catholic Church enabled the Hutu to commit genocide. The RPF insists that the colonial religious institutions were responsible for the genocide in three ways. First, the Catholic Church created the Hutu ethnicity. Second, the Catholic Church, as an institution, is responsible for the genocide because it promoted ethnic tensions in order to maintain colonial power in Rwanda. Third, and perhaps most damningly, the Catholic Church enabled the genocide by failing their moral duty to instill Christian values into the Hutu population. The church ruins-cum-genocide memorials are the symbols of ecclesiastical complicity in the Rwandan genocide.

5.4 "The RPF, as an Institution, and not the Catholic Church, as an Institution, Possesses the Capacity to be a true Moral Voice in Rwanda."

The salvation offered by the RPF is both moral and political. By promising to dissolve ethnic divides, created by the sins of the religious institutions, the RPF claims to be the moral voice of Rwanda. This moral claim buttresses their political claim to legitimate authority.

The logic behind the unification of Rwandan national identity under the auspices of the RPF is now clear. The Hutu are unfit to govern without the leadership of the RPF because of their collective crime. Only by embracing the national Rwanda identity and by rejecting ethnic identities can this crime be overcome. The primary cause of the genocide does not lie within Rwanda, or with the state's now "united" people; rather, true responsibility lies with colonial forces, especially the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church created the ethnic divisions in Rwanda, which prompted the categorical violence of the genocide. This logic weakens the RPF's main competitors' claims within public memory, while strengthening its own political and moral legitimacy (Longman and Rutagengwa 2006, 138).

## **6. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the seemingly excessive efforts of the Rwandan government to permanently instill a particular version of the nation's past in the nation's memory constitute an under-theorized aspect of anamnestic reasoning: salvific discourses. These salvific discourses arise from the desire of a collectivity to seek, and if fortunate experience, salvation from a tragic condition. Salvific discourses locate the path to salvation in identification with the rule by the saviors. Focusing on these discourses not only reveals a type of the narratives that political groups seeking to govern can use to justify their claim to political authority, but also illuminates the authoritarian potentials of anamnestic reasoning. For Habermas, reasoning through the Nazi past as a form of public reasoning guards against a return to the kind of barbarism and rule by non-democratic institutions. Limiting himself to the political discourse of (West) Germany, Habermas overlooks the non-democratic avenues into which anamnestic reasoning can be pushed. The struggle for the justifications to rule as well as for popular support (or least acquiesce) in Rwanda provide an instructive case-in-point. Remembrance of the genocide is the main justification of the regime's (ethnic) minority rule. Each time the government commemorates the genocide it reaffirms the legitimacy of its rule. Recently, the government even passed laws criminalizing "genocide ideology" to further suggest that any future without the beneficent, authoritarian hand of the regime will end up a lot like the nation's past: ethnic strife culminating in genocide. According to the RPF, the ever-constant threat of future genocide justifies their indefinite single party rule. By final way of conclusion, we would like to briefly note that what is not said, not remembered, is just as important as what is spoken of and remembered.

The RPF reality defining statements must overcome competing statements based memories such as the pre-colonial basis for ethnicity in Rwanda and the moral culpability of the RPF in the Rwandan genocide. Pottier argues that pre-colonial elites “largely” determined how colonialism influenced the transformation of the power structure of Rwanda and the “transformation” of socio-economic categories into ethnic categories (Pottier 2002, 111, 116, 118). Likewise, Alan Kuperman argues that the RPF knew that the Hutu government was engaging in the mass killing of the Tutsi (though they were unaware of the true scope of the rapes and murders) and deemed that this atrocity was an acceptable price for victory (Kuperman 2004, 78-82). It is by overcoming these antinomies in public memory that the genocide memorials embody the necessity of Rwandan unity by revealing the cost of its tragic absence instead of embodying the costs of RPF’s cold calculations of political and military expediency. The “truth” of the genocide memorials is determined by how they are remembered.

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