

The Purposes of Genocide Research

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Kwibuka20, Kigali, Rwanda, 4 April 2014

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When the U.N. adopted the Genocide Convention in 1948, it outlawed genocide, the worst of all crimes against humanity. But it did not end genocide. 55 genocides have occurred since. It took the genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda to awaken the world to the fact that genocide is a universal human problem, not just a problem for Armenians and Jews.

There are many purposes of genocide research:

The first purpose of research is to discover and understand the social and cultural processes that lead to genocide and how we can prevent it. That is the purpose of the Eight Stages (now Ten Stages) of Genocide I wrote in 1996 for diplomats in the State Department, a model now used in Rwanda and around the world. It will soon be a short (150 page) secondary school textbook, translated into many languages and published free on the internet.

A second purpose of research is to design institutions and policies to stop these genocidal processes before more millions are murdered. That is why I proposed the creation of the Office of the Special Adviser to the UN Secretary General on the Prevention of Genocide in a paper in 2000. Genocide Watch, the Leo Kuper Foundation, the Minority Rights Group, and The International Campaign to End Genocide lobbied for it in the UN. Kofi Annan created the Office in 2004, at a commemoration of the tenth anniversary of the genocide of Tutsis in Rwanda.

The third purpose of research is to gather the evidence and build the courts to prosecute planners and perpetrators of genocide. That is why I wrote UN Security Council Resolutions 955 and 978, which created the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, and the Internal Rules of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. It's also why I resigned from the State Department when the US voted against the Rome Treaty of the International Criminal Court. I became Co-Chair of the Washington Working Group for the International Criminal Court, and working with the President Jimmy Carter, we persuaded President Clinton to sign the ICC Treaty just before he left office. President George W. Bush promptly unsigned it after he took office.

These three purposes have driven the Cambodian Genocide Project, Genocide Watch, and the International Alliance to End Genocide, to which I have devoted my entire professional life. For me that research began by listening to the survivors of the genocides in Cambodia and Rwanda. Walking through the mass graves of Cambodia and Rwanda and shedding tears with the survivors, gave me a fierce determination to bring those who committed these genocides to justice.

There are other important purposes of genocide research as well.

---In the works of film-makers, playwrights and song writers, novelists, poets, and artists, the anguish of victims and survivors can be directly felt.

---Social scientists attempt to determine the risk factors and early warning signs of genocide, using both quantitative and qualitative methods.

---Public policy analysts and journalists try to determine what mistakes were made that led to genocides and what can be done in the future to avoid similar catastrophes.

---Historians write accounts of genocides and the fatal errors that led to them. They describe their causes and what might have prevented them.

Let me warn of three types of research that are dishonest.

The first is research by the “nothing could have been done” school that argues that genocide is inevitable, and nothing could have been done to prevent or stop it. Such research can be found in the writings of some apologists for American, UK, or UN inaction to stop the Rwandan genocide. Alan Kuperman, for example, argues that the American President did not know genocide was happening in Rwanda until late April 1994, and that American and other troops could not have arrived in Rwanda from the US in time to prevent most of the killing.

As a State Department Foreign Service Officer with Top Secret Code word clearance, I have read the Top Secret cables, and interviewed the US officials who served at the US Embassy in Kigali

in 1994, and I can tell you that top US officials, including the US Ambassador and Deputy Chief of Mission in Kigali were warned months in advance of the coming genocide. The Deputy Chief of Mission, Joyce Leader, called it “genocide” on the very first day of the genocide in her telephone calls to Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Prudence Bushnell on April 7, 1994. Ambassador Bushnell immediately communicated news of the genocide in Rwanda to the National Security Advisor and the White House.

But the US National Security Council, led by Richard Clarke, advised President Clinton not to intervene. When Secretary of State Warren Christopher got a call from the Belgian Foreign Minister after ten Belgian soldiers were murdered, the Belgians pushed for the US and UK to support withdrawal of UNAMIR in the UN Security Council. In fact, legal advisors at the State Department wouldn’t even permit the US government to call the genocide of the Tutsis by its proper name for three months – “genocide” – because calling it genocide might force the US “to do something.” It was blatant legal malpractice.

Kuperman is also wrong that US troops would have required weeks to fly in from the US. The fact is that thousands of heavily armed US Marines were on US warships in the Indian Ocean and within days could have taken control of the Kigali Airport and implemented General Dallaire’s appeal for reinforcements to surround stadiums and churches where Tutsis had gathered, hoping for protection, but instead making their mass murder easier for the *Interahamwe*. The US also had several hundred well-equipped Marines in Burundi. The proof that immediate intervention was possible came when 800 Belgian and French paratroops landed in Kigali to rescue Belgian and French citizens, even their dogs, within a week, and left 800,000 Tutsi in Rwanda to be slaughtered.

When President Clinton gave his false apology to the people of Rwanda on March 25, 1998, in which he said “all over the world there were people like me sitting in offices, day after day after day, who did not fully appreciate the depth and the speed with which you were being engulfed by this unimaginable terror,” he was lying. Fifteen years later, on March 23, 2013, he finally admitted that if the US had intervened immediately, at least 300,000 lives could have been saved.

The second false line of research is by genocide deniers like Peter Erlinder, who argue that the Rwandan genocide was not carefully planned months in advance, was not the result of a

conspiracy, and therefore lacked the intentionality necessary for it to be legally characterized as genocide. Erlinder has been encouraged by the bizarre reversals of conspiracy convictions by the ICTR Trial Chamber in the ICTR's Court of Appeals, which has ruled that a conviction for genocide encompasses the lesser crime of conspiracy, so that the conspiracy charge should have been dismissed. The otherwise outstanding jurist Theodore Meron has written several such reversals, which are criticized by genocide scholar, Prof. William Schabas for failing to recognize that conspiracy to commit genocide and genocide are two separate criminal charges. Peter Erlinder has drunk the poison of Major Aloys Ntabakuze and other *genocidaires* he defended in the ICTR, and has since spewed forth his denialism on his website, encouraging the growth of a vicious denialist movement around the world.

A third type of dishonest research is historical revisionism, which does not deny the fact that crimes against humanity occurred, but tries to “understand” the motives of the perpetrators, by “discovering” new evidence explaining why the perpetrators acted, or “re-characterizes” genocide as counter-insurgency in a civil war, or even as “double genocide,” in which the victims also committed genocide against the perpetrators, blaming the victims for their own deaths. The truth is that the genocide of the Tutsis in Rwanda was systematic and one-sided mass murder, much like the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide. Historical revisionism often has the purpose of justifying inaction by policy makers, who are portrayed as lost in the “fog of uncertainty.”

A revisionist interpretation of the genocide in Rwanda appeared in a New York Times Op-Ed January 10, 2014, written by Michael Dobbs of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum questioning the trustworthiness of Jean-Pierre, the informant who came to General Dallaire in January 1994 warning of the Hutu Power plan to exterminate all Tutsis. Jean-Pierre told General Dallaire of shipments of 500,000 machetes and rifles to the *Interahamwe*, the MRND militia. General Dallaire verified evidence of the arms caches with eyewitness inspection by one of his trusted officers, and he famously faxed Kofi Annan and Iqbal Riza requesting permission to confiscate the arms. But in a cowardly response, they refused, saying confiscation of weapons was “beyond his mandate.” Yet there was already a UN Security Council arms embargo on Rwanda in place, and General Dallaire was actually well within his mandate to enforce it. Riza and Annan even advised Dallaire to take the “news” of the arms shipments to Rwandan President Habyarimana, who undoubtedly already knew about them, and who had himself led genocidal massacres against the

Tutsi of Rwanda. Annan has since tried to justify this incredible advice as a “warning” to Habyarimana.

By questioning Jean-Pierre’s *bona fides*, Dobbs effectively justifies Annan and Riza’s refusal to permit Dallaire to confiscate the machetes.

Dobbs also characterizes the *Interahamwe* as young thugs who later somehow haphazardly drifted into committing genocide. It’s like claiming that the SS were disgruntled youth who later drifted into the Nazi Party. In fact the SS were carefully recruited to put Hitler into power, and then trained to carry out the Holocaust.

Linda Melvern and I and nine other genocide scholars responded to this Dobbs Op-Ed in a Letter to the Editor also published in the New York Times on January 22, 2014. We pointed out that the genocide of Tutsi in Rwanda had already begun in 1959 and the 1994 genocide was planned and warned about a year in advance. We also explained to Dobbs that the *Interahamwe* were specifically chosen and trained to carry out the genocide of the Tutsis of Rwanda, just as Jean-Pierre warned Dallaire.

Dobbs, a former Washington Post reporter, has admitted that he is no expert on Rwanda or even on genocide, yet he has been put in charge of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum’s documentation project on the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia. In 2009 Dobbs wrote revisionist articles questioning whether the Srebrenica massacre of 8000 Bosnian Muslim men should be called “genocide”, by redefining genocide as the destruction of a whole group, a common misinterpretation of the Genocide Convention which ignores the Genocide Convention’s definition of genocide as “the intentional destruction, in whole or in part, of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such.” He wrote another historical revisionist article “In Defense of the Serbs,” in Foreign Policy magazine in August, 2012 attempting to prove that Serbia was not the aggressor in the Bosnian war.

Michael Dobbs is the wrong man to be heading the research on past genocides at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum. He is not a genocide scholar. He is a journalist of the Cold War. On genocide, he is an amateur. On March 11, 2014, Prof. Linda Melvern, Prof. Frank Chalk, and I met with Dobbs, and other directors of the USHMM documentation project as well as with the

Director of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Sara Bloomfield. We requested specific corrections of errors in the articles Dobbs has written on Rwanda on the USHMM website. We also requested appointment of Boards of Experts on Rwanda and on Bosnia for the USHMM documentation project, which would have the power to clear and correct future articles and website postings resulting from the project. The USHMM has made minor changes in Dobbs' articles, some that drag more red herrings across the path. But the USHMM has not agreed to Boards of Experts on the genocides in Rwanda and in Bosnia. I doubt that it will.

The USHMM is using this documentation project to launch its Center for the Prevention of Genocide, and to raise money for its billion-dollar endowment campaign. Vampire like, the USHMM is using the blood of Rwandans and Bosnians to raise money.

I warn against such research for profit, research that is really a legitimating excuse for fund-raising to pay large salaries to Western research staffs, or for publications by academics like Alan Kuperman or Alex de Waal to gain tenure.

I also warn against turning the anti-genocide movement into a Western government and foundation-funded project by Western intellectuals.

For the anti-genocide movement to end genocide, it must become the movement of thousands of people around the world, especially people who live in the countries most at risk. The findings of genocide research must be made available to secondary school students, religious leaders, and policy makers around the world. The anti-genocide movement must become a genuine world movement.

Ultimately, the goal of genocide research must be to understand human nature. Genocide is committed by human beings; and only human beings can end it. Genocide begins with human words, and ends with murder.

In Hebrew, what distinguishes living from non-living things is that God has implanted in every living being the WORD. We are not just material beings. God's WORD is in all of us. We have in each of us spiritual souls capable of love and justice. Love is God's force personally expressed. Justice is God's force socially expressed.

To end genocide, we must promote empathy for every other human being. Empathy is love that reaches around the world. It focuses love into a laser beam that can light up the suffering of people in Rwanda, and also in Sudan, Myanmar, and the Central African Republic, where genocide is underway as we speak.

There is only one race. The human race.

Acting together, we can and must end genocide in this century.

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