



BOSTON COLLEGE

DIVIDED THEY FALL: AN ANALYSIS OF THE
DESTRUCTIVE EFFECT OF PROPAGANDA ON WOMEN'S
EMBODIMENT IN WAR

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ABSTRACT

Rape as an instrument of territorial control has increased alongside with more sophisticated use of propaganda. It is not a coincidence that the 1990's marked a time in which propaganda was employed in systematic and deliberate ways and was successful in compelling millions to participate in genocidal campaigns. This thesis will explore the power of propaganda and how it created a space for brutal and sexualized violence in Bosnia and Rwanda. In order to do this a historical, political and social framework will be analyzed and the way that propaganda worked within these frameworks to inspire violence will then be considered. Special emphasis will be given to the situation of women and the way in which their positions at the intersection of ethnicity and gender placed them in a particularly vulnerable position. Propaganda is one of the main vehicles through which the hatred of women is built and the result is the reduction of women to political objects. Women, both within and outside the context of war, are viewed as means to an end or tools rather than embodied persons. Propaganda dehumanized them and set them up in such a way that their demise was necessary.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“We are living as if we are dead.”¹ These words were uttered by a female victim of the Rwandan Genocide. She speaks to her experience and those of the women in her community. Her experience is not unique. Rather it is similar to the experiences of women who were systematically raped in Bosnia and in conflicts around the world. Witnessing the destruction of their people, country and selves was more than these women could bear. Many of the raped women are living with the constant horror of the memory and stigma that comes with sex outside of marriage. They are isolated from themselves and their communities, both literally because of social practices and mentally because of the dissociation that followed as a coping mechanism. They have come to objectify their own bodies as others have done and are therefore being denied a full and integrated life. This violates human dignity and does not allow for human flourishing which should be the goal of every society and of the global community.

In the last century war has become increasingly violent and dangerous for civilians. Mary-Wynne Ashford and Yolanda Huet-Vaughn, authors of “The Impact of War on Women,” state that “bombs and missiles kill men and women indiscriminately,

¹ Human Rights Watch, “Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath,” Human Rights Watch. (1996) 38, 26 Jan. 2009. <<http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1996/rwanda.htm>>.

but other aspects of war affect women and girls disproportionately.”² Women have the added component of their sexual vulnerability that is exploited during wartime. Rape and sexual exploitation are often used as a genocidal tool and this method has increased in the last 20 years. Joshua Goldstein claims that “rape as an instrument of territorial control and domination seems to have spread in the 1990s.”³ This trajectory of violence against women in war makes it imperative to analyze its effects and the environment in which it takes place.

Women’s bodies have become a forgotten battlefield, in that their bodies are not always acknowledged as a targeted and vulnerable entity in war. Rape is a threat to both the physical and mental health of the victims and has effects outside of the act itself—it is a denial of basic human rights. According to the World Health Organization, health is “not only the absence of disease but also the presence of physical and mental health and social wellbeing.”⁴ Rape must therefore be considered a serious crime of war and analyzed with the gravity that it deserves. Through rape, there is a disproportionate amount of physical harm done to women’s bodies compared to those of men.

This paper will explore the intersectionality of ethnicity and gender and how these factors put women in a particularly vulnerable position during genocidal campaigns. Propaganda is one of the main vehicles through which the hatred of women is built and the result is the reduction of women to political objects. Both rape and propaganda contain elements of power—of one group expressing dominance over another. This

² Mary-Wynne Ashford and Yolanda Huet-Vaughn, “The Impact of War on Women,” War and Public Health. Eds. Barry S. Levy and Victor W. Sidel. (Washington: American Public Health Association, 2000) 186.

³ Joshua S. Goldstein, War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 363.

⁴ H. Patricia Hynes, “On the Battlefield of Women’s Bodies: An Overview of the Harm of War on Women,” Women’s Studies International Forum 27 (2004) 434.

power imbalance must be acknowledged and studied in order for change to occur. Only once intersectionality is recognized and women are seen as human beings by themselves and their communities rather than objects or tools will human flourishing and rebuilding be possible.

Method

In order to illustrate the media's role in genocidal conflicts two case studies will be presented—Bosnia and Rwanda. Propaganda played an extremely important role in each of these conflicts in terms of organization and creating a unified message of hate which served to marginalize the out-group and empower the in-group. Both of these conflicts occurred in the 1990's, therefore there is a good body of literature documenting both what occurred during the war and during the aftermath. Also, as noted before, there has been a significant rise in the deliberate and planned use of rape in wartime in the 1990's. The advantage of hindsight is especially important when looking at the effects of propaganda. At times it is hard to see the effect of something when one is under its spell.

The phrase genocidal rape was coined in the late 1980's to describe the sexual "contamination" of Muslim women by Bosnian Serbs. Analyzing the conflict in Bosnia therefore is a good place to start looking at the motivations and effects of such an atrocity. The Rwandan Genocide that occurred in 1994 is a recent and dramatic example that has captivated the world. Each conflict affected a large number of people whose life circumstances are forever altered. Michael J. Toole, who studies displacement in wartime, speaks to the sheer number of displaced persons in Bosnia and Rwanda when he states that "By mid-1994, just two conflicts—in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda—

had between them generated four million refugees and internally displaced persons.”⁵

That is four million persons that have been forced out of their homes and who must, somehow, start to rebuild. In both Bosnia and Rwanda, women constitute the majority and therefore must bear the burden of picking up the pieces of their war-torn countries. For this reason special attention must be paid to their experience in war.

Each case was analyzed through looking at the reports of International Organizations, scholarship and personal testimonies. Because of language barriers and a lack of first hand information, transcripts that were looked at come from translations and interpretations of scholars beforehand. By looking at a variety of information, a balance could be struck between the overarching theories and personal effects of rape on these women. One of the central research questions in this paper comes from Veena Das, an anthropologist who has analyzed the conflict in Bosnia. She asks of the Bosnian situation specifically:

How did the space for the most brutal violence against women and against different ethnicities get created, and how were Others—“women” and “Muslims/Croats/Serbs”—constructed such that the “desire for nationalism . . . became metamorphosed into sexual violence?”⁶

The effect of objectification is central to this question. Both the Serbs and the Hutu regime employed propaganda which demonized the “others.” The other came to be seen as an object, and in many cases the “other” began to see themselves as objects.

Another central question is “How were actions so manifestly wrong transformed into systematic methods of war?” The answer comes in the form of extremely sophisticated use of propaganda. Propaganda discourages human beings from living as

⁵ Michael J. Toole, “Displaced Persons and War,” *War and Public Health*, Eds. Barry S. Levy and Victor W. Sidel (Washington: American Public Health Association, 2000) 197.

⁶ Veena Das, “Language and Body: Transactions in the Construction of Pain,” *Social Suffering*, Eds. A. Kleinman, V. Das, and M. Lock (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997) 69.

embodied subjects and from being viewed as people adequately and integrally considered. During both the Rwandan Genocide and the Bosnian War, propaganda encouraged the objectification of women for advancement of political aims—which resulted in the rampant exploitation of women’s bodies through rape and sexual assault. This objectification has been internalized and must therefore be combated as part of the “solution.”

Rape and Embodiment

Rape is not an easy thing to define. Its definition varies by country and region. In the Rwandan Genocide rape was defined as “physical invasion of a sexual nature, committed on a person under circumstances which are coercive.”⁷ The presence of a hostile military force among other circumstances constitutes coercion. Following from the case of *Prosecutor v. Furundzija* in 1998, the definition of rape for the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia is

The sexual penetration, however slight, either of the vagina or anus of the victim by the penis of the perpetrator, or any other object used by the perpetrator, or of the mouth of the victim by the penis of the perpetrator, where such penetration is effected by coercion or force or threat of force against the victim or a third person.⁸

These definitions have in common that they involve sexual organs and force although the definition for Yugoslavia is much more specific in naming its terms. Susan Brownmiller, one of the leading authorities on rape wrote an ideal definition in her 1975 book, Against Our Will. She wrote, “A female definition of rape can be contained in a single sentence. If a woman chooses not to have intercourse with a specific man and the man chooses to

⁷ “Principle Gender Crimes,” Global Justice Center. <<http://www.globaljusticecenter.net/publications/Principle-Gender-Crimes-1.pdf>> 2.

⁸ Principle Gender Crimes 3

proceed against her will, that is a criminal act of rape.”⁹ For Brownmiller, the element of choice is central.

There is also a debate among scholars about how much relative weight sex and violence should be given in the conception of rape. Brownmiller tries to separate rape from sexuality claiming that it is all about a desire for power not a desire for sex. Part of what she relies on is the fact that most often the attractiveness of the victim is irrelevant; it is therefore the expression of power which is central to the act. Through this construction women are acted on and denied agency. Rape is about violence and domination but it must not be reduced to this. As Ann J. Cahill argues:

Defining rape as primarily violence, not sex, implied that rape was significantly similar to other types of assault, and that its sexual nature was relatively irrelevant to the experience. Yet few women would agree that being raped is essentially equivalent to being hit in the face or otherwise physically assaulted.¹⁰

While Cahill gives some credence to Brownmiller’s definition, she adds a more nuanced element to the discussion. Rape is neither all about power nor all about sex rather there is a complex relationship between the two.

Rape does not only exist in the specific violation but has a significant impact on the culture in which it occurs. The possibility of rape shapes the way that women move about the world.¹¹ Choices that women make often rely on the possibility of sexual violation. This potential is not something that is necessarily talked about but its presence is palpable, just beneath the surface. This culture of silence differs from culture to culture, but silence is a term often connected with such a personal violation.

⁹ Susan Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1975) 18.

¹⁰ Ann J. Cahill, *Rethinking Rape* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001) 3.

¹¹ Cahill 1

The production of fear through the threat of sexual violation is exploited during war, especially in genocidal conflict. Women come to be viewed as the property of other men and are violated almost as if they were cattle or furniture.¹² Brownmiller speaks to this point and says “A mob turns to rape as an expression of power and dominance. Women are used almost as inanimate objects, to prove a point among men.”¹³ This use of women as inanimate objects becomes internalized and affects women’s ability to view their bodies as an integral part of themselves.

The body is not just a vessel for the soul rather, an integral part of our being—human beings exist as embodied subjects. In this light, the violations against the body in the Rwandan Genocide and Bosnian War take on a greater significance. Richard Gula, a Catholic theologian discusses how the human person’s mind and body are deeply connected and that the human body is not simply an object. He states that the concept of the “embodied subject implies that our bodies are not accessories. They are not merely something we have to house our subjectivity, but are essential to our being integrated persons.”¹⁴ Therefore the violation of our bodies, as symbols of our interiority has a significant impact on our inner selves. Humans are also deeply connected to their concept of their own sexuality; therefore sexual violations add another level to the atrocities committed in war. It is through our bodies that we interact with society at large— if the body is denied, enacting social change and becoming a social actor of any kind becomes more difficult. This denial of the human body, as exemplified in acts of sexual violation, separates the body from the self and denies the existence of the person.

¹² Brownmiller 125

¹³ Cahill 18

¹⁴ Richard M. Gula, Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality (New York: Paulist Press, 1989) 69.

In such a degenerate state, the victim is unable to constructively engage the inequalities present in society. The subjectivity of the women must be restored so that they again have the ability to take charge of their lives and become an integral part of the solution. Relationships with the self as well as relationships with society at large must be taken into consideration when looking at the effects of sexual violations.

The embodied person must be viewed as having agency rather than as an agent to be acted upon. Gula reflects further on the idea of the embodied subject saying, “The great moral implication of the person as subject is that no one may ever use a human person as an object or as a means to an end the way we do other things of the world.”¹⁵ Women are frequently used in genocidal campaigns as political tools and as a means to an end—that end being the destruction and humiliation of the out-group. The out-group and all persons that associated with them—in this paper the Tutsis and Muslims—were reduced to objects and therefore denied basic human dignity and respect. Their objectification has led to a toxic shame that inhibits their ability to rebuild their lives and their communities.

Through the lens of embodiment it naturally follows that rape is a threat to a woman’s personhood. Cahill states that one must “understand rape as an act charged with political and bodily meanings, as a threat to the possibility of the bodily integrity of a woman, and therefore a threat to her status as a person.”¹⁶ There therefore must be an understanding of the severe psychological and physical impact that rape can have. Cahill continues stating:

By locating the body as central to a woman’s identity, while not demanding that such identity be unified or determined, contemporary

¹⁵ Gula 68

¹⁶ Cahill 10

feminist theories of the body will approach rape as a crime not limited to an assault on woman's sexuality, but as an assault on various but fundamental aspects of her embodied selfhood.¹⁷

Rape has complex and profound effects on the victim and many times on the community of which she is a part. Using this reasoning, it is clear that the use of rape in war was an important and effective tool of the in-group. Propaganda encouraged the destruction of persons not only in a physical sense but in a psychological battering of their selfhood.

Propaganda

The use of and theories about propaganda can be traced back to the days of ancient Greece. It was also used during of the Roman Empire and had a great impact in the Reformation. It has been used to sway opinion on political, social and religious matters and has therefore had lasting effects in the course of history. The word did not always have a negative connotation and in some cultures it still does not, but for the most part in modern times it is associated with manipulation and evil deeds. With each new advancement in communication—radio and television for example—the use of propaganda became more sophisticated and widely used. Jowett and O'Donnell give a good basic definition of propaganda. They state “*Propaganda*, in the most neutral sense, means to disseminate or promote particular ideas.”¹⁸ The purpose is not just to disseminate ideas but to create an imbalance of power in terms of the ideas that are accepted and acknowledged by the public. Mutual understanding is not the goal rather an imbalance of power which is often achieved through lies and half-truths. At its heart, propaganda contains an element of secrecy and control. Jowett delves deeper into the use

¹⁷ Cahill 8

¹⁸ Garth S. Jowett and Victoria O'Donnell, Propaganda and Persuasion: Third Edition (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 1999) 2.

of propaganda, stating that “the term is associated with control and is regarded as a deliberate attempt to alter or maintain a balance of power that is advantageous to the propagandist.”¹⁹ This power is embraced by a number of different organizations—from advertising firms to persons preparing for war.

Propaganda is much like genocide in its systematic and deliberate nature. Jowett writes that “Propaganda is the deliberate, systematic attempt to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behavior to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist.”²⁰ There is a lack of sound reasoning in propaganda—a fact which is disguised at all costs. The arguments are manipulative and one-sided in nature and have little to no relation to the truth. Propaganda is central to how many wars are fought and ideologies are created.

Propaganda is often disseminated in a way which aims to limit thought on the part of the receiver. It does not present an idea and ask the viewer or listener to reflect rather presents messages as fact in a constant barrage of information. The information becomes pervasive and infiltrates the minds of the receivers. Jacques Ellul argues that “because propaganda is instantaneous . . . it destroys one’s sense of history and disallows critical reflection.”²¹ With information presented in such a compelling way it is difficult to question and put it into context. Propaganda often consists of oversimplified messages and images which play on the emotion rather than reason of the recipient. Pratkanis and Turner define propaganda as “attempts to move a recipient to a predetermined point of view by using simple images and slogans that truncate thought by playing on prejudices

¹⁹ Jowett 3

²⁰ Jowett 6

²¹ Jowett 4

and emotions.”²² Propagandists play on values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors which are all anchors that are used in the creation of an effective message.²³ In the propaganda studied in this thesis, the value of nationalism and the fear of the “other” are relied upon by those in control.

The response of the audience is the central consideration in the creation of the message. An objectively good message in the context of propaganda is one that plays on existing fears and beliefs. The message must resonate with its audience in order for it to be given credence. Jowett writes that:

Both persuasion and propaganda tend to produce messages of *resonance*; that is, the recipients do not perceive the themes of messages to be imposed on them from an outside authority to which they are required or committed to defer. Rather, the recipients perceive the anchors on which the message is based as coming from within themselves.²⁴

In the context of genocidal conflict then, fear and ethnic instability are played upon and taken to extremes. The messages created can either produce an active response, such as the slaughter of thousands, or a passive response, such as discrimination or hatred. This range of reaction is achieved by the way that the message is framed. Entman defines framing as

Essentially involve[ing] *selection* and *salience*. To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation.²⁵

²² A.R. Pratkanis and M.E. Turner, “Persuasion and Democracy: Strategies for increasing deliberative participation and enacting social change,” *Journal of Social Issues* (52) 190.

²³ Jowett 31-33

²⁴ Jowett 33

²⁵ Christine L. Kellow and H. Leslie Steeves, “The Role of Radio in the Rwandan Genocide,” *Journal of Communication* (Summer 1998) 110.

The creation of a single simple frame of reference which elicits an emotional response in the recipients is the goal of the creators of the message.

It is also important to note that the dependency on media increases during times of conflict. The media is turned to with increased fervor and information is accepted more readily. Kellow and Steeves support this point saying that

In times of instability people may be more reliant on mass media for information and guidance; people may know of the crucial events only through media; and media are more influential in matters outside the realm of personal experience.²⁶

The idea that there is less ability to critically reflect goes along with this point as well. In times of instability, a single unifying voice is very appealing.

This unifying voice was used in Bosnia and Rwanda to ignite ethnic and racial tensions and to inspire a fear that justified particularly heinous acts. The message regarding women in both conflicts was clear—women were considered the political tools of the enemy and their destruction was therefore imperative. Because their sexual nature was often considered the women’s “tool,” their sexuality was targeted. In both Bosnia and Rwanda, women were viewed as property to a great extent and therefore the sexual violation of a woman was also the violation of men’s property. The aims of genocide were reached through propaganda’s instruction.

Genocide

Genocide is the systematic and deliberate destruction of a group in whole or in part. The term was coined by Raphael Lemkin in 1944 to describe the events that transpired in during the Holocaust. Before it was “a crime with no name” but a name and

²⁶ Kellow 110

definition were necessary in order to fight against it and protect the international community. It was formally defined in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Article 2 of the convention defines genocide as “any of the following acts omitted with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, as such

- A) killing members of a group
- B) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group
- C) deliberately inflicting on the group condition 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 group²⁷

Genocide does not necessitate the immediate destruction of a group, rather it is a name for a coordinated plan which aims to destroy a population. This population, generally is, but does not have to be defined by its ethnic makeup. The elements of planning and intent are critical in defining and understanding genocide. The attacks generally take place in a series or a process at the bidding of some larger controlling institution and are systematic in nature.

There are psychological factors that are often present in the evolution of genocide. Dutton discusses this in his work The Psychology of Genocide. He talks about how evil begins with a basic frustration of human needs and therefore the creation of means of fulfillment that disregard human life. According to Dutton

These basic needs include security, positive identity, effectiveness and control over essentials, connections to others and autonomy, and an understanding of the world and one’s place in it. The frustration of these needs both interferes with the satisfaction of other needs and begins a

²⁷ Prevent Genocide International, “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.” <<http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/convention/text.htm>>.

search for a scapegoat, in the form of a target group that can be blamed for the dissatisfaction.²⁸

The target group therefore becomes the new source of the first group's frustrations. In order to fulfill their needs it becomes imperative to destroy those targeted.

There are many different techniques of genocide. Lempkin defines some of these methods in a statement made in 1943. He states:

The objectives of such a plan would be the disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups²⁹

Political techniques might include taking away political rights and advantages therefore limiting control. Social methods might include attacks on cultural and moral practices. Often along with this is a creation of racism or discrimination of the group's defining features. Those perpetrating genocide also have an incentive to limit the economic possibilities for the group they are intending to destroy. A final method often employed is biological destruction. This can manifest itself in cutting off food supply, forced labor and the separation of men and women so that reproduction is impossible.

Gregory Stanton, the president of Genocide Watch, wrote a paper titled "The Eight Stages of Genocide" which is helpful in determining the kind of environments where genocidal ideologies can come to fruition. He names classification, symbolization, dehumanization, organization, polarization, preparation, extermination and denial.³⁰

Although genocide could happen without one of these factors, the above is a general

²⁸ Donald G. Dutton, *The Psychology of Genocide, Massacres, and Extreme Violence: Why "Normal" People Come to Commit Atrocities* (London: Praeger Security International, 2007) 99.

²⁹ Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944) 79.

³⁰ Gregory Stanton, "The Eight Stages of Genocide," *Genocide Watch* <<http://www.genocidewatch.org/8stages.htm>>.

outline which is followed. Genocide often requires a group to be classified and singled out against the rest of society. This group is then identified with symbols and talked about as though they are less than human. Because genocide requires intent there must be an element of organization which generally comes from some part of the government. This lead group then drives the parties apart and prepares for the destruction of the dehumanized group. In these more modern times, this division is often achieved through massive propaganda campaigns. The final stage is a denial that the actions of the organizing group were criminal.

All of these factors were at play in both Bosnia and Rwanda and propaganda was influential at every step. Propaganda inspired a culture of fear which was used as justification for rape and killing on a mass scale. In Bosnia, the use of pornography helped the in-group to dehumanize Muslim women and instruct Serbian men in sexual exploitation. In both societies the message was clear—the other was fearful and therefore must be exterminated.

Case Studies

In order to demonstrate the power of propaganda in war and the effect of objectification the case studies of Bosnia and Rwanda will be examined. Each chapter will give a brief history of the conflict, the situation of the victimized women and the level of agency displayed by both the perpetrators and the victims. There will then be examples and a discussion of the role of the media in encouraging and directing the conflict and the health effects—both psychological and physical—that resulted. Finally there will be a brief discussion of legal actions linked with the conflict.

It was in the context of conflict in the former Yugoslavia that the term genocidal rape was born. The case study of Bosnia involves a complex relationship of different ethnicities and cultural attitudes which propagandist played upon to organize a systematic destruction of a people. Although all parties partook in the destruction, it was largely perpetrated by the Serbs against Muslims. The situation in Bosnia differed from that of Rwanda in the fact that religious tensions played a large role in Bosnia. Part of the reason for this is that religion was an integral part of cultural identity for the women involved.

During the conflict in Bosnia, the use of television and pornography was seen to a much larger extent. There were special reports before, after and during the news which recounted the greatness of the Serbs and how Non-Serbs brought down the nation. The television in Bosnia also provided a constant barrage of images of victims which were portrayed in such a way that they were further marginalized and support was garnered for the Serbs. In Bosnia, rapes would be shown on television with disinformation as to those that were perpetrating the act and the identity of the victim.

Although pornographic magazines were present in Rwanda, it was in more closed circles. In Bosnia, pornographic videos and magazines were highly pervasive and instructive. The prevalence of pornography further dehumanized Bosnian women and further encouraged their sexual destruction.

The Rwandan Genocide was more clear-cut in terms of who the perpetrators and victims were. The Hutu regime planned in detail the destruction of the Tutsi population. Women were specifically targeted in media campaigns, largely through the radio, and were seen as a political weapon of the Tutsi population. Women were more actively

demonized in the Rwandan propaganda machine, whereas women seemed to be more of a way to injure the men in Bosnia. Rwandan propaganda portrayed women as political tools of the Tutsi population and they were therefore feared to a greater extent, because they were seen to carry some power—especially sexual power. This portrayal of sexual power made it imperative in the minds of the Hutu to bring sexual destruction and disgrace on the women.

There are many similarities that exist between the two cases. In both cases propaganda was used in a planned and purposeful way in order to “ethnically cleanse” a marginalized group. The propaganda machine established a fear of difference in the population and used it as a framework to direct the systematic killing and removal of a people. The message to destroy the “other” morphed into an imperative to rape that other. The Tutsis and the Muslims were transformed by the media into ideas rather than persons. Perpetrators were therefore more easily able to dehumanize and destroy their victims for the “greater purpose of nationalism.”

The result in each case was nations of women who are afraid to tell their stories and have become disembodied. Personal testimonies from women will illustrate this affect of disembodiment in each chapter. They are rejected by their communities and often by themselves. The place of their violation—their bodies—has become a place with which they can no longer connect. They are living a life unfulfilled because their trauma has forced them to deny a key part of themselves. My hope is that they will be able to once again see agency in their bodies because as the saying goes, divided they fall. Without the ability to integrate the mind and body and connect with themselves, it

becomes difficult for effected women to connect to the world and cultivate a life that is deep and meaningful.

Chapter Two: “They Invaded It”: The Effect of Propaganda and Pornography in the Bosnian War

There is something between my legs. I do not know what it is. I do not know where it is. I do not touch. Not now. Not anymore. Not since. . . . Not since I dream there's a dead animal sewn in down there with thick black fishing line. And the bad dead animal smell cannot be removed. And its throat is slit and it bleeds through all my summer dresses. . . . Not since the soldiers put a long thick rifle inside me. So cold, the steel rod canceling my heart. Don't know whether they're going to fire it or shove it though my spinning brain. Six of them, monstrous doctors with black masks shoving bottles up me too. There were sticks and the end of a broom. . . . Not since I heard the skin tear and made lemon screeching sounds, not since a piece of my vagina came off in my hand, a part of the lip, now one side of the lip is completely gone . . . Not since they took turns for seven days smelling like feces and smoked meat, they left their dirty sperm inside me. I became a river of poison and pus and all the crops died, and the fish. . . . They invaded it. Butchered it and burned it down. I do not touch now. Do not visit. I live someplace else now. I don't know where that is.

-Eve Ensler, The Vagina Monologues¹

This is an excerpt from the piece “My Vagina was my Village,” from The Vagina Monologues by Eve Ensler. It was written after interviews with Bosnian women refugees conducted during and after the war in former Yugoslavia, and represents one woman’s experience of rape and sexual torture during the conflict.

¹ Eve Ensler, The Vagina Monologues: Official V-Day Script 2009, Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 25-26.

The term genocidal rape was coined after the war in the former Yugoslavia, and therefore it is critical to understanding the term and its implications. Patricia Hynes writes

In the late 1980's, *genocidal rape* was coined to describe the new extreme of men's inhumanity to women in war when Serbs intentionally detained and raped Muslim women in camps to destroy them and their people by sexually 'contaminating' the women.²

Rape in the Bosnian conflict was neither an accident nor part of the "normal" spoils of war rather it was an official policy of war. Catherine MacKinnon discusses the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina and says "this is ethnic rape as an official policy of war . . . rape under orders; not out of control, under control."³ This reiterates the fact that rape was not just the corrupt deeds of individual men, but it came from an overarching centralized command from the Serbs to root out the Muslims. Although this thesis discusses the actions of the Serbian forces against the Muslims because of their greater strength, it is important to note that violations occurred on both sides of the conflict. Part of the reason for the greater "success" of the Serbian forces was their control and command of propaganda—which enabled them to direct a large group of people against another large group.

The rape of women and girls was a part of "ethnic cleansing" and the attempt of the Serbs to destroy the Muslim population. It is important to recognize the gravity of the phrase "ethnic cleansing" and the fact that it does not adequately describe all of the horrors involved. Samantha Power eloquently states, the term ethnic cleansing "became

² H. Patricia Hynes, "On the Battlefield of Women's Bodies: An Overview of the Harm of War on Women," *Women's Studies International Forum* 27 (2004) 432.

³ Vesna Kesic, "From Reverence to Rape: An Anthropology of Ethnic and Genderized Violence," *Frontline Feminism: Women, War and Resistance*, Eds. Marguerite R. Waller & Jennifer Rycenga (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000) 24.

numbing shorthand for deeds that were far more evocative when described in detail.”⁴ It calls for the elimination of one or more ethnic groups by another ethnic group, no matter the cost. Rape was one of the many destructive tools used in the conflict in former Yugoslavia. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, it was mainly Muslim women raped by Serbian forces. The number of women raped is an estimated 20,000 by the European Union commission and 50,000 according to the Bosnian government.⁵ These estimates of course are rough, as many women are either afraid to tell their story or are not around to tell it.

Helsinki Watch, an American human rights organization, discusses rape as a weapon of war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. They state,

Whether a woman is raped by soldiers in her home or is held in a house with other women and raped over and over again, she is raped with a political purpose—to intimidate, humiliate, and degrade her and others affected by her suffering. The effect of rape is often to ensure that women and their families will flee and never return.⁶

The rape of Bosnian women was planned and purposeful. Women and girls in both cases were transformed into political tools and the destruction of the women’s sexualities became a means to destroy the entire community. This was metaphorically alluded to in the opening quote of the chapter which is aptly titled “My Vagina is My Village.” The woman equates her rape with the destruction of life and land in general and in terms of the community. She states at the end, “I live someplace else now. I don’t know where

⁴ Samantha Power, “A Problem from Hell:” America and the Age of Genocide, (New York: Basic Books, 2002) 250.

⁵ Joshua S. Goldstein, War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 363

⁶ Alexandra Stiglmayer, Mass Rape: War Against Women in Bosnia- Herzegovina, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994) 85.

that is.”⁷ Although this is a metaphor, it accurately describes the actual displacement of so many women, girls and their families. Many women quite literally do not know the place they are living and the life and body they inhabit post-rape and war.

Alexandra Stiglmayer, a leading scholar on the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and editor of the book, Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina discusses at length the use of rape as a genocidal tool in war. She states, “rapes spread fear and induce the flight of refugees; rapes humiliate, demoralize, and destroy not only the victim but also her family and community; and rapes stifle any wish to return.”⁸ Rape has the power to cause entire communities and families to flee their homes. This power must not be taken lightly. It is a force that is incredibly destructive and its effectiveness makes it highly appealing to those with genocidal aims. A Zagreb feminist Asija Armanda once said that rape is “surefire weapon that doesn’t need any fuel or ammunition,” which adds to its effectiveness and pervasiveness.⁹ Rape was a way of severing the bond between citizens and the land. This is an example of women’s lives and livelihoods not being calculated as a “cost” in war. Continuing the metaphor, women are considered expendable.

The intersectionality of ethnicity and gender proved to be very important in the Bosnian War. Women were targeted and threatened both because they were Muslims and because they were women. It is important then to look at their experiences from a perspective of intersectionality so as not to deny the peril wrapped up in either identity. Women’s sexuality was put on display and the destruction of it encouraged through the use of propaganda—especially in the form of pornography. Propaganda, largely

⁷ Ensler 26

⁸ Stiglmayer 85

⁹ Stiglmayer 85

controlled by the Serbian forces in Bosnia, encouraged ethnic hatred between Serbs and Muslims. Pornography, as one of the main forms of propaganda, helped to instruct and transform the nature of the attacks, making them highly sexual.

This chapter will explore the use of rape as a genocidal tool and how the use of rape was planned and encouraged through the use of propaganda. In order to do this a foundation will be laid in terms of the historical context of the conflict and the social position of women in society. The “players” in the conflict will then be analyzed in greater detail in order to give a fuller picture of the perpetrators and the dynamic between perpetrators and victims. Once the perpetrators are better understood, the way that media campaigns were organized and the types of messages that were instrumental in encouraging rape will be clearer. An account of historical and social contexts is necessary in order to understand how and why the propaganda was so affective. Finally, the aftermath of the conflict—including health effects and legal repercussions will be analyzed. The use of propaganda in the Bosnian War was highly effective in inculcating fear in the Serbs and encouraging the sexual violation of Muslim women as a controlled tactic. The sophisticated use of pornography added a different dimension to the conflict and help to ensure that fear and anger were expressed in a sexual way.

History of the Conflict

The war in Bosnia-Herzegovina came as a result of the breakup of Yugoslavia. The Bosnian War, as it is commonly referred, officially lasted between March of 1992 and November of 1995. It was a war involving many players and sides with changing allegiances. Because it precipitated from conflicts in the wider region of the former

Yugoslavia, there is a dispute over whether it was a civil war or a war of aggression. Classically Serbs label the conflict as a civil war while human rights organizations, Croatians, Muslims and many others find it a war of aggression. Similarly, there is a disagreement over whether the actions of the Serb forces against the Non-Serbs align with the definition of genocide, which requires a specific intent, or if the actions would be more properly labeled as crimes against humanity. The court concluded that while the actions in eastern Bosnia in 1995 could be constituted as genocide, the occurrences in the war taken as a whole were more akin to crimes against humanity, which do not require the same level of intent to destroy a population or group.

Prior to 1991, Yugoslavia was made up of 6 republics. According to Vesna Kesic, a historian of the conflict,

Ethnic nationalisms have historically been present in the region of former Yugoslavia, either in latent form or as open conflict. But so has the coexistence of multifaith, multilingual, and multiethnic societies of the region, which was reinforced as a practice and as a political structure in multiethnic, socialist Yugoslavia.¹⁰

The question is how the potential violence became real. Susan Woodward points to the breakdown of political order and governmental authority.¹¹ There was a weakening of the communist regime that had been in power for 45 years and a rise of nationalist and separatist ideologies.

In 1991 Bosnia was made up of 43 percent Muslims, 35 percent orthodox Serbs, and 18 percent Roman Catholic Croats, making in the most ethnically heterogeneous of Yugoslavia's republics.¹² Serbs were favored by the government, receiving more educational and employment opportunities, whereas the Muslim and Croat populations

¹⁰Kesic 23

¹¹ Kesic 23

¹² Power 247

were highly marginalized under the rule of Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic. The Bosnian Muslim population, commonly referred to as Bosniak, was particularly vulnerable as it did not have a protector nation like the Serbs and the Croats, who could rely on Serbia and Croatia respectively. Muslims only had the international community to rely on and therefore were left in an extremely weak position. This also left them unable to build up defenses against the persecution of the Serbs. President Milosevic sought to partition Bosnia in such a way that Bosniaks were not assigned a section. This led to Muslims being “deported” on forced marches.

The lines were blurred between military and paramilitary, allowing “ordinary people” to participate at large and causing a lack of respect of war customs, such as respecting civilians and those preventing extreme torture. Those not officially trained in war, are not aware of conventions and policies of decency. This was also fueled by state-controlled nationalistic rhetoric that reported massacres without clear information about victims and perpetrators and inspired a culture of fear in the Yugoslav Republic. Vesna Kesic, author of “From Reverence to Rape: An Anthropology of Ethnic and Genderized Violence” notes that “The cultures of terror and fear were actually created some time before the outbreak of the “proper” war.”¹³ The establishment of fear of difference was the framework on which genocide was built.

The war ended officially with the signing of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina on 14 December 1995 and the peace negotiations of the Dayton Agreement which was signed a few days later. Although it is difficult to name the number of casualties in large-scale war, most claim that between 100,000 and

¹³ Kesic 24

110,000 were killed and another 1.8 million people were displaced.¹⁴ Victims of the conflict, both civilians and soldiers, were mostly Bosniaks, while the perpetrators were overwhelmingly found to be Serb forces. Even though the majority of the killing and displacement was perpetrated by the Serb forces against the Bosniaks, it is important to keep in mind that there were perpetrators and victims on both sides. This may have been due to a lack of international response to the conflict. With no aid against Serbian forces, Bosniaks felt they needed to and were entitled to take matters into their own hands. Ancient ethnic and religious feuds came to the fore and “cleansing” became inevitable. The tensions were too great for the differing parties to sit back and wait for an attack. Each side therefore had to assume an offensive position.

Situation of Bosniak Women

Prior to World War II, Muslim society was fairly isolated and therefore was able to develop and enforce beliefs based on a patriarchal structure and the religious teachings found in the Koran. According to Azra Zalihic-Kaurin, “the role of women is laid down in Islamic *shari’ah* law, which derives from Allah’s instructions as preserved in the Koran. . . . The *shari’ah* contains more precepts about the rights and duties of women than does constitutional law.”¹⁵ This law pays particular attention to gender and therefore makes it easier to define and divide society in terms of gender. In this tradition, a woman’s place was in the private realm and motherhood was given great importance.

¹⁴ Ewa Tabeau and Jakub Bijak, “War-related Deaths in the 1992–1995 Armed Conflicts in Bosnia and Herzegovina: A Critique of Previous Estimates and Recent Results,” *European Journal of Population*. (Volume 21, Number 2-3. June 2005).

¹⁵ Azra Zalihic-Kaurin, “The Muslim Woman,” Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ed. Alexandra Stiglmeier (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994) 170.

Bosnian Muslims were seen as being good mothers and housewives and on the whole women were treated with reverence and respect.

In 1945, with the end of WWII, Communism gained power in Yugoslavia. Under the 45 years of Communist rule, the situation of Bosniak women was both improved and hindered. Communists sought to “liberate” these women from a culture that they found oppressive, but at the same time they were robbing them of their religion and tradition. Zalihic-Kaurin states that “the Communist leadership wanted to mold the Muslim woman into a new type of Communist woman and erase all traces of the Islamic religion and its customs.”¹⁶ This focus on equality “brotherhood and unity” naturally led to a forced blindness of difference. Muslim women were made to feel backward if they wanted to keep and express their old traditions, such as wearing the veil making integration into the new way of society difficult and in a way led to a new kind of separation of Bosniak women.

After Tito’s death in 1980, the influence of Communism began to dwindle and a harkening back to traditional values followed. Before, during, and after the Communist rule one value remained constant—the value of purity and virginity. Motherhood and exclusivity in sexual relationships continued to be regarded as deeply important for Bosniak women, which made their rapes even more traumatizing, both individually and socially. One striking illustration of this point is in the pervasive story of Emina. Emina was a Muslim woman that sought to defend her village but was outnumbered and therefore unable to do so. Zalihic-Kaurin wrote the traditional story as she heard it saying, “when she fell into their hands she begged one of the Chetniks, ‘only leave me

¹⁶ Zalihic-Kaurin 171

my honor; I will forgive you my death.’”¹⁷ Emina is seen as a model Muslim because she prioritizes her sexual honor and dignity over her own life. Rape for her was seen as worse than death itself. When this is the picture created for young Muslim women, the systematic mass rape that occurred in the Bosnian War is that much more traumatic and “effective.”

Sadeta, a Muslim woman told her story of rape during the Bosnian conflict. She states:

Maybe that’s their way of hurting Muslim women and Croatian women, and the whole female race. Killing them isn’t interesting enough for them anymore. It’s a lot more fun to torture us, especially if they get a woman pregnant . . . I feel dirty myself somehow. And I feel as though everybody can see it when they pass me in the street.¹⁸

This fear of visibility is a very real fear for women in these communities when their innocence and virginity are paramount. The torture is not only physical but deeply psychological.

The fact the Yugoslav society is a patriarchal one is another important factor when looking at the situation of women. Kesic states that

Although traditional patriarchy was seemingly destroyed through quick modernization in socialist Yugoslavia, patriarchal structures and gender relations were at work—somewhat undercover in the public and completely unquestioned in the private sphere.¹⁹

What is experienced in the private sphere must not be discounted as it is the model for action in the public sphere. If women are treated as secondary in the home, that behavior is learned and internalized. Stanley Tambiah discusses how this patriarchal tradition manifests in the social and political world. He states

¹⁷ Zalihic-Kaurin 173

¹⁸ Stiglmeier 96

¹⁹ Kesic 28

The entrenched tradition of patrilineage-affirming feuding and waging vendettas strengthens the use of women merely as pawns in the politics of identity, and merely as possessors of a procreative sexuality appropriated by the nationalist imperative.²⁰

Women are reduced to objects to be used to reach a more ultimate end rather than being viewed as an end themselves. An attack on them becomes an attack on an idea or possession rather than on a person.

There was a need to recreate the image of Yugoslav women in general after the fall of communism. Kesic writes:

During the first years of Yugoslav socialism (1945-1948), the Soviet social realist representation of woman as a “comrade worker” or a *kolhoz* woman dominated public space (posters, children’s texts and coloring books, political propaganda and popular culture alike). But such imagery was abandoned already in the early fifties and, since then, “a Yugoslav woman” has become more and more a void, or a least a very eclectically filled space in Yugoslav ideology and adjoining symbolic imagery.²¹

This void proved to be particularly dangerous as new political powers and ideologies had more control over how women were perceived and defined. Women were given little agency in that they were not allowed to define themselves. A society that did not have their best interests at heart rather was given the power of defining who women were and for what they stood.

Agents and Lack of Agency

Those who were given the power to define the in-group and the out-groups were the agents of the genocide. Although rapes occurred on both sides, the majority of rapes were persecuted by Serb forces against Muslim women and rape was used as a genocidal

²⁰ Kesic 25

²¹ Kesic 27

tool—planned and executed in a systematic way. Men often spoke about acting under orders rather than of their own free will. Stiglmyer reports that

According to the young girls' reports, the men discussed the rapes with them as if it had to do with a mission that they had to carry out. The women describe how many of the men took white pills that seemed to stimulate them.²²

The rapes were clearly not solely the actions of individuals rather a reaction to orders given from above. This does not excuse the action of the soldiers, rather provides some insight into the larger schema and plan that was laid out.

Fatima is a Muslim woman whose husband disappeared in 1992. She now lives in a refugee camp in central Bosnia. She talked about the military men—her interactions with them and observations of them. She recalls, “They used to get together and sing ‘O beautiful *bula*, a Chetnik’s beard will scratch you,’ or [sing] about how Muslim women would give birth to Serbian children.”²³ The fact that there were songs that many of the military men knew that specifically demean Muslim women gives a sense of institutionally and planning. The actions were not random or the product of uncontrolled male need and sexual desire. This demonstrates that rape was not about sex rather about power and domination.

Fatima also recalls a connection between rape and ethnicity. She said, “They ordered me to get undressed, and they cursed my mother.”²⁴ Military members were often referenced as cursing the mothers’ of the women they were raping. This is significant in that referencing motherhood brings up images of the womb and one’s ethnic make-up. The womb is where humans originate and how they are ethnically

²² Stiglmyer 160

²³ Stiglmyer 104

²⁴ Stiglmyer 104

determined. Disparaging remarks about the mother therefore translate into curses against the ethnicity as a whole.

Another tool employed by the agents was that of fear. Fear is a paralyzing force and therefore the rape of women effectively robbed them of their agency, or personal power. Stiglmyer reports that “Most of the rape victims are broken, not thinking about revenge, for the horror of their rape and expulsion has also taken away whatever power of resistance they might have had.”²⁵ When women are not able to talk about the terrible things that have happened to them and the things that they have seen, they are rendered helpless to protect themselves and their communities. Rape evokes a negative reaction from the community which takes away from the women their ability to speak freely about what has happened to them.

Women are often labeled and put into “boxes” that are equally damaging and threatening to their freedom. The virgin/whore dichotomy is one set of categories in which women are placed in Bosnian society and is extremely damaging in terms of rape. “The raped woman is also a fallen woman; her symbol calls for revenge, incites the willingness to fight, but also victimizes women and inspires violence against women.”²⁶ In this kind of society, women are made to feel that they are somehow to blame for not preserving themselves. They are seen and see themselves as soiled. Sex outside of marriage therefore threatens the very fabric of society. The pedestal of virginity is equally damaging for women especially in the context of war because it adds weight and social significance to rape.

²⁵ Stiglmyer 99

²⁶ Kesic 33

Not only does rape undermine the agency of women, but it also hurts the men and the community. Folnegovic-Smalc talks about what stories of rape do to the community at large. She states,

Her story produces fear in the remaining inhabitants, not only the females, but also the males: the men come to realize that they are not in a position to defend their women, and thus they are not only fearful, but also severely demoralized.²⁷

Rape harms both genders in a psychological way which of course was the aim of the Serbian nationalist paramilitary, or Chetnik, forces. Goldstein states that “A raped woman ‘is devalued property, and she signals defeat for the man who fails in his role as protector.’”²⁸ This element adds another layer to the humiliation and violence.

The Role of the Media

Television and radio were both largely influential in fanning the flames of ethnic hatred in former Yugoslavia. For the most part, Serbian forces had control over the broadcast system and therefore were able to determine and monitor the messages that were conveyed. It was used by the government as a tool of nationalism and taught people to not only love their own group but hate all others. There were TV specials devoted to recounting times when Serbs were victimized and programs idolizing Serbian history. There were also specials condemning the “enemy.” Mladjenovic and Hughs report that “every night, before and after the TV news, there were extra segments of pictures of dead or tortured people with an accompanying commentary on ‘what the enemy has done to

²⁷ Vera Folnegovic-Smalc, “Psychiatric Aspects of the Rapes in the War against the Republics of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina,” Mass Rape: The War against Women in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ed. Alexandra Stiglmayer (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1994) 175.

²⁸ Goldstein 362

innocent Serbs.’’²⁹ Graphic images of victims were pervasive on television and were used to drum up support for their cause and create a state of paranoia. The images showed a lack of humanity and called for the destruction of the “other.” The visuals contributed to the culture of fear and made the other side exactly that—other. There were also images of the destruction of sacred places and spaces.

The media was used not only to bolster national pride but also to encourage and enforce the marginalization of the Muslims and the Croats. For example, at times a Serbian radio broadcast would inform the citizens that local businesses “had introduced a quota to limit the number of Muslim or Croat employees to 1 percent of the overall workforce.”³⁰ Announcing the lack of employment of Muslims and Croats solidified the idea that they were lowly and unworthy of work and as well as weakening them economically. There were other policies before the outbreak of war that promoted the “special status” of Serbs over Non-Serbs that were highly reminiscent of laws codified against the Jews under the Nazi regime. For example, in a town in northern Bosnia, a curfew was imposed and a list of things that Non-Serbs were forbidden to do was created. Some of these rules include the prohibition to: “meet in cafes, restaurants, or other public places, hunt or fish, carry a weapon, drive or travel by car, or use means of communication other than the post office phone.”³¹ The aim of controlling all Non-Serbs was clear.

Although the Serbs were informed about the “lowliness” of other ethnicities, they were kept uninformed of the brutal cleansing actions of the Serbian army. Instead,

²⁹ Lepa Mladjenovic and Donna M. Hughes, “Feminist Resistance to War and Violence in Serbia,” *Frontline Feminism: Women, War and Resistance*, Eds. Marguerite R. Waller & Jennifer Rycenga (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000) 251.

³⁰ Power 250

³¹ Power 250

television focused on the actions of “Muslim extremists.” According to Stiglmeier “for two months Belgrade television did not report that Serbian troops were firing on Sarajevo—rather, it reported that ‘Muslim extremists’ were shooting at their own people.”³² These lies were being broadcast by what was supposed to be a trusted source, which helped to increase the perceived legitimacy of its message and built a distorted image of reality.

A doctor, Jusuf Pasalic (pseudonym), from Kozarac who encountered many that had been affected by the war talked about the effects of propaganda. He states

They used to think that Muslims were their friends and neighbors, but then the propaganda clouded their minds. They told me that the Muslims had lists with the names of Serbian children who were going to be butchered. That was the propaganda lies of Serbian TV from Banja Luka.³³

This goes back to the idea of instilling a culture of fear through the media. Veena Das discusses this saying “*fear of the other* is transformed into the notion *that the other is fearsome*.”³⁴ With this mentality, people thought they were defending themselves and their ethnicity.

Further actions of propaganda were to contrast the traditional roles of women with the image of attractive vibrant women in military garb in the mass media. Kesic states that the potential for violence was written into these contradictory constructions, whether they were “our women” or “their women.”³⁵ This language of “ours” and “theirs” demonstrates the concept of possession. Furthermore, when women are presented with such extremes as virgin/whore there are inevitably going to be defined as failing to meet expectations and standards. Women do not exist as Madonnas or whores, mothers or

³² Stiglmeier 20

³³ Stiglmeier 89

³⁴ Kesic 33

³⁵ Kesic 30

warmongers, but exist on a continuum in between. In this patriarchal society women were not viewed as independent rather connected to men and not given the option of defining themselves.

It is important to note that propaganda was used by the Bosnians with a different aim. Bosnians used propaganda in order to try and garner support from the international community. Although through propaganda the Bosnians did gain some support, the campaigns mounted by the international community on behalf of the Bosniaks were largely ineffective due to a lack of organization and power. This is a demonstration on the importance of a unified and powerful message in terms of propaganda campaigns.³⁶ It also raises the point that in the Bosnian conflict, all sides had some responsibility in launching campaigns which were false and intended to manipulate.

Pornography

Rape was not the only tool of genocide employed by the Serbs. Pornography, transformed into propaganda was used as another tool in the Bosnian War in that it encouraged the sexual exploitation of women. Representations of women and their perpetrators and the ethnicities of the two were blurred and doctored to create outrage and fear among the Serb forces against women. “Pornographic hate speech in the media draws on, sustains and legitimates cultural values that communicate sexual inequality”³⁷

These values were deeply integrated which can be seen through their pervasiveness.

“According to Asja Armanda of the Kareta Feminist Group, a news report showed

³⁶ Nicholas John Cull, David Holbrook Culbert, and David Welch. Propaganda and Mass Persuasion: A Historical Encyclopedia, 1500 to the Present, 44-46.

³⁷ Danica Minic, “Mediated Violence and Women’s Activism in Serbia,” Local Violence, Global Media: Feminist Analyses of Gendered Representations, Eds. Lisa M. Cuklanz & Sujata Moorti. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009) 227.

Serbian tanks rolling in to “cleanse” a village. The tanks were plastered with pornography.”³⁸ This demonstrates how normalized the use of pornography became and made it even easier to dehumanize the female victims. Pornographic magazines were also highly pervasive in the rape camps and among Serb leaders. Porn served not only as a motivator, but also as an instruction manual of sorts. For some men, rape in war was their first sexual experience and pornographic film and magazines instructed, encouraged and validated their actions.

The content of the pornography reflected the rapes that were being carried out daily. They served as models for the rapist—a fact that was reported by many survivors. One woman describes some elements of the films when she states “Those pictures with those things you hit them with . . . like you have a chain like this, and like this they hang you to a bed. He hangs her from the ceiling.”³⁹ She then goes on to describe what was done to the women and said, “I know there was some kind of wooden board on the side, a woman tied to it by chains, she had a mask over her eyes and he was hitting her with some kind of thick whip-crop.”⁴⁰ The films were clearly graphic, violent, and used materials that were readily available in the camps. Even if chains and whips were not used on a particular victim, the presence of those materials in the camps would serve as a constant threat and reminder.

Pornography was not necessarily sold in backrooms or brown paper bags; rather it was deeply integrated into many media. MacKinnon reports that “A major news magazine, *Start*, with a *Newsweek*-like format and the politics of *The Nation*, had

³⁸ Catharine A. MacKinnon, “On Human Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures,” Hastings Woman’s Law Journal 5 (1994) 76.

³⁹ MacKinnon 79

⁴⁰ MacKinnon 79

Playboy-type covers and a centerfold section showing naked women in postures of sexual display and access.”⁴¹ When pornography appears in respected news outlets the lines between news, entertainment and lies gets blurred and, in this case, the sexual exploitation of women is reduced to a tool of politics. Both the fact that women were shown in such degrading positions in respected publications and the fact that ethnicity is clearly coded makes it harder to reject pornographic images and sort through lies and manipulation. This integration of news and sex tries to make hatred “sexy.”

The use of pornographic images was not confined to print; rather actual footage from rapes was used as propaganda and was shown to wide audiences, especially soldiers. One survivor of a rape/death camp, whose rape was filmed and used as propaganda, describes her experience. She states: “In front of the camera, one beats you and the other—excuse me—fucks you, he puts his truncheon in you, and he films all that . . . We even had to sing Serbian songs . . . in front of the camera.”⁴² Part of the reasons the women were commanded to sing Serbian songs could have been a way of falsely coding the Muslim women as Serbian and therefore promote the idea that Serbian women are being raped by Muslim men. The traumatic experience for these women does not end after the final thrust. Their experience, which is most often misrepresented, is viewed over and over again by the group that was responsible for the hatred in the first place. She becomes, unwillingly, part of the engine that drives the hatred and fear. MacKinnon states,

Xenophobia and misogyny merge here; ethnic hatred is sexualized; bigotry becomes orgasm. Whatever this rape does for the rapist, the

⁴¹ MacKinnon 77

⁴² MacKinnon 75

pornography of the rape mass-produces. The materials become a potent advertisement for a war, a perfect motivator for torturers.⁴³

The fears played on in the films, the fear of humiliation and desecration of Serbian ethnic women, are presented as the solutions—as the way to retaliate and make things right.

The pornographic images that came out of the conflict reinforce sex as a deeply intimate part of the war.

Aftermath and Effects

The Bosnian War had many lasting effects, one of the most notable being the health of those involved. Health effects refer not only to the physical health of those that were raped and injured, but also the mental health of members of an ethnic group that were driven from their homes and witnessed the rape and humiliation of their people. The phrase “ethnic cleansing” is one that has been used many times throughout this thesis but the result of the conflict on health was anything but clean. One woman, like the woman from the beginning of the chapter, recalls that “They pushed bottle necks into our sex, they even stuck shattered, broken bottles into some women . . . Guns too.”⁴⁴ The physical and emotional trauma that these women endured is overwhelming.

The axis of gender as discussed by Paul Farmer puts victims at even more of a disadvantage, as women’s rights and health are not treated on the same level as males.

Farmer states that

This power difference has meant that women’s rights are violated in innumerable ways. Although male victims are clearly preponderant in

⁴³ MacKinnon 75

⁴⁴ Stiglmyer 118

studies of torture, females almost exclusively endure the much more common crimes of domestic violence and rape.⁴⁵

It is therefore imperative that power structures be equalized in society and that propaganda which seeks to promote these imbalances be shut down. According to the World Health Organization, “The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being.”⁴⁶ Until the axis of gender is more equal, women will continue to be abused, denying their fundamental rights.

Women’s inferior position in society often makes crimes committed against them invisible. This stems from the fact that they cannot be attributed to a singular cause or occurrence. Green talks about the fact that “women often experience compounded or intersectional discrimination, in which their experience of gender discrimination intersects with racism and intolerance.”⁴⁷ Muslim women were not allowed to be central in any of their identities. They were pushed to the margins because of both their gender and their ethnic identity. The human dignity of these women must be restored both on a personal level and in terms of their positioning in society. When a person is pushed to the margins it gives her less agency in terms of being able to improve her situation in the world. These women often feel as Milka Zulicic states “you can go anywhere but home.”⁴⁸ These women live in a state of uncertainty and without a stable foundation, it is difficult to rebuild.

⁴⁵ Paul Farmer, *Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and a New War on the Poor* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 43.

⁴⁶ “Health and Human Rights,” *World Health Organization*, 3 Feb. 2009 <<http://www.who.int/hhr/en/>>.

⁴⁷ Llezlie L Green, “Gender Hate Propaganda and Sexual Violence in the Rwandan Genocide: An Arguments for Intersectionality in International Law,” *Columbia Human Rights Law Review* (33:733, 2002) 769.

⁴⁸ Mladjenovic 254

Displaced Persons

Displacement of persons in the former Yugoslavia was a somewhat obvious result of the war as it was one of the goals of the Serbs. Although some fled because of a general threat of war, most did so because they were directly targeted. According to Michael J. Toole “Almost two million refugees have been displaced within or have fled the republics of former Yugoslavia.”⁴⁹ Being internally displaced is especially difficult because of the close proximity to the conflict. There have been many attacks on internally displaced persons in so called safe zones in Bosnia making it hard for relief organizations to provide aid in a place so affected by war.

The displacement of individuals was a planned strategy of war that carried with it risks and effects which have lasted long after the direct combat. People are living in conditions which promote the spread of disease and often do not have access to the resources necessary to survive. Those that have been displaced were quite literally sent away to die.

Pregnancy

One of the health concerns facing Bosnian women was pregnancy. Forced impregnation of Bosniak women by Serbian men was a goal and strategy used in ethnic cleansing.

Serb soldiers and paramilitary troops who raped women told them that they would give birth to “little Chetniks,” or Serbian soldiers, who would grow up to kill them. Other Croat or Muslim women were told that if a woman carries a Serbian baby, then she, too, is Serb.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Michael J. Toole, “Displaced Persons and War,” War and Public Health, Eds. Barry S. Levy and Victor W. Sidel (Washington: American Public Health Association, 2000) 197.

⁵⁰ Mladjenovic 254

This again melds sex with ethnicity and attempts to rob women of their ethnic roots. It also denies their impact on determining the ethnicity of the child. In Bosnian culture, it is the man's ethnicity that determines that of the child. Women talked about the situation in the rape camps claiming that pregnant women were protected and taken care of until their seventh month when they no longer had the choice to have an abortion without serious health risks to themselves. Not only were these women forced to physically carry children that they did not want—products of rape and constant reminders of their trauma—but they were also denied a choice, a mental freedom, in the situation. A woman named Hatiza was threatened by the man who raped her. He said “We’re bringing you to a concentration camp. The next time we meet, you’ll have one of our kids in your belly.”⁵¹ This threat was not unique rather pervasive and constant.

The result of forced impregnation was both physically and mentally damaging. The children that these women are forced to risk their lives for often lead to scorn and ostracization from their communities. A woman named Melisa, who gave birth to a child after being raped, said “where I come from, everybody, my husband, my daughter, the whole town, everybody would think of the kid as filth.”⁵² Her child is a constant reminder of the humiliation that Melisa went through and continues to endure. She is left without a home or a structure of support.

Rape in general, especially when pregnancy is a result, affects a woman's attitude towards sex and relationships in general and therefore affects the furthering of the population in consenting relationships. A child further reminds the woman of an act which occurred under duress and which caused so much pain and suffering.

⁵¹ Stiglmyer 92

⁵² Stiglmyer 137

Fatima focuses more on the emotional aspect of things and the effect that the rape had on her daily interactions with people. She states:

I really don't trust anybody anymore; I've gone through too much. I'm really doing fine now compared with the way I was before. I don't know . . . Of course there were a few decent people who helped us or at least tried to help us, but there were too many of the other kind.⁵³

The "other" kind of people caused so much emotional stress and discomfort that women like Fatima have been displaced—too hurt to go back to where they once called home.

The rape of Fatima produced its desired result. Her rape, like the rape of so many others, has come to embody the destruction of a community of people. Their displacement, while literal, is also highly symbolic.

Legal Issues

Many of the measures that have been taken to rectify the brutal violence that occurred and continues to occur during the Bosnian War have been legal in nature. The International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia since 1991, also known as the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia or ICTY, was created to try the perpetrators of the crimes that were committed during the wars of the former Yugoslavia and is a part of the United Nations. Unfortunately, it does not seem that the tribunal has been effective in alleviating tensions nor does it have much power in terms of arresting and trying individuals. Furthermore, there seems to be a lack of emphasis on those that were responsible for producing and spreading the propaganda which was central to the success of the campaign.

⁵³ Stiglmeier 111

Furthermore, laws have typically been written by males and therefore reflect male interest. This gender bias is especially important when looking at the crime of rape against women.⁵⁴ Paul Farmer discusses the vulnerability of women because of what he calls the “axis of gender.”⁵⁵ The axis of gender puts victims at even more of a disadvantage, as women’s rights and health are not treated on the same level as males. Farmer states that “this power difference has meant that women’s rights are violated in innumerable ways.”⁵⁶ Not only are rights violated but they are not recognized. In this context, peace cannot be reached and justice cannot be served.

On a positive note, according to Joshua Goldstein, “The Bosnia war resulted in the inclusion of rape for the first time in an international tribunal’s indictments for war crimes.”⁵⁷ Although international laws which define rape in wartime as illegal come from the Geneva conventions of 1949 and the 1977 Protocols, prior to the Bosnian War they were not included as indictments.

Conclusion

The law is not enough to bring justice to the situation in the former Yugoslavia. A new picture must be painted which encourages community and dispels the high degree of ethnic hatred which currently exists. Direct efforts must be made with the people that were affected by the conflict in addition to court proceedings. Court proceedings are good for setting international legal precedents and developing an overarching theory of

⁵⁴ Lucinda Joy Peach, “Is Violence Male? The Law, Gender and Violence,” Frontline Feminisms: Women, War and Resistance, eds. Marguerite R. Waller and Jennifer Rycenga (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000) 57.

⁵⁵ Farmer 43

⁵⁶ Farmer 43

⁵⁷ Goldstein 363

how the international community should precede in future cases, but they do little to help those actually suffering.

It is clear that the propaganda that was used in Bosnia contributed to the extreme hatred between ethnic groups, to the sexualization of violence and to the level of planning and strategy involved. This pattern is seen again just a few years later in 1994 with the genocide in Rwanda. The case of the Bosnian War might have served as a warning sign to the global community of the power of propaganda to create a culture of violence and hate. Unfortunately, the lesson was not learned soon enough, and propaganda also fueled the genocide that plagued Rwanda.

Chapter Three:

Rape was the Rule: Propaganda and Genocide in Rwanda

Perpetue, a Tutsi, was found on April 9, 2004 by a group of Interahamwe. Instead of killing her, they took her and eight others and gang raped them over and over. They claimed that it was the best way to check the difference between Tutsi and Hutu women. In the minds of the Interahamwe, Perpetue's ethnicity was connected with her sexuality. She recalled that there were about 20 attackers, three of whom she knew. Over the course of a few days, the Interahamwe raped the women again and threw them in the river to die. Perpetue was not able to walk at this point and the Interahamwe told her she had already died and could go. She crawled to a church, passing at least 10 dead bodies along the way—bodies that were burnt or sliced with machetes. After about a month at the church, she was chosen by one of the Interahamwe and was taken behind the church to be raped again along side about 15 other women and young girls. Perpetue states, "The next day, two Interahamwe watched over us while the others went to kill. The two were complaining they were feeling tired from all the killing. Then, one of them sharpened the end of the stick of a hoe. They held open my legs and pushed the stick into me. I was screaming."¹ Perpetue managed to survive these brutal circumstances but not unscathed. She continues to suffer from medical and psychological issues. She has moved back to

¹ Human Rights Watch, "Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath," Human Rights Watch. (1996) 22, 26 Jan. 2009. <<http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1996/rwanda.htm>>.

her home, and must live amongst the men that did these horrible things to her. Each time she sees them she contemplates suicide.²

According to a statement given in a 1996 United Nations Special Rapporteur on Rwanda by Rene Degni-Segui, “Rape was the rule and its absence the exception.”³ The use of rape in war is not unique to the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, but its widespread and systematic use requires some exploration. Joshua Goldstein notes that “rape as an instrument of territorial control and domination seems to have spread in the 1990s.”⁴ This fact makes it all the more imperative that the questions of why and how this brutal violence against women happens get explored in more depth. It is also important to acknowledge that the 1990s marked the time when genocidal rape was defined and therefore given more weight on the international stage. Women’s bodies have come to be viewed as a battlefield, as part of the spoils of war. The destruction of their bodies and lives is not mourned, acknowledged or given reverence to the extent that all human beings deserve by local and international communities.

At its heart, genocide is about power and a deep-seated belief that one group’s value outweighs that of others. According to the Genocide Convention Article 2, genocide necessitates “the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.”⁵ The intentionality to destroy a group of human beings requires that the group to be viewed as less than and different than the group perpetrating the killings. Genocidal aims require the creation of an Other which stands in opposition to the One. Mahmood Mamdani claims that “before you can try and eliminate an enemy, you must

² Human Rights Watch 23

³ Human Rights Watch 15

⁴ Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 363.

⁵ Human Rights Watch 18

define that enemy.”⁶ In Rwanda, the Hutus believed that they were superior to the Tutsi Other and therefore they felt the need to express their power and “cleanse” the nation. Women were especially vulnerable, as they have been defined throughout history as outside and other, giving people license to treat them as subhuman.

An informative way to look at genocide is by looking at three main factors: history, agency and geography which are laid out in the book When Victims Become Killers by Mahmood Mamdani. The history of genocide considers the political and social constructs that helped give rise to the situation at hand. The Rwandan genocide cannot be viewed as a conflagration that ignited out of thin air. There was a history of ethnic conflict which was encouraged by the government and instilled in the population through newspapers and radios. Agency refers to the exertion of power of those participating in the genocide. It is important to note that the Rwandan genocide required both inspiration from above and willingness from below to function. The geography piece refers to physical signs and boundaries. Although most of the slaughter occurred within the boundaries of the country, there was planning that occurred outside Rwandan borders and victims that have been forced outside the country.⁷

The twentieth century is a time that championed and named human rights in theory and yet it is a time of massive human rights violations. Jack Geiger calls this the “bloody paradox in the political and social history of the twentieth century.”⁸ The Rwandan genocide took place at a time when the international community had recognized the “life integrity rights” of each and every individual, regardless of age, race,

⁶ Mahmood Mamdani, When Victims become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001) 9.

⁷ Mamdani 7

⁸ H. Jack Geiger, “The Impact of War on Human Rights.” War and Public Health, Eds. Barry S. Levy and Victor W. Sidel, (Washington: American Public Health Association, 2000) 39.

religion, ethnicity and gender. Some of these rights include the right to life and freedom from bodily harm. Geiger states,

No prior period in human history has produced human rights documents of such sweeping scope and rigorous specificity. . . . Yet (with the exception of institutionalized slavery) never before have human rights been violated on so massive a scale, nor with such efficacy and savagery, as in this same century.⁹

With expanding technology, civilians are more exposed to the risks of war and the increasing death tolls of civilians include women and children to a greater extent.

The desire for a pure nation was facilitated in many ways by the language that Hutus employed and the way that they used the media. The media outlets encouraged the dissociation of the Hutu and Tutsi tribes and played on pre-existing tensions and beliefs. Not only did the media encourage ethnic tensions, but also spoke about gender. Llezlie Green, author of “Gender Hate Propaganda and Sexual Violence in the Rwandan Genocide” states that “Tutsi women were targeted by propagandists based on a dual animus—on the basis of their ethnicity and their gender.”¹⁰ Women’s experience therefore is informed by both gender and ethnicity and must be considered in that light. The radio provided a unifying voice against the Tutsis and the newspapers supplied words and images to rally around. The propaganda used contained elements which morphed the desire for extermination into something sexual. Survivors explained that “after rape, you don’t have value in the community,” which was the precise goal of the perpetrators—to devalue the other. The brutal sexual violence seen in the Rwandan

⁹ Geiger 39

¹⁰ Llezlie L Green, “Gender Hate Propaganda and Sexual Violence in the Rwandan Genocide: An Arguments for Intersectionality in International Law,” Columbia Human Rights Law Review (33:733, 2002) 735.

genocide was not just a side effect of war, but rather an integral part of it. Through rape women became the property of the other and their agency was denied.

The genocide in Rwanda took the lives of between 500,000 and one million men, women and children and the struggle is not over.¹¹ Women, including Tutsi and Hutu, currently make up about 70 percent of the population in Rwanda and head roughly 50 percent of households.¹² They have been left to rebuild the nation after being raped, cut, and shot at. They must reconstruct after having witnessed the slaughter of their families and neighbors. They are left to rebuild in a nation that does not recognize their right to property and does not make their education and health a priority. Although the Rwandan constitution guarantees women equality, cultural practices continue to dictate inheritance law and relegate women into second class citizenship.¹³ They must reestablish themselves in a nation that still has ethnic divides and prejudices. It is imperative then to look at the genocide in Rwanda through the lens of how it affected women and how they were persecuted through the intersectionality of their gender and their race.

This chapter will look at the key role that propaganda played in the construction of women in Rwanda and how it played to the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity. This location at the intersection allowed for the massive rape and slaughter of Rwandan women and the intersectional perspective is necessary to determining, about 15 years later, they should start to rebuild. In order to fully understand how propaganda was able to have such power it is necessary to first grasp the historical, political and social contexts of Rwanda in 1994 therefore this chapter will begin with a detailed discussion of these three contexts. It will then move to dissect the different forms of propaganda and the

¹¹ Human Rights Watch 8

¹² Human Rights Watch 3

¹³ Human Rights Watch 4

effects that it had on the nation, particularly with regards to women. Without the unified voice of the radio, the slaughter of more than half of a population would not have been possible. The Rwandan case demonstrates the extreme power of broadcast and the actions that ordinary people will take if instilled with enough hate and fear.

History of the Conflict

The foundations of the popular genocide in Rwanda were laid long before the 100 days of fighting in 1994. In 1916, Belgium gained control of the colony from Germany and imposed racial classifications, elevating the Tutsi over the Hutu and a third group called the Twa, and creating a deep animosity among the groups. The Belgians effectively transformed class structures into biological differences and created an ethnic hierarchy. In 1962, Belgium withdrew from its colony, leaving the Hutu majority in control. Hutus numbered about 6.5 million at this time, while the Tutsis made up only 1 million persons.¹⁴ With this kind of commanding majority and a history of resentment, Tutsis were systematically discriminated against and experienced periods of “ethnic cleansing.” The genocide was a result of clashing identities; identities which were politically constructed.

Even though tension existed in the years between the departure of the Belgians and the massive slaughter in 1994, Tutsis and Hutus coexisted in relative peace. There were a significant number of marriages between the two groups and they could eat and drink at the same establishments. At the time of this apparently peaceful coexistence, both sides were preparing for civil war. In 1988, Tutsi exiles in Uganda created the

¹⁴ Donald G. Dutton, The Psychology of Genocide, Massacres, and Extreme Violence: Why “Normal” People Come to Commit Atrocities (London: Praeger Security International, 2007) 34.

Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), which was an armed group born out of political tensions and in 1990 they launched an offensive in order to reestablish themselves in Rwanda. Their goal was to create a system of power-sharing with President Juvenal Habyarimana, who created a one party state in 1973. He gave Hutus preference in many areas including the work force and education. The fact that much of the planning for the RPF attack was done in Uganda is an example of the complexities that geography played in the genocide.

In 1993, a peace agreement called the Arusha Accords was signed by the RPF and the Rwandan government, and United Nations forces were brought in to help keep the peace. According to Donald Dutton, in the year before the arrival of the UN peacekeeper, “Hutu extremists had been stockpiling guns, grenades (85 tons), and over a half million machetes.”¹⁵ These weapons were meant for not only the official military, but every Hutu citizen against every friend and neighbor who went against their cause. The government did not only physically prepare for the genocide, but also mentally prepared the Hutus. A Rwandan theologian once argued that “the genocide would have been inconceivable before the 1990s and . . . it took four years of preparation to make mass violence possible.”¹⁶ Newspapers and both public and private radio stations called for the extermination of the Tutsi minority and any of its sympathizers. According to Kellow, radios took on a great deal of power in Rwanda because of a “tradition of hierarchy and authoritarianism, which increase[d] the likelihood of blind obedience to the orders of officials on the radio.”¹⁷ Without this amount of power, the genocide might not have happened. The media outlets built upon hatred of economic and social advantages

¹⁵ Dutton 34

¹⁶ Green 740

¹⁷ Christine L. Kellow and H. Leslie Steeves, “The Role of Radio in the Rwandan Genocide,” Journal of Communication (Summer 1998) 116.

seen during the Belgian rule and added an ethnic component. One Hutu newspaper, *Kangura*, laid out anti-Tutsi sentiments in its Hutu 10 Commandments. These included, but were not limited to, the idea that Tutsi women work on behalf of their ethnic group and that any Hutu man that marries or fraternizes with a Tutsi woman would be viewed as a traitor.¹⁸

The plans that had been laid were realized on April 6, 1994 when President Habyarimana's plane was shot down. Although the origin of the shot was not known, this sort of attack was all that was needed to set the genocidal plan of the Hutu regime into motion. The majority of the violence was perpetrated by the members of the Hutu militia groups, also called the *Interahamwe*, civilians and soldiers of the Rwandan Armed Forces. Among those that were victimized were Tutsis and any Tutsi sympathizers. The wide range of people participating in the genocide was remarkable. Hutu men, not involved in the military, took it upon themselves to find an instrument of destruction and used it on their friends and neighbors—anyone who was connected with the inferior Tutsis. Often this weapon was their penis. Roadblocks were set up, lists of names were produced and systematic killing became the landscape of Rwanda for 100 days in 1994. Between April and July of 1994 between 500,000 and one million Rwandan men, women and children were killed.¹⁹ According to Donald Dutton, an expert in psychology and abusive behavior states of the Rwanda genocide that “whether political or personal/political, the slaughter was primarily genocidal and succeeded in exterminating 77 percent of the Tutsi population.”²⁰ More than three-quarters of the Tutsi population

¹⁸ John A. Berry and Carol Pott Berry eds., *Genocide in Rwanda: A Collective Memory*, (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1999), 113.

¹⁹ Human Rights Watch 8

²⁰ Dutton 35

was wiped out in just 100 days and though the remaining 23 percent's lives were spared, it does not mean that they were not affected. The survivors must live with what they saw and experienced and remember those they lost on a daily basis. Like Perpetue, they live in communities with those that raped them, impregnated them, and killed their families.

Women and Social Status

Beginning with the importance placed on status by the Belgians, social status and the ethnic group stated on one's identity card came to be of extreme importance. Women were put in the middle of, and made to symbolize, long standing political rivalries and the marks on their bodies and their beauty were emphasized and given great importance. Their bodies became a landscape of war and a way of expressing the deeply rooted anger and revenge. A woman's value in Rwandan society was deeply linked to her maternal duties, which serves to further root her in her body in the eyes of society. This importance on fertility could explain the massive amount of destruction of symbols of maternity during the genocide. The genitals of thousands of women and girls were mutilated and many reported the soldiers cutting off their breasts after they were finished raping them. This mutilation also leaves a lasting mark of the woman's traumatic experience, in a society in which shame and humiliation are deeply integrated with sex outside marriage. Sexual virtue in Rwandan communities is paramount.

A woman's social and political status was in large part linked to her sexuality. According to the Human Rights Watch report on women in Rwanda, "rape in conflict is also used as a weapon to terrorize and degrade a particular community and to achieve a

specific political end.”²¹ Rape isolates women from their social groups through the shame coupled with living through the experience. One Tutsi woman said “Tutsi women have always been viewed as enemies of the state.”²² Their ethnicity as well as their gender influence how they are perceived by the community, therefore these factors must be looked at together when analyzing women’s experience in the conflict.

The report further states that:

Combatants who rape in war often explicitly link their acts of sexual violence to this broader social degradation. In the aftermath of such abuse, the harm done to the individual woman is often obscured or even compounded by the perceived harm to the community.²³

Women therefore are left with less of a voice and fewer options in terms of their individual stories being heard and understood. This social exclusion is described by a survivor who states that “after rape, you don’t have value in the community.”²⁴ The idea that a woman’s value can be so easily taken from her leaves her little hope of rebuilding a life in her community.

Women also are regarded as dependent on their male relatives, whether their fathers, husbands or another close male. She is regarded, in practice, as the property of men and therefore in conflict as the property of the enemy. Ann Cahill, discusses Brownmiller’s ideas about how this dynamic plays out in wartime. She states,

Here women are used as political pawns, as symbols of the potency of the men to whom they belong. To rape a woman in the context of war or other violent conflicts, Brownmiller suggests, is not (according to the ultimate intention and motivation of the rapist) an act against the woman herself. Indeed, such a formulation would demand that the woman is

²¹ Human Rights Watch 2

²² Human Rights Watch 10

²³ Human Rights Watch 2

²⁴ Human Rights Watch 25

someone *herself*, which she clearly is not. Rather, the act is a direct threat to the ownership of the man who is the rapist's enemy.²⁵

Because women are denied their personhood, they are particularly vulnerable. They are left with little room to develop a sense of identity outside of the male shadow and little opportunity to learn of their rights or how to deal with legal processes. This fairly controlled world of which women are a part was also wrought with violence. There is a traditional Rwandan proverb that states that “a woman that has not been battered is not yet a real woman.”²⁶ Violence in the home was therefore easily translated into the violence witnessed in the streets.

Agents from Above and Below

The media machine was a major agent in the Rwandan genocide and was influential in inspiring many Hutus to action against their neighbors. Ann J. Cahill wrote in her book Rethinking Rape that:

The military and civilian authorities—including regular soldiers, members of the national police force, members of the elite Presidential Guard, burgomasters, and heads of sectors—condoned and encouraged the sexual violence.²⁷

When so many groups are conducting and condoning rape on a grand scale, it leaves women exposed. Rape was the norm and those that were not participating were more likely to be questioned than those who were contributing. The question was asked of the population “who will fill up the half-empty graves?”²⁸ This encouragement in a culture of fear and violence left everyone, especially women, at high risk.

²⁵ Ann J. Cahill, Rethinking Rape (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001) 18.

²⁶ Human Rights Watch 13

²⁷ Green 751

²⁸ Kellow 120

This culture of fear and violence was controlled from above, but it is important to acknowledge that it took root below. Human Rights Watch, a leading international non-governmental organization that conducts research and advocacy in human rights, discusses the recruiting of the poor and vulnerable for the purposes of the genocide.

They state that

For these people, the genocide was the best thing that could have happened to them. They had the blessings of a form of authority to take revenge on socially powerful people as long as they were on the wrong side of the political fence. They could steal, they could kill with minimum justification, they could rape . . . This was wonderful. The political aims pursued by the masters of this dark carnival were quite beyond their scope.²⁹

The organizers of the genocide played upon preexisting fears and anxieties of the Rwandan people. The history of discrimination in Rwanda, primed the population to grasp the idea that the *inyenz*, which translates to “cockroaches,” must be exterminated. A small group produced a message that the population at large embraced and actively carried out. The extermination and humiliation of the Tutsis was something that was important to them—so much so that they not only killed men, women and children, but tortured them as well.

Those who carried out the genocide, including soldiers and civilians, destroyed people in ways that did not always involve physical loss of life. Women were gang raped, mutilated, and forced into collective and personal sexual slavery. One survivor, Jeanne was forced to marry a member of the Hutu militia. Often this was the only way to survive the savagery. She states,

I knew I was condemned to this . . . I thought this is a death, like other deaths . . . I thought to be taken as a wife is a form of death. Rape is a

²⁹ Human Rights Watch 21

crime worse than others. There's no death worse than that. The problem is that women and girls don't say what happened to them.³⁰

Women are forced to live with these memories and the stigmas placed on rape in their society force them to struggle silently. Rape has taken away the little agency that they ever had in their society. Instead of feeling angry about what has happened to them many women feel guilty for having survived.

The Role of Propaganda

Propaganda was one of the most important agents used by the Hutu government in carrying out the genocide in Rwanda. It linked the visions of the organizers of the genocide to the population at large, which was necessary for the massive slaughter that took place. The use of newspapers and radio stations was a very structured and deliberate means of igniting ethnic and gender based conflict and in preparing the Hutu citizens mentally for killing their friends, neighbors and co-workers. According to Kellow and Steeves "In the early 1990s, media frequently issued appeals to racial hatred. These included official media—Radio Rwanda, the Rwandan Press Agency, and the periodicals, *Imvaho* and *La Relève*—as well as the privately owned paper, *Kangura*."³¹ The media's influence and incitement of hate began long before the fighting took place. At the time of the war, *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM)* acted as an almost uncontested voice of hate.

In order to carry out the killing on such a massive scale, the enemy was dehumanized. "Psychologists regard this process of de-humanizing the enemy as one of

³⁰ Human Rights Watch 30

³¹ Kellow 116

the many critical ways in which we come to “distance” ourselves from our victims.”³²

Tutsis were called many names that denied them their humanity, including *inyenzi*. Green describes the propaganda as both “remarkably essential and effective before, during, and after the genocide.”³³ Media provided a way of organizing Hutus from both urban and rural areas, and gave them a common language of hate and revenge.

The propaganda used in Rwanda disproportionately encouraged the sexual destruction of women—as they were seen to be the weapons used by the Tutsis. Tutsi women were portrayed as proud and highly sexual and were made into a sort of exotic other, which the Hutu men could not have free access to. This caused sexual violence on a massive scale when the fighting broke out, because Tutsi women were transformed into more than an ethnic enemy. It was written that Tutsi women “are very sexual, and they sleep with their Tutsi brothers. You will be deceived by them.”³⁴ Their sexuality was turned into a threat.

Newspapers

Although newspapers were printed in the city, workers in urban areas would disseminate the writings in the countryside when they returned home on the weekends. Those that were literate, a majority of the population, read the literature to those that could not read. *Kangura* was one of the most prominent and powerful voices of hate and described itself as “the voice that seeks to awake and guide the majority people.”³⁵ The goal then of this newspaper is clear—to unite the Hutu majority in seeking their revenge

³² Hugo Slim, *Killing Civilians: Method, Madness, and Morality in War*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 218.

³³ Green 740

³⁴ Human Rights Watch 11

³⁵ Green 741

against the Tutsis. The costs of *Kangura* were largely defrayed by the Rwandan government, making many copies available free of charge. This allowed the message to spread to a larger audience, especially populations with less education and therefore peoples that were more easily persuaded. The newspaper served as a platform for the Hutu government to distribute its message without a backlash from the international community.

The newspapers often included cartoons, which could be easily understood, even by those that were illiterate. The newspapers used images that would evoke a feeling of personal connection to the message. One example appeared in a November 1991 publication of *Kiberinka* which

Denounced the government by depicting Habyarimana in priest's robes holding a bloody sacrament. The following day, Radio Nationale claimed that the biased reporting of the opposition press was aiding the RPF. The army pleaded for loyalty.³⁶

This is an example of radio and newspapers feeding off of each other. Radio Nationale claimed that it was *Kiberinka*, the independently owned newspaper that had obvious biased intentions to vilify the government who were working in the open under the guise of free expression, failing to recognize or admit that they were doing the same thing.

Radio

Although print news was influential, the radio was the most important and pervasive means of disseminating information to the Rwandan people. About 29 percent of households nationwide had radios and in urban areas this number rose significantly to

³⁶ Kellow 117

about 59 percent.³⁷ Those who did not have a radio listened to broadcasts in bars or in the houses of their neighbors. Jean-Philippe Ceppi, a Western journalist present before and during the genocide, claimed that he saw everybody listening to RTLM, the most popular and influential radio station. He states that “military personnel or peasants, rebels or intellectuals in cafes, in cars, in the fields; the Rwandan people spend all their time with a receiver stuck to their ear.”³⁸ During the genocide, the radio was the only means of “news” for many and therefore the only interpretation of the news. Without independent resources available to verify claims made, the radio had a monopoly on the thoughts of the people. The set-up of radio as a single voice, rather than a dialogue, helped to create a message that seemed universal.

Until 1992 the Rwandan government used the public airwaves to disseminate their message. As tensions grew, the station would not allow the kinds of extreme hate speech they were promoting. This led to the creation of a private radio station, *Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM)*, in April of 1993 which was controlled by Hutu extremists.³⁹ The principle function of RTLM was “to prepare the people of Rwanda for genocide.”⁴⁰ In order to achieve these ends, the radio station appealed not to the elite, but to vulnerable populations, those on the margins of society and especially the young. They did this through playing reggae and other popular music forms during off hours and using anecdote, personal stories, humor and insults.⁴¹ According to Kellow “the station prided itself on *inkuruishushe*—“hot news.” A political jingle was repeated

³⁷ Green 742

³⁸ Kellow 118

³⁹ Green 744

⁴⁰ Green 744

⁴¹ Kellow 118

all day long to keep the public keyed up: “We have the latest hot news”⁴² In order for the genocide to operate, the Hutu needed the manpower of common citizens in rooting out the enemy and by disseminating “hot news” they got a large base of the population to listen and follow orders.

Both the newspapers and radio stations presented Hutu and Tutsi as two different people “Hutu, part of the larger category of ‘Bantu’ and the Tutsi, part of the ‘Ethiopic’ or ‘Nilotic’ group.”⁴³ According to these sources, Tutsis were alien conquerors on Hutu land that were taking their jobs and resources. Tutsis were presented as thinking that they were better than Hutus and having extreme pride. Media also used the concept of reversal in their messages, by claiming that it was the Tutsis that were doing evil things to the Hutus and therefore justifying extreme actions. The following transcript is of a broadcast aired on RTLM on April 6, 1994. It was presented as being between two Tutsi men and was played as a song using a well known poem titled *I Hate the Hutu*:

- The truth resists all ordeals, even the ordeal of fire. I talk to people who understand. Me, I hate Hutus. Me, I hate Hutus. Me, I hate Hutus who become Tutsis.
- What are you saying, Mutawa?
- Let me say it. I’m getting things off my chest. I’m going to tell you why I do hate them. Me, I hate the Hutus. I hate their “Hutuness,” which makes them want to be our equals.
- Here, I agree with you.
- Me, I hate the Hutus. They’re very arrogant with each other. The one who becomes important despises the other Hutus even though they are the same. Me I hate the Hutus. The greedy Hutus [take everything, give nothing], and they ignore me. They like to live as slaves, and practice slavery amongst themselves.
- Can we blame you for that [hating them]?
- How lucky we are that there are not many here who want to be our equals.⁴⁴

⁴² Kellow 118

⁴³ Human Rights Watch 10

⁴⁴ Kellow 119

This song reflects some of the fear and anger that the Hutus felt about the Tutsis and presented it in the reversed way. The language of hate and inequality are highly pervasive in this message and repeated throughout the genocide. By framing the hatred as started and perpetuated by the Tutsi, the Hutu were made to feel like they were just defending themselves.

Gender Specific Media

Much of the media was directed specifically at women. Tutsi women were constantly referred to in a sexualized way. For example Hutu magazines “printed graphic cartoons to portray Tutsi women using their supposed sexual prowess on U.N. peacekeepers . . . and in various sexual poses with other politicians.”⁴⁵ This effectively turned a woman’s sexuality into an enemy of the state and therefore something to be attacked during war. Their sexuality was something to be exploited and torn down in a systematic way. The cartoons are an example of the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity in propaganda, as the woman is being ridiculed for both her ethnicity and womanhood. Pictures also could be understood by illiterate persons in the population. The language and images were structured in such a way that just killing the enemy women would not be enough therefore women were raped and mutilated. Part of this stemmed from the propaganda, which exalted the beauty of the Tutsi women. They were culturally perceived as more beautiful than Hutu women with long thin noses and delicate fingers. Hutu men sought to humiliate them and rob them of their dignity. They cut off their breasts and mutilated their genital areas—their symbols of sexuality. Hutu men also cut the noses and fingers of women as these were defining Tutsi features.

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch 11

Tutsi women were made into weapons by which their ethnic group would attempt to infiltrate the Hutu population. This was stated quite explicitly in *Kangura*, one of the main newspapers. It said that the RPF “will not hesitate to transform their sisters, wives and mothers into pistols.”⁴⁶ One way that this might happen would be through marriage. Marriage between Tutsi women and Hutu men was not uncommon. Green states that “Tutsi women became the ‘pivotal enemies’ in the Hutu extremists’ struggle because ‘they were socially positioned at the permeable boundary between the two ethnic groups.’”⁴⁷ By portraying women in this threatening role, it made their extinction all the more imperative. Human Rights Watch noted that

The extremist propaganda which exhorted Hutus to commit the genocide specifically identified the sexuality of Tutsi women as a means through which the Tutsi community sought to infiltrate and control the Hutu community.⁴⁸

Part of the resentment then of Tutsi women had to do with secrecy and trickery which was linked with the idea of lust and seduction. Tutsi women were also said to be more beautiful and therefore think that they were too good for Hutus. Rape was a way for Hutu men to strip that pride and perceived feeling of superiority from Tutsi women.

In *Kangura's* December 1990 issue, *The Ten Commandments of the Hutu* were published. Four of the 10 commandments dealt specifically with women, demonstrating their role at the heart of the propaganda machine. These commandments were:

Every Hutu should know that a Tutsi woman, wherever she is, works for the interest of her Tutsi ethnic group. As a result, we shall consider a traitor any Hutu who: marries a Tutsi woman; befriends a Tutsi woman; employs a Tutsi woman as a secretary or a concubine.

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch 11

⁴⁷ Green 747

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch 2

Every Hutu 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?

Hutu woman, be vigilant and try to bring your husbands, brothers and sons back to reason.

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.⁴⁹

Each of these commandments demonstrates paranoia centered on female sexuality and place great significance on marriage and family ties. Tutsi women were clearly laid out as enemy infiltrators that were a threat to public and private life.

The effectiveness of the propaganda is reflected in statements of survivors recalling the words exchanged during rape. One Interahamwe said “those Tutsi people won’t die- we raped her and she survived.”⁵⁰ Another said “you Tutsikazi, you think you are the only beautiful women in the world.”⁵¹ Other statements from survivors included: “We want to see if a Tutsi woman is like a Hutu woman [and] if there were peace you would never accept me.”⁵² All of these statements demonstrate that resentment towards Tutsi women promoted by radio and newspapers was internalized by the Hutu militias. Rape was their way of humiliating Tutsi women and reclaiming their perceived superiority as Hutu men. Propaganda made women more vulnerable to sexual attacks and therefore heightened their suffering.

The radio broadcasts also encouraged the destruction of Tutsi women, especially through reversal. RTLM would falsely broadcast actions of the Tutsi men against Hutu women. On June 3, 2004 they reported that the inyenzi “grabbed pregnant women,

⁴⁹ Green 748-749

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch 22

⁵¹ Human Rights Watch 33

⁵² Green 749

knocked them unconscious with a stick, and sliced open their stomach to extract the fetus, which, in turn, they tossed on the ground and killed after having sliced its stomach open too.”⁵³ These violent acts against women were used to instruct and justify Hutu actions against Tutsi women. RTLM would also describe how Tutsi men threw the bodies of women and babies into the lakes and rivers. This again encouraged the killing of all Tutsis as a form of retaliation.

The Aftermath of War and Its Effects

Since the genocide in Rwanda, public health is a major issue of concern. First it is important to define health. “The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined health as not only the absence of disease but also the presence of physical and mental health and social well-being.”⁵⁴ The genocide in Rwanda affected the entirety of the population. Those who were spared physically still witnessed the killings or at least knew someone whose life was taken. Others perpetrated the killings which had a severe psychological impact. Although the health of all of the survivors of the genocide was in peril, a disproportionate amount of health problems fell on women.

Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Sexually transmitted infections (STI) were a huge problem among the surviving population of women. One statistic based on resulting pregnancies, estimates that the number of rapes during the genocide ranged from 250,000 to 500,000.⁵⁵ Members of the

⁵³ Kellow 121

⁵⁴ H. Patricia Hynes, “On the Battlefield of Women’s Bodies: An Overview of the Harm of War on Women,” Women’s Studies International Forum 27 (2004) 434.

⁵⁵ Green 751

militia would rape many women in succession without protection, thus spreading disease. One study found that “Rwanda has one of the highest rates of HIV-positive persons, and ‘militiamen carrying the virus used it as a ‘weapon,’ . . . intending to cause delayed death.’”⁵⁶ In this way, both the physical and mental health of the woman is damaged. The number of infections continued to rise after the genocide as survivors sought protection and affection. Researchers who interviewed survivors found that women were not protecting themselves against STIs, showing a lack of hope and will to live and thrive.⁵⁷

Pregnancy

Other women became impregnated as a result of rape. Because of the genocide there were far fewer medical resources available to women in terms of pre-natal care. This was compounded with the shame surrounding rape which caused many women not to seek proper medical treatment. Many women sought abortions or tried to perform them on themselves which proved to be a very dangerous activity. Forced pregnancy is something that is suffered exclusively by women and “involves a violation of, among other things, reproductive freedom and sexual autonomy.”⁵⁸ If one chose not to abort the baby, the other available options were infanticide or raising the child. Choosing to raise the child has lasting effects on the woman’s position in society and often within her own family, as unwed mothers are not often accepted. This denies the woman her basic right to dignity.

⁵⁶ Green 754

⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch 39

⁵⁸ Green 754

Pregnancy was often a desired result of the genocide. When a woman becomes pregnant after a rape, it is a way of mixing and contaminating the ethnic group that is targeted. The Human Rights Watch report stated that

Women subjected to sexual violence may be left physically unable to reproduce, or, they may be denied this role by their community given the nature of the attacks they suffered. . . . Taken as a whole, the evidence indicates that many rapists expected, consequent to their attacks, that the psychological and physical assault on each Tutsi woman would advance the cause of the destruction of the Tutsi people.⁵⁹

Impregnating a woman is a method of “ethnic cleansing.” Its use is not only physically damaging but psychologically damaging as well.

Displaced Persons

Displacement is a third issue that affects public health. More than two million people have been displaced as a result of the conflict in Rwanda.⁶⁰ Those in displacement camps often do not have access to the resources and food they need in order to get back on their feet. Many reports have also reflected that women are often put second in terms of nutrition and supplies and are often sexually abused in exchange for medicines and food rations. Michael Toole speaks about the displacement that occurred after the Rwandan genocide. He states:

Initially, more than 500,000 refugees fled into Burundi and Tanzania; later, in July, when the Rwandan Patriotic Front militarily defeated the Rwandan government and took over the country, one million ethnic Hutus abruptly fled to eastern Zaire, provoking an unprecedented refugee crisis.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch 19

⁶⁰ Michael J. Toole, “Displaced Persons and War,” *War and Public Health*, Eds. Barry S. Levy and Victor W. Sidel (Washington: American Public Health Association, 2000) 199.

⁶¹ Toole 199

Displaced persons are living without roots, making them more vulnerable to disease and starvation. Hugo Slim reports on the flight of roughly 1.3 million people, mainly Hutu's into eastern Zaire. He states that it was

one of the largest, fastest, and densest refugee movements in modern times. Cholera took hold before humanitarian agencies could control conditions and tens of thousands of people died in camps around Goma and Bukavu.⁶²

Crowded conditions in the camps promote the spread of disease. Just because they have left the sight of the conflict does not mean that they are no longer affected by it.

Displaced persons also affect the countries that receive them. Many Hutu extremist fled into the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), which stirred up political tensions there. This is another example of geographical factors in the Rwandan genocide. The genocide was not contained within the borders of Rwanda, but rippled out and contributed to killing and sexual violence that continues today in eastern Congo.

Legal Issues

The genocide of Rwanda was a popular genocide meaning that it was carried out by a majority of the population. This then poses a problem in terms of punishment and the law and raises questions about how one should punish a criminal population and whether or not one must physically kill to be considered responsible. Though there has been a good amount of aid from the international community, it has focused mainly on support for refugees, internally displaced persons and on the justice system, all of which are important. There is a scarcity of programs which acknowledge the intersectionality of gender and ethnicity which is necessary to understand before rebuilding is possible and in

⁶² Slim 100

order to fully prosecute crimes against humanity. Programs which seek to talk to women about their experiences and rebuild communal relationships are important in seeking to put society back together. According to the Human Rights Watch,

Despite approximately U.S. \$19 million going to the Rwandan judiciary, there are currently no programs designed to enhance the capacity of Rwandan police or police inspectors to investigate gender-related crimes, including rape and sexual violence during the genocide and current abuses against women.⁶³

For almost all of these women, the sexual violence experienced during war is something that causes them a great deal of shame and therefore is something that they will not talk about if those investigating do not know the right questions to ask. The rape and mutilation of women must be recognized both in terms of ethnicity and womanhood.

Green talks about the effectiveness of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) with relation to the treatment of women. She writes,

Thus, the legal analysis of sexual violence against Tutsi women as a violation of human rights, within the confines of the ICTR statute, is largely based on its effects on their ethnicity, and not as a violation of their womanhood.⁶⁴

This denies an intersectional analysis between the gender and ethnicity of the Tutsi women even though both are integral to their experiences. This definition of genocide also lacks a gender component. As it stands, violations of rape are legally viewed as an affront to ethnicity rather than gender which does not fully encompass the crime.

Rape against women in wartime must be redefined so that it is not solely viewed as a challenge to honor. Rape is a violent attack and results in mental and physical destruction. By defining it as a challenge to honor, it is defined by the way that it affects males. It also “diminishes the serious nature of the crime and further contributes to the

⁶³ Human Rights Watch 5

⁶⁴ Green 764

widespread misconception that rape (i.e. and attack on honor) is an ‘incidental’ or ‘lesser’ crime in comparison to crimes such as torture or enslavement.”⁶⁵ Rape involves torture and often enslavement and therefore cannot be regarded as a lesser offense. Lynn Higgins and Brenda Silvers discuss this problem and claim that looking at rape “requires restoring rape to the literal, to the body; restoring, that is, the violence—the physical sexual violation.”⁶⁶ Rape must be understood as a violent physical violation if justice is to be brought about.

Although there is some discussion within the international community, most agree that those that incited the killings through propaganda should be held responsible for their actions. According to Alan Sigg, head of external relations at a United Nations tribunal investigating Rwanda’s genocide, “For these journalists, it won’t be enough to say: ‘Sorry, I was just a small fish and I had orders.’ The standards of international law should be the same here in Rwanda”⁶⁷ Those that were a part of running the radio stations that distributed hate messages, namely RTLM are guilty of war crimes.

Conclusion

As has been demonstrated, the 1990’s were a time of extreme hate and violence as genocidal actors had more advanced means of controlling and communicating with large populations and inciting fear and hate within a population. It is important to understand that the propaganda occurred within a social, political and historical context which allowed messages to be better understood and accepted. The more sophisticated

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch 16

⁶⁶ Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver, “Introduction: Rereading Rape,” Rape and Representation, Eds. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 4.

⁶⁷ Kellow 108

broadcast media, allowed for the source to have complete control over what the listeners were hearing and in what order. When reading a newspaper one can choose to read certain stories in any order—radio does not operate in this fashion and was used to encourage the destruction of a large percentage of the Tutsi population. It was also used to specifically encourage and instruct acts of sexual violence against women.

Propaganda must be taken seriously on the international stage if tragedies like the Rwandan Genocide are to be prevented in the future.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

The 1990's marked a time of increasing violence against women in armed conflict, especially sexual violence. Aided by advanced propaganda campaigns and the development of complex genocidal ideologies, the sexual destruction of women was systematic in nature. In Bosnia and Rwanda, the intersection of gender and ethnicity made women especially vulnerable to violations by those committing the genocide. We must be careful not to call this sexual violence against women unprecedented, indeed it has been occurring for centuries, but the increase in intensity and intentionality is something to note and study.

The use of rape went beyond the physical act and has implications on the social and political fabric of the societies of Bosnia and Rwanda. Rape was used as a genocidal tool and women's bodies were transformed into a battlefield—a place to display dominance. Propaganda helped create an anger and desire for revenge that was then expressed and carried out—in both sexual and non-sexual ways—on women's bodies. Propaganda organized and channeled this anger and produced a common simple vision of hatred and fear.

An important common factor linking genocide and propaganda is the centrality of power that is necessary. Neither genocide nor propaganda call for a dialogue or differing opinions, rather they are unilateral in nature. This was demonstrated especially in

Rwanda, with the lack of sources other than those spouting lies. In Rwanda, society was set-up so that there was no where else to turn but RTLM and the true facts were not available. Those that control the means of communication have the power to define the “in groups” and the “out groups” and dissenting sources are rarely available even for people that seek them. Mahmood Mamdani, a scholar on genocide, states that “before you can try and eliminate an enemy, you must define that enemy.”¹ Propaganda was that defining vehicle in Bosnia and Rwanda.

The power structure did differ in the two cases. The players and power dynamics were much clearer in Rwanda, as there were two distinct groups that were clearly labeled. The Hutus had control over the dissemination of ideas and were able to construct the in and out groups. The situation in Bosnia was messier as there were more participants with less extreme degrees of power. The Serbs did dominate the Non-Serbs but not in the extreme way seen in Rwanda. Although this influenced the way that propaganda was tailored in many respects, the two cases were similar in that they demonized women and necessitated sexual destruction.

Sexual purity was seen as extremely important in both Bosnia and Rwanda, and the destruction of that purity therefore had an effect on both the women and the men of the community. The act became a symbol for something larger. Joshua S. Goldstein, who writes about war and gender, speaks to this issue saying,

As a symbolic form of rape, armed violence genders the victor as male and the vanquished as female. Symbolic rape is acted out in various ways in different cultures and contexts, but key themes repeat across time and space.²

¹ Mahmood Mamdani, When Victims become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, and the Genocide in Rwanda, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001) 9.

² Joshua S. Goldstein, War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 371.

Rape was an expression of the misogynistic culture of Rwanda and Bosnia. Women, both within and outside the context of war, are viewed as means to an end or tools rather than embodied persons. Propaganda dehumanized them and set them up in such a way that their demise was necessary.

As has been demonstrated the use of propaganda was a driving force in the genocides and in the subjugation and objectification of women. It encouraged the use of the penis as another weapon in warfare. Susan Brownmiller notes,

Sexual sadism arises with astonishing rapidity in ground warfare, when the penis becomes justified as a weapon in a logistical reality of unarmed noncombatants, encircled and trapped. Rape of a doubly dehumanized object—as woman, as enemy—carries its own terrible logic.³

Women were constantly demonized through radio, newspapers, and television both through their gender and their ethnicity. In Bosnia, the rape of women was filmed and they were shown in degrading sexual positions. These photos and film were then misrepresented and distributed widely to encourage further destruction. In Rwanda, women were called cockroaches and were portrayed as highly sexual.

In both cases women were characterized as threatening, especially in terms of their sexuality. They were seen as the political tool of the enemy. This language of women as tools denies them their humanity and reduces them to objects. They were seen as no more than the pawns of their ethnic group and therefore were targeted as the key to destroying the enemy. Because their sexuality was perceived to be threatening, the desire to exterminate that threat manifested itself in sexual ways.

³ Susan Brownmiller, "Making Female Bodies the Battlefield," Mass Rape: War Against Women in Bosnia- Herzegovina, Alexandra Stiglmyer ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994) 181.

Although the sexualization of violence happened through this overarching theme of women as the enemy, there were also very direct and purposeful attempts that dictated rape as the means of exterminating said enemy. Perhaps the most poignant example of this was the distribution of actual rapes in the form of pornographic propaganda in Bosnia. These videos served as instruction manuals for the perpetrators of violence and make it clear that rape during war was not a result of loss of control on the part of the soldiers rather, it was a very deliberate method employed.

It is important to recognize that propaganda played on pre-existing fears and conditions in both Bosnia and Rwanda. It played upon fear and gave the green light to those who were oppressed and needed some way of expressing their anger. This was done through exaggerating the fear of difference and manipulating it in such a way that necessitated action. Propaganda existed not solely on the airwaves and in print, but in addition was internalized by those that heard it. This was demonstrated through words uttered during sexual exploitation and in the justifications made after the fact. Rwandan women were told they were being raped to see if Tutsi women were like Hutu women. They were being raped because according to propaganda a Tutsi woman would never choose to marry a Hutu man, thinking she was “too good for him.” Bosnian women were told that the aim of their perpetrators was forced impregnation and destruction of life and land. Clearly, the messages were reflected in the actions carried out and by the words that were said to the victims.

The transformation of power dynamics into something sexual is summed up well by E. Fromm as quoted by Dutton. E. Fromm states that “The core of sadism, common to all its manifestations, is the passion to have absolute and unrestricted control over a

living being . . . It is transformation of impotence into omnipotence”⁴ The term sadism often implies gratification sexual in nature. The word choice then employed by Fromm is no accident rather it demonstrates the centrality of sexuality in the struggle for power.

Limitations

The study of the effects of propaganda in genocidal conflict presented in this paper is limited in some ways. Part of this limitation is due to the fact that I am unable to personally talk to the women who have been affected. There is a plethora of personal accounts that other researchers have provided, but without being able to construct and direct the line of questioning, something is lost. The way that the women feel about how they were represented and the repercussions that they have experienced as a result of media indoctrinated ideas is a critical piece of the puzzle. This is not to say that the testimonies available do not have great value, rather which direct interviews and conversations may prove to be more revealing.

Another challenge to research is the language barrier that is present. The phrase “lost in translation” exists for a reason. It is difficult to comment on television, radio programs and newspaper content that I cannot directly access. I must rely on the interpretations of other sources. Language is nuanced and is influenced by culture and region. A final related limitation is a lack of access to newspapers, cartoons and films of the time. Further primary source research may have added depth and a fresh perspective.

⁴ Donald G. Dutton, The Psychology of Genocide, Massacres, and Extreme Violence: Why “Normal” People Come to Commit Atrocities (London: Praeger Security International, 2007) 27.

Solutions

The solutions must acknowledge that structural factors are partly to blame for the conflict and serve as blockades to reconstruction and reconciliation. There should be an effort that seeks to eradicate male domination of cultural practices and tradition, and to relieve psychological, social and political subordination and alter practices that reinforce economic marginalization and subjugation of women.⁵ The improvement of relationships, which were manipulated through the use of propaganda, should be dealt with on a more personal and grassroots level and must then be matched by the society at large. Citizens should be given the opportunity to create a society that reflects their experience rather than what they have been told through propaganda campaigns. Part of this solution may resemble the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa. This commission sought to find out the truth of what happened during the apartheid and asked that perpetrators tell their stories freely without risk of punishment. Similarly, the attitudes and actions in Bosnia and Rwanda must be made clear so that they can start to be altered.

Restorative Justice

The paradigm offered by restorative justice is one that reflects the values of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Restorative justice constitutes an ethical lens which places great importance on relationships and is defined as a social movement that seeks to solve problems of human rights and legal violations through peaceful

⁵ Llezlie L Green, "Gender Hate Propaganda and Sexual Violence in the Rwandan Genocide: An Arguments for Intersectionality in International Law," Columbia Human Rights Law Review (33:733, 2002) 760.

approaches. It allows victims to find a voice, ask questions and seek answers. Howard Zehr defines restorative justice in this way. He says

Crime is a violation of people and relationships. It creates obligations to make things right. Justice involves the victim, the offender, and the community in a search for solutions which promotes repair, reconciliation, and reassurance.⁶

The focus on the relationship is central to this approach. Harms are defined in concrete terms which then seek concrete, direct solutions.

The perpetrators are not peripheral in this approach; rather the effect the crime had and continues to have on them is adequately considered. Wrongdoers can admit that they are wrong and seek forgiveness as well under this approach so that they can then become productive members of society and can take responsibility for their actions. Restorative justice seeks to engage those that have been affected by the crisis rather than privileging overarching institutions and high ranking individuals. This constitutes a grassroots approach that acknowledges the importance of the community in repairing and rebuilding the community and relationships within it. It seeks to find a balance between the needs of victim, wrongdoer and society.

This grassroots type of approach is not necessarily the most glamorous, but it is the one that considers the people involved to the greatest extent. Restorative justice requires a devotion to learning about the experience of those people involved and not applying generalized blanket solutions. Restorative justice also is a messy process as it requires face-to-face contact between victims and perpetrators. Justice will not be served fully through the legal system or an official apology. That approach does not help the

⁶ Howard Zehr, Changing Lenses: A New Focus for Crime and Justice, (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2005) 181.

woman who cannot gain access to her house or sleep at night because of the terrible nightmares of her attackers.

Restorative justice requires a shift in the questions asked after a conflict. Instead of asking questions which seek to place blame, questions which seek to address the needs of the community are central. Under this system the victims are central and therefore they are more fundamental to the solutions. By asking questions like “what do the victims need?” a program can be developed which more accurately reflects their experience and their needs. The victims must be involved in both the design and implementation of the program in order for the greatest success. The dialogue necessitated by this system lies in stark contrast to the single sided propaganda that was a reality of war.

Clearly genocide constitutes a massive breach of human rights. The Rwandan and Bosnian Genocides took not only physical lives, but also affected the mental health and stability of a nation. Although scholars have written about ways to recognize and prevent genocide before it happens, that does not help in the cases of Bosnia and Rwanda. The genocides have happened and those that remain must bear the memory of the tragedies that occurred. There is no way to undo what happened in the past therefore the solution must be oriented towards the future while still engaging and coming to terms with past events.

Structural Inequalities and Axes of Power

Of course the ethical dilemma seen in the situation of Rwanda cannot end with an analysis of individual cases and relationships. There were and still are fundamental

structural inequalities that exist in both locations that allowed for genocide of that magnitude. Structural inequalities can be harder to identify as it is often an overall attitude rather than specific actions linked to human agency. Paul Farmer, an anthropologist who has witnessed structural inequities first hand makes the following observation.

Whereas a purely legal view of human rights tends to obscure the dynamics of human rights violations, the contextualizing disciplines reveal them to be pathologies of power. Social inequalities based on race or ethnicity, gender, religious creed, and – above all—social class are the motor force behind most human rights violations. In other words, violence against individuals is usually embedded in entrenched structural violence.⁷

A society that does not give equal value to women then would be one in which the rights of women are more likely to be violated. It is not a coincidence that it was women that were raped and targeted in propaganda efforts on a grand-scale in Rwanda and Bosnia. In order to fully analyze these situations, the experience of individuals as well as altering the structures—political, legal, and social—that act as obstacles to justice must be looked at.

The restorative lens will inform the proposed “solutions” for the current state in Bosnia and Rwanda. In keeping with the restorative lens, the solutions must focus on the needs of the victims, wrongdoers and the community. Assigning blame must not be of primary concern rather, resources should be directed at how to solve the problems that Rwandans and Bosnians are facing. The restoration of the social fabric of society is central and focus is on the future rather than placing blame for what happened in the past. Justice comes in seeking to meet human needs.

⁷ Paul Farmer, Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and a New War on the Poor (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003) 219.

Often when looking for solutions and justice people look to the international courts and tribunals, but money used on court proceedings does not help the victims in a real and immediate way. Zehr writes “Laws are not science; they are normative ideology and are thus tightly tied to power.”⁸ The legalistic view of justice often suffers from being out of touch with the needs of the people as laws are created by people that have not necessarily seen the situation or talked to the people involved. Furthermore, laws seek to punish individuals and those that are behind the propaganda machine may get left out of this category. Our focus should be on people and their relations; solutions at the grassroots level rather than confined to the courts.

Collection of Testimonies

Justice comes in seeking to meet human needs and seeking to make things right rather than punishing those who committed the crime. One of the ways that this can be done is through better training of police inspectors in the effected areas in issues relating to rape and sexual assault. This must be an innovative and culturally appropriate program of counseling, support and rehabilitation. Because of the highly sensitive nature of the topic, female officers should be trained to collect testimonies as the shame connected with rape prevents women from talking to male officers about their experience. According to the Human Rights Watch report, “many women interviewed by our team, composed solely of women, indicated that they would report rape to a female

⁸ Farmer 235

investigator, but not to a man.”⁹ The importance of understanding the implications of gender in this matter are clearly evident.

Silence should not lead to the assumption that these women do not have anything to say or contribute. Higgins discusses the fact that the collection of testimonies

involves listening not only to who speaks and in what circumstances, but who does *not* speak and why. It requires that we listen for those stories that differ from the master(‘s) story; that we recuperate what has too often been left out: the physical violation and the women who find ways to speak it.¹⁰

The stigmas that are associated with rape in the communities of Bosnia and Rwanda must be fully understood and acknowledged by those taking the testimony. Just because rape happened on such a mass scale does not mean that each woman’s story in its individuality is not important. Therefore women must be given the opportunity to speak of their experience. Higgins further states that “Whether in the courts or the media, whether in art or criticism, who gets to tell the story and whose story counts as “truth” determine the definition of what rape *is*.”¹¹ Giving voice to and acknowledging their experience will give them some power in reclaiming their lives. History does not have to be defined by the victors. Collecting testimonies and supporting those who tell their stories also helps to counteract the messages of propaganda. By owning their experience they are no longer the objects that propaganda claimed. Instead they have the possibility of reintegrating their body with their inner selves and may flourish and grow.

⁹ Human Rights Watch, “Shattered Lives: Sexual Violence during the Rwandan Genocide and its Aftermath,” Human Rights Watch. (1996) 4, 26 Jan. 2009. <<http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1996/rwanda.htm>>.

¹⁰ Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver, “Introduction: Rereading Rape,” Rape and Representation, Eds. Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) 3.

¹¹ Higgins 1

Access to Means

After repeatedly trying and failing to gain access to the property and money of their husbands that had died, many women in Bosnia and Rwanda felt hopeless. One Rwandan woman said, “Someone once told me that it is better to live through a war than after a war . . . I understand that now.”¹² There must be a structure in place that helps these women to gain access to what is rightfully theirs. Without access to money or a home, they cannot begin to process their experiences as each ounce of their energy must be directed towards surviving. Lack of ability to return to the places they were driven from also reinforces the idea that they are not wanted. The female populations of Bosnia and Rwanda have been indoctrinated with this idea since before the war even occurred. There must be an opportunity for reconciliation with the communities and a dedication to building communities that are supportive to women.

One of the defining features of the restorative justice lens is that of forgiveness. For Rwandan women, forgiveness is an important part of moving on and dealing with rape and sexual assault. Zerh supports this idea saying,

Forgiveness is letting go of the power of the offense and the offender have over a person. It means no longer letting that offense or offender dominate. Without this experience of forgiveness, without this closure, the wound festers, the violation takes over our consciousness, our lives. . . Real forgiveness, then, is an act of empowerment and healing. It allows one to move from victim to survivor.¹³

This allows for a change in the balance of power and involves empowerment rather than punishment.

¹² Human Rights Watch 36

¹³ Zehr 47

Health Issues

There are various health issues, both physical and mental, that also must be addressed as part of the solution. A population that is not healthy is not able to provide for themselves. In other words, their human capital is compromised. Part of the solutions must be forward looking in that ways are provided so that one day the women and their communities can help themselves and be self-sufficient. Michael Toole supports this idea and talks about the necessity of community-based health plans. He states:

Public health programs need to be community-based and integrated with other development programs that aim to minimize dependency on the outside world, restore dignity to stressed communities, and prepare for eventual repatriation to their homelands. Training of community health workers, particularly women, should be the cornerstone of these longer-term programs.¹⁴

The integration of the community in the task of providing care will help ensure that the standards of health are maintained at a high level, which all humans deserve. Increasing positive community contact will also serve to counteract the messages of propaganda. Through interaction the communities will learn not to treat women as objects and the falsity of the stereotypes and information that propaganda campaigns provided.

Access to councilors to talk about their experience and address their mental health needs is also critical. One woman begged to be killed after a rape and the perpetrator refused telling her she would “die of sadness.”¹⁵ Unfortunately that is a reality for many of these women. They are living in sadness, as a shell of the person that they once were. The goal of any community should be the flourishing of its members, therefore helping these women to deal with the guilt at having survived their experience is crucial.

¹⁴ Michael J. Toole, “Displaced Persons and War,” War and Public Health, Eds. Barry S. Levy and Victor W. Sidel (Washington: American Public Health Association, 2000) 210.

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch 38

Conclusion

This thesis started with a quote from a survivor that read “we are living as if we are dead.”¹⁶ It is my hope that through a re-conceptualization of what it means to be female and a Tutsi or a Non-Serb, women will find new life. The conflict is not truly over until the communities are able to rebuild in a way that responsibilities and power are distributed more evenly. It is my hope that through this new dialogue, renewed life will spring. Through looking at the cases of Bosnia and Rwanda, it is clear that propaganda is an essential ingredient of modern genocidal campaigns. It is important to study this power now, as technologies will only become more sophisticated and pervasive. Propaganda inspired events which led to the death of thousands and the psychological destruction of thousands more. Those that survived were not unscathed by the conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia. This power must be kept out of the hands of groups with evil aims and the international community must learn from these cases and heed their warning.

¹⁶ Human Rights Watch 38

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