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## The Rwandan Diaspora: Residual Politics and the Culture of Silence

### Cover Page Footnote

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# The Rwandan Diaspora: Residual Politics and the Culture of Silence

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*The present article examines the political environment in Rwanda following the 1994 genocide from the perspective of diaspora members. Research was conducted via in-person and telephone interviews from May 2015 to March 2016 with eight members of the Rwandan diaspora in the United States and Canada. The primary research objective questioned how members of this particular diaspora attempt to achieve justice and reconciliation among one another. However, current Rwandan politics became a central discussion point during interviews, particularly the residual effect among the diaspora. Interviews suggest that the current political climate in Rwanda may have created a culture of silence among diaspora members. Members of the diaspora appear to be hesitant to discuss potentially political and divisive topics for fear of retaliation against themselves, their family, and loved ones remaining in Rwanda. Furthermore, interviews suggest that participants believe that the Rwandan government is monitoring the diaspora. This, along with the promotion of a dominant narrative regarding the 1994 genocide, has created a residual political climate in the diaspora that hinders attempts at justice and reconciliation among members.*

*Keywords: Rwandan diaspora, justice, reconciliation, Rwandan politics, culture of silence*

## Introduction

From April 1994 to July 1994, approximately 800,000 to 1 million Rwandans were murdered during a 90-day genocide between the two predominant ethnic groups in the country, the Hutu and the Tutsi (Gourevitch, 1998). The atrocity was largely the result of hundreds of years of building ethnic tension exacerbated during colonialism and fueled by the militant and anti-Tutsi-led government, both of which were also responsible for the 1959 genocide that resulted in the death of over 20,000 Tutsi (Harrell, 2003). The 1994 genocide eliminated approximately 10–15% of the total Rwanda population (7 million), including 70% of the Tutsi population—the overt targets of the genocide. The 1994 genocide ended when the Rwandan Patriot Front (RPF), under the command of Paul Kagame, seized political control of the country in July 1994. Kagame is currently serving his third term as president of Rwanda. Upon assuming power, the RPF became responsible for addressing justice and reconciliation in a post-genocide society. Ultimately, the RPF responded punitively to the 100,000 people accused of genocide.

This article examines the thoughts and feelings of those who left Rwanda directly before, during, or shortly after the genocide. Data are sourced from telephone interviews with diaspora members from May 2015 through March 2016. Using phenomenological methodology, we observe how diaspora members' feelings regarding the genocide, justice, and reconciliation are closely related to their perception of the current political climate within Rwanda. The majority of our findings challenge the carefully crafted image propagated by the Kagame administration regarding its role in bringing justice and peace to the people of Rwanda in a post-genocide society. In general, qualitative data indicate that diaspora members are doubtful of the extent to which justice and reconciliation have been achieved. More specifically however, interviewees attach their perspectives on post-genocide justice and reconciliation to their impression of the current political climate—a climate they overwhelmingly characterize as punitive and oppressive. Many remain fearful. According to the diaspora members interviewed for this study, the current political climate in Rwanda precludes justice and reconciliation through three mechanisms: the creation of a culture of silence; the creation of fear through monitoring; and the enforcement of a single narrative

of the genocide. Before going into further detail on these findings, however, it is necessary to first examine social relations in Rwanda in the years following the genocide as they pertain to justice, ethnic relations, and the political climate.

## Post-Genocide Justice in Rwanda

Following the genocide, two institutionally-sanctioned structures were created to address issues of justice and reconciliation for survivors: the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and *gacaca* (meaning *grass*) courts held locally throughout Rwanda (Harrell, 2003). *Gacaca* courts were originally utilized in pre-colonial Rwanda as a way for communities to address crimes against its members (Lahiri, 2009). Following the 1994 genocide, these courts re-emerged in an attempt to address local issues in a society bereft of a functioning judicial system. Participation in *gacaca* was mandated by the new Rwandan government, which categorized genocidal crimes along four levels (Harrell, 2003). Level 1 crimes included genocidal organizers, planners, those suspected of killing “with a particular zeal and cruelty” (Hola & Nyseth Brehm, 2016, p. 62), and those suspected of sexual crimes. Those who participated in killings were tried for Level 2 crimes, while Level 3 crimes involved all other acts of physical violence. Level 4 crimes referred to property crimes. Sentences for Levels 1, 2, 3, and 4 crimes were death, life in prison, incarceration according to Rwanda’s Penal Code, and reparations, respectively. If accepted by the court, individuals convicted of Level 2 and 3 crimes could reduce their sentence in exchange for a guilty plea (Hola & Nyseth Brehm, 2016).

While very few Rwandans participated in the ICTR, around 250,000 Rwandans participated in *gacaca* courts in various capacities (Hola & Nyseth Brehm, 2016). By the end of the appellate hearings in 2012, around 2 million people were tried in *gacaca* courts. Both the number of cases tried by *gacaca* courts and the number of Rwandans involved in the process are pointed to as proof that justice and reconciliation have been achieved for survivors—both victims and offenders (Haider, 2014). Importantly, however, victimhood (in the eyes of the Rwandan government) has more to do with one’s ethnic identity than their experience with violence during and after the 1994 genocide.

## Post-Genocide Ethnic Relations

Following the genocide, the RPF government (led by President Paul Kagame) instituted drastic measures to eliminate any and all notions of ethnicity, tribalism, and race ideology from public discourse (Rafti, 2004). Based upon the presupposed notion that any discussion of ethnicity is divisive, it is illegal to even mention ethnicity and ethnic difference. Simply put, Rwanda has entered into a state of what Vandeginste refers to as “ethnic amnesia” (Vandeginste, 2014). These measures stand in stark contrast to pre-genocide Rwanda, wherein identity cards which stated one’s ethnic affiliation (Hutu, Tutsi, Twa) were assigned to each citizen (McLean Hilker, 2012). Because this practice assisted in the easy identification of Tutsi during the genocide, the practice has been abolished. The use of terms such as Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa are only allowed in public discourse when they are being used to “dismiss them and deny their salience” (Hintjens, 2008, p. 12). And yet, the practice of labeling Rwandans continues—it simply manifests along the lines of victim and perpetrator rather than Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa. These lines are binary, strident, and unmoving in the eyes of the law, such that all Hutu are supposed perpetrators and all Tutsi are victims (Goehrung, 2017).

President Kagame’s administration has played an important role in perpetuating the notion that all Hutus were necessarily perpetrators (Goehrung, 2017; Newbury & Newbury, 1999). Under Law No. 47/2001 and Law No. 18/2008, the RPF codified their version of the 1994 genocide, deeming it *the only* credible narrative of the genocide. Under these laws, the Rwandan government is able to criminally sanction anyone who proffers a narrative which contradicts theirs. Again, there is little, if any, variance in who can be considered a victim or a perpetrator. This narrative of the genocide directly contradicts existing research which suggests as many as 300,000 Hutu were killed during the genocide either because they attempted to protect Tutsi, or as a result of their “moderate” Hutu status (Goehrung, 2017). Moreover, this narrative severely impacts Hutu survivors and their family. The consequences of this binary narrative are articulated by Goehrung (2017):

[I]n 1998 the Survivors of Genocide Fund (FARG) was established to pay the school fees and grant assistance to orphans of the civil war. However, the fund lends support only to Tutsi children even in areas where violence did not occur, while children who are Hutu, including orphans whose parents were killed by other Hutu during the genocide for being Tutsi sympathizers, are denied assistance because they are not considered legitimate victims. The very recognition of Hutu as legitimate victims of violence is in fact criminalized by Rwandan law. (p. 83)

Actions such as these lead Rwandans living at home and abroad to question the extent to which justice and reconciliation have been achieved, ultimately contributing to an increasingly hostile political climate (Kuradusenge-McLeod, 2018).

### Post-Genocide Political Climate

The relationship between ethnic relations, victim-perpetrator status, and political climate in Rwanda are closely intertwined. The current political landscape in Rwanda suggests an almost total authoritarian regime spearheaded by President Kagame and the RPF. The regime is perhaps most effective due to their intense level of monitoring regarding the activities of its citizens, journalists (both national and international), academics, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (Amnesty International, 2010).

As was stated earlier, the Tutsi-led RPF took control of the Rwandan government in 1994, an action that ultimately led to the *official* conclusion of the genocide. It is important to note, however, that upon assuming control of the government, the RPF (aided by supportive civilians) immediately began targeting individuals they believed to be Hutu militants, political opponents, and civilians. Both Amnesty International and Africa Watch reported extensive war crimes and crimes against humanity against the Hutu people in the months following the genocide (Reyntjens, 2011). This narrative of the genocide, however, is not sanctioned by Rwandan law, making it difficult for Hutu victims of violence to obtain justice. On the other hand, by excluding these facts from the official narrative, Kagame and the RPF are able to maintain their image as the heroes who swept in and put an end to the senseless violence (Kuradusenge-McLeod, 2018).

Once order had been restored in Rwanda in the years following the genocide, the Kagame regime began to aggressively crack down on free speech. One year after the genocide, almost 40 NGOs were ejected, with 18 more getting “suspended,” largely as a result of their vocal concern over alleged human rights violations. Additionally, an April 2001 law gave the Rwandan government the ability to control the finances and management of both local and international non-governmental agencies. In June 2004, the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry on Genocide Ideology recommended banning all organizations that they believed produced speech that was considered divisive or that promoted genocide ideology (Amnesty International, 2010).

NGOs are not alone in being targeted by the RPF for speaking out. Journalists and news reporters have also been identified as a threat to the current regime and have been accused of reporting inaccurate information and disseminating material that incites divisiveness. Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have consistently published reports regarding the lack of political transparency and human rights violations in Rwanda, and in turn have been consistently accused by the government of producing inaccurate documents (Human Rights Watch, 2014). In August of 2008, the Rwandan government accused both Voice of America (VOA) and the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) of attempting to destroy the unity of Rwandans. In early 2009, the government banned the Kinyarwanda edition of the BBC for two months, and both BBC and VOA were again threatened with sanctions later on that same year (Reyntjens, 2011).

In addition to the attempts to silence journalists and discredit research organizations, the Rwandan government has put in place a variety of measures to limit the freedom of political expression within Rwanda. Organic Law 2003 prohibits the political parties from any discussion or production of information that can be considered divisive. The main opposition party, *Le Mouvement Democratique Republicaine* (LMDR) was outlawed in 2003. With the exception of LMDR, other political parties in opposition to the current administration are technically allowed; however, many political opponents have been placed on house arrest for accusations of divisiveness, while others have been strategically exiled and imprisoned (Beswick, 2010).



If this were not enough to cause concern, Kagame has successfully maintained an international image of having the overwhelming support of the people, in spite of highly doubtful election results. President Kagame won the presidential re-election in 2003 by an overwhelming 95% of votes. In the 2008 and 2010 elections, the RPF received over 98% of the general vote. However, it appears the RPF-led government understood the difficulty of portraying this astronomical number as a result of a democratic election, and they reduced the number to 78% during the announcement of the official election results (Reyntjens, 2011). In August of 2010, 93% voted for President Kagame (Amnesty International, 2010). Reyntjens (2011) suggested, "Rwandans know well what is expected of them" (p. 12). Although Article 101 of the Rwandan constitution states that presidents may only hold office for two 7-year terms, Kagame successfully ran for a third term in 2017. During July 2015, both houses of Parliament voted in favor of altering the constitution so that Kagame could remain a presidential candidate. After conducting consultations with citizens in all 416 sectors of Rwanda, the government claimed only 10 Rwandans opposed the constitutional amendment (News 24, 2015). Shortly after this report was submitted to Parliament in August 2015, a constitutional amendment was approved. These topics—problems with the officially sanctioned narrative of the genocide, limitations on political dissent and freedom of expression, and the power of Kagame and the RPF—emerged in conversations with members of the Rwandan diaspora, individuals who, despite their distance, keep a close eye on what has been unfolding in Rwanda since Kagame assumed power.

## The Rwandan Diaspora and Residual Effects

Both during and following the genocide, a large number of Rwandans fled the country, establishing numerous diaspora throughout the world, including in North America. According to the United Nations Office High Commissioner for Refugees, in 2014 there were approximately 5,600–7,700 Rwandans living in Canada and around 7,000 living in the United States, making the Rwandan diaspora in North America modest, yet still substantial in size. According to extant literature, issues of ethnicity and politics within Rwanda often have a residual effect on issues of ethnicity and politics experienced

by the diaspora outside of Rwanda (Haider, 2014). Because of the close connection to home and the level of nationalism, many members of the Rwanda diaspora believe that what occurs in Rwanda has a residual effect, including fears (whether imagined or real) associated with speaking out about the government. Members of the diaspora are well aware of what is going on in Rwanda regarding the elimination of political opposition and independent media, and this awareness does, in fact, affect them.

Anjan Sundaram (2016), for instance, demonstrates how the Rwandan government conducts surveillance on members of the diaspora in his book *Bad News: Last Journalists in a Dictatorship*. Sundaram reports on Moses, a Rwandan journalist, who was pursued by the government for his “critical reporting”:

He was to be deployed against his family, some of whom had fled the country and were intellectuals in the Rwandan communities in Europe and America. His task would be to befriend these aunts, uncles, cousins and nephews, and report on them to the governmental services. It was possible that the authorities had caught on to his activities at our program. Sending dissidents for work abroad was a way to neutralize them. The same had happened to General Kayumba, who had been made the ambassador to India. But here they were inflicting a double punishment on Moses by asking him to turn on those who trusted him. (p. 121)

Indeed, diaspora members are impacted by post-genocide relations in Rwanda to the extent that many have family remaining in the country. Additionally, however, diaspora members are further impacted by post-genocide relations in Rwanda because the Rwandan government takes extreme care to maintain a watchful eye on those who have left, typically in the form of perceived or actual monitoring. Marijnen (2015) demonstrates how the presence of the Rwandan government in Brussels negatively affects diaspora members living there. While Marijnen (2015ola) suggests that those in the diaspora have more freedom to speak, she argues that speaking out can come with very real consequences, including:

A trigger response from the RPF, usually in the form of the local embassy or prominent exiles loyal to the regime. Hence, contentious Rwandan politics most often occurs beyond the territorial

boundaries of Rwanda itself, especially on-line and in the social media. (pp. 287–288)

According to Marijen, the Rwandan government does not see the diaspora as an independent body that exists separate from Rwanda, but rather sees it as an extremity of Rwanda that poses an “existential threat to its hegemonic project” (p. 292). To this end, Turner (2013) suggests that the Rwandan diaspora is separated into three categories by the state: members who support the works of the Kagame administration, those who remain skeptical and may be converted, and those who remain hostile toward the government and are not capable of “rehabilitation.”

However, Marijnen (2015) outlines a more specific categorization of the diaspora by the state as dictated by the Rwandan Diaspora Policy. The first group includes those who fled Rwanda between 1959 and 1994 due to violence and hostility. This group is subdivided into two groups, which are designated both positive and negative. The “negative” group includes those who left Rwandan during 1959–1994 and are considered “subversive” due to spreading genocidal ideology or encouraging diaspora members to be critical of the Rwandan government. The “positive” group includes descendants of refugees who fled Rwanda in 1959 and are frequently cited as “victims.” They are defined by the Diaspora Policy as offspring of those who left Rwanda for economical or other educational purposes—essentially, those that constitute the “brain drain” of Rwanda (Nmaemeka, 2007). Members of this group are highly sought after by the Rwandan government, as they are seen as being well positioned to contribute financially toward the rebuilding of the country. The third and final group defined by the Diaspora Policy includes descendants of refugees and Rwandans that are born to foreigners. Marijnen (2015) notes that the Rwandan Diaspora Policy publicly acknowledges that there is a lack of unity and community cohesion among members of the diaspora, but she attributes this to false information and the spreading of genocide ideology.

Marijnen (2015) further highlights that the lack of social cohesion among the diaspora as partially the result of ethnic boundaries. However, she suggests that the current dominant public boundary within the diaspora is political. They divide themselves often into “pro-Kagame,” “anti-Kagame,” and “those that do not care” sets of

groups (p. 297). Not surprisingly, ethnic and political boundaries tend to be blurred. Marijnen found that while individuals among the diaspora may work and live near those of different Rwandan ethnicities, there still existed a deep level of mistrust, running congruently along ethnic and political lines. While they may coexist peacefully, they are not ready to create meaningful relationships among one another.

Indeed, preliminary research shows that members of the Rwandan diaspora do not feel justice and reconciliation have been achieved either for them or for those remaining in Rwanda, that reconciliation is typically superficial at best, with very few meaningful relationships created among different ethnicities, and that as these issues continue to exist among those in Rwanda, they have a residual effect on those in the diaspora. More specifically, if justice and reconciliation have not occurred in Rwanda, diaspora members seem to believe that justice and reconciliation have not occurred for them (Marson, 2016).

## Methods

As we aim to describe the lived experience and perceptions of members of the Rwandan diaspora, phenomenology served as our methodological and conceptual guide. In short, phenomenology seeks to analyze the subjective experience as it is understood, perceived, and judged by the subject of inquiry (Sokolowski, 2000). As a result, phenomenological studies are not concerned with representativeness of the sample; rather, they are concerned with providing rich, analytic description of individuals' perception of reality. The phenomenological approach was necessary in this study because the original research questions aimed to understand: (1) how members of the diaspora attempt to facilitate justice and reconciliation among one another; and (2) diaspora members' perception of what justice and reconciliation look and feel like. Put simply, we were not interested in determining if diaspora members had reached a consensus on whether justice and reconciliation had or had not occurred. What we found important was the extent to which individual diaspora members *felt* that justice and reconciliation had been achieved among one another. Phenomenology created space for acknowledging differing opinions on the nature of justice and

reconciliation--concepts which are rather abstract and are shaped by one's subjective experience.

To provide rich and analytic descriptions of individuals' perception of reality, researchers who utilize phenomenology often interview participants multiple times, gathering large amounts of data on a single individual (Morse, 2000). For this reason, phenomenological studies often work with smaller sample sizes in comparison to other qualitative projects (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In total, eight members of the Rwandan diaspora were interviewed for this study. Six of the eight participants were interviewed twice, resulting in 20–25 hours of interviewing. Morse recommends anywhere from six to ten participants for projects utilizing phenomenology (Morse, 2000).

Telephone and face-to-face interviews were conducted with eight members of the Rwandan diaspora in a variety of locations in the United States and Canada between May 2015 and March 2016. Participants were identified via snowball sampling and interviews were semi-structured in nature. Three participants identified as female and five as male. Seven participants were Tutsi and one was Hutu. Three participants were citizens or permanent residents of Canada and five were citizens/residents of the United States. Participants varied in age from 32 years to 60 years. It is important to note that four of the eight participants worked for the Rwandan government and/or judiciary prior to their relocation. Within the qualitative framework, the life-story method of interviewing was utilized for both in-person and telephone interviews.

Interview questions were aimed at understanding interviewees' perceptions of the gacaca system and whether they felt justice and reconciliation had been achieved (both in the diaspora and in Rwanda). More specifically, the semi-structured interviews asked questions about participants' lives in Rwanda and their experiences during the genocide. Participants were also asked about their perception of ethnic relations in Rwanda (before, during, and after the 1994 genocide). While the original research questions were focused on understanding participants' perceptions of the efficacy of gacaca courts, their feelings about gacaca were secondary to their concerns about the present-day political climate in Rwanda. As a result, transcripts were coded for discussions of justice, reconciliation, and gacaca, as well as President Kagame, the Rwandan government,

monitoring by the Rwandan government, and the “culture of silence” identified by participants.

Phenomenological methodologies allowed us to pursue unexpected themes that emerged from interviews with diaspora members. Thus, although justice and reconciliation were the primary focus of the study, when political climate and the culture of silence emerged in conversations with interviewees, the primary focus of the study shifted to reflect their subjective experiences. The interviews revealed a sincere belief that speaking out negatively against Kagame can have very real consequences for Rwandans, both those in Rwanda and those abroad. Absolute proof of this type of monitoring is unattainable. However, what is important in this study is that participants believe this to be real.

## Findings

Findings consist heavily of direct quotations from participants, as we were best able to preserve the authenticity of the participants’ standpoints and perspectives by using their exact words. Discussion of these topics was often complex and layered with additional commentary. Each participant was provided a pseudonym to assure anonymity.

When this research began, we expected that interviews would center exclusively on discussions of justice and reconciliation. However, participants were unable to truly discuss justice and reconciliation without addressing the two issues that appear to impede the process of both: Rwandan politics and how such politics have created residual ethnic contention. Previous research supports the claim that issues of ethnicity and politics within Rwanda often have a residual effect on issues of ethnicity and politics experienced by the diaspora outside of Rwanda (Haider, 2014; Mohamoud, 2005; Owen, 2009). As such, interviews focused heavily on the particular issue of Rwandan politics and its effect on the diaspora. Three prominent themes emerged: the political culture of silence; how the diaspora is silenced through monitoring; and the single narrative of victimhood perpetuated following the genocide.

## Culture of Silence

All eight participants agreed that the Rwandan government is an authoritarian government, where freedom of speech was stifled. Participants varied in the degrees of this belief, as well as in their opinions about the utility of it. For example, while most respondents felt that President Kagame and the administration were authoritarian, Jean-Paul and Therese offered a justification as to why this approach, to some extent, is understandable following a mass atrocity. Jean-Paul explained:

After the genocide, the way Kagame leads made sense in my mind. I understand him releasing hundreds of perpetrators and killing his opponents. I could understand him putting limits on the freedom of expression because the experience was very recent. It made sense to limit the freedom of expression, but now we are two decades after the genocide. Now is the time to build something that is sustainable and what is sustainable is social creation of strong institutions. True reconciliation, true history about what happened in Rwanda. Human rights is a vicious cycle. You kill me or you chase me out because I criticize you. Kagame is killing people because some are criticizing him.

For Jean-Paul, this approach can be justified in the early years following the genocide. At this point, however, he sees it as not “sustainable” and worries it is creating a “vicious cycle.”

Like Jean-Paul, Therese justified the authoritarian actions of the government. Therese was 9 years old during the genocide. Her parents and siblings were killed shortly after the genocide began. Shortly after, in 1996, she was granted asylum and moved to the United States, yet she has some family who remain in Rwanda. Whereas Jean-Paul cannot excuse the continued actions of the RPF-led government so many years after the genocide, Therese appeared to be more understanding:

People even going to the same park or the same church saying “hi”, that is a miracle. I think part of that is a result of having that strong government that doesn’t allow certain things to take place, so I do think that from the beginning there was a need for a strong government and a leadership that was trying to curve



everyone's hostile feelings. People feel that some of that strong type of leadership needs to relax and people need to start talking about their grievances. Some of the criticism I do agree with, honestly. But sometimes I feel like they do not take in the context and the reality on the ground. They say the government is not democratic and certainly there is a need for more political space. But it is something that needs to be managed and it needs to take place slowly in the right space because it is something people are just not ready for.

Therese worries that without the "strong type of leadership" that currently exists, it would be impossible to "curve everyone's hostile feelings."

Pierre is another participant who feels that a certain degree of monitoring and control is necessary. Pierre was 39 years of age when the genocide occurred. He and his wife survived, but his parents and in-laws did not. He worked as a minister and a teacher in Kigali until he relocated to the United States in 2003. Of all participants, Pierre was the most supportive of President Kagame and the tactics utilized by the government. Pierre agreed that there was extensive control by the government, but justified such actions, as he felt Rwandans were "difficult" to govern. Pierre explained much of President Kagame's governing style as a result of his life experiences:

If we had a president with a civilian background, he would take things differently but beginning where he (Kagame) begun, his background makes him who he is. The military wants their subject to do according to what the officers say so that is the type of leadership that is evolving there. A lot of it is positive; at least on the whole there has been security. However, at one point people fear that there is too much policing [laughs]. So you don't know.

Even with justifications from participants such as Jean-Paul, Pierre, and Therese, all respondents spoke of the culture of silence among those in Rwanda and how Rwandans tend to be hesitant to speak out publicly about any potentially divisive topics. This may be attributed to the non-political cultural norm in Rwanda that discourages citizens from speaking about sensitive or political topics, something participants referred to throughout our conversations



with them. However, interviews suggest that the cultural norm is highly exacerbated by the current administration.

In addition, participants typically spoke of Rwandan politics and what is happening in Rwanda first, and then spoke of how such issues affect and exist among the diaspora. Participants, to varying degrees, discussed the authoritarian nature of the current Rwandan government (most notably, President Kagame). Participants suggested that this authoritarian government had fostered a culture of silence among those in Rwanda and residually among the diaspora. In other words, participants suggested that the majority of Rwandans, both in Rwanda and the diaspora, are afraid to speak honestly and publicly about anything political and politically divisive (re: justice and reconciliation), for fear that the Rwandan government may harm them or their families. This culture of silence also included discussion of monitoring among the diaspora, as well as a single narrative that exists both in Rwanda and among the diaspora.

Paul, a once prominent legal figure in Rwanda, was the first participant interviewed for this study. He clearly discussed the negative perceptions of the current Rwandan administration among the diaspora. When discussing what life may be like in Rwanda currently, he stated:

The problem is not among Hutu and Tutsi. The problem is under the dictatorship that is there. The Hutu and Tutsi are suffering together. President Kagame's problem is that he likes to maintain his power.

Paul suggested that the ultimate goal of the Kagame administration was not to provide justice for Rwandans, but to exert political power by ensuring citizens are afraid to speak. As indicated in the quotation above, Paul believed that this affects both Hutu and Tutsi negatively. While Paul acknowledged problems with ethnicity, he felt that the real problem lies in the Rwandan government, not among the continued (yet informal) separation by ethnicity.

Another participant, Marc, worked closely with President Kagame for six years and ultimately left Rwanda because he became vocal against the government and their policies. Because of his outspokenness, Marc feared for his life and fled first to South Africa

and then to Canada. When discussing fear and silence in Rwanda and the current administration, he stated:

One of the things with this regime is that it is very hard-core. The (government) threatens, it is very careful about spreading fear. There is a reason why it is successful—part of it explains why there was genocide. It was genocide of neighbour against neighbour—the character of Rwandan people is that you obey. So when you are ordered, you do and you do not question.

Jean-Paul, a former attorney in Rwanda who worked closely with gacaca courts, also spoke to the culture of silence among those in Rwanda. Because of the legal ramifications of talking publicly about ethnic identity, he suggested there is still deep suspicion among Hutu and Tutsi, but few speak of it. Contrary to Paul, who felt that there is no palpable conflict among Hutu and Tutsi, Jean-Paul believed that this forced silence creates more animosity among ethnic groups, creating a “tinderbox” of anger.

Joseph, in agreement with Paul’s perception, went into detail regarding politics in Rwanda. For most of his adult life, Joseph worked in governmental positions in Rwanda prior to his relocation to Canada. This included a high-ranking economic position that resulted in his assignment to the Office of the President. He suggested that the culture of silence created a distinct, yet inaccurate, portrait of Rwanda to the world:

I’ll tell you this. Everyone knows who stays in Rwanda. Sometimes we choose to stay silent. You may see the outer picture, but it’s not the country that you actually see the way it is. The inside of the country, what goes on in the leadership, is not what people know about Rwanda. You may know some things. It does not reflect reality.

Joseph elaborated by discussing the involvement of the government in his occupation. He stated that there were times during his tenure with the Office of the President that the administration wanted to push a particular developmental goal:

It is going to be a problem for you if you disagree. You are going to be told to say and write certain things. Then, that narrative is

what goes out in the world. The truth is the country does have a lot of things happening. People have gained a new sense of life. If you want to have peace in Rwanda, make sure you don't involve yourself in politics. You don't criticize the government, you do whatever you are told to do and don't question that or you are going to have things happen to you.

Joseph has family remaining in Rwanda with whom he communicates frequently. He stated the fear that he has of the administration did not dissipate when he left Rwanda, as there are ramifications for those who remain if someone they know well (e.g., family member, close friend) speaks out against the government:

You cannot discuss politics at all. You can discuss family, how you are doing, but you cannot mention politics. It has happened to one of my sisters-in-law. We talked about political things and then she mentioned to me that they can't say anything and they have to watch what they say. We ended our conversation and the following day she was picked up and taken to the police. Our conversation had been tapped and she was asked to elaborate more on everything she discussed with me. They took her to jail for one month and three weeks.

For Joseph, the arrest and incarceration of his sister-in-law confirmed his suspicion that the culture of silence would be enforced by the Rwandan government.

Marc's narrative was similar to Joseph's. He felt that his family members who remained in Rwanda were unable to speak with him because of his vocal opposition to the Kagame administration. For Marc's family, there existed a belief that there would be consequences should they engage with him:

I had a sister here in Canada who would not even talk to me because of the regime there. About three months ago I lost my mother in Rwanda but they can't talk to me and I can't talk to them—we can't even talk. That's how it is.

In this quote, Marc indicates that the culture of silence within Rwanda has residual effects on those living in the diaspora. Indeed, although both Marc and his sister reside in the diaspora, neither

feel comfortable conversing with one another because of his history of voicing dissent.

Monique, a participant who not only lived through the genocide but also witnessed the execution of her father and brothers, relocated to the United States in 2001. Throughout her interview she discussed the fear members of the diaspora—as well as those in Rwanda—experienced when speaking to one another via telephone. She outlined her general belief about this issue, as well as her own experience when calling her mother. She noted that it was not simply concern regarding the monitoring of phone calls by authorities—she also feared informal surveillance by regular citizens who might overhear a conversation:

I know that this happens. People are still cautious when talking on the phone. There are people who can't bring up anything and that's just a normal thing. Even if it's not about criticizing the government, they are worried...they don't want to discuss certain things on the phone.

For instance, for my mom and my sister...I know there are things that I can't bring up or I just don't talk about. I have never brought up anything political. We know that we cannot talk on the phone about these things. You don't bring it up if you don't want anyone to hear because you don't know what can be taken out of context. You don't want anything to be taken out of context.

Monique's perception that the culture of silence will be enforced is so strong that she has become wary of any speech that could be "taken out of context."

When asked his thoughts on why people were so afraid of the Kagame regime and the RPF-led government, Jean-Paul explained:

They are afraid of the consequences or the repercussions of their (gacaca) statements. They are afraid of the government. Everything is monitored from the top level of the government to the lowest level of administration. Everything is monitored and people have to be silent.

The quote above echoes sentiments expressed by both Joseph and Paul. While Jean-Paul is speaking specifically about gacaca, his

supports the general theme that the administration may have silenced Rwandans, both during and after gacaca proceedings. Jean-Paul also worked with researchers in attempts to understand the effectiveness of gacaca and how Rwandans felt about the process:

They are not free to speak about anything. I and other researchers went to deep villages in Rwanda and ask people what they think about gacaca. Everyone from Ruhengeri to Butare speak the same language, "Gacaca is good, and everything is good! We thank the president Kagame, we thank our leaders." That was the same language. Very few people tell you, "Okay, if you want me to tell you what I believe, you should grant me anonymity..." Very few speak their mind, very few because of the regime in place and because there is still suspicion.

The hesitancy among Rwandans to "speak their mind" extended to civic engagement. Later in the interview, Jean-Paul explained that during his time volunteering as a commissioner for the 2003 election, there was fear among citizens that their ballots were not confidential. According to Jean-Paul, voters worried about what might happen to them if they did not vote for President Kagame. From a phenomenological standpoint, it is not important whether or not citizens' votes were actually being tracked and monitored by the RPF; the perception of some that this *could* happen was enough to instill fear. Marie felt similarly.

Marie was 6 years old during the Rwandan genocide. Her father worked as a government official and was killed shortly after the genocide began. She relocated with her family, first to Belgium and then to the United States. Marie supported statements made by other participants, suggesting that the Rwandan government has created a culture of silence among Rwandans in an attempt to instill a sense of fear:

A lot of people silence themselves because we are afraid of the consequence of what may happen. Once the government was able to establish a sense of fear it makes you think that they are watching us even though they can't watch everyone all the time. I was reading a few months ago that, after the genocide it takes about five generations to reconstruct a stable society, to reconcile with what happened. We are starting the second generation in Rwanda

and things are not getting better. We distrust each other. Even among Hutus we don't trust each other because of the silence culture. Among Hutus and Tutsis, it's even worse.

Although Marie realizes that it is impossible for the Rwandan government to surveil all members of the diaspora at all times, the fear is enough to create a culture of silence and sow distrust, even among the diaspora.

Similar to Marie, Monique stated that she believed that people were afraid to speak publicly about certain issues for fear of retribution by the government. On the other hand, she is different from Marie in that she views the diaspora as being more "open" in terms of expressing their dissent than those who remain in Rwanda:

I think that to some extent, people are afraid to talk. Normally we don't talk about things very much, about the things that may put you into trouble. In Rwanda people have managed to find a way to see that there are things you can't talk about and just leave it alone. We are opening up here (diaspora) more than we are in Rwanda.. For survivors in Rwanda, they feel like the only way to live peacefully is just to go along with what is going on in the country, so just forget about the stuff. Because I'm here, I'm not sure 100% if people disappear because of what they have said and so forth. For survivors, I know there are some of them that have been killed coming from gacaca courts and nobody has followed up about these survivors getting killed and the disappearance. I know for some survivors after the gacaca court were getting killed. But, unfortunately there are things that I hear but I am not sure 100%.

Monique's perception that the diaspora is willing to "[open] up more" may be influenced by her skepticism regarding the veracity of the stories she hears about what is going on in Rwanda.

The authoritarian nature of the Kagame administration is known throughout academe, as are its implications on justice and reconciliation in Rwanda (Clark, 2014; Hintjens, 2008; Ryentjens, 2011). Rwandans appear to tell two stories—one that has political approval and state sponsorship, and one that they speak of while looking over their shoulders. It is therefore difficult to make definitive claims regarding what is—or is not—occurring in Rwanda.

However, participants' statements, as outlined above, suggest that what is occurring in Rwanda, whether real or imagined, impacts the lives of diaspora members. Importantly, six out of eight participants spent the majority of their lives in Rwanda and had distinct experiences regarding the political climate within the country. Because of the deep connection with their home country, including previous residency, members of the diaspora are keenly aware of what occurs in Rwanda and have very particular opinions and beliefs regarding these events (Marijnen, 2015).

### *Promoting Silence through Monitoring*

As some of the quotes above indicate, the culture of silence appears to transcend the physical location of Rwanda and spills over into the diaspora in the United States and Canada. For this reason, even securing interviews for this research proved difficult. Members of the diaspora were afraid to speak, believing that their statements would become public knowledge and/or that the Rwandan government would find out. These fears appeared to be partially a result of the perceived level of monitoring among the diaspora, which respondents felt could have very real consequences for them, as well as for their family members remaining in Rwanda. When discussing this with Paul, he stated:

I know it's not easy (finding participants) because they don't know who the person is and they don't know what the person is going to do with their testimony. People are sort of scared of the government so it is not easy to get many people to talk.

Marc was not surprised by the difficulty in securing participants and stated, "It's because they are afraid, so I'm actually surprised you were able to find anybody (to talk with)." Marc believed that even among the diaspora, Rwandans were afraid to speak publicly about anything that might be considered negative against President Kagame. Marc stated that there is a very real belief among the diaspora that what they say publicly might reach the ears of the Rwandan administration.

When discussing the fear among the diaspora of President Kagame, Joseph stated:

The only reason I am trusting you right now is because I know that you are handling this like a professional, but I have to be cautious when discussing this with fellow Rwandans who I don't trust. We know how our government works; they have agents everywhere.

Joseph stated he believed the diaspora in Canada was actually monitored by the Rwandan government. He reported being approached by the government to monitor the diaspora when he moved to Canada. Joseph was unwilling to do so, but many others were:

I have friends that are watched by police in hiding positions. There are officers all around. For example, if you say something about the government and the person whom you disclosed to texts an intelligence officer, they take it back to the government. If you happen to go back to Rwanda, this is how you may not come back. They will arrest you and keep you there. (Because of this), they (the diaspora) may not disclose anything about their government for fear of repercussions. It may come to bite them when they go to Rwanda.

Marie also acknowledged the monitoring of the diaspora. When discussing the fear of monitoring among the diaspora, she shared a salient example from her personal experience as a diaspora member.

When Marie first arrived in the United States, she attempted to participate in diaspora-based activities. She noticed that most Rwandans in her area were Tutsi, and she tried to create activities that encouraged Hutu to participate as well:

First, I got some emails...threatening emails from people who worked at the embassy. I went to a conference and someone came and he pretty much—he kind of pushed me around in front of everybody saying how I was promoting genocide ideology myself. I was followed a couple times and I tried to put together a conference about the policy situation in Rwanda. I wanted to invite a couple scholars on Rwanda. But among the scholars of Rwandan government they are not approved. They are pretty much black-listed. That also got me into trouble.



She continued:

I had a class with someone who works at the embassy. At one point we were supposed to present and he brought a couple people from the embassy with him. They kind of made me understand that I better not say anything that wasn't appropriate for our people.

Out of all eight participants, it appeared that Marc had the most intense belief regarding the monitoring of the diaspora. This is largely a result of his former occupational ties with the Rwandan government, as well as his outspoken nature about political topics. Marc was followed and monitored in South Africa, and he believes that this action of the Rwandan government continued when he relocated to Canada:

I first experienced that in South Africa. That is why I left, because I could no longer sleep in my own house because of fear. So, of course I'm aware of what happens. I cannot bear to sit at an event with Rwandans I don't know—they wouldn't have me anyway because I am an 'enemy of the state,' as they call it.

Additionally, Marie's family in Belgium were deeply afraid that she may be hurt by those working for President Kagame in the United States. They were most afraid that her research would make her a target:

It's actually one of the main concerns I, and my family, had when I was writing and talking about Rwandan politics. They were saying, 'Make sure we know where you are and where you are going. Have someone, and a faculty member, with your emergency contact information.' They were right, as I was getting phone calls and letters when I was doing my research. I'm away from Rwanda and I'm still young. I haven't made any remarkable contributions but I still get threatening letters from people who were trying to influence me.

Marie felt that these phone calls were a direct result of her vocal opposition to the Kagame administration, which resulted from her academic research on the Rwandan diaspora in Belgium. She did not disclose the specific content of these phone calls or emails.

When Monique discussed the possibility of diaspora members being monitored, she agreed that it happens, but that it depends on where someone is and what they speak about. While acknowledging the possibility of monitoring, she also said that she hoped that this would change, as people needed to speak openly about their feelings:

I think there are people who are followed, but it depends on where you are. There are people who are very cautious. It depends on who you are talking to, because there are times when you can say things, but you don't know who else is there. I know that happens to some people. It has happened to people who have left Rwanda. I used to worry about what I say. I don't talk politics. I talk about women's issues. I care about those kinds of things. In the private places or in conversation, you have to be able to open up about certain things and tell people what you feel. Sometimes I feel like it's very scary. But sometimes it will be helpful for you to hear perspective from different people and if it is taken in a good way it can help. I hope that will change. We will see what happens.

Monique also discussed that this fear leads to Rwandans not being interested in speaking with researchers. She informed me that it was very rare for Rwandans to be willing to speak out about potentially political and divisive topics, and that no one would speak without guaranteed confidentiality.

Joseph and Marc each discussed something very specific about the monitoring of both those who remained in Rwanda and those who relocated to Canada. There appears to be a very precise monitoring form utilized in Rwanda that may also be utilized in the diaspora. Joseph elaborated on how this system appears:

Rwanda's administration system, here is how monitoring works. For example, every ten houses must have a RPF leader. One individual is in charge of those ten houses and communicates to the government what is going on there. If the President is in the area or something is happening, the leader must make sure that all the ten people are there.

Marc discussed this “10 house system” as well, but suggested that it is not just applied in Rwanda, but is also utilized among the diaspora:

Do you know how the system works in Rwanda? The smallest unit there is the one in charge of ten houses. It means that every village, every block, is organized as a unit of government so if anything happens in those ten houses it is reported. So you have the smallest ten houses which are cells, then provinces, then districts, and all of those are spy levels. It is how the government tracks everyone's house. It's here (in the diaspora) too. Every grouping has a mechanism of reporting. The next thing you know, if you move to another house, the ambassador calls the ambassador in Rwanda and then he tells Kagame.

Jean-Paul discussed the monitoring that occurs in Rwanda. However, he was less certain that this happens among the diaspora. Interestingly, his narrative regarding monitoring also touches on lack of reconciliation among the diaspora, precisely *because* diaspora-based organizations may be seen as instruments of the Kagame administration:

I do not have any facts about that (monitoring in the diaspora). I am aware though that few people participate in Rwandan diaspora associations here (the United States) and in Europe because they mistrust those associations. Those who are believed to be pro-RPF are the only ones that participate. This is why it's rare to see strong campaigns that bring together Rwandan diaspora living here, in Canada, and in Europe. There is a big suspicion and mistrust between Rwandans in the diaspora based primarily on the past history of genocide and political support or opposition of the current government. The formal Rwandan diaspora associations were established by the Rwandan embassies. Those who are active in those associations often get involved as a way of targeting political positions in the government or any other job.

Neither Pierre nor Therese talked about monitoring among the diaspora. This finding was not entirely surprising, as they appeared to be the most supportive (or at least expressed neutrality) of President Kagame and the RPF government. With both participants, this topic was broached, and both quickly replied that they did not want to discuss this type of political topic.

When asking respondents *why* they felt the Rwandan government worked so hard to create fear and silence among those in Rwanda as well as the diaspora, the answers were varied. Some suggested that it was a necessity to ensure that genocidal ideology did not occur. Numerous participants suggested that it was done so that President Kagame could maintain his stranglehold of political power. Others suggested that the culture of fear was used to essentially create one approved post-genocidal narrative—a narrative that paints all Hutu as perpetrators and all Tutsi as survivors.

### Single Narrative

Legally, the elimination of ethnic categories has been utilized as a form of social reconstruction following the genocide (Hintjens, 2008). Rwandans are no longer allowed to publicly identify as Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. This specific type of identification is considered divisive under Rwandan law, and penalties for such public identification can result in imprisonment. However, a new form of labelling exists in Rwanda. Instead of identifying oneself by ethnicity, Rwandans now are classified as “perpetrator” or “survivor.”

However, it appears that it is a commonly held assumption among both those in Rwanda and those in the diaspora that Hutu are categorized as perpetrators/offenders and Tutsi are categorized as survivors. This particular label appears to be a way to create a single, government-approved narrative about who did what during the genocide. Five participants spoke specifically of a single narrative.

Marie was perhaps the most vocal about the single narrative created by the administration, likely because she identifies as an ethnic Hutu. Moreover, her family died as a direct result of their moderate political ideology and their refusal to commit genocidal acts:

The Hutus disappeared out of the genocide and it just became Tutsi. You are like, what happened to all the moderate Hutu who actually died saving Tutsi? They had family members who should be recognized. Looking at my family, the oldest member of my family is only 39 years old. He’s the oldest member and I’m like, so what happened to the rest of them? What can’t I speak publicly that they were victims? That’s something I’ve been struggling with for so long, because the issue is saying that only the

minority group were victims and everyone else wasn't a victim. They (politicians, President Kagame specifically) are sending a message. They are not looking for justice and reconciliation; what they are looking for is approval of their narrative itself. They are not trying to bring people back together.

Joseph, a Tutsi, also suggested a single narrative exists in Rwanda. It was audibly clear how angry it made him that only Tutsi were allowed to be survivors and Hutu perpetrators, particularly because he had Tutsi family members that killed Hutu. He provided a particular example:

I am going to give you an example, my own brothers. I know that my cousin's brother went to the place where our grandfather and my uncle's wife and six kids were killed. They decided to kill every Hutu that was in that area as revenge. These were Hutu that were killed and innocent people. I ask them sometimes why they killed these people and they ask me why they killed *our* people. There are so many incidents like that, so this single narrative is just a joke.

Jean-Paul also discussed the inaccuracy of the single narrative, based specifically on the number of those who died during the genocide.

When we talk about a million people killed in Rwanda, we didn't have a million Tutsi in Rwanda! That means the numbers that are accumulating like that are also the bodies of Hutu. Some of us have weaknesses and have hid bodies of the Hutus being killed and buried in masses because the UN was going to come and investigate the reported murder—the narrative makes it worse.

Marc outlined a single narrative that exists both in Rwanda and in the diaspora and hinders reconciliation in both locations. He suggested that Hutu are essentially forced to ask for forgiveness, even if they did not participate in the genocide:

Reconciliation has not happened because Kagame has divided us—it's confusing because on one hand they say 'we are Rwandans!' On the other, he has told the Hutu to ask for forgiveness. There is a program in Rwanda that asks Hutu to denounce what

they did and ask for forgiveness which assumes all Hutu are perpetrators, even children—which is contradictory.

Paul outlined a single narrative, but did so in a somewhat indirect manner. He spoke of his occupation and how as a Chief Judge he was asked to render judgment on a variety of cases. Part of the reason that Paul left Rwanda was that he felt the government wanted him to disperse judgment on one type of offender, Hutu. Paul spoke frequently of the difficulty he had being an officer of the law and not technically being permitted to hold certain Tutsi or RPF members accountable for their crimes. Furthermore, he suggested that those with political and economic connections to the RPF were not held accountable for their crimes. For Paul, this violated his moral and ethical standards.

This narrative has been successfully incorporated into society, as evidenced by respondents' statements and current Rwandan laws. Five respondents spoke of the single narrative that exists in Rwanda, and suggested that this type of narrative hinders attempts at justice and reconciliation among those in Rwanda. Again, it appears the single narrative that exists in Rwanda has a residual effect on the diaspora. All respondents reported first that justice and reconciliation have not fully occurred in Rwanda, due to the imposition of a single narrative that transcends the borders of Rwanda. The presence of this narrative created silence, and because of this silence, Rwandans are not free to truly express their feelings regarding the genocide or discuss how it affected them.

## Summary and Discussion

All eight participants discussed, in varying levels of detail, current Rwandan politics and more specifically, the culture of silence they create. Seven out of eight participants spoke of personal experiences they, or their family members, had that supported such claims. All eight participants stated that President Kagame and the RPF-led administration governed Rwanda in an authoritarian fashion, which severely limited freedom of speech. This belief that the Rwandan government has a stranglehold on freedom of speech, and passes laws with severe consequences for ambiguous "divisive" speech and action, is supported by both academic literature

and non-governmental publications (Amnesty International, 2010; Beswick, 2010; Vandeginste, 2014). Participants, however, varied in their beliefs regarding the appropriateness of such actions.

Respondents had conflicted opinions of President Kagame. While acknowledging the positive economic and infrastructure changes the Kagame administration has achieved, participants were also well versed in the authoritarian nature of his administration. Six participants outlined very strong feelings about the Rwandan government and its control and believed that this severely hindered attempts at justice and reconciliation for those in Rwanda. For these participants, the lack of honest public discourse combined with a fear of the government made issues associated with ethnicity worse and created a culture where Rwandans, both in country and in the diaspora, were afraid to speak publicly about a variety of topics.

The culture of silence appears to have a residual effect on the diaspora, most notably through the perception that it is monitored by Rwandan government officials, or by Rwandans who will report back. Participants suggest that this culture creates a sense of silence and fear among them, understanding that public statements may have consequences for them and for their families remaining in Rwanda.

Regarding participants' belief that their movements in the diaspora were being monitored by the RPF, Reyntjens (2011) and Hintjens (2008) suggest that if monitoring does exist, it is probably directed at those members of the diaspora who are considered political, divisive, or dissenters. Reyntjens (2011) argued that some are more likely to be monitored than others, particularly those who are considered dangerous, usually by participation in political activism, previous governmental work in Rwanda, or level of intimacy (inside knowledge) with the Rwandan government. Based on previous employment and current activities, it is likely that five participants would be considered dissenters.

Because the topic of "monitoring" was unexpected, the first author spent considerable time discussing with participants why they felt it happened. More specifically, the first author explored why they felt President Kagame ruled so authoritatively and how this control extended to the diaspora. Responses varied, with no real consensus among participants. However, one general theme appeared that was not anticipated—the single narrative. Five participants spoke of this,



indicating that they believed the push to impart and reinforce this narrative was a large driver of the tactics of the Rwandan government.

It is known that many Hutu died during the genocide as a result of their moderate political stance and for their attempts to rescue and protect Tutsi. However, the five participants made clear that this was in violation with the national narrative that President Kagame has created around the genocide. While the Rwandan government now professes that ethnicity and ethnic differences do not exist, with public ethnic identification being illegal, a new labelling system has replaced it. This system indicates quite clearly that only Tutsi may be considered as survivors of the genocide and Hutu are named as perpetrators. To be clear, by highlighting participants' perceptions that the RPF does not allow for a multiplicity of experiences concerning the 1994 genocide we are not suggesting a "double genocide" took place in Rwanda—one against the Tutsi minority in 1994 and a second against the Hutus. Indeed, such claims have been made and have been found to lack empirical support (Strauss, 2019). Similar to Strauss—and in line with the perceptions of our participants—we endeavor to draw attention to the limitations of reductionist and binary thinking about the violence in Rwanda.

Political silence exists in Rwanda, and to a lesser extent among the diaspora. There is a layer of "opaqueness" that exists, which impedes our understanding of the situation. While speech in the diaspora is stifled, it appears that more honest conversations can exist there than in Rwanda. Thus, understanding the diaspora may help us more clearly understand what may be occurring in Rwanda.

Future research on diaspora populations should consider the cyclical nature of the relationship between the home country and the diaspora. It is important to acknowledge not only how political issues occurring in home countries affect their diaspora populations, but how diaspora populations can also influence and affect home countries. Participants suggested that there is an underlying political narrative which exists among the diaspora. It may be that, as suggested by participants, there are also issues of divisiveness within ethnicities as they begin to take "pro-Kagame" and "anti-government" stances. Future research may address this issue more specifically, focusing on political beliefs of participants. These beliefs may work as an additional source of contention among the diaspora or may possibly serve in the process of unification.



## Methodological Issues/Limitations of Research

Because of methodological issues inherent in the research design, findings from this study should not be used to draw conclusions about genocide survivors or diaspora members outside of this sample. While snowball sampling was an appropriate way in which to conduct a study of this nature, it was clearly not without its issues. Snowball sampling is susceptible to selection bias, as initial gatekeepers and all participants may have entirely different experiences and notions of ethnic division and potential divisiveness compared to those who were not part of this research. Indeed, all participants were well-educated men and women, and four of them worked within the judiciary or in high level positions within the government. These positions and identities ultimately impact their experiences during the 1994 genocide and, thus, their perception of events. Put simply, it is likely the experiences and perceptions of well-educated, highly-skilled Rwandans in the diaspora are very different from those who do not have the same educational or vocational backgrounds. It should be noted, however, that the majority of the participants shared similar beliefs regarding the genocide and current political climate in Rwanda, regardless of their age, ethnicity, or gender. Many Rwandans who are members of the diaspora may have similar qualifications, as these qualifications make it easier to immigrate.

Moreover, participants who agreed to participate in this study may be inherently different than those who elected not to, or those we were unable to reach. Members of the diaspora who were willing to share their stories might have completely different life-stories and ideas about justice and reconciliation than those who did not participate. We also attempted (via contact with participants and lengthy internet searches) to identify members of the alleged "extremist" diaspora. We were unable to locate any members of such diaspora groups that wished to participate in this research. Future research should attempt to document the experiences of these individuals and examine their perception of the political climate in post-genocide Rwanda. Researchers should also consider exploring whether or not the lived experiences of Rwandan diaspora members are similar to those of other populations who have been displaced by violence, such as political refugees and asylum seekers,

in general. Such an investigation would provide meaningful insight on the extent to which political dissent, the notion of a single narrative, and fear of surveillance are common among populations of people displaced by violence.

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