

Beyond Ethnic Politics and Fear: Hutu, Tutsi, and Ethnicity in Rwanda

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INTRODUCTION

Fifteen years after the small nation of Rwanda experienced one of the worst tragedies of the modern history, the core problems remain unresolved. While most people, including Great Lakes Region experts, humanitarian and human rights organizations, diplomats, intelligence services, and Great Lakes region nationals agree on the social roots of the problems, they disagree on the solutions. The agreement that ethnic politics constitute the root of the problem remains widespread. Ethnic politics have set the stage for the tragedy to happen and have continued to profoundly shape the political landscape. Several propositions to resolve the conflict have been put forward. Unfortunately, these proposed solutions appear not based on clear specific, measurable, achievable, pragmatic and time-bound objectives. Without such clearly defined objectives, the roads to durable solutions in the Great Lakes region, especially in Rwanda, may only lead nowhere. This lack of clear vision has led to the multiple invasions of the DRC by Rwanda and Uganda, the recent invasion of the DRC by Rwanda through proxy forces, and the combined military operations by the Rwandan Army, Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF) and the Congolese army, FARDC, against Congolese militias, Rwandan rebels, and Rwandan refugees. The world has been experimenting with Henry Kissinger's theory that "*If you do not know where you are going, any road will take you there*" and the Roman Empire narcissistic approach that "*all roads lead to Rome*". The result of the chaotic approach to solving the problems of the Great Lakes region has been more chaos, massive losses of life, missed economic opportunities, and making the problem even more complex.

This memorandum goes from lessons learned from my own personal tragedy and attempts to propose an approach and find solutions to reach durable peace in the Great Lakes region. The memorandum proposes to look at the ways of the past without following the roads that led to failure. As the Japanese poet Matsuo Basho said: "*Do not seek to follow in the footsteps of the men of old; seek what they sought.*" The experience of our predecessors can teach us what made them fail despite their honest vision. They sought a peaceful and prosperous

region, where ethnic groups will live harmoniously, while individuals would thrive, and the region would live in an economic integration. For that purpose, our Rwandan predecessors tried ethnic politics and failed: from the seeds of ethnic politics, Rwandans harvested unbearable suffering. It is the task for the current Rwandan leaders and the future generations to follow the legitimate aspirations of their predecessors, but track a different road: a road beyond ethnic politics and fear.

The memorandum describes the road as envisioned. The proposition in the memorandum maps four critical phases:

- Recognize the fallacies behind the denial of ethnic identities;
- Mobilize the Rwandan people for consensual democracy;
- Aim for the full democracy, where platforms of ideas will transcend ethnic identities;
- Openness to the World, beginning with good neighborhood and regional integration.

A DAY OF RECKONING

I can claim that my active interest in the Rwandan politics started on March 2, 1997. That date will remain forever engraved in my memory. In the morning of March 2, 1997 a company of Tutsi soldiers of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) army, the Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA), encircled the villages and small towns of my origin, in Jenda, Cellule Kabatezi, Sector Nkuri, Prefecture Ruhengeri, Northwestern Rwanda. They rounded up all Hutu men and young boys they could find, tied their arms in the back with sturdy ropes (also known as “Akandoya”, one of the torture methods in RPA arsenal) and led them into the mountains of Konoma, Rubare, and Runyanjya. Late that evening, women and a few men who by chance had escaped, heard heavy fusillades. When the fusillades ceased, the RPA soldiers descended down the mountains and left the villages.

During the night, the surviving men, conquering their fear, went to the place where the fusillades took place. The macabre scene lit by the moon could only be equaled by episodes from the scariest horror movie. Torn apart bodies of young boys and men, old and not old, lay in pools of blood, some with arms tied in the back by sturdy ropes that had eaten away the flesh. Unrecognizable and severed heads were smashed and lifeless bodies were riddled with bullets. Few of these surviving men, frozen by fear, had enough courage to bury some of

the bodies before the sunrise. In the following morning the RPA troops came back with trucks and led terrified Hutu porters up in the mountains to carry the bodies and load them in waiting trucks. When the RPA troops could not find some of the bodies, they went on rampage, killing more Hutu men, torturing and executing women they suspected of knowing where the missing bodies were buried. The cleansing operations took several days. After the operations, only a few Hutu men and young boys from the villages of Jenda and the surroundings had escaped the pogrom. Several women and children, including infants, were massacred. Hutu men and young boys and women who were spared were because they either were mistaken for Tutsis or were hidden by Tutsis.

On the single day of March 2, 1997, thousands of Hutu people were systematically massacred by Rwandan Patriotic Army (RPA) troops. My close family alone lost 57 people. These are 57 brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews, nieces, uncles and aunts, and their wives, husbands or kids, who were killed by the RPA for one reason: being Hutu or suspected of being Hutu or Tutsi associated with Hutus. However, even the most brutal regime cannot annihilate an entire clan. Several more brothers, sisters, cousins, nephews, nieces, uncles, and aunts, along with their spouses or kids survived the pogrom. Some survived because they were Tutsis, or mistaken for Tutsis, others because of the flip side of the human wicked face: humanity.

This is how Human Rights Watch recounted these events in an report titled: "Rwanda: the search for Security and Human Rights Abuses, published by Human Rights Watch on April 1, 2000: *"In 1997, ex-FAR and Interahamwe who had returned from the Congo and who had strengthened their forces by recruiting inside Rwanda, conducted a major insurgency in the northwestern prefectures of Gisenyi and Ruhengeri. In suppressing this uprising, as in the first Congo war, RPA troops killed tens of thousands of unarmed civilians, a slaughter which Rwandan authorities sought to justify by their need for security."*

In that period of total darkness, a dim light shone and humanity prevailed in some cases. Some Tutsis conquered their fear and risked their lives to protect some of my surviving relatives against the murderous madness of their Tutsi brothers of the RPA. My Hutu relatives who survived that day owe their lives to these courageous and selfless Tutsis. When I contacted my surviving relatives they could not tell me the story: It was too painful to relate. It is from these Tutsis that I came to know the tragic story of what happened in my village on that fateful day of March 2, 1997.

From those tragic moments, I retained the names of two individuals: the criminal commander of the Tutsi RPA company responsible for the ethnic cleansing, and one of the fearless and self-sacrificing Tutsis who stood guard in front of the shacks and caverns where some of my Hutu relatives hid for days. Sadly, RPA soldiers, when they learned that these Tutsis had protected my relatives, murdered some of them.

When I asked one of the Tutsis who saved my relatives why he did it, he simply answered: I am a Christian. I did what any good christian would do: *“having the fear of God’s judgment and making amends by loving your neighbor as yourself.”* He attempted to apologize on the behalf of the Tutsis but I stopped him. I explained that the horrendous crimes were not committed by Tutsis, but that criminals just happened to be Tutsis. I also gave him the example of Tutsis relatives who were massacred in the same period.

FEARLESSNESS, A NECESSARY CONSEQUENCE OF TRUTH

The Tutsi’s answer reminded me of Gandhi’s vow of fearlessness: *“When we fear God, we shall fear no man, no matter how high-placed he may be. And if you want to follow the vow of truth in any shape of form, fearlessness is the necessary consequence. And so you find, in the Bhagawad Gita, fearlessness is declared as the first essential quality of Brahmin. We fear consequences, and therefore we are afraid to tell the truth. A man who fears God will certainly not fear any earthly consequence.”*

In the days following March 2, 1997 and after listening to the amazing story of the fearless Tutsis who stood guard in front of the hideout of my relatives and gave them the chance to live another day, I took two important decisions: first to honor the memory of my 57 relatives brutally murdered for their ethnicity on March 2, 1997 and second, as a tribute to the bravery and selflessness of the fearless Tutsis. These two decisions have followed me and guided my political engagement for the last 12 years:

- 1) I will tell the truth about the Rwandan tragedy**
- 2) I will strive for fearlessness in pursuing the truth**

These incidents happened when a number of Rwandan refugees living in the United States of America, Europe, and Africa were busy building the human rights organization, Organization for Peace Justice, and Development in Rwanda (OPJDR) that we had co-created in 1995. As the Coordinator General of OPJDR, I looked at the human rights organization as a launching pad and a platform for fulfilling the vows I had made.

The OPJDR sought to actively and objectively create awareness about the situation in Rwanda. During an investigation on massacres committed in Eastern Rwanda, I received troubling reports regarding my relatives who had moved to and resettled in Rusumo region of Kibungo Prefecture and Mutara region of Byumba Prefecture in search of land and other economic opportunities. I learned that when Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) resumed attacks on April 6, 1994, RPA troops quickly reached Gabiro and Kabarore. An uncle lived there and owned a prosperous small business in Kabarore, Mutara. The first day of the attacks, RPA troops captured the small town of Kabarore, rounded up all Hutu men, including my uncle, his sons, and neighbors and massacred them. My uncle's wives and a few of his remaining children fled South-East to Rusumo to live with my other relatives, including uncles, aunts, cousins and their spouses and kids. The RPA troops caught up with them around the end of April - early May 1994. A company of RPF soldiers massacred them and dumped their bodies into the Akagera river. It is believed their bodies were among those found hundreds of miles away in Lake Victoria and that I watched with horror on US TV floating and being recuperated and buried by Ugandans. Refugees International, working with UNHCR recounted the massacres in the May 17, 1994 SITREP by Mark Prutsalis transmitted to George Hogeman, Program Officer of the Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration at the U.S. Department of State:

"At Rusumo commune, sectors NYAMUGARI, GISENYI, NYARUBUYE, the RPF comes at 05h00 waiting for villagers to open their doors. The villagers are caught and taken away to the river by trucks. No one has returned. Refugees of the area have seen people being tied together and thrown into the river... Asked by UNHCR field officer refugees said that RPF did not care whether victims were hutu or tutsi villagers"

In these Rusumo massacres, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) massacred almost all my relatives who had migrated to Rusumo and Mutara, including 43 adults, and an unknown number of children. Only two young men are known to have escaped to Tanzania and are still alive. The RPF government tried to deny the massacres and attacked the UNHCR in the "Statements on the Questions of Refugees and Security in Rwanda", published on 25 September 1994 by Colonel Frank Mugambage from the Ministry of Defense and Claudine Nyinawumwami Umutoni Deputy Minister for Rehabilitation and Social Welfare (MINIREISO): ***"At the height of the genocide in April-May this year the UNHCR officials dared to make a false report that RPF forces were responsible for the genocide... The UNHCR accepted and widely publicized false reports by MRND-CDR militias in refugee camp in Ngara... UNHCR officials encouraged the people [from the zone Turquoise] to run to Zaire lest they be killed by the RPF forces when the French Forces left ... UNHCR reported bodies (of HUTU) in Akagera river in early***

September purportedly as a result of Government atrocities. Following this, the President [Pasteur Bizimungu] made a week long verification tour in areas along the river and did not come across a single body in the river. .. The above cases raise suspicions that UNHCR could be having other motives not yet known to us. Otherwise how does one explain their continued baseless and unfounded allegations up this day."

From that time on, the UNHCR was intimidated and remained silent about the atrocities committed by the Rwandan government, to the point of declaring in the April 1997 report called "REFUGEE CAMP SECURITY IN THE GREAT LAKES REGION that: ***"The fatal accident which befell the President of Rwanda in April 1994 gave the signal for the start of a brutal genocide which was to last for several months and involve the massacre of several hundred thousand civilians,"*** when it was already public knowledge that President Juvenal Habyarimana's plane was shot down by a missile.

I fell sick when I learned about the massacres and dumping the bodies into Akagera river, including those of at least 43 of my relatives. As I remembered seeing on TV and in news papers and magazines the bloated bodies floating in the Akagera river, the hands tied in the back, and those being fished in the Lake Victoria I could only imagine the cruel death these Hutus and Tutsis suffered in the hands of an organization that claimed to liberate them and the country.

The denial by the RPF government officials was a sharp knife in a bleeding wound, a proof that a monster had inherited a den full of preys: the innocent Rwandan Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa alike. The fact that RPF systematically massacred Hutus, Tutsis and Twas while claiming to stop the "genocide of Tutsis" showed an even more sinister side of the regime. I believed the RPF wanted to eradicate Hutus and Tutsis living alongside them in selected areas, so that the separation between Hutus and Tutsis would be effective and any reconciliation and cohabitation would be doomed forever. This realization convinced me that remaining a mere activist would be equivalent to staying silent in the face of the worst evil.

Thus, I embarked on the second project towards reaching the goals I set for myself. I researched the circumstances of the assassination of the two Presidents of Rwanda and Burundi and their entourage. The research led to the publication in September 1999 of the **"Memorandum on the Assassination of the President Habyarimana."**

These two experiments - launching OPJDR and the publication of the memorandum- taught me several things that I had long sensed, but never really pinpointed.

- 1) Ethnic politics were entrenched in our lives; we could not move forward before we face the sad reality heads-on;**
- 2) Wherever I looked, and despite the tragedy that separated Rwandans, I found people who, though conscious of their ethnicity, sought ways to escape the entangling web of ethnic politics. Somehow these individuals aspired to be transported into a “neverland” where ethnic groups would have never existed, and the events that have plunged the Rwandan nation in an endless cycle of violence, retribution, fear, and bloodshed since 1990 were just a nightmare;**
- 3) There were, and possibly will always be, some cliques of individuals who will seek to use ethnicity to reach their machiavellian goals at all cost including assuming the helm of the power.**

CONQUERING ETHNIC POLITICS.

I realized that we can ignore ethnicity only to our own risk. At the same time I found genuine people who would see ethnic identity as a positive addition to the diversity of ideas, experiences, and enrichment in a nation that has always regarded peaceful coexistence as a major, if not the key source of resources and progress. This realization and finding led me to contemplate the third idea, and to engage on a path that would alter the course of my life forever.

My participation in the creation of the Democratic Liberation Forces of Rwanda (FDLR) lay within that approach. The co-founders of the FDLR believed that on both sides of the ethnic divide, there are forces of good that can mobilize the rest to sit at the table and debate their differences within a fraternal and constructive framework. The Inter-Rwandan Dialogue which constituted the backbone of the FDLR platform stemmed from this core belief, shared by the initial members of the FDLR.

A few years later, a light shone on this idea with the birth of the “Alliance pour la Démocratie et la Reconciliation Nationale (ADRN-Igihango)”. ADRN-Igihango was an experiment, where Tutsis, who could no longer tolerate the cruelty, brutality and dictatorial methods of the ruling RPF, and Hutus, mostly refugees, met, debated, and proposed a platform for change: the Consensual Democracy. The Consensual Democracy envisioned a democratic society where an effective

representation and protection of all the components of the Rwandan society would be guaranteed.

Meanwhile, it had become clear that some key leaders of the FDLR no longer had the vision of the founding members and favored political profiteering to the goals of rebuilding the society beyond ethnic politics. Several of the founders, including myself, and a large number of my companions of the struggle could no longer identify themselves with what had become of the FDLR. We decided to pursue our vision and objectives outside the organization and leaders resigned from the FDLR in September 2004. The ADRN-Igihango could not survive the departure of the leaders who had engineered the platform of inter-ethnic dialogue and consensual democracy.

Despite its failure, the ADRN-Igihango experiment, remained a watershed in conquering ethnic politics. Along with other political leadership companions, the failure of ADRN-Igihango coincided with our resignation from the FDLR in September 2004. However, the ADRN-Igihango experience left me with the following important lessons that would fuel my next political move:

- 1) Several Hutus and Tutsis share core aspirations for the creation of a democratic, yet diverse and plurastic society, where people's voices will be heard, and truth and genuine participation will be given precedence over fear and ethnics politics;**
- 2) Building a consensus around the idea of Consensual Democracy is an arduous enterprise, that requires a ground up approach of mobilizing the grassroots before diffusing innovative ideas slowly across the Rwandan social fabric;**
- 3) Time is the best friend of success.**

It is with this realization that I, working with other struggle companions that had resigned from the FDLR, embarked on a new initiative: the creation of the Rally for Unity and Democracy (RUD-Urunana). The principle behind the initiative remained the shared vision of consensual democracy, the constant dialogue among ethnic groups, the mobilization for a Rwandan nation united for the common purpose, while aiming for a sustained development and regional integration to the benefit of all the components of the society.

The RUD experiment was unique, yet promising because of the existence of a team with a focused vision, a sense of common purpose, an idea that we could not afford to lose. An impetus was added when Tutsis brothers and sisters of the Rally for the Rwandan People (RPR), mostly ex-RPA, joined the Army National (AN-Imboneza), to protect Hutu refugees in the Democratic Republic of

the Congo (DRC). The fact that hundreds of Tutsis troops who, a few months or years before were part of the RPA that sought to exterminate the Hutu refugees, had joined their former Hutus opponents to fight for a common good and just cause, while protecting Hutu refugees, was a first and a major step in the direction of the birth of a new Rwanda: a Rwanda with a political landscape void of ethnic politics. It was a major victory over ethnic politics and a significant blow to the clique of Hutus or Tutsis who promoted these politics. It was an awesome experience lived by fearless individuals, Hutus, Tutsis and Twas.

THE THREAT OF FEARLESSNESS TO ETHNIC POLITICS

The RUD/RPR experiment threatened those who sought to plant fear among Rwandan ethnics groups to better control them. The Tutsi-led Rwandan regime, whose ethnic politics is the root and the engine of its existence, felt particularly vulnerable. The Rwandan Intelligence and security services apparatus launched a terrorist campaign targeting all the Hutus and Tutsis suspected rightly or wrongly of being behind the RUD-RPR coalition initiative.

After dismissing the existence of RUD-Urunana/RPR on Voice of America (VOA), Mr. Richard Sezibera, then Rwandan President Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region, suddenly made a volte-face. On March 17, 2006, Mr. Sezibera published in the Daily Monitor, one of the leading Ugandan newspapers, an article alleging that Rwandan dissidents in Kampala were preparing to wage a war against their homeland. He particularly singled out RUD-Urunana and RPR. His article showed that the Rwandan regime was clearly alarmed by perspectives of the collaboration among mostly Hutu and mostly Tutsi political organizations.

The article set off a chain of repressive actions by the Kigali regime. Mobilizing its full financial, diplomatic, and political machine, Kigali hunted down people across Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region suspected of supporting the two organizations. People were arrested and accused of all sorts of things: Tutsis were accused of being members of “Army of the Tutsi King”. Already in September 2006, just after they learned of the collaboration between the RPR and RUD, Kigali government officials circulated a list to the Tripartite-Plus, on which the founders of the two political parties were included. On that list, the former RPA officer Major Gerard Ntashamaje, a Tutsi and the leader of RPR was included as a Hutu and a former ex-FAR. Yet, Major Gerard Ntashamaje, whose father was a prominent Tutsi, government Minister, Supreme Court Judge, and Prosecutor under the previous regimes, was until 2000, an RPA soldier and RPF

high ranking government official. On March 17, 2007, after the Rwandan Government exerted a heavy diplomatic pressure on the Ugandan Government, 10 people, including 9 Tutsis and 1 Hutu that were arrested in Uganda a few months earlier were handed over to the Rwandan intelligence services and accused of being RUD/RPR members.

The uneasiness of the Rwandan Government about the peaceful cohabitation between Hutu and Tutsis was clearly underlined by several independent observers. In an report published on April 1, 2000 and titled: "Rwanda: the search for Security and Human Rights Abuses," Human Rights Watch observes: ***"Between November 15 and 20, 1999 local authorities in Nyamirambo, a section of the capital city, Kigali, detained more than 200 young people on the charge of being part of the "army of the king". They arrested the young men on the streets, where they had supposedly been awaiting transport to take them to places where they would receive military training. The young men were detained in the local lockup for two days and then handed over to the Department of Military Intelligence (DMI), which reportedly released them after they had confessed to unspecified crimes. Unlike previous opposition groups identified solely with Hutu, the monarchists include both Hutu and Tutsi."***

The Human Rights Watch Report continues further:

"Some Tutsi soldiers of the RPA, both survivors of the genocide and those from Burundi and the Congo, say they have no wish to fight the war in the Congo. They want that conflict settled by negotiations, even if this means coming to terms with the insurgents."

The multi-ethnic nature of the monarchist group poses a major challenge to authorities who previously could discredit opposition groups for being composed only of Hutu and for including persons implicated in the genocide. Now both the RPF and the government are themselves increasingly criticized for being dominated by Tutsi. Although they continue to talk about the multi-ethnic sharing of power, about nationalism, and about reconciliation, the RPF and the government have progressively excluded all the major Hutu leaders who once participated in power."

The Rwandan Supreme court judgment Nr RPA 0017/07/CS of October 25, 2007 of Prosecutor vs Rukeba Francois (Tutsi) , Ugirimpuhwe Leonard (Hutu), Kabagambe Peter (Tutsi), and Iyarwema Vedaste (Tutsi) accused of seeking to overthrow the Rwandan government under the provisions of articles 164 and 165 reinforce the trend of Rwandan ethnic and fear politics. The three Supreme Court judges: Mukanyundo Patricie, Hatangimbabazi Fabien and Kanyange Fidelite convicted the defendants of creating the RPR and having cooperated

with RUD-Urunana. Specifically they convicted them of *“having talked on phone with Kanyamibwa (myself), residing in America”* and of *“belonging to the political party created by Ntashamaje Gerard.”*

The case of Rukeba Francois took its roots long before 2000. The Tutsi-led government National Rights Commission writes in its 2000 Annual report published in March 2001, under the section: “The arrest and detention of Second Lieutenant MURERA Bertin, Pte BYABAGAMBA Innocent, RUTABANA Benjamin, RUKEBA Francois and RUGEMA Janvier”.

“The families of the soldiers MURERA Bertin and BYABAGAMBA Innocent, together with those of the Civilians, Benjamin RUTABANA (known by the name Ben) and François RUKEBA sought verbally the Commission's assistance so as to know where these four men had been detained. They had been arrested, some in Tanzania, others in Burundi and forced back into the country by Rwanda Government.

“As for RUTABANA Benjamin, he said that the charges referred against him were fabricated and not the real reason for his arrest. He thought the real reason could be that, he had been suspected of aiding and abetting in the escape of former Speaker of Parliament, Mr. SEBARENZI KABUYE Joseph.”

On his part, RUKEBA François admitted to have taken BYABAGAMBA Innocent in his car as far as Butare, on the day BYABAGAMBA fled the country. He did not however, know that he was running away from the country. He said they later on met in Burundi by coincidence. RUKEBA François denied any involvement in the soldier's escape. During these discussions at the Kigali Military Prosecutor's Office, none of the detainees said he had been tortured or undergone any other cruel, in-human treatment. However, they showed such signs as unusual fatigue that the Commission believed those men might have experienced such kind of treatment but, out of fear, they concealed the fact.

Five months after the Commission met them for the first time, all the five were bailed out. They are currently waiting to appear before the court, free from detention. However, at the time of writing this report, some information yet to be confirmed by the Commission says that two of them, namely RUKEBA François and RUGEMA Janvier, might have fled the Country.”

The government will once more catch up with Rukeba Francois in Uganda a few years later and accuse him of allying himself with Hutus seeking to overthrow the government.

Reading both Reports, one by the completely independent Human Rights Watch and the other by the Tutsi-led government sponsored commission, one may realize the following:

- 1) Like Hutu, Tutsis seeking to free themselves from ethnic politics and politics of fear are equally targeted by the Tutsi-led government;**
- 2) They also, like Hutu, are arrested on trumped up charges and eventually tortured**

It is clear that ethnic politics and fear are used to intimidate both Tutsis and Hutus. The policy of division has been embraced, promoted, and enhanced into a method of governance by the Tutsi-led regime, since its inception. The regime has expanded the policy to promote divisions based on criteria such as clan, region of origin, second language.

FEARLESSNESS ON A LONG AND NARROW ROAD BEYOND ETHNIC POLITICS

This year, amazing things happened in the World. America got its first Black President (and first Black First Lady). On January 20, 2009 the voice of the Black President echoed across the halls where decisions that shake the entire World are made.

The man came from a race, which less than 50 years ago, was struggling to move from the back of the bus to decent schools, whose males were being lynched for making innocuous comments or gestures, women raped for being in a wrong neighborhood, and both men and women imprisoned or killed for just claiming their basic rights.

In his speech, the Black president preached hope, racial harmony, and a new order of peace around the World. Most Americans agreed with him that race and diversity should be a source of richness of ideas, initiatives, entrepreneurship and openness that would propel the most powerful and richest country to new heights of prosperity and respect around the World. The American people, the most diverse nation in the World, made a bet on the complementarity of races, nationalities, and ethnic groups and won the war over racial and divisive politics.

America heeded the call of Franklin Delano Roosevelt delivered in his March 4, 1933 First Inaugural Address: *“So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself -- nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance. In every dark hour of our national life, a leadership of frankness and of vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory.”*

When the American people were making strides and renewing their shared commitment of building a nation as a beacon of hope and racial harmony, somewhere, in Africa, Rwanda in particular, ethnic identities were exploited and used for the politics lethal to the interests of the African people. The current Tutsi-led Rwandan regime has used and continues to use these politics to the criminal perfection.

On April 11, 2009, in an article published in Los Angeles Times and titled: **“The power of horror in Rwanda”**, Human Rights Watch Executive Director Kenneth Roth wrote:

“One tool of repression has been the gacaca courts ... which the government established at the community level to try alleged perpetrators of the genocide. ... the law outlawing “genocide ideology” is written so broadly that it can encompass even the most innocuous comments. As many Rwandans have discovered, disagreeing with the government or making unpopular statements can easily be portrayed as genocide ideology, punishable by sentences of 10 to 25 years. That leaves little political space for dissent.”

In Rwanda, both the Gacaca courts and the law on “genocide ideology” targets one ethnic group: The Hutus. The purpose of these two instruments of repression is to keep both Hutus and Tutsis in constant fear and mutual distrust. The Hutus fear being jailed, tortured, or killed. The Tutsis are always reminded that Hutus are seeking to exterminate them. It is a win-win situation for the small clique in power. The cynicism behind the logic is simple: Hutus will never express any dissent, and Tutsis will keep loyalty to a clique that promises protection. It is a lose-lose situation for the Rwandan people: reconciliation will remain a distant dream. Therefore ethnic distrust will prevail while racial conflicts, like a ticking bomb, are bound to erupt.

Gandhi, in his speech on “Ashram Vows” at YMCA, Madras and published in Indian Review in February 1916 and The Hindu, 16 Feb 1916, writes about the Untouchables ***“There is an ineffaceable blot that Hinduism today carries with it. I have declined to believe that it has been handed to us from immemorial times. I think that this miserable, wretched, enslaving spirit of “Untouchableness” must have come to us when we were in the cycle of our lives, at our lowest ebb, and that evil has still stuck to us and it still remains with us. It is to my mind, a curse that has come to us, and as long as that curse remains with us, so long I think we are bound to consider that every affliction that we labour under in this sacred land is a fit and proper punishment for this great and indelible crime we are committing. That any person should be considered untouchable because of his calling passes one’s comprehension; and you, the student world, who receives***

this modern education, if you become a party to this crime, it were better that you received no education whatsoever.”

In Rwanda, a new class of “Untouchables” is being created. This class is made mostly of Hutus, but also of Tutsis who question the rationale behind ethnic politics. Fear has, like a metastatic cancer, spread its tentacles into the fabric of a nation, fueled by ethnic politics. One sees it in the administration, in the private enterprise, and public ceremonies, in schools, in the military, in the police, in the financial system, in the judiciary system, and in the media: in summary, the entire public and private administration.

Every year, in April, Rwandans remember the survivors of the 1994 madness. Usually, the first day, Rwandan leaders make speeches and survivors remember the departed. In all speeches, there is no mention of Hutu victims. Only Tutsis are mentioned and remembered. Only Tutsis have the right to remember, to shed tears, to cry, and to commemorate. As recently as in January 2009, a delegation of Hutu refugees visited the Memorial erected in Gisozi for Tutsis killed in 1994. When her baby cried, the Hutu mother was expelled from the memorial site, being accused of defiling the sacred place.

Rwanda has moved from the period of ethnic politics to ethnic annihilation.

Annihilation of Hutus has become a public policy: Hutus and Tutsis who sympathize with them are excluded at all cost, in order for the clique leading the country to maintain itself in power. In a resolution, the United Nations (UN) Security Council concluded that events in Rwanda in 1994 constitute “Rwandan Genocide”. The Rwandan government, while denying the existence of a Tutsi ethnic group, renamed the events “Tutsi genocide”.

The new qualification of the 1994 events by the current Tutsi-led government only solidifies the exclusion and annihilation of Hutus under three forms:

- 1) Constantly and wrongly reminding the other ethnic groups (Hutus and Twas) that are criminals;**
- 2) Trying to pretend that ethnic groups do not exist in Rwanda;**
- 3) Imposing the belief that only Tutsis were killed.**

With this politics, Hutus and Twas cannot claim being discriminated against: How can one be discriminated against if he or she doesn’t exist? Job, public service, scholarships, admissions to high and higher education, and other benefits can be given to one ethnic group without being accused of

discrimination. At the same time, Hutus can be arrested, accused of “genocidal ideology” and crimes against the Tutsi survivors, and be subjected to torture, summary execution, and arbitrary imprisonment because they are “marked” as being responsible for the 1994 Rwandan Genocide.

Hence, only Tutsis, as the only recognized survivors may benefit from all the programs such as Fond d’Aide aux Rescapés du Génocide (FARG), a fund set up to assist “Tutsi genocide survivors” and Travaux d’Interets General (TIG), forced public work executed by Hutu prisoners. Hutus and Twas cannot be survivors, because they are not Tutsis, and cannot claim to exist because there are no ethnic groups in Rwanda. Hutus and Twas as members of ethnic groups have been annihilated and Tutsis who sympathize with them suffer the same fate.

The annihilation of Hutus is fueled by fear:

- **Fear by Tutsis to tell the truth about the blatant repression against Hutus;**
- **Fear by Tutsis to sympathize with the plight of Hutu, because they may risk to loose the support of or being persecuted by a Tutsi government;**
- **Fear by Hutu to tell the truth, because they are already accused of being criminals and risk being accused of “genocide ideology.”, negationism or revisionism.**

Maintaining fear among Tutsis and Hutu through ethnic politics is the only efficient and effective tool the current Tutsi-regime has to maintain itself in power. The Tutsi-led power preys on the nation and will devour the people if nothing is done. Tutsi and Hutus who have understood the machiavellian scheme have no other choice than finding ways to move beyond fear and ethnic politics for their own survival but, most importantly, for the survival of Tutsis, Hutus, and Twas, and of Rwanda as a nation.

ETHNIC POLITICS WAS TRIED IN RWANDA BEFORE AND FAILED: IT LED TO 1959 BLOODY REVOLUTION

Between 13 and 28 June 1956, the Conseil Superior du Pays, exclusively composed of Tutsis, held a closed-door meeting called “Huitième Session du Conseil Supérieur du Pays”. The question of ethnicity was raised, following the general discontent of Hutus across the entire country. The Hutus openly complained about excesses, abuses, and repression by Tutsis. The Conseil Superior asked the Rwandan King to make the following statement to the nation [French]:

“Certaines personnes peu ou mal informées répètent ou écrivent volontiers que les Batutsis venus dans le Pays en conquérant ont spoliés les Bahutu [Hutus] de leurs biens et les ont maintenus à un rang inférieur. Une telle affirmation relève d’une tendance à ne voir que le mauvais côté des choses. Ceux qui la formulent perdent de vue que certaines lacunes de l’organisation politique et sociale des Bututsi [Tutsis] étaient compensées par l’assurance qu’avaient les serviteurs de jouir de la protection de leurs maîtres, les administrés de celle de leurs chefs, cette protection revêtant un caractère nettement familial. ...

“Les Bahutu eurent en tout temps l’occasion d’acquérir richesses et considération sociale. Quant au pouvoir politique, des Bahutu et même certains Batwa furent nommés chefs par le Mwami[King] du Ruanda. Si la chose a été perdue de vue, si l’on a pu croire que seuls les Batutsi étaient aux postes de commande du Pays, c’est que des alliances de ces chefs Bahutu et Batwa avec des familles Batutsi avaient tôt fait d’aplanir les différences sociales et raciales de sorte que toute distinction devenait impossible. A plus forte raison sous le régime actuel, les chances sont-elles laissées à tous, suivant leur capacités et leur mérites, d’accéder à toutes les fonctions vacantes.

“Le conseil Supérieur du Pays émet le vœu suivant: “que les mentions “Mututsi, muhutu ou mutwa soient rayés dans les livrets de recensement, fiches ainsi que dans tous les actes officiels.” La séance est suspendue à 12 heures.”

Hence, to the complaints of ethnic discriminations and the monopolization of power by one ethnic group, Tutsis, the Conseil Supérieur du Pays, composed exclusively by the Tutsi ethnic group decided to suppress the mention of ethnic groups in official records and documents. However, in months that followed, the complaints by Hutus became even louder across the entire country.

On October 21, 1957, the Hutus wrote a letter to the Mwami Mutara III Rudahigwa asking for equal representation of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa within the Conseil Supérieur du Pays.

In October 1957, the Hutu published the Manifeste des Bahutu asking for democracy in general, and a constitutional democracy, in particular.

On March 7, 1958, Vianney Bendantunguka, a prominent Hutu political activist, compared the situation in Rwanda to that at the night of the French Revolution on 4 August 1789. However, he suggested that the King still had time for a peaceful revolution, instead of a bloody one, in order to replace a society based on privilege of one ethnic group by a society based on Democracy.

A series of unrelenting complaints came from all the regions of the country:

In Marangara: Hutu asked why only Tutsis were allowed in colleges and universities, demanded the abolition of forced labor and sharecropping by Hutu, the introduction of competitive examination in attribution of scholarships, the participation of Hutu in Conseil Supérieur du Pays, the abolition of arbitrary confiscation or appropriation of Hutu farms by Tutsis, etc.

In Bushiru: Hutus observed that all the Chiefs, Deputy Chiefs, Judges, and public servants were Tutsis; that even these were imposed to the Hutus. Hutu owned the land, but now Tutsis had decided that land belonged to Tutsis. Hutu were not allowed to graze cattle on their own farms. Tutsis who failed schools were hired as teachers of agriculture, when Hutu farmers knew better.

In Kingogo: Hutus wondered why only Tutsis were the only ethnic group allowed to inherit. If a Hutu died, his property became the property of a Tutsi chief. All public functions were occupied by Tutsis. Hutus demanded the abolition of arbitrary confiscation or appropriation of Hutu farms by Tutsis, etc.

In Kabagali: Hutus pointed out that all Judges and prosecutors were Tutsis. They insisted that there were 3 races in Rwanda: Hutu, Twa and Tutsis. They asked what criteria to get a public position: race (ethnic group) or competency. They wondered whether all Hutu were incompetent. They demanded the abolition of arbitrary confiscation or appropriation of Hutu farms by Tutsis, etc.

In Cyanika-Bufundu: Hutus asked why only Tutsis receive scholarships to study in Europe. They complained that all Judges were Tutsis. Hutu denounced corruption and arbitrary confiscation or appropriation of Hutu farms by Tutsis, etc.

And several other complaints from individuals or groups landed at the Royal court, in tracts, newspapers, magazines, reports from local meetings, etc.

The core of those complaints was: Tutsis hierarchy oppressed Hutus and occupied most of the public positions; Tutsis were exclusively represented in the highest institutions of the country, such as Conseil Supérieur du Pays, Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs, Judges, persecutors. Tutsi were exclusively admitted in public high and higher education and exclusively received public scholarships; Tutsi aristocrats misappropriated the farms of Hutus.

The situation before 1959 appears similar to what we observe in Rwanda today. At the invitation of the Government of Kigali and the international

community and between 23 and 28 January 2008, a delegation of the combatants and their dependents of the Rally for Unity and Democracy (RUD)/ Rally of the Rwandan People (RPR) conducted an exploratory visit to Rwanda. The visit was in the agenda within the framework of the Peace Process initiated in Rome on May 9, 2008 between the Government of the Democratic Republic of Congo (RDC) and the National Democratic Congress (NDC), a coalition between RUD and RPR, under the facilitation of the Community Sant' Egidio.

The Roadmap of the Process was published in Kisangani on May 26, 2008. In executing the process, a first group of combatants of RUD/RPR voluntarily disarmed in an official ceremony held in Kasiki, Lubero Territory, North-Kivu, on July 31 2008. The combatants, their dependents and other Rwandan refugees were subsequently grouped in Kasiki.

The exploratory visit to Rwanda was organized in order for the delegation to enquire about the security conditions and social, economical, and political participation of Rwandans inside Rwanda with the purpose of a voluntary and peaceful repatriation of Rwandan refugees.

The report published by the delegation after their visit underlines the following findings about the general political and social situation inside Rwanda:

- ***pervasive lack of security for individuals;***
- ***terror by government militias, Local Defense Forces (LDF), et intelligence services;***
- ***harassment, targeting one ethnic group, fabrication of accusations and general lack of justice in the Gacaca courts;***
- ***lack of freedom in political and social participation;***
- ***selective exclusion of Hutus from government jobs, the army, the police et businesses;***
- ***arbitrary confiscation of private properties without compensation;***
- ***forced labor in Travaux d'Intérêt Généraux (TIG);***
- ***cruel treatment of prisoners and detainees;***
- ***forced recruitment of ex-combatants to fight in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, within CNDP or the Rwandan Defense Forces (RDF).***

The current Rwandan regime repeats the same mistakes and follows the roads of the past generations. The same causes lead to the same results. That is why it is important to reject ethnic politics, before its is too late. We need to create a just system, regardless of the ethnic background of those, with legitimate aspirations, who would associate with it. However, the presence of all the components of the Rwandan social and historical fabric must be sought at all

costs. All the components must be empowered. Leaders must earn the confidence of the Rwandan people in the legitimacy of their leadership, the positive goals of their purposes, and their vision.

Rwanda as a nation belongs to all Rwandans. In January 2008, at the invitation of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) a delegation of Rwandan political leaders visited Kinshasa. The purpose was to find peaceful solutions to the resolution of the 15 years old problem of Rwandan refugees in Eastern DRC. At the conclusion of the visit, I, as the head of the delegation, challenged General Paul Kagame, in our 24 January 2008 statement in Kinshasa on peace in the Great Lakes Region, to rebuild ***“the Rwandan nation on a model [not] based on the failed past, but a future Rwanda where our descendants will rise above what has until now divided Rwandans; a Rwanda where our children and our descendants will not live in the confrontation but rather would spend their time exploring and putting into practice solutions for the development of Rwanda.”***

Yet again, in Kasiki, on July 31, 2008, I invited General Paul Kagame to open the doors for the Rwandan refugees to go home. I invited him, first as a man, second as a former refugee, and third as a leader. The challenge has been the constance of our calls and we have always stated our willingness to meet General Paul Kagame anytime with the facilitation of fair and independent minded mediators. We made the call because we believed, as a Chinese proverb teaches us, that *“A Great Man Can Bend and Stretch.”* The current Rwandan leaders need to show they can bend lower and stretch farther.

The urgency of acting now, before it is too late, compels Rwandans to learn from the mistakes of the past and to avoid them. Both the French and the Rwandan Revolution had their time and taught us the consequences of ignoring the aspirations of the people and the tragedy of ethnic politics and politics of fear.

We need to free ourselves from fear and ethnic distrust, move beyond bitterness and retribution, so that Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region would not remain plagued by a cycle of violence and bloodshed. Other countries and nations became victors over ethnic politics and fear. We can learn from them and even do better. I remain convinced that Rwandans can get there if they focus their energies to reaching these stated goals.

A GRADUAL ROAD TO THE SOCIETY BEYOND ETHNIC POLITICS AND FEAR.

Rwanda has been living in a vicious cycle for which the velocity is fueled by ethnic politics. Ethnic politics can only exist because of fear and mistrust among the various ethnic groups. Dishonest politicians, like scavengers and parasites, feed on that fear, keep the mistrust alive, and inflame popular emotions to maintain themselves in power.

On December 12, 1958, less than a year before Hutu rebelled against the Tutsi monarchy in a bloody revolution, a Tutsi priest warned both the Tutsi aristocrats and the Colonial administration about the impending tragedy.

In an article titled “Aux Origines du problem Bahutu au Rwanda, published in Revue Nouvelle XXVII, no 12 p1-5, the priest Stanislas Bushayija wrote [French]:

“Le sentiment d’injustice que ressentirent à un moment donné les plébéiens romains vis-à-vis des patriciens, les serfs vis-à-vis des seigneurs dans l’ancien régime, est celui qu’éprouvent aujourd’hui les Bahutu par rapport aux Batutsi. Ils cherchent leur émancipation, leur accession à un monde libre et égal pour tous. C’est ainsi qu’il faut comprendre les discussions, les manifestes, les articles qui se succèdent à un rythme de plus en plus rapide. L’histoire nous montre que lorsque des revendications arrivent à ce point de maturité, elles aboutissent fatalement à des révolutions ou des guerres civiles, si les responsables ne leur donnent pas une réponse satisfaisante.”

[Translation: “The sense of injustice felt at one time by the Roman plebeians towards the Patricians, the Serfs towards the Lords in the former regime, is now felt by the Hutu towards the Tutsis. They seek their emancipation, to access equal rights. Thus, it is necessary to understand the complaints, the events, the journal articles that follow each other at an accelerated pace. History shows that when claims reach such a point of maturity, they inevitably lead to revolutions or civil wars, if the leaders do not give them a satisfactory answer.”]

Unfortunately, very few leaders learn from history. As I recently pointed out in a speech I delivered at Rutgers University, citing the Irish author and Nobel Prize Laureate George Bernard Shaw: **“If history repeats itself, and the unexpected always happens, how incapable must Man be of learning from experience... Hegel was right when he said that we learn from history that man can never learn anything from history.”**

The observation by the Tutsi priest remains relevant now and applies to the current situation in Rwanda. On October 30, 1959, Father Stanislas Bushayija wrote to the colonial Administrator to propose measures for calming the impending social explosion [French]:

“D’autre part, je suis persuadé que le temps est révolu où il était possible de gouverner le Munyarwanda, surtout le mututsi, par des négociations doucereuses et concessions factices, c’est, aujourd’hui, l’énergie (j’allais dire la force, mais je n’y pense pas moins) dans la justice et l’équité, qui doit et peut gouverner le Ruanda.”

[Translation: “On the other side, I remain convinced that the time where it was possible to rule on the Rwandan people, especially the Tutsis, by sweet negotiations and fake concessions has passed. Today, it is by strength (I was going to propose force, although I believe it is the right approach) with justice and equity of treatment, that must and should govern Rwanda.”

Eight days later, on November 7, 1959, the 1959 Rwandan Social Revolution had started, plunging the nation into an orgy of bloodbath that has marked the history of Rwanda to date.

Unfortunately, the dire consequences predicted by Father Bushayija are bound to happen. When tragedy strikes again, the flames from the fire of social revolution undoubtedly would consume masses of innocent people.

That is why we cannot remain oblivious by-standers, and let Rwanda go on a road to perdition and annihilation. A society beyond ethnic politics is possible. I propose the following steps to get there.

1) Recognize the fallacies behind the denial of ethnic identities.

Ethnic identity is who we are, our social heritage, our essence as people or group of people, whether we want it or not or others want to define us as such. It is not the existence of ethnic identity that is the problem: it is the use of ethnic groups to reach misguided political aims that dooms us. We need to question, fight against, and defeat this cursed heritage that our forefathers have left us with.

Ethnic groups cannot be suppressed or kept conveniently at the whims of politicians or one ethnic group. The social nation must determine the best way to manage a multi-ethnic state and use ethnic identity as a source of richness of ideas, initiatives, driven entrepreneurship, and openness and prosperity. Rwanda has a good example in America, Canada, India, Great Britain, France, South Africa and other increasingly multiracial, multi-ethnic states, where

diversity has become the best resource that fosters the goodness of the respective societies.

2) Consensual democracy remains the best solution to ethnic politics and fear.

Ethnic politics in Rwanda is a curse. As Gandhi urged us, as long as that curse remains with us, the Rwandan people will be afflicted by suffering, exile, uprooting, bloodshed, and one day, annihilation. Annihilation can only be avoided by self recognition and acknowledgment of others, in a society where, as argued Philosophers Jurgen Habermas and Bruce Barry, the legitimacy of our nation Rwanda must be based on a notion of political rights of autonomous individual subjects. However, we need to marry those individual rights with the approach put forward by political scientists like Charles Taylor and Will Kymlicka: Rwanda must recognize ethnic identity and develop processes through which the particular needs of ethnic groups can be accommodated within the boundaries of a strong and fair political structure accepted by all. Brief, we need a system where the voice of every individual is heard, but in which ethnic groups strive. That is the concept of Consensual Democracy.

3) Consensual democracy will phased out in favor of a full democracy.

Consensual democracy will protect minorities, specifically ethnic minorities, from the potential tyranny of ethnic majority. However, as trust among ethnic groups grow and political groups form around a platform of ideas and transcend ethnic identities, the consensual democracy will have outlived its usefulness, and eventually lead to a unfettered democracy.

4) Rwanda must work outward not inward.

Most of ethnic conflicts may be linked to limited resources. Unfortunately, overpopulated, landlocked, with limited natural resources, Rwanda and its people must only rely on their ingenuity, sense of entrepreneurship, and hard work. They must develop good neighborhood and a sense of seizing opportunity wherever it comes from or may be found. Rwandans are bound to be good neighbors if they have to survive as a nation. They must be flexible, proactive, and strategic thinkers. They must anticipate and seize opportunities around and in front of them. However, they cannot do it if they do not bury their clothes of victims, and wear those of victors: Victorious over Ethnic Politics and Fear.

CONCLUSION

Despite all its complexity, problems arising from the current policy of ethnic politics and politics of fear promoted by the current Rwandan regime may find practical and actionable solutions. The fact that so many Tutsis are fleeing the country, and some are joining the so called “Hutu rebels” in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) or elsewhere, or creating their own armed-rebellions is an indication that the policies of division and fear promoted by the current Rwandan regime have failed and Rwandans leaders are “building on moving sand”.

A system based on democratic values, respect for individual rights and freedom, exclusion of the complex of the conqueror, and the social, political, and economic participation of all the components of the Rwandan society is more likely to succeed. We, Rwandans, can not built a nation on vengeful and domination premises. Rwandans cannot get there alone. True friends of the Rwandan people cannot afford to watch Rwandans led on the path of destruction, like a flock of sheep to the butcher. These true friends have also an awesome and uplifting responsibility. It is this kind of system, with the help of true friends that would lead the Rwandan nation beyond ethnic politics and fear.

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