

Uzi Kurinda Imana We: A Story of Resilience in Rwanda

MARGOT MOINSTER '09



Land of One Thousand Hills

As my two-and-a-half day journey from Memphis to Kigali comes to a close, the mist parts outside my small, oval airplane window, revealing the blazing red soil and lush vegetation that drapes Rwanda's "land of 1000 hills." The rolling panorama of Rwanda's verdant terrain lies in stark contrast to the reel of bloody images scrolling through my mind. While struggling to sort through reality and preconceived notions, my eyes' breathtaking snapshots of Rwanda become overshadowed by images of bloodshed ingrained in my imagination.

Peering down at the fertile land that lies beneath me, I begin to picture exposed, mutilated corpses. The red soiled roads weaving in and out of wooded areas and through small farming communities morph into bloody streams, drowning powerless men, women, and children in their midst. For the past few years, my perceptions of Rwanda have been shaped by the genocide, but as I sit anxiously in my window seat, I begin to move beyond my one-dimensional view of Rwanda and see its complex beauty.

Rwanda's topography reveals a geology that constructs continuous struggle. As each hill arches up and down again, gradually coalescing into the next, the land is fused together. Deep beneath the soil lie sturdy roots, intertwined to create a strong, supportive foundation. Above, the vegetation enveloping the land sways back and forth from the force of the wind. Struggling to remain rooted in its fertility amid numerous forces of destruction, Rwanda's terrain transcends traditional interpretation as each step taken north, south, east, or west provides a different angle from which to see, and interpret, the land and the events that have shaped it.

During my first few days in Kigali, as I navigate the streets that begin to form the roadmap of my experience, I am engulfed in the hustle and bustle of the city. Surrounded by vendors selling fruits, shops filled with vivid African fabrics, and motos speeding by, I am invigorated. Yet I remain haunted. Approximately 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were brutally murdered here with machetes, clubs, guns, and sticks in merely 100 days. The Human Rights Watch estimates that at least 250,000 women were raped. Women became sex slaves, raped over and over again until the assaults led to gruesome internal wounds

where maggots began to fester, crawling in and out of reproductive organs. Many were gang raped, raped with objects such as gun barrels or sharpened sticks, and sexually mutilated with machetes, knives, sticks, boiling water, and even acid. Children watched as their parents were assaulted, skulls smashed and limbs severed. Neighbors were forced to turn against one another and many Rwandans were tortured into killing their friends and even families. Babies' heads were bashed against walls, and machetes tore against flesh and bone. Achilles tendons were slashed, and individuals unable to flee, died slow, torturous deaths. In the span of 100 days, blood was spilled throughout the country; families were decimated, children were orphaned, women were left infected with HIV, many of them pregnant. Yet 14 years later, all I see are scrumptious mangos and pineapples balancing delicately in baskets resting on women's heads, bright, vivid colors, and life happening all around me.

How can I begin to reconcile these two spheres in which my mind resides? Meandering through town, I find myself attempting to comprehend the vivaciousness around me within a mental framework that fails to coincide. Am I a perpetual outsider, unable to develop even a glimpse of insight into the remnants of the genocide and its impact on individuals' daily lives because of my Western lens and inability to speak Kinyarwanda? Or, am I a superficial observer, unable to unpack the complexity of present-day Rwanda simply because I am not looking deep enough? As I continue to stroll the streets of downtown, struggling to piece together a more comprehensible picture of the country, I encounter numerous beggars showcasing their amputated limbs and large disfiguring scars that mark the places where machetes had been taken to skin and bone during the genocide. I realize I am a superficial observer.

Throughout my journey, I continually struggle to process the myriad sights, smells, and sounds over-stimulating my senses. As time progresses, however, I begin to understand that beneath the beautiful veneer lie countless reminders of the ethnic struggles that have marked this country for nearly a century. The reminders are there at night when I am haunted by an eerie silence transfixing the air, caused by an absence of barking. During the war, dogs were murdered to prevent them from eating rotting corpses, and to this day, they are rarely seen or heard. The reminders are there when I sit in a restaurant with friends enjoying a cool, refreshing Fanta, and the waiter removes the tightly sealed lid of my drink in my presence. Poisoning was a common occurrence in Rwanda in the mid-20th century. They are there when I see convicted genocidaires (perpetrators of genocide) in light pink jumpsuits riding in large truck beds as they are transported through town to their next work site. They are there on my daily commute to work via minibuses, when I pass billboards promoting Gacaca courts, which combine traditional local justice with modern jurisprudence to try individuals for crimes committed during the period of the genocide. And, the reminders are there on numerous trips I take outside of Kigali, when I pass vivid purple ribbon strewn throughout the country along trees, on churches, in front of graveyards, all marking the places where Rwandans were murdered or where corpses have been found. The reminders are always there.

Though it was not obvious to me at first glance, my time in Rwanda has taught me that Rwanda's history of ethnic strife and bloodshed continues to live on in the daily lives of survivors. Whether it is triggered by something physical or an intrinsic emotional reaction, Rwandans are plagued with inefaceable reminders. For the women who contracted HIV through genocidal rape, the horrors of the genocide did not end in June of 1994, but rather they continue to be relived every day when they take their antiretroviral medication, and their impact continues among the youth who are products of rape and the infants who are born HIV positive.

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Women's Equity in Access to Care and Treatment (WE-ACTx)

While thousands of Rwandan women infected with HIV during the genocide are left to die, their alleged rapists are receiving anti-retroviral treatment in prison. It is in response to this unjust and dire reality that Rwandan women's associations issued an international call in 2003 to aid women infected with HIV from genocidal rape. These associations, often led by survivors themselves, help thousands of widows, rape survivors, and orphans. The leaders of these groups recognized that their members needed antiretroviral care, as well as post-traumatic stress counseling, access to support groups, food, housing, job training, and education about their illness and treatment options. In 2004, a group of US-based activists, physicians, and scientists responded to their call and established Women's Equity in Access to Care and Treatment (WE-ACTx). At its conception, WE-ACTx joined with four Rwandan women's associations to launch an HIV treatment program that now serves over 5,000 women free of charge.

The seeds of WE-ACTx's work were sown long before the 21st century. The needs the organization serves are rooted in Rwanda's history, stemming from the impact of colonization and its remnants, which functioned to build a backdrop for the 1994 genocide and its aftermath.

WE-ACTx has established three clinics that provide Rwandan women with access to trauma counselors and nurses, antiretroviral treatments, as well as HIV testing and treatment for their children. WE-ACTx has embraced a grassroots empowerment model, integrating medical care with psychosocial support, while simultaneously addressing barriers to care for these women, including poverty. In addition to its clinical work, WE-ACTx has a research center and provides non-clinical services, including a peer education program, community legal aid training program, and an income generation project.

Uzi Kurinda Imana We

The sound of the women's chatting fuses with the rhythmic chanting of the sewing machines. Feet move up and down, driving needle and thread in and out, intricately weaving together vivid African fabrics and bonds between the women. At times one of the women will begin to sing, softly vocalizing her deep, rich voice, enticing the others to join in by the sheer beauty and purity of sound. The voices stretch over the noise of the machines as words begin to take shape and change with the rhythm of the music. The soft, melodious beat of the sewing provides soulful percussion as the singing and the pedaling fuse together into an enchanting masterpiece of music, of woman and machine.

In Kigali I worked primarily with WE-ACTx's income-generation project known as WE-ACTx Ineza. This project consists of a sewing and craft cooperative and is geared towards providing job training and economic

support for women who are patients receiving services from the organization. In particular, I helped connect the cooperative to the U.S. market and worked with the women to design a line of bags made out of traditional African fabrics, kitenge, for export to the United States. In addition, I interviewed many of the women, compiling their stories for the organization as well as gathering their thoughts on the cooperative and goals for the future.

The lives of the women of Ineza have each been dramatically shaped by Rwanda, its history and present-day economic, political, and cultural dynamics. Each woman's involvement in this project signifies a joint financial and physical struggle as a result of a shared national identity that for over a century had been marked by colonization and its remnants, ethnic struggle and bloodshed. The women of Ineza are all on antiretroviral medication (ARVs), and though these women come from varying backgrounds and have contracted HIV through different modes of transmission, they are united and bonded by their common struggle. Regardless of each woman's history and her ethnic identity, five days a week these 25 women come together in a small, cozy brick home and sit and sew on a traditional Rwandan woven rug whose colors have faded with time, or at an old fashioned Butterfly sewing machine under a bright blue tin awning. Located off of a narrow dirt path on the back side of a large multi-lane well-paved road that is lined with office buildings, stores, bus stops, and small communities of homes, this house is insulated by a large brick wall on all four sides, walling in an environment that is free from the stigma, poverty, and struggle that are characteristic of these women's daily lives outside of the safety of the WE-ACTx Ineza project.

As I sit, designing and producing patterns for new prototypes, I listen to the women's soulful singing. I watch as Sophie, the cooperative's trainer, closes her large brown eyes and begins to slowly move her head to the beat of the music. When the song transitions into its chorus of Uzi Kurinda Imana We ("God's Protection is Supreme"), Sophie's voice becomes louder and her entire body begins to morph; her arms stretch up over her head, while her hands start to clap and her hips swivel. I watch as she is swept off her feet by the collective effervescence transfixing the air. Sophie is a woman of deep faith, and as I sit enchanted by her movements, I see the manifestation of her faith in song and dance.

The women of Ineza are all spiritual, and the songs that are sung at the WE-ACTx Ineza house all pertain to Imana, God. Historically, Rwanda has been the most Christianized country in Africa, with Christians representing more than 80 percent of the population. However, for many Rwandans, religion holds a negative connotation, due to the involvement of religious leaders and churches in exacerbating ethnic tensions. The leadership of Christian churches, particularly Catholic churches, played a key role in the creation and the furthering of racist ideology during and after colonial rule. Moreover, during the genocide,

many of the massacres occurred in and around churches, and at times religious leaders even conspired in these murders. Rwandans are a people of deep faith, and during past periods of unrest as well as during the genocide, tens of thousands of individuals fled to churches for protection, believing that no individual would dare murder another in God's home; however, in 1994, this belief was tragically shattered.

Post-genocide Rwanda has engaged in a dialectic struggle with religion, and specifically with Catholicism, attempting to reconcile faith in God with feelings of betrayal by the Catholic Church. Though a substantial portion of Rwandans have grown disenchanted with the Catholic Church, spirituality and belief in God remain strong. Recently, there has been a surge in conversions to Islam and to numerous born-again Christian faiths. Small and large places of worship rest on nearly every block of Kigali and its surrounding areas. Minibus paraphernalia often include large iridescent images of Jesus accompanied with his name in bold print along the back and/or side windows. In addition, references to God are incorporated into language and various elements of daily life. For the majority of WE-ACTx Ineza women, too, faith and religion remain a substantial constant in their lives. Some of the women are Muslims and some identify with born-again sects of Christianity; however at the WE-ACTx Ineza house, passion for God transcends traditional boundaries of organized religion.

The Ineza house is more than a structure that houses sewing machines and workers; it is a place that fosters personal growth, community building, and support. The women of Ineza have constructed a community that provides personal as well as economic empowerment, and the women's unwavering belief in God is a shaping force in the construction of this community. Their resilient faith in the aftermath of mass violence illustrates that for these women, religion is a means of coping, enabling them to come to peace with the past and to look towards the future. In addition to being a force in the shaping of community, religion is a catalyst for social change as these women take charge of their lives and become leaders in the fight against AIDS. Whether they actively attend religious ceremonies or not, as the words of the women's singing transfixes the air, God is ever-present, providing support and strength, propelling these women into the fight for social change.

While the women work at the income-generation project, weaving needle and thread in and out of fabric, reinforcing seams, they are simultaneously weaving together and reinforcing their support network. For the majority of these women, there are many ups and downs, sick days and good days, days with food and others without; however, as the women's soulful singing of Uzi Kurinda Imana We coupled with the melodious beat of the sewing machines reaches my ears, I realize that through these women's tumultuous times, their faith in God and in this community remains constant. Uzi Kurinda Imana We.

Murambi

As I begin the three-kilometer hike from the town of Gikongoro to Murambi, I am guided up the dirt road through luscious, breathtaking countryside by vivid purple ribbons hanging mournfully from the branches of trees. The rich, red soil of this long, winding road lies in stark contrast to the vibrant green hills that hover over the small communities of homes and people residing along its side, cradling those in its midst into an enchanting state of comfort and safety. While walking and inhaling the cool breeze and the savory aroma of burning wood, the word *mzungu*, white person, echoes in my ears. People I pass greet me with curious stares and introductory phrases that fuse French and Kinyarwanda, "Mzungu, Bonjour!" As I continue up the path framed by verdant rolling hills, I am struck by the beauty and vibrancy of life that lies along this road to Murambi Technical Institute, a large two-story unfinished school complex that now houses and displays the remains of 50,000 Rwandan men, women, and children brutally murdered the week of April 21, 1994. This large, brick building lies nestled in the surrounding hills, encapsulated by the sheer beauty and spirit that engulfs and enchants the entire area. Concealed is the horror and terror that has marked this school as the site of one of the most gruesome massacres during the Rwandan genocide.

When I reach the arched entrance of the Institute, the other visitors and I are met by a middle-aged man on a bicycle and an elderly man who staggers in our direction and introduces himself. After exchanging some words between themselves and then with us, the younger man guides us in the direction of dormitories that lie hidden behind the main school building. I follow the silent gentleman's lead as he points to the first room filled with shrunken, brittle corpses. It is within the confines of these bare, cement walls that in early April of 1994, thousands of Tutsis took refuge, at the advice of local government officials. For nearly two weeks, these individuals struggled to survive on contaminated water and no food until the Hutu militias arrived.

I tentatively peer in, and see the horrified expressions engraved on dozens of faces and read the stories of their excruciating murders; there are distorted body parts, limbs severed by machetes, and skulls smashed by clubs. Twenty-four rooms constructed in the early 1990s to house ambitious university students have since 1995 served as the final resting place of 800 corpses preserved in lime. Outside the dormitory, an auditorium, vacant of human activity, sits with wall-to-wall clotheslines and cupboards on which the deteriorating clothing of the dead are neatly strung and folded, providing a visual representation of the magnitude of 50,000 lost lives.

Prior to visiting Murambi, I listened to a Public Radio International broadcast entitled *The World: The Rwanda Series*. One of the reports was about the Murambi massacre, and the reporter interviewed the

same two men who guided me through the memorial. One, a survivor who lost his wife and children in the massacre, had said in the interview, "We're always here, we are always here explaining things to people, we are always in pain. But we have no choice. We can't ask someone who didn't lose someone here to work in such a place, so we stay, we explain what happened and that gives us some relief."

I noticed that throughout the tour, this man pointed to rooms but never fully went in, never fully looked at what lay inside. Instead, he stared out at the rolling green hills, disengaged from the individuals who snapped photos and commented to one another casually. In her report, the reporter depicted these two gentlemen as loquacious and willing to tell their stories, as if telling these stories to visitors is not only important in preventing future genocides but is also therapeutic. When I met these same two men, I did not sense these objectives and emotions. Maybe this disparity in perception is a result of her power to edit her experience in a way that supports her desired story, or maybe it is because of the very limits of interpretation in events so horrifying that they defy traditional comprehension, I am not sure. Regardless of the reasoning behind our strikingly different perceptions of these men, I know that while there, I could not help but feel that my presence only served to exploit these men, their stories, and their pain. I yearned for these men to speak to me and appease my guilt in coming; I wanted them to validate my presence for at the time. I felt like an intruder.

While walking up the isolated road that led me to the Murambi Memorial Center, I felt that my whiteness betrayed me as a tourist and that my presence in this remote area, like the ribbon which signifies mourning, served as a reminder of the massacre that occurred just up the hill. Prior to arriving, I felt invited to come by the very fact that Murambi is a memorial; however, once I arrived, isolated from the hustle and bustle of city that provides some semblance of comfort and protection within the confines of the fast-paced, busy atmosphere, I felt exposed and forced to confront my own presence. I was forced to engage in the process of contemplating what a memorial is and who a memorial serves, as well as how my conflicted feelings about my own presence fit into the greater context of a memorial's purpose.

How can Rwandans remember but still move on? Silence is not the answer, for in Rwanda, those who fail to bear witness to the atrocities committed become complicit bystanders to the perpetrators by virtue of their silence. Therefore, memorials serve as an institutionalized form of collective memory, recognizing the existence of a shared national tragedy, while simultaneously honoring those who perished. However, does the need for breaking the silence around the genocide extend to outsiders? Like Rwandans, do I too have an obligation to share what I saw while at Murambi? I am still struggling with my own feelings of discomfort revolving around my presence at the memorial, but maybe Murambi serves a dual purpose: it is a place that

honors the dead while simultaneously educating visitors on the horrors that unfolded, so that next time, the promise of “Never Again” may not be simply futile. Maybe memorials, and the institutionalization of collective memory in an educational fashion, serve as a means in and of themselves to striking a balance between remembering and moving on.

School Fees

My friend and I exit the small, tightly packed minibus and board the back seats of two motos (motorcycle taxis) early one hot Saturday morning. I relish the cool breeze and comfort that the moto’s high speeds and cushioned seat afford me. Straddling the back seat as the driver intricately weaves in and out of traffic and around numerous holes and bumps in the road, my eyes suddenly gravitate towards a large crowd of Rwandans gathered around a small, one-room brick building located a few hundred feet up ahead. While pondering what type of community event could be occurring, my moto abruptly stops just short of the gathering. My driver looks back at me expectantly, making it clear that this is our final destination. I pay him the 350 francs (approximately 85 cents) we had previously negotiated, and I tentatively step down. Before I can even finish saying murakoze cyane (“thank you very much”), the drivers are already gone, leaving the last few syllables of my words lingering in the dust filled air and my friend and I, two white 19-year-old college students, standing in the midst of over 400 men, women and children awaiting our arrival.

As we meander through the crowd of people, gradually making our way to the small schoolhouse, I am bombarded with greetings from young children being pushed in my direction by their elders’ outstretched arms. Engulfed in this teeming group of people, I begin to realize the extent of poverty that ravishes this community. Everywhere I look there are dozens of malnourished children with large protruding, swollen bellies. I see children with no shoes garbed in old, disintegrating clothing hanging loosely off their weak, thin limbs. I see children with cases of ringworm and others with swarms of bugs flying around their dirt-encrusted faces. Despite the apparent despair and a precarious future, a palpable feeling of excitement is prevalent around me. These 300 children and their friends and family members have gathered in the hopes of being on the list compiled by Solidarity (a Rwandan organization that partners with WE-ACTx) to receive school fees for the upcoming year. Currently, attending school is too expensive for a large proportion of Rwanda’s population. Though not officially affiliated with WE-ACTx, a few of my colleagues decided to start this program in 2006, and on this particular day, it was the responsibility of my friend and me to photograph the children already enrolled in the program and to update their information. Furthermore, we were asked to photograph and record the information of 100 additional children who had been chosen by Solidarity as the “neediest.” These photographs and profiles are then sent to the United States, where each Rwandan child is linked with his/her respective donor.

What is your name? What is your sex? How old are you? What is your class year? Is your mother alive? Is your father alive? How many siblings do you have? How many meals a day do you eat? Are there any health problems in your family? What is your favorite subject in school? These are the questions I was given to ask every child after taking his or her photo. Sitting at a rickety, old, wood table in the schoolhouse next to my translator, Bob, a 23-year-old secondary school student currently enrolled in the program, I hastily type the answers that he provides me:

- 8-year-old female, 1st year primary school, no mother, no father, 2 siblings, 0-1 meals a day.
- 11-year-old female, 3rd year primary school, HIV+ mother, no father, 5 siblings, 1 meal a day.
- 16-year-old male, 2nd year secondary school, no mother, no father, 10 siblings, 1 meal a day, favorite subject: French.
- 9-year-old female, 3rd year primary school, no mother, no father, 0 siblings, 1 meal a day, favorite subject: math.

The list goes on for 11 pages.

Beset by grinding poverty, malnutrition, infectious diseases, the remnants of colonization and of the genocide, Rwandans today are in a crisis fueled by social and structural violence, and on this particular day, the manifestation of this crisis is illustrated in the hundreds of lives surrounding me. While navigating through the crowd, the children I pass will most likely not attend school this upcoming year unless their names are on the list compiled by Solidarity. In addition, for those whose names are on the list, there is no guarantee that the funding will go through for their fees. To attend school for one year in Rwanda costs approximately 30 to 40 U.S. dollars per student, depending on his or her grade level. This fee includes the costs of books, uniforms, and a small stipend for teachers’ salaries; for the people gathered at this schoolhouse, it is an impossible price to pay. For five hours my friend and I work to find, photograph, and document the 200 children whose names are on the lists provided. When we finish, nearly the same number of children remains, patiently waiting outside under the hot, Rwandan sun for their names to be called. As I leave the building, I am forced to face these children. In their minds, their fate for the next year rests in the white, privileged hands of my friend and me, and we fail them.

To this day, I am unable to fully grapple with the myriad emotions I feel when I recall the times I spent collecting information for the school fees program both in the outskirts of Kigali and in a small mountainous

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village on the border of the Congo. Though I had no control over who was on the list while collecting children's information, I was perceived by the children and families to have all of the power. My academic studies at Brandeis thus far have taught me about the larger structural forces that perpetuate poverty and the disproportionate vulnerability of some individuals and communities. Despite this education, when face-to-face with a teenage boy who has followed me for nearly a half-mile down the road, pleading with me to take his picture and record his information, I am unable to turn towards scholars such as Philippe Bourgois and their analysis of structural forces for guidance on how to respond.

Rwanda is stuck in a multiplex crisis rooted in the legacy of colonialism and structural oppression, and it is the impact of this crisis on the lives of millions of Rwandans that serves to further the cycle of poverty and dependence. While working on the school fees project, I am overwhelmed by the sheer magnitude of despair that appears in the hundreds of eyes focused on me, and I struggle to contextualize this experience within a greater intellectual framework. In retrospect, I begin to see the importance of a multi-dimensional approach that works to address structural inequalities while simultaneously not losing sight of the individual amid the masses, for it is the individual who addresses the consequences of the resulting privilege and disadvantage in his or her day-to-day life.

National Liberation Day

On July 4th, my friends and I boarded a bus to Rwanda's national stadium in Remara, an area on the outskirts of Kigali, to attend the national Liberation Day celebrations. In Rwanda, this date commemorates the day that the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) took control of Kigali from the Interahamwe (Hutu militias) during the genocide, and a large celebration occurs annually to honor the military and their heroic feat.

When we arrived at the stadium around 7:30 a.m., tens of thousands of Rwandans who had traveled from all over the country to see the festivities welcomed us into their midst. The stadium, which is painted in the national colors of yellow, green, and blue, was particularly festive this morning, strewn with ribbons and banners and packed with people sporting Rwanda's official colors. When President Paul Kagame arrived at 10:00 a.m., the parade officially began. Because of my American upbringing, I had envisioned that the parade would include Rwandans on large floats waving flags in the air while a marching band led the way around the stadium. Although I was right about the traditional

band component of the parade, my imagination failed to register the significance of Liberation Day, and subsequently, the fact that large floats and Rwandans in elaborate and playful costumes were not part of the program.

As the marching band entered the stadium, 70,000 people were suddenly brought to their feet by the sound of the national anthem, *Rwanda Nziza* ("Rwanda, Our Beautiful Country"), which was altered in 2001 to break from Rwanda's violent and bloody past. Following the playing of the anthem, the stadium erupted in jubilation as the soldiers began to enter by the hundreds. With every commandment delivered by a drill sergeant, the soldiers, who were lined up in formation, assumed their positions and adjusted their weapons. The crowd sat fixated by the demonstrations, entranced by the soldiers' coordinated manipulation of their weapons and their military prowess. Over the course of two hours, the soccer field and the surrounding track vanished beneath the feet of thousands of soldiers who entered the stadium and followed various military commands for the ecstatic crowd.

Engulfed in this extremely militaristic environment, I struggled to understand why Rwandans expressed such extensive enthusiasm towards the military when they themselves have endured so much bloodshed. While watching the crowd's reaction to the demonstrations, I realized that the Rwandans in the stadium are invested in each move these soldiers make. Many of the men who stood before us in the stadium were the same soldiers who defeated the Interahamwe in 1994. These soldiers were proving their military strength, and the crowd responded by basking in their glory and the comfort it provides them.

Throughout the parade, the Rwandan Patriotic Front was presented as Rwanda's liberators, and for the tens of thousands in the stands, these soldiers are the physical embodiment of the message "Never Again." Fourteen years after the genocide, Rwandans are still working to heal the wounds of their past and find comfort in the present. As each step taken north, south, east, or west in the land of one thousand hills provides a different angle from which to see and interpret the land and the events that have shaped it, so too does it provide Rwandans with a different direction to turn towards for support. Whether they turn towards the mystical realm of religion, towards a memorial, or towards the strength and power of the RPF, resilient Rwandans are struggling to reconcile the ineffaceable reminders of their past with a determined eye to the future.

To Sophie and the women of WE-ACTx Ineza:

Their lives, shaped by colonialism and post-colonialism, genocide and AIDS, gave me new definitions of strength and resilience. Without them, my experience of Rwanda would have been shallow and incomplete. The future of Rwanda as a nation is only as strong as the resilience of individuals like these women.

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WE-ACTx official Website: [<http://we-actx.org/>]

Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre website: [<http://www.kigalimemorialcentre.org/>]