

[Philip Gourevitch, A Reporter at Large, "The Life After," The New Yorker, May 4, 2009, p. 37](#)

ABSTRACT: A REPORTER AT LARGE about President Paul Kagame's attempts to rebuild Rwanda after the genocidal violence fifteen years ago. In the course of a hundred days, beginning on April 6, 1994, nearly a million people from the Tutsi minority were massacred in the name of an ideology known as Hutu Power.

On the fifteenth anniversary of the genocide, Rwanda is one of the safest and most orderly countries in Africa. The great majority of prisoners accused or convicted of genocide have been released. And Rwanda is the only nation where hundreds of thousands of people who took part in mass murder live intermingled at every level of society with the families of their victims.

"So far, so good," Rwanda's President Paul Kagame tells the writer. Kagame led the rebel force that stopped the genocide. He has presided over Rwanda's destiny ever since. He is unapologetically authoritarian, and Rwanda's stability has come at the expense of internal opposition and dissent, while its security is owed in large part to the exporting of its violent conflict into the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Writer travels to Taba, a village in Rwanda's central highlands to see what had become of an elderly genocide survivor, Laurencie Nyirabeza, and Jean Girumuhatse, the man who had massacred a number of people in her family. Tells about *gacaca*, the community courts convened for genocide cases. Last year, the government decided to clear the genocide caseload. More than a million cases were adjudicated.

Writer interviews Girumuhatse, who served eleven years in prison and says he confessed everything in *gacaca*. Writer interviews Girumuhatse's brother-in-law, Evariste, a Tutsi, his sister Mariane, and Nyirabeza. Nyirabeza had worked for the *gacaca* courts, and she had not been impressed. "Even when the killers ask forgiveness, it's from the government and the Rwandan people and the victims, but they never name our names." Kagame says, "nobody will tell you he is happy with the *gacaca*," but "*gacaca* gives us something to build on." Tells about the genocidal Hutu army in exile in Congo.

Writer interviews Paul Rwarakabije, a former top officer in that army who is now a general in Kagame's army. Mentions the overthrowing of Mobutu Sese Seko and the installation of Laurent Kabila as the President of Congo. Kabila was succeeded by his son, Joseph. Tells about the Hutu army reunited under the name F.D.L.R. (Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda). Discusses efforts by Kagame to reintegrate the exiles into Rwandan society. Describes a new rebellion in eastern Congo launched by a renegade Congolese Tutsi general named Laurent Nkunda and the sometimes contentious relations between Kagame and Kabila over the violence. Writer interviews Nkunda two weeks before his arrest by Kagame's troops. Nkunda's army has since disbanded. There are still about fifty thousand Congolese Tutsi refugees in Rwanda and there is still no peace in Congo. But, for the first time in fifteen years, there is near-universal agreement that there is a prospect of peace.

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