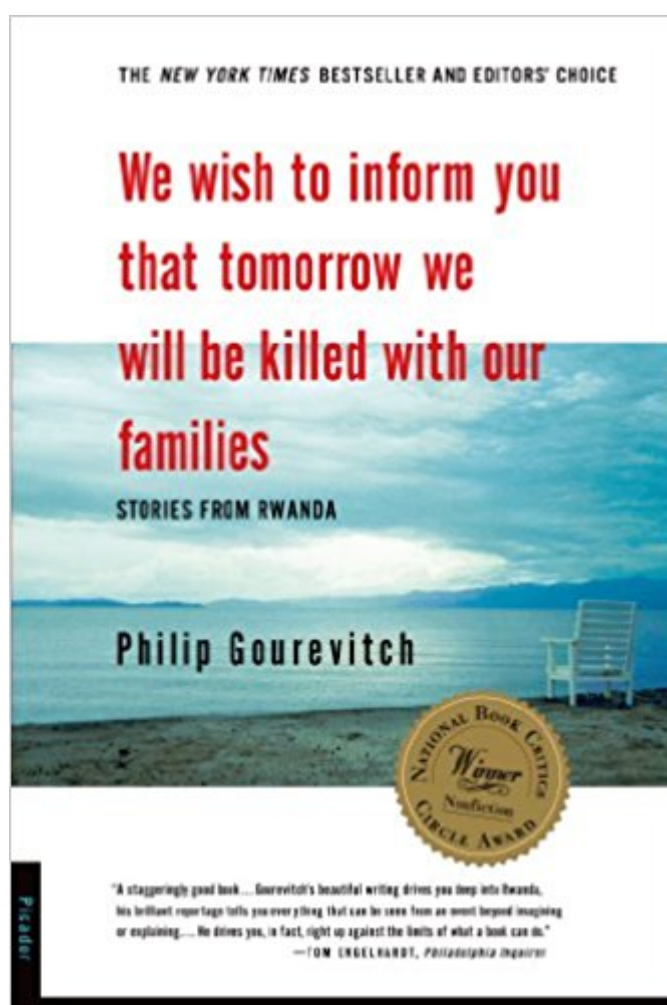


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We Wish To Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories From Rwanda (Bestselling Backlist)



Synopsis

An unforgettable firsthand account of a people's response to genocide and what it tells us about humanity. This remarkable debut book chronicles what has happened in Rwanda and neighboring states since 1994, when the Rwandan government called on everyone in the Hutu majority to murder everyone in the Tutsi minority. Though the killing was low-tech--largely by machete--it was carried out at shocking speed: some 800,000 people were exterminated in a hundred days. A Tutsi pastor, in a letter to his church president, a Hutu, used the chilling phrase that gives Philip Gourevitch his title. With keen dramatic intensity, Gourevitch frames the genesis and horror of Rwanda's "genocidal logic" in the anguish of its aftermath: the mass displacements, the temptations of revenge and the quest for justice, the impossibly crowded prisons and refugee camps. Through intimate portraits of Rwandans in all walks of life, he focuses on the psychological and political challenges of survival and on how the new leaders of postcolonial Africa went to war in the Congo when resurgent genocidal forces threatened to overrun central Africa. Can a country composed largely of perpetrators and victims create a cohesive national society? This moving contribution to the literature of witness tells us much about the struggle everywhere to forge sane, habitable political orders, and about the stubbornness of the human spirit in a world of extremity. *We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families* is the winner of the National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction.

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Customer Reviews

Knowing I was going to visit Rwanda as a tourist, I wanted to have a better understanding of Rwanda's recent history. Wow, I had no idea how much one book could contribute to my experience. In less than 400 pages, I felt I learned about as much as one could about the colonial history, the genocide (before, during, and after), as well as the culture, people, and their traditions. During my visit, the knowledge acquired from this extraordinary book allowed me to better appreciate and understand Rwanda today, as well as provided me the ability to have very intelligent and revealing conversations with many Rwandans. This was not just a book of facts and figures, but a comprehensive collection of all that were involved during the Genocide. While there are plenty of first hand accounts from the victims themselves, Phillip Gourevitch was also able to interview both Tutsi and Hutus as well as military leaders, clergy, NGO's, and many others trapped in this insane period. His access to Paul Kagame, currently Rwanda's very successful President, allowed for a perspective not typically found in historical accounts of the Genocide. The authors insight into the colonial history shows how ethnic differences were effectively manufactured first by Germany than by Belgium as their obsession with dividing and classifying the population to preserve power would culminate into this Genocide that would claim more than one million babies, children, grandparents, mothers, and fathers. Rather than a spontaneous event, the very title of this book makes perfectly clear that this conflict was not only years in the making, but very public with daily radio broadcasts and government communications speaking the necessity of ridding Rwanda of those "cockroaches". Perhaps though what was most revealing was the deliberate indifference the rest of the world would have. Even after the atrocities, the political fear of the West to actually declare it Genocide as this would require a protocol of help and support. However, nothing quite hits you harder than the very fact that just a few thousand UN Soldiers, that was in fact requested by the commanding officer in charge in Rwanda at the time, would have avoided the majority of the killings. Instead, without even the basic machines and infrastructure of Nazi Germany, over 330 Rwandans would be slaughtered EVERY hour. A fair amount of the book

also explains how the global political community post-genocide would allow France to continue to not only fund the Hutu military that kept on slaughtering, but allow these leaders a safe passage out of Rwanda and avoid punishment by establishing refugees camps along the border. Gourevitch also carefully writes about how one day teachers, priests, colleagues, family and neighbors that had lived together would, the very next day, slaughter their students, congregation, family members, and people they had worked with for a long time. For one of the most Christian countries in Africa faith and religion actually expedited the genocide as thousands of Rwandans would flee to local churches where they were easily executed. Finally, the author does spend enough time on one of the few bright spots of humanity, in particular how creative, determined and successful Paul Rusesabagina of the Hotel des Mille Collines (‘Hotel Rwanda’), not just saved thousands of lives, but was also one of the only source of information to the outside world. During my visit to Rwanda, it was surreal to be walking/driving on the same roads and visiting the same places that I had read about that just twenty years earlier was covered in bodies and blood. Moreover, having multiple conversations with the very same people that were either victims of dead family members, or the perpetrators of the senseless massacre left me somehow hopeful in humanity as not only was I warmly accepted by all that I met, but I could not sense a desire for revenge.

I started reading this book on the eve of a trip to Rwanda. Needless to say, I didn’t sleep well that night. It’s hard to reconcile what happened in Rwanda 20 years ago with what the country is today. It is a beautiful, safe and welcoming country with clean streets, good roads, beautiful schools and clinics in every town. This book gives a very good account of the history both recent and ancient that led up to the genocide in 1994. The author also carries on a few years into the future as Rwanda struggles to recover. He ends the book in 1998 wondering how the country will ever be whole again. I hope he has returned more recently to see the country’s transformation. You cannot help but root for Rwandans. Theirs is an amazing success story. On a side note, be wary of the account of Paul Rusesabagina. His was the basis for the movie Hotel Rwanda. Apparently, there may be some question about the accuracy of his telling of the events at the hotel. But that is not the fault of the author. He does an amazing job tracking down both victims and genocidaires to get their stories. It’s a compelling read.

I read this book many years ago and I highly recommend it. I recall reading an article in my local newspaper in 1994 about a mass migration of people from Rwanda to eastern Congo. Until I read

this book, I didn't realize that these "refugees" were Hutus fleeing Rwanda after Paul Kagame's RPF had taken the capital, Kigali. Now in November 2015, 21 years later, it appears there is a potential genocide brewing in Burundi, Rwanda's mirror image country to the south. I was heartened to read the positive reviews of this book that were written in 2015, largely by young people who read it in school. This story isn't history, it's background and it is as relevant today as it was the day it was published. And, unfortunately, it's still happening all over the world.

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