Reconciliation as Human Development in Post-Genocide Rwanda

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Introduction

Between April and July of 1994, the country of Rwanda experienced a dark and devastating genocide, during which nearly one million people, primarily of the Tutsi ethnic group, were killed. The nature of this genocide is significant because of the mass participation of the Hutu population in the killings despite social and cultural similarities between the primary opposition groups, the Hutus and Tutsis, and the speed and short duration of the genocide.\(^1\) Although the 100-day period was clearly the most violent climax between the two groups, this ethnic conflict began long before the genocide, during the pre-colonial and colonial eras of Rwanda. Numerous reconciliation and justice efforts have been initiated since 1994 in an attempt to recover from the traumatic aftermath of the genocide, to unite the people of the country, and to work toward the development of the nation; although Rwanda has made significant progress since then, there remains much debate concerning the efficacy and legitimacy of the various methods of reconciliation in use. Some argue for justice, while others believe in the restoration of trust and peace.

For this article, I have chosen to analyze these major reconciliatory efforts in light of the theory of Christian philosopher Jean Vanier.\(^2\) His discourse on trust, openness, and shared humanity offers a perspective of reconciliation at the local, personal, and individual level. I begin by introducing the history of Rwanda and the events leading up to the genocide. Then, I present the major reconciliatory efforts developed after the genocide and the various interpretations of these methods from the existing literature. Finally, I apply Vanier’s theoretical framework to the discussion to suggest that gacaca courts and church initiatives hold the greatest potential for achieving authentic reconciliation in Rwanda; that true reconciliation and human development requires acknowledgement and openness, rather than the suppression of ethnic labels, past transgressions, stories, and memories of the genocide.

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\(^1\) Phil Clark, *The Gacaca Courts, Post-Genocide Justice and Reconciliation in Rwanda* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 12.

The Genocide: History and Background

In order to explore the complexities of reconciliation, it is necessary to review a brief history of Hutu-Tutsi relations during the pre-colonial and colonial years leading up to the genocide. The history of the pre-colonial era shows that the hierarchical division between the Hutu and Tutsi people emerged gradually; the Hutu were primarily pastoralists and settled in Rwanda before the Tutsi herdsmen, who arrived approximately five centuries later and conquered most of the country, establishing a Tutsi-ruled monarchy. During the subsequent years, “Tutsi” came to indicate a wealthy person with many cattle or subjects, while “Hutu” indicated a subordinate; however, these labels were fluid, and one could change their status depending on their wealth. When Belgium colonized Rwanda in 1919, they favoured the Tutsi because of their socio-political power and established a system of ethnic identity cards, indicating whether one was Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa (a smaller ethnic group); this system is significant because it created a tangible ethnic division among the Rwandan population, and it was later used by Hutu killers to identify Tutsis during the genocide. After some time, however, the Belgians shifted their support to the larger Hutu population, which established an authoritarian leadership when Rwanda became independent in 1962. Thus began the violence between the Hutu and Tutsi as the Hutus fought to eliminate the Tutsi rulers to gain power and assert their superiority.

By 1993, ethnic tensions had escalated, and the assassination of a Hutu leader by a Tutsi army led the Hutus to retaliate with violence. It is at this point that Hutu politicians began using propaganda to justify and encourage violence against the Tutsi peoples, and Rwandan President Habyarimana began training the “interahamwe” - Hutu youth militia - to attack the Tutsi. The catalyst for genocide was the assassination of President Habyarimana on 6 April 1994; Hutu interahamwe, government leaders, and militia immediately set out to kill all Tutsi citizens and encourage the Hutu population to follow suit. During the following one hundred days, nearly three-quarters of the Tutsi population was murdered.

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3 Phil Clark, 15. 4 Ibid, 16. 5 Ibid, 12-13. 6 Ibid, 12. 7 Ibid, 12.
and proceeded to bring the genocide to an end. They established a primarily Tutsi-led government and began undertaking the immense challenge of restoring justice and peace in post-genocide Rwanda. It is important to note that in the immediate aftermath of the genocide, the RPF imprisoned thousands of genocide suspects and executed many of them; several RPF members also participated in revenge massacres of Hutu displacement camps, killing thousands of Hutu civilians each month from late 1994 to early 1995. Thus, while Hutus were the main perpetrators of the genocide, the actions of the RPF cannot be overlooked in discussions of post-genocide reconciliation.

**Strategies for Reconciliation**

Various action plans have been implemented in Rwanda at the international, national, and local levels since the genocide in an attempt to achieve reconciliation and development. At the international level, the United Nations Security Council established the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) to prosecute the leaders and perpetrators most responsible for the massive crimes during the genocide; the ICTR hearings take place in Arusha, Tanzania.

At the national level, the Rwandan government established new national courts, equipped with newly-trained judges and lawyers, to process the numerous and growing number of genocide cases across the country. In addition to implementing justice through the court system, the government also created the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) to emphasize and promote unity as a necessary component of reconciliation. The policies of the NURC are primarily educative rather than punitive; this is evident in their use of solidarity camps, called Ingando, to build coexistence and strengthen the ‘Rwandan’ identity. Approximately 3,000 pre-university students attend Ingando for two months each year across the country.

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8 Ibid, 15.
At the local level, the traditional Rwandan justice system of gacaca courts, meaning “justice in the grass,” has been reestablished and transformed to bring peace and justice to victims and offenders in the post-genocide context. Gacaca court hearings, which are led by respected elders elected by the local community, take place in open spaces in public; this setting is intended to involve the local population in the process of justice. The gacaca system emphasizes mediation, truth-telling, offender accountability, and compensation for victims. These various approaches to reconciliation have been analyzed and debated throughout literature, mainly by political theorists. In the following section, I will provide a brief literature review of the major proponents and critics of these reconciliatory efforts.

Reconciliatory Efforts: Interpretations in Literature

There is a general consensus within literature that the ICTR is flawed and does not present a sufficient means to achieving reconciliation. Even the ICTR chief prosecutor, Justice Jallows, states that the ICTR “only complements further measures aimed at securing restorative or socio-economic justice as a basis for lasting peace and national healing.” However, Kohen et al. argue that the ICTR has not aided Rwanda in reconciliation because it focuses solely on major offenders. Moreover, it follows the Western criminal justice system protocol that prohibits contact between victims and offenders. Kohen et al. contend that this separation eliminates the possibility for personal reconciliation, forgiveness, or healing. Generally, Rwandans regard the ICTR with skepticism and distance because the tribunal judges are not Rwandan, and the tribunals are held in Arusha, Tanzania; these factors have resulted in a lack of awareness, ownership, and familiarity of the ICTR trials by the Rwandan community.

The NURC has placed a particularly significant emphasis on reconciliation over retribution; according to the NURC’s (2010) Rwandan Reconciliation Barometer (RRB), their first guiding principle

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13 Phil Clark, The Gacaca Courts.
14 Ibid.
18 Ibid, 90.
19 Ibid, 94.
is “to promote the spirit of Rwandan identity and put national interests first instead of favours based on ethnicity, blood relations, gender, religion, region of origin, etc.”20 The results of the RRB survey suggest that, despite the majority population who report that they experience reconciliation in their lives, a significant portion of Rwandans, approximately 35%, report that the issue remains unresolved and often desire revenge for past events.21 Thus, the NURC recommends that the government and the NURC should double their efforts in fighting against ethnic stereotypes through education and Ingando camps.22 Nevertheless, many scholars strongly critique Ingando and ethnic reeducation. Kearney questions Ingando’s ability to eliminate peoples’ association to their ethnic identities; he argues that silencing ethnic terms only temporarily suppresses resentment and tension, resulting in negative consequences for long-term reconciliation.23 Similarly, Clark states that “the denial of ethnicity…means that the past cannot be fully addressed…The government’s efforts to forge a unifying Rwandan identity will at best create only a fragile, superficial unity that cannot provide a solid foundation for the building of reconciliation.”24

The gacaca court system is another reconciliatory approach that has been met with significant controversy. One of the major criticisms of gacaca is the legal incompetence of the elected community elders. Kohen et al. believe that the locally-elected elders’ leadership and neighbourhood participation are incompetent and unofficial, which may easily result in unfairness and partiality towards Tutsis.25 Critics also claim that gacaca allows victims to make false accusations against suspects and encourages suspects to make false confessions in order to reduce their sentence or attain early release.26 At the same time, however, Amstutz also argues that, despite its flaws, gacaca is more likely to reveal truth about the genocide and encourage the restoration of social bonds; in addition, he states that the public nature of gacaca trials engages more of the Rwandan community, which better promotes individual healing and communal reconciliation than conventional trials.27

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21 Ibid, 70.
22 Ibid, 90.
24 Janine Clark, 144.
25 Kohen, 93.
27 Ibid.
Beyond gacaca, Amstutz also argues that churches have significant potential to contribute to reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda; their dominant religious, social, and political role allows their actions and message to be heard through multiple fora. Lowe insists that churches cannot hold any credibility without confessing and apologizing for their institutional complicity during the genocide; only then can they contribute to reshaping the moral-cultural system of Rwanda. Churches have the potential to encourage processes of healing and restoration of relationships, which eliminate distrust and animosity between Hutus and Tutsis.

Another primary recommendation for reconciliation in the dominant literature is justice for RPF war crimes. Kohen et al. note that the Rwandan government has been reluctant to acknowledge and prosecute RPF war crimes, which may indicate a bias in their approach to reconciliation. Clark adds that the minority of RPF crimes during the genocide does not justify their dismissal or excuse them from punishment. Clearly, there remains much uncertainty, disagreement, and progress to be made in the discussions and implementation of reconciliatory efforts in post-genocide Rwanda. However, I believe that there is hope and potential for genuine reconciliation in light of Vanier’s theory of development. By examining the above literature through Vanier’s theoretical framework, it is clear that the ICTR and Ingando camps present barriers to reconciliation, while gacaca and the churches of Rwanda offer significant potential for healing, peace, and human development.

Reconciliation Efforts: Application of Vanier’s Theory

Much of the literature concerning reconciliation in Rwanda is founded on political theory; thus, the theoretical framework of Vanier, as a Christian philosopher and the founder of L’Arche, may seem irrelevant or inappropriate within discussions of post-genocide reconciliation. Vanier’s theory is largely founded on Christian values and spirituality. He argues that people are only capable to love and forgive

28 Ibid.
30 Amstutz, 563-564
31 Kohen (2011).
32 Janine Clark, 145-146.
through the power of God. These claims are explicitly religious and may present a source of controversy within larger socio-political discussions; however, I believe that, in the Rwandan context, Vanier’s incorporation of Christian beliefs becomes highly relevant and applicable, given that the majority of Rwandans identify with the Christian faith. Even within his focus on people with intellectual disabilities, the experience he describes is one of common humanity, and L’Arche provides an example of how his theory can be lived out in a particular community. Therefore, despite the vastly different community addressed in Vanier’s theory, his perspective of reconciliation as a bottom-up process, with a focus on individual and local development, offers significant insight into the discussions of reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda.

According to Vanier, development is the movement towards a society of trust and openness that respects differences and desires to care for the needs of others; it involves the reconciliation of all opposing groups through the recognition of their common humanity, which is characterized by unique strengths, weaknesses, joys, and sufferings. Cultural or political conflict arises when groups or individuals, who believe that their way is right or superior, attempt to dominate all other groups. Vanier describes the common cycle in history in which oppressed groups, who spend much of their energy struggling against their oppressors, succeed and eventually become the oppressors in an effort to maintain their own power; the pre-colonial and colonial eras of Rwanda present a clear example of this cycle between the Hutu and Tutsi peoples. In the post-genocide context, Vanier implies that development is more than civility or coexistence; true human development requires peace that is accomplished through respectful dialogue, openness, vulnerability, and willingness to both acknowledge our pasts and look to the future.

In the words of Jean Vanier, “true peace can rarely be imposed from the outside; it must be born within and between communities through meetings and dialogue and then carried outward.” At the international level, the ICTR has clearly failed to involve the Rwandan community in its trials and

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34 Vanier, *Becoming Human*.
36 Vanier, *Finding Peace*.
37 Ibid.
hearings. There are three major points of disconnect: the physical separation between Tanzania and Rwanda, the language barrier presented by the court’s failure to use the Kinyarwandan language, and the prohibition of interaction between offenders and victims. This separation hinders dialogue and, ultimately, peace.\(^{39}\) Unsurprisingly, Amstutz’s study reports that these trials have had little impact on the reconciliation process in Rwanda.\(^{40}\) I believe that the trials of genocide suspects, including both major and minor criminals, would contribute more to the reconciliatory process if put in the hands of the national and local Rwandan courts. The following analysis of gacaca and the NURC’s survey results will help illustrate this point.

A similar phenomenon of disengagement is occurring at the national level through the NURC and its Ingando camps. Kearny provides a case study of the largest Ingando camp, located in Nkumba, Rwanda, that was built to teach and train Rwandan pre-university students in peace studies, reconciliation, and solidarity. Based on his survey of student responses, it is clear that the use of the terms, “Hutu,” “Tutsi,” or “Twa” is implicitly forbidden; moreover, the majority of students are successfully taught to believe that people who do not agree with one version of history are dangerous.\(^{41}\) These camps are essentially presenting a revised version of Rwanda’s history that omits the details of the ethnic identities that fuelled the genocide. According to Vanier, Ingando’s curriculum represents an emerging ideology of national unity, which refuses to accept any other reality or opinion.\(^ {42}\) However, to move towards reconciliation, Vanier suggests,

\[\text{We have to be willing to look backwards and become more conscious of all those who have hurt us, all that is broken in us and that has brought us inner deaths, hurts that we may have hidden and stifled. It means that we acknowledge the story of our origins, of our own lives, see and accept our brokenness and the times we also have hurt others.}\]

\(^{43}\) The NURC’s efforts through Ingando directly oppose Vanier’s proposals by systematically suppressing the painful reality of the past in the hopes of achieving unity; I do not believe that unity can be equated to authentic reconciliation. According to the RRB survey results, approximately 90% of Rwandans proudly identify with the Rwandan identity, and 98% of Rwandans want their children to identify themselves as

\(^{39}\) Amstutz (2006).
\(^{40}\) Ibid.
\(^{41}\) Kearney, 163.
\(^{42}\) Vanier, Becoming Human.
\(^{43}\) Vanier, Finding Peace, 47.
Rwandan. This represents Rwanda’s immense progress towards unity since the genocide, and I do not discount it as a negative outcome. However, the survey also reports a significant fear and belief by approximately 40% of the population that some Rwandans would try to commit the genocide again if conditions were favourable. Thus, the unity that is externally experienced and reported by Rwandans is, more often than not, superficial. The trauma of the genocide clearly lingers in the form of fears, insecurities, and distrust among a considerable portion of the population.

Buckely-Zistel provides a similar critique, arguing that there is a sense of “pretending peace” among Rwandans. This is clearly expressed in one of her interviewees where an elderly man recently released from prison in Nyamata, Rwanda explained:

> Just after the war there were many problems. People returned from exile; there were also revenge killings. People could not talk to each other. Everybody was afraid of everybody. Today, it is as if we have forgotten everything. At the moment it does not exist anymore. People never talk about the past because it brings back bad memories and problems.

This quote represents the restriction of freedom many Rwandans have expressed regarding their ability to articulate and acknowledge their suffering, pain, and trauma because it would “upset the social balance” imposed by the government and the NURC. Clearly, a few years cannot suppress the immense problems and deep ethnic divisions, which have existed long before the genocide, that still exist in the hearts and minds of Rwandans.

Contrary to the methods of Ingando, Vanier believes that peace is not possible through the suppression of conflict; rather, peace requires people to work through conflict by using dialogue. Undoubtedly, dialogue in the post-genocide context is extremely challenging, and Vanier (2003) recognizes that this process will require risking pain, facing fears, and moving into a state of insecurity. Nevertheless, the Social Cohesion in Rwanda survey demonstrates that while the acknowledgement of past ethnic conflicts and suffering is uncomfortable, it is rewarding: the majority of survivors (82%) and a significant portion of prisoners (54%) reported feeling threatened and insecure during gacaca trials; at the

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44 NURC (2010), 56-57.
45 NURC (2010), 60.
47 Ibid.
48 Vanier, Finding Peace.
same time, the majority of survivors (71%) agreed that they will feel safer after the process of gacaca is over, and the majority of both survivors (71%) and prisoners (79%) believe that the families of those who are convicted and those of the victims will be reconciled. These results support Vanier’s claim that peace can be achieved through dialogue and openness, despite the difficulty of the process. His concept of reconciliation as development allows for the discussion and sharing of varying opinions and personal histories, and the acceptance of these differences. These components are necessary for a deeper, lasting level of unity among the citizens of Rwanda.

In light of Vanier’s theory, the gacaca court system emerges as the most appropriate means of justice to achieve reconciliation as human development. Unlike the ICTR trials, gacaca brings the victims and the genocide suspects into an intimate, communal setting and allows each party to tell their story. The public setting of gacaca also engages the Rwandan society to a far greater extent than the ICTR. According to the NURC’s Social Cohesion survey results, 62% of respondents participated in gacaca as spectators, and only 1% of respondents were not involved in gacaca in any way during 2005-2007; clearly, gacaca allows for the active involvement of Rwandan society within its tribunal. True peace is only possible through the incorporation of dialogue which occurs within the communities themselves, as demonstrated by gacaca, rather than outside of its borders. Moreover, the process of gacaca rests on the foundation of truth-telling, healing, forgiveness, and restorative justice. I believe that, while gacaca alone may not have the capacity to accomplish complete healing and forgiveness, it provides a starting point for authentic reconciliation to occur. Clark’s analysis of gacaca courts describes the population’s perspectives on healing through gacaca. Despite the general hesitancy to discuss their traumatic memories with researchers, Clark’s interviews and observations reveal a discourse of “healing as belonging” among survivors. Survivors explained that gacaca allowed them to tell their stories in front of an empathetic audience and listen to similar stories from others; these opportunities provided them with a sense of reintegration and healing as the community acknowledged their sufferings. Vanier describes this sense

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52 Vanier, Finding Peace, 16.
53 Phil Clark, 262.
54 Ibid.
of belonging as the heart of being human, in which people share their weaknesses and vulnerabilities with each other through their personal stories.\textsuperscript{55} The Social Cohesion survey reports that 97% of the general population and 81% of genocide survivors believe that gacaca will facilitate sustainable peace in Rwanda, signifying their positive outlook on gacaca’s potential for development through reconciliation.\textsuperscript{56}

It is important to note that, although the population’s responses about gacaca are largely optimistic, the picture becomes more complex when the opinions of specific issues and groups are considered. According to Clark’s study, genocide suspects who have confessed to committing crimes experienced a personal sense of healing as liberation and purification from the crimes that have “polluted their souls.”\textsuperscript{57} On the other hand, those who do not believe they are guilty reported feelings of liberation when they were given the opportunity to refute the accusations made against them. However, they also experienced a sense of fear that their communities would refuse to accept them upon their release.\textsuperscript{58} Thus, there seems to be a persistent fear of exclusion and distrust by the community among genocide suspects.

In fact, this fear may be legitimate according to the Social Cohesion survey, which reports that 66% of survivors agreed that the families of the guilty will always be resentful.\textsuperscript{59} Apart from resentment, the survey also reveals a significant amount of distrust concerning the individual accounts made during gacaca: 83% of prisoners doubt the truthfulness of the prosecution witness accounts, and 77% of survivors distrust the credibility of defence witness accounts.\textsuperscript{60} Clearly, the gacaca court system is not entirely sufficient in achieving full reconciliation, despite its emphasis on truth-telling and forgiveness. There is also much room for improvement to assure and further encourage truth-telling during gacaca trials, although specific proposals and strategies to do so are beyond the purposes of this paper.

Nevertheless, gacaca offers a venue for victims and offenders to meet face-to-face and honestly share their stories, a feature that is clearly lacking in other retribution measures, such as ICTR. Without this opportunity for public engagement, the difficulty, and often inability, to discuss the traumatic experiences of the genocide “exacerbates survivors’ sense of isolation…creating a vicious cycle of silence and

\textsuperscript{55}Vanier, \textit{Becoming Human}, 89.
\textsuperscript{56}NURC (2007), 68.
\textsuperscript{57}Phil Clark, 268.
\textsuperscript{58}Phil Clark, 267.
\textsuperscript{59}NURC (2007), 73.
\textsuperscript{60}NURC (2007), 77.
loneliness.” Vanier describes a similar sense of isolation and loneliness in the experiences of some individuals with intellectual disabilities before they joined the L’Arche community. In both situations, the lack of sharing and communion with others leads to the destructive forces of seclusion and societal division. Dialogue facilitates the healing process by allowing people to share their lives with each other. 

Paul, an interviewee in Clark’s study, is one of the few members of his family who survived the genocide; while the loss and pain of the genocide remains, Paul states that “[at gacaca], we realize that we are in the same situation, that we have all had family who were killed. We understand each other and we realize that we are not alone.” The acknowledgement and dialogue of shared experiences that occurs during gacaca trials unites people at a deeper level, in spite of the participants’ scattered doubts and distrust of specific accounts. Therefore, gacaca’s system of restorative justice provides an effective stepping stone for Rwandans to move from resentment to reconciliation.

In order for genuine forgiveness to occur, Vanier (2008) proposes five steps: 1) a refusal to seek revenge, 2) a hope that the oppressor is liberated, 3) a desire to understand the oppressor, 4) a recognition of one’s own darkness, and 5) patience. It may simply be a matter of time before all Rwandans refuse to seek revenge and instead desire to understand their oppressors, though many have already accomplished this. I believe that the next step in pursuing reconciliation is for the RPF-led government to “recognize their own darkness” by addressing their offences and accounting for the RPF war crimes that occurred during the genocide. In the midst of the efforts to eradicate ethnic differences and promote the Rwandan identity, Clark poses an important question: “If ethnicity does not matter, why is nobody being called to account for the crimes of the RPF?” Hutu citizens have been the primary target during prosecutions of genocide criminals, which indicates that an unspoken ethnic divide remains. Clark suggests that RPF Tutsi officers have not been prosecuted, most likely for the reason that it would cause conflict between President Paul Kagame and the military he relies on to maintain governmental power. This indicates a clear refusal to admit the errors of one’s own group in order to maintain power, which Vanier identifies as

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61 Phil Clark, 263.
62 Vanier, Becoming Human.
63 Phil Clark, 263.
64 Vanier, Becoming Human, 154-155.
65 Janine Clark, 145.
a key characteristic of conflicts between groups. The governmental Tutsi majority and their efforts to preserve power are strongly reminiscent of the Hutu-Tutsi relations during the pre-colonial and postcolonial eras of Rwanda. Unsurprisingly, reports that feelings of victimization by the Hutu have increased due to their perception that members of the RPF are not being held accountable for their crimes by neither the ICTR nor the gacaca courts. In fact, the primary critique of gacaca by human rights groups is that it disregards fairness and represents “victor’s justice” rather than justice for all. There is, undoubtedly, a need for the Rwandan government to apologize and account for the crimes of RPF individuals; a persistent silence on this subject has the potential to lead to the reemergence of resentful ethnic divisions and conflicts.

The churches of Rwanda represent another institution that must take the responsibility for their complicity and inaction during the genocide, and offer a public apology to its citizens. Vanier believes that God is the source of power to forgive and reconcile with one’s enemies; this Christian belief resonates particularly well with the Rwandans as the majority of them are practicing Christians. Clark’s study of gacaca reveals that the Christian faith, including its conceptions of grace, mercy, and redemption, largely informs the Rwandan population’s efforts towards healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation. In fact, those who expressed the most passionate desire to pursue these goals were firm Christian believers. Therefore, churches possess a significant amount of potential to further encourage reconciliation and development. Due to their large religious and social influence, churches have the capacity to become centres of reconciliation and healing by restructuring the Rwandans’ moral value system to one that is contextualized in post-genocide Rwanda with a focus on forgiveness. However, these actions cannot occur without a public apology from the churches; Lowe quotes Tom Ndahiro, a former Human Rights Commissioner in Rwanda, who writes, "The church has failed in her mission, and lost her credibility, particularly since the genocide." In order to reestablish its credibility, I agree that the church must “repent before God and the Rwandan society.”

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66 Kohen, 104.
67 Amstutz, 557.
68 Vanier, Becoming Human.
69 Amstutz, “Is Reconciliation Possible…?”
70 Phil Clark, 349.
71 Lowe, “Genocide and Reconciliation…”
72 Ibid.
After offering an apology for their mistakes, Amstutz argues that churches need to teach the Gospel, in which forgiveness is possible for all sins, and all human beings possess dignity and sinfulness.\(^{73}\) These values and beliefs are consistent with Vanier’s emphasis on the recognition of our common humanity, which includes strengths and weaknesses. In light of his ideology, the church emerges as a significant institution that may complement the progress of gacaca courts towards reconciliation and development. As mentioned earlier, a significant number of gacaca participants, including genocide survivors and prisoners, doubt the truthfulness of the witness accounts.\(^{74}\) At the same time, Clark reports that the Christian doctrine plays an important role in Rwandans’ perceptions of truth-telling. Many Rwandans view truth-telling and confession as a path towards God’s presence, and the freedom from and forgiveness of their sins.\(^{75}\) Celeste, an interviewee whose son and brother are in prison for genocide crimes, says, “at gacaca, the judges will bring us to the truth, just as the gacaca with the priests shows us how we can find the truth. The priests taught us to talk together…saying God loves peace and truth, so we also must love peace and truth.”\(^{76}\) Here, Celeste references a Christian gacaca trial, in which priests played a facilitating role alongside the judges; her response reveals the extent to which Christian beliefs influence Rwandans through the process of truth-telling in gacaca. A similar influence of Christianity is present within Vanier’s theory of reconciliation and development. Therefore, churches and their prospective involvement in gacaca and the general Rwandan society emerge as a promising step towards authentic reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda.

Conclusion

Beginning in the pre-colonial era, the Hutu-Tutsi ethnic labels divided the people of Rwanda, leading to a violent history in which each group constantly sought to prove their superiority over the other. The trauma and suffering experienced during the genocide has compelled the international, national, and local communities to restore Rwanda’s development by implementing a variety of reconciliation efforts. Through the application of Vanier’s theoretical framework, I have argued that an

\(^{73}\) Amstutz, 563.
\(^{74}\) Phil Clark (2010).
\(^{75}\) Phil Clark, 196.
\(^{76}\) Phil Clark, 197.
acknowledgement, rather than a suppression, of ethnic labels, stories, and past memories of the genocide is required to achieve reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda. Reconciliation is a key component of development, according to Vanier; therefore, processes of dialogue, sharing, and forgiveness are necessary for the human development of Rwanda.

Some may argue that Vanier’s vision of development is a blissful ideal that is far beyond what Rwanda is able to attain. Given the sheer horror and violence of the genocide, I do not dismiss the seeming impossibility and immense difficulty of reconciliation and forgiveness, particularly for the families and individuals who lived through the genocide. However, it is necessary to recognize the personal accounts of healing and reconciliation that Rwandans have experienced since the genocide through gacaca, the Christian faith, and Vanier’s methods of peaceful dialogue and sharing of personal stories. I believe that these accounts serve as a sign of hope for the future and represent a promising step towards the true reconciliation and development of Rwanda.
Appendix

Rwanda is located in central Africa, east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with a land area of 26,338 square kilometres. The country also borders Burundi, Tanzania, and Uganda. The geography of the land consists of savanna grassland with uplands, hills, and mountains. As of July 2013, Rwanda has a population of 12,012,589, of which 909,000 live in the capital city of Kigali. The population is comprised of three ethnic groups: Hutu (84%), Tutsi (15%), and Twa (1%). Kinyarwanda, English, and French are the official languages of Rwanda. The dominant religion in Rwanda is Christianity, of which 56.5% of the population is Roman Catholic and 26% is Protestant.

Rwanda is a rural country with approximately 90% of the population involved in subsistence agriculture. Their primary sources of foreign capital and trade include tourism, minerals, coffee, and tea. The Rwandan currency is Rwandan francs (RWF). The 1994 Rwandan genocide had devastating impacts on the economy, resulting in significant increases in poverty rates, particularly among women. However, the country has since made considerable progress in recovering its economy to pre-1994 levels. Rwanda also joined the East African Community, and it is collaborating with its regional partners in its budget, trade, and immigration policies.

The Rwandan government is a republic with a presidential, multiparty system. The current president of Rwanda is President Paul Kagame, who has been serving since April 22, 2000. The president is elected by a popular vote for a seven-year term, and the next election will be held in 2017.

Education has been growing in Rwanda since the genocide. Currently, the expected length of school life, from primary to tertiary education, is 11 years. The literacy rate, defined by those who are at least 15 years old who can read and write, was at 71.1% of the total population in 2010.

Rwanda’s history consists of long-lasting ethnic conflicts between the Hutus and Tutsis. In 1959, the Hutus overthrew the ruling Tutsi king and proceeded to kill thousands of Tutsis and drive out approximately 150,000 Tutsis into exile in nearby countries over the subsequent years. Eventually, the exiled Tutsis formed a rebel group, called the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), and began a civil war in 1990. Over the next 4 years, ethnic tensions steadily increased with political and social disorder, reaching its climax in 1994 with the Rwandan genocide. Approximately one million Rwandans, including three quarters of the Tutsi population, were killed in the span of three months. The genocide ended when the Tutsi-led RPF halted the killings of the national army and Hutu militias and established an RPF-led government. Since then, international mediation by the United Nations and the Rwandan government has made significant progress to create a civil society in Rwanda; however, approximately 57,000 Rwandans refugees still remain in neighbouring countries.

Source:
Bibliography


