

**CONSTRUCTING RWANDAN IDENTITY IN THE DIASPORA: REMEMBERING THE  
GREEN HILLS IN COLD CANADA**

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## **Abstract**

This study investigated the processes of identity formation among those who identified as Rwandan and lived in the Greater Toronto Area. The study was conducted using in-depth qualitative interviews and ethnographic participant observation. It argues that those who identified as Rwandan in the GTA were subject to powerful discourses of simultaneous belonging and non-belonging in both the Canadian and the Rwandan state. The extreme violence of the Rwandan genocide ruptured the bonds of belonging that had tied those who identified as Rwandan to each other and to the Rwandan state. Since 1994, the new Rwandan state had developed a powerful mythico-history that proposed that all those who are identified as Hutu are perpetual perpetrators and all those who are identified as Tutsi are perpetual victims, even as it had denied that the identities of Hutu and Tutsi continued to exist. The re-telling and re-enacting of this mythico-history became the condition of belonging to the newly created diaspora and the Rwandan state. Simultaneously, ambivalent welcome and racialization that those who identified as Rwandan faced in Canada, and, specifically, the GTA, generated an anxiety and an awareness that they could only partially belong in the new homeland. Thus, the exclusion of the Canadian state generated a desire for the imagined homeland and enabled the Rwandan state to create a diaspora. Yet, those who were defined as part of the Rwandan diaspora negotiated and navigated the terms of their belonging/non-belonging in both Canada and in Rwanda. Even as they were they were racialized by the Canadian state and framed as both desirable and threatening by the Rwandan state, those who identified as Rwandan in the GTA built a sense of home and belonging in Canada. They simultaneously became a diaspora and rooted themselves in the new homeland of Canada.

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Figure 1: Rwandan flag flying over Toronto City Hall, April 2013





## Chapter One

### Introduction

Interviewer: How do you define yourself?

Janvier: That's a question I struggle with all the time. I've been here since '86, so, my adult life really tends to make me a Canadian. And my children, who are born here, they are Canadian in all their thoughts and everything else. So it's not easy, much as I love Rwanda, to uproot myself from here, I know my kids would not go back, I had wanted to go there in [...] we were there, I didn't get enough, or I didn't get support from my family. I realize, I can go back no problem, but I again, I say that, most of who I am, is here.

Interviewer: Well, you've already hinted at this, but to what extent do you feel that you belong to Rwanda or belong in Rwanda?

Janvier: Great extent, great extent. I'm a Rwandese. And the fact that, it may be psychological, having been stateless for that long in other African countries, the fact that now I can hold a Rwandan passport makes me feel deeply psychologically involved with that country because it's like something we never had. I used to carry stateless travel documents. If you carry that, that document, I can tell you, say you reach Heathrow airport—the way you are treated, it's like you are a criminal. You cannot be allowed to wander in the airport, you don't know, again this goes to Canada, you don't know how proud I was, holding a Canadian passport, going to Rwanda, through Heathrow airport, those immigration officers wishing me to have a nice day sir, a nice day sir. The same joe who in a couple of years had a stateless travel documents and was treated as a criminal, now having a Canadian passport, ohhh, it was so sweet. Very sweet, very sweet. So being a Rwandese again, having a passport is a wonderful thing, so nice.

Interviewer: How do you define yourself?

Christophe: Because this also, because at some point we will go and, I don't know how long we will take, but it will come to reality where actually we will find that we are the same. So those Rwanda, DRC, those conflicts to me, they are no sense, 'cause those they are definitions. Those are definitions, but if we go back in history, we might find that we are all brothers and we are all one, and actually we should have one target. So that's how I, you know, to myself, I define myself as a human being. Yeah, 'cause sometimes I take like Rwanda, Africa, you know those are, all, geographical criteria. Unless you send me geographically, how do you define me? But to me, as a, I, I, define myself as a human being. Who wouldn't give an opportunity to a Rwandan, maybe, let's say I'm CEO of a company and I would say, you know, let's meet you and you qualify for a position that's available in my company, I wouldn't say you know this is the number one is Rwandan,

number two is African, number three is a Canadian. I would, you know, look at the performance of everybody, so that is why I say I define myself as a human who would not go by nationality, or ethnic lines, or whatever. I know those things are everywhere.

Interviewer: To what extent do you feel that you belong in Rwanda, when you visit, or when you think about it?

Seraphine: Ummm, 20%? I feel Canadian, like I'm I'm a Canadian, I feel like this is my home. Umm, the transit, like, like in the first few years when I just got here, I was still back in Rwanda, 'cause I was not sure what's here, how, how do I integrate here, how do I come around and feel at home, but after those years, after now, I don't, I just, when I go to Rwanda I feel like I'm a visitor. A visitor who is excited to see how the country is progressing, to see how, what has happened, but I don't feel like I'm there, I'm part of them. I don't feel like I'm Rwandese. [laughs a bit nervously] I am Rwandese, but at the same time, I would love to visit and then come back.

Interviewer: So when you migrated you were comfortable identifying as Rwandese?

Theodore: Yes I was, when I migrated in 1992 I wish I could go to Rwanda directly, before I came to Canada, but at that time I couldn't do that, so that's why I went back. At my age now, what I have and what I can contribute, that's what I have to do now because the country's in my heart now, so what I can do for a little boy or a small girl in the country, so what I can do. Yeah, let's me do my part, my contribution and I will do it, I will teach my son, or my daughter, anybody around me to help. Not only Rwanda, yeah, Africa too, that's why I'm doing things not only for Rwanda, it's for Africa too.

Interviewer: How do you identify yourself?

Theodosia: I am Rwandese, period. And I have my IDs as Rwandese and I have my passport as Rwandese, so I keep that because Canada accepts dual citizenship, so that's where I belong. I'm here, I'm Canadian, I have my passport. I cross the border, I go to Kigali, I'm Rwandese, I show my Rwandese passport.

Why did the people quoted above perceive themselves as belonging to a group? They shared little in common; one was born in Uganda, one in Rwanda, and one in Burundi; one migrated to Canada 27 years ago, one 13 years ago, and one 3 years ago; one was educated in Egypt, one in Rwanda, and one in Canada. They shared skin colour, yet they also resembled African-Americans, Caribbeans, Sub-Saharan Africans. They shared a language spoken by about 15 million people worldwide—Kinyarwanda, but not all members of this supposed group spoke

Kinyarwanda. Indeed, most of the youth of this group barely understood the language and did not speak it. Yet, despite the incongruences of their experiences and subjectivities, all of the above individuals identified as members of a Rwandan diaspora residing in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and in some cases Hamilton, Canada.

This dissertation studied the processes of identity formation among the Rwandan diaspora in the GTA. It argues that those who identified as Rwandan in the GTA actively participated in the process of making a collective identity, even as the Rwandan state called into being a diaspora and, in doing so, actively excluded those whom the state deemed as threatening. Simultaneously, the ambivalent welcome that they experienced in the new homeland, Canada, meant that neither Rwanda nor Canada could be an easy home; yet, even as they became a diaspora, they built a sense of belonging and rootedness in the GTA. The extreme violence of the Rwandan genocide ruptured the bonds of belonging that had tied those who identified as Rwandan to each other and to the Rwandan state. Since 1994, the new Rwandan state had developed a powerful “mythico-history” (Malkki 1995) that proposed that all those who are identified as Hutu are perpetual perpetrators and all those who are identified as Tutsi are perpetual victims, even as it had denied that the identities of Hutu and Tutsi continued to exist. The re-telling and re-enacting of this mythico-history became the condition of belonging to the newly created diaspora and the Rwandan state. Simultaneously, the ambivalent welcome and racialization that those who identified as Rwandan faced in Canada, and, specifically, the GTA, generated an anxiety and an awareness that they could only partially belong in the new homeland. Thus, the exclusion of the Canadian state generated a desire for the imagined homeland and enabled the Rwandan state to create a diaspora.

Successive waves of ethnic repression in Rwanda following the so-called “Hutu Revolution” in 1959 have led to a substantial diaspora in the global North, resident predominantly in Canada, the United States, France, and Belgium. The 1994 genocide also sparked a wave of migrations which swelled the numbers of this diaspora. A substantial number of these migrants have settled in Toronto and formed ties with one another, making Toronto a good site for this study. According to the 2006 national census, 5,670 people who identify Rwanda as their country of origin live in Canada and of those, 2,075 live in Ontario (Statistics Canada 2006). These numbers do not account for all those who live in Canada but identify Rwanda as their place of origin. Many who have recently migrated have done so as “economic” refugees and as such, may or may not be documented. Those who are undocumented will not appear in census figures. Further, many, though they may think of themselves as Rwandan, may identify themselves as having a different country of origin on official documents so would appear in the census figures as Congolese, Kenyan, Burundian, and Tanzanian, among others. Finally, there are also those who no longer wish to be identified as Rwandan and would thus check Black or African, rather than Rwandan on a census form. Given all these factors, the census numbers of 5,670 for Canada and 2,075 for Ontario are very conservative. While the self-described community does not keep internal statistical records, those I have spoken to estimate that in the Greater Toronto Area alone there are up to 5,000 Rwandans who identify as such and participate in the life of the community to a greater or lesser degree. Indeed, when the community hosted the Rwandan President for Rwanda Day in Toronto, on September 28, 2013, about 3000 Rwandans attended the event. This community is closely linked to similar communities in Ottawa, Montreal, and Quebec City. Also, as of 2001, there has been a westward

migration as those who had settled in Quebec or Ontario have chosen to pursue employment opportunities in Alberta and British Columbia.

Table 1: Individuals Identifying as Rwandan on Canadian Censuses

Province /Territory	Numbers of those who identify as Rwandan, 1996 census	Numbers of those who identify as Rwandan, 2001 census	Numbers of those who identify as Rwandan, 2006 census
Newfoundland and Labrador	10	0	0
Quebec	815	1720	2670
Ontario	40	1060	2075
Manitoba	15	30	135
Saskatchewan	35	50	30
Alberta	45	140	400
British Columbia	110	45	240
Northwest Territories	0	0	20

I focused on the GTA community because it is a young community, and the earliest migrants settled here in the mid-1980s, as compared to the communities in Quebec which date back to the late 1960s. Therefore, the GTA community was currently to this study evolving a nascent collective sense of identity, while the older communities had more clearly articulated boundaries. Among this group I traced how nation and ethnicity were constituted and formed, and how these structures were superimposed onto individuals. Academic discourses, popular discourses, and state discourses played out on the bodies of those who were deemed members of

this group; yet these discourses did not go unchallenged, as those who were being defined and narrated by said discourses contested and actively engaged in their own shaping. I sought to find the moments where these negotiations played out.

Further, I am interested in how the homeland and hostland, the institutions of Rwanda and Canada, are instrumental to constructing the category of Rwandan diaspora. In fact, the Rwandan state explicitly called into being a diaspora, calling it a diaspora, through concerted policy measures. The centralised Rwandan state acted upon the diaspora by generating and articulating discourses about ethnicity and belonging in the nation as well as through transnational political engagements with the diaspora. The less centralised Canadian state likewise created common sense meanings through its multiple discourses of multiculturalism. In Rwanda, the post-genocide government had generated a new discourse about ethnicity that on the surface stood in stark contrast to previous articulations; namely, the current government adamantly argued for a Rwandan identity and denied the existence of the ethnic Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa identities. Indeed, among the diaspora, the term ethnicity had come to be associated with the deeply riven categories that were the fertile ground for genocide. Those I spoke to were adamant that there were no longer ethnicities, even when they spoke of the division and conflict between those who identified as Hutu and those who identified as Tutsi, reflecting the dynamics in Rwanda. Indeed, contrary to official rhetoric, Tutsi identity was socially, politically, and economically privileged in the new Rwanda at the expense of all others (Mamdani 2001; Reyntjens 2004; Prunier 2009). These new ideas about the meaning of ethnicity were actively communicated to the diaspora by a Rwandan state that was increasingly reaching out to those who identified as Rwandan outside the borders of Rwanda. As the Rwandan state actively and increasingly courted the diaspora, transnational engagements between the diaspora and the state

were expanding. This study investigated changing home state formations and changing forms of transnational engagements with the diaspora which co-constructed the diaspora. The ethnic labels of Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa, which had been officially erased from Rwanda (though they continued to shape political discourse), had not disappeared among the diaspora to be replaced by the new construct of Rwandan, despite the commonly echoed refrain that “we are all Rwandan”. Yet, state-generated narratives, or mythico-histories, affected the self-identification of individuals and groups, and produced new meanings attached to signifiers like ethnicity, nation, and place of origin. Canada had co-shaped and co-produced the communal identities of this group through technologies of governance, and in particular, through the ambivalent construct of multiculturalism. Rwandans found themselves doubly othered in Canada, both as migrants and as black Africans, yet they were making their homes here and creating communities interwoven into the fabric of Toronto (Tettey and Puplampu 2005; Creese 2011).

Given these dynamics, I focused the study on internal and external contestations of what it meant to be a Rwandan in the diaspora and how the individuals in this particular population came to see themselves as sharing a collective identity. My research questions included the following: By what processes, discourses, collective and individual practices, did these disparate people come to understand themselves as part of a nation and, in this case, as part of a diaspora? How were nation, race and ethnicity constructed, and how did these constructions affect the lives of individuals? What was the role of violence in this construction, and how was the event of the Rwandan genocide been mobilized in the construction of the categories of nation, ethnicity and race? What role have institutions like the Rwandan and Canadian states played in the construction of these dominant narratives? How did experiences of racialization, gender, and class affect and alter the common sense understandings of those who identified as Rwandan, and

offered counter-narratives to dominant discourses? The study asked whether these challenges occurred in the public sphere, or were instead examples of “infrapolitics”, that is subtle, covert resistance (Scott 1990, 19)? Further, how did transnational politics and connections to the homeland shape these narratives? How did people who shared a perceived common origin come to understand themselves as members of a community?

This chapter will first offer a brief historical sketch to explain the recent dispersal of those who identify as Rwandan and what propelled them to settle in Canada. Following this section, it will discuss the methods that were used in the study, followed by the framework of analysis, the central arguments and conclude with the organization of the study.

### ***Brief Historical Context***

Though Rwandese history extends at least 500 years, I will focus on the politics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which generated a diaspora outside of Rwanda, since that is the topic of this study. Of necessity, this short sketch of Rwandan history will be incomplete and simplified, in keeping with a need to provide background to the politics that resulted in an exodus of mostly those who identified as Tutsis from Rwanda starting in 1959, and then largely those who identified as Hutus after 1994.<sup>1</sup> Thus, the story will begin with European colonialism, though the political roots of the construction of the ethnic divide reside in contests for power within the pre-colonial kingdom (Vansina 2004).

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<sup>1</sup>Though this study investigates how ethnicity, nation, and race are constructed, it is too awkward to continuously refer to “those who identify as...”, thus, this phrase will appear periodically to signal that identities are not things in the world, but, as Rogers Brubaker (2006) argues, ways of seeing the world. However, the short and succinct terms—diaspora, Hutu, Tutsi, and Rwandan will be used the remainder of the time to enhance readability.



Rwanda was officially claimed as a colony by Germany at the Berlin Conference in 1885, but only in 1897 did the German state make its presence known in what, at the time, was Ruanda-Urundi—later to become Rwanda and Burundi. Germans governed the area through indirect rule and relied on the Rwandese monarchy (in the portion that became Rwanda) to govern directly. This allowed the Rwandese, largely Tutsi, monarchy to continue “the pre-colonial transformation towards more centralisation, annexation of the Hutu principalities and increase in Tutsi chiefly power” (Prunier [1995] 2010, 25). In 1916 Belgian forces occupied Ruanda-Urundi and effectively claimed the colony from Germany. With the defeat of Germany in World War I, the League of Nations granted the colony as a Mandate to Belgium. From 1916 to 1962 Rwanda was a Belgian colony (Prunier [1995] 2010). While the Belgian colonial administration continued the policy of indirect rule, its presence in Rwanda was much more notable as, along with imposing significant legislative changes, the Belgian administration imposed individual *corvée*, or forced labour. Under the new regime, “the Rwandan monarchy’s oppression of the rural population increased with a disproportionate burden borne by Hutu peasants, while Tutsi peasants were spared some of the most exploitative *corvée* labor requirements” (Burnet 2012, 15). Thus, the administrative system fostered a growing resentment between Hutus and Tutsis, even though not all Tutsis belonged to the ruling class (indeed, the majority were peasants), and not all Hutus were equally oppressed.

What the colonial moment most effectively created was a racist ideology called the “Hamitic hypothesis” of the presumed moral superiority of the Tutsis over the Hutus. This ideology, rooted in white, Christian fantasies of a morally ordered universe where (northern) Egyptian or Hamitic “invaders” conquered a primitive Southern people, created the mythical foundation of the nationalism that emerged with the onset of Rwandan independence (Prunier

[1995] 2010; Mamdani 2001). This ideological imposition culminated in a census in 1933-34 which identified each individual as Tutsi, Hutu, or Twa, and formalized this division with identity cards. These distinctions were drawn through oral testimony of clergy, physical measurements (the francophone Catholic clergy had long held that Tutsis were significantly taller and had more elongated features) and ownership of large herds of cattle (Mamdani 2001, 99). Identity cards with one's supposed "race" would continue to be used up to 1994 and enabled the génocidaires to identify Tutsis in order to kill them.<sup>2</sup>

By the 1950s, the small group of Hutu elites who had gained a clerical education began a social reform movement aimed at transforming the oppressive political and economic system in Rwanda before formal independence. In 1959, this reform movement published a "Bahutu Manifesto" which claimed that "the conflict between Hutu and Hamites—i.e. foreign-Tutsi' was the heart of the Rwandan problem and called for a double liberation of the Hutu: 'from both the 'Hamites' and 'Bazungu' (white) colonization'" (Mamdani 2001, 103-104). The outcome of this document was two-fold: the hastening of Belgian efforts at decolonization and the framing of democracy as majority rule by Hutus.

In anticipation of independence and "democracy", political parties were established in the late 1950s. APROSOMA, created in 1957 by Hutu businessman Joseph Gitera, claimed to be a class-based party, but attracted only Hutu membership. Likewise, Grégoire Kayibanda created Mouvement Sociale Muhutu-MSM, which also was a primarily ethnically based Hutu party. This party shortly became PARMEHUTU. The conservative Tutsi faction reciprocated by creating Union Nationale Rwandaise-UNAR, a Tutsi monarchist party that was hostile to the Belgians, but wanted the largely Tutsi monarchy to retain political power. The regional and ethnic

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<sup>2</sup> For more extensive discussions of colonial Rwanda, see Catharine Newbury, *The Cohesion of Oppression: Clientship and Ethnicity in Rwanda 1860-1960*, 1988, and René Lemarchand, *Rwanda and Burundi*, 1970.

antagonisms resulted in a PARMEHUTU activist being beaten by UNAR youth on November 1, 1959. False reports of his death resulted in violence as PARMEHUTU activists attacked any Tutsis, UNAR activists retaliated and APROSOMA activists joined the fray. By November 14, order had been largely restored, and colonial authorities supported the Hutu political parties (Prunier [1995] 2010, 47-51). But the spark that had lit the fire continued to burn, and between the end of 1959 and the end of 1964, violence aimed at Tutsi continued, causing the mass exodus of 336 000 Tutsi to Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania and Zaire (Prunier [1995] 2010, 61-62).

By the time Rwanda had achieved full independence from Belgium in 1964, PARMEHUTU leader Grégoire Kayibanda had been elected president, and APROSOMA and PARMEHUTU candidates took most of the legislative seats. Thus, the post-independence Rwandan government reflected the “ethnic” divide. Between 1963 and 1972, “ethnic” tensions subsided as they “faded into the background of daily social interactions between average Rwandans until 1972 when President Kayibanda’s regime redirected growing regional opposition from northern Hutu into ethnic conflict” (Burnet 2012, 15). Tutsi students were forced to leave schools, Tutsis were fired from their jobs and rural Tutsi homes were burned. A few hundred Tutsis were massacred, causing another wave of migrations of Tutsi out of Rwanda. The conflict continued until Juvénal Habyarimana, a general in the army, took power in a coup d’état in 1972 (Burnet 2012, 16). He banned political parties and created his own Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (MRND), which formed the government (Prunier [1995]2010, 76). The MRND created a system designed to create ethnic “equilibrium” by effectively excluding Tutsi from lucrative government posts, and turned Rwanda into a “donor darling” due to its “well-organized state apparatus and relative lack of corruption”

(Burnet 2012, 16). Below this façade lurked the murderous potential of the ethnic/racial myths upon which the nation was founded.

Estimates of the number of Rwandans in exile by the late 1980s range between 400 000 and 600 000, and, of those, a large group resided in Uganda, where, by 1987, those who desired return to Rwanda had formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). As Prunier explains, 30 years of exile had turned Rwanda into a “land of milk and honey”, particularly among the Ugandan group of exiles ([1995]2010, 66-7). When news reached the RPF that Rwanda was again on the brink of political crisis as the state repression and violence necessary to sustain an authoritarian regime had inspired multiple points of internal conflict, the RPF chose to launch its plans to invade. On October 1, 1990, the RPF invaded Rwanda (Prunier [1995] 2010, 93). The Habyarimana regime was embroiled in internal conflict as, a few months earlier, on the urging of French President Mitterand, Habyarimana had agreed to a multi-party system once again, and factions within the MRND were actively opposed to the liberalization of the regime (Prunier [1995] 2010, 89). At this opening, PARMEHUTU recreated itself as MDR (Mouvement Démocratique Rwandaise), which was also an ethnically based party, but one focused on the grievances of those who had been denied power (Prunier [1995] 2010, 122). Those who opposed the virulent anti-Tutsi image of both the MDR and the MRND created an alternative Parti Social Démocrate (PSD), which positioned itself as a centre-left party. Alternatively, the Parti Libérale (PL) was a centre-right political alternative (Prunier [1995] 2010, 123-4). Responding to the growing opposition and alternate discourses around ethnicity, the hard-line MRND activists and politicians, later to be known as the Hutu extremists, or “Hutu Power” wing, used the RPF invasion to spur inter-ethnic hatred and ratchet up anti-Tutsi rhetoric (Burnet 2012, 16).

Fighting a nearly 3-year rebellion, attempting to reassert order in his own ranks, and facing re-emerging opposition parties, Habyarimana agreed to peace negotiations in Arusha, Tanzania in 1992. Out of these negotiations emerged a power-sharing agreement with the opposition parties within Rwanda and the RPF, granting the latter an equal number of cabinet seats to those held by the MRND (Mamdani 2001; Prunier [1995], 2010). A key principle of the Arusha Accords was minority protection for Tutsis and access to power and resources. The Arusha Accords and the ceasefire satisfied the international community, and a small UN peacekeeping force was deployed to ensure that the Accords were enacted. However, within Rwanda, the Accords only further exacerbated the internal tensions as the MDR opposition party used them as evidence that what it called the moderate faction of the MRND was selling out to the invaders. Opposition and MRND hardliners framed the now “moderates”, who included the PL and PSD, as internal enemies, on par with the RPF. The hard-liners, or the Hutu Power ideologues, left the MRND and formed their own party, while retaining political and ideological control over the MRND’s youth wing—the Interahamwe. Within days of the Accords being signed, the now infamous Radio Mille Collines began broadcasting its open racial hatred and spurring average Rwandans to violence, at the behest of the Hutu Power wing (Mamdani 2001, 209).

On April 6, 1994, around 8:30 pm, President Habyarimana’s plane was shot down over Kigali airport and the FAR (Force Armées Rwandaises, the national army from which Habyarimana had hailed) and the Interahamwe began killing first members of the coalition government and Hutu “moderates”, then the Tutsi elites at about 10:30pm. Over the course of the next 100 days, about 800 000 Tutsis and Hutus were brutally murdered (Prunier [1995] 2010; Human Rights Watch 1999; Mamdani 2001; Burnet 2012). The genocide ended when the RPF

conquered Kigali and forced the remnants of FAR and the Interahamwe into Zaire, in late July of 1994. In fear for their lives, another 2 million Rwandese, largely Hutu this time, followed the génocidaires into Zaire (Prunier [1995] 2010, 312).

From 1994 to 2003 the RPF created a transitional government, initially following the Arusha Accords and creating a coalition of all the major parties, with the notable exclusion of the extremist wing of the MNDR (Powley 2005, 154). However, the coalition government quickly fell apart as the RPF imposed its vision of a new state and new nation. Since 2003, Rwanda has held regular elections, and Paul Kagame, a former general in the RPF, has handily won each election. The RPF government, which functions as a single-party system, “orchestrates elections, suppresses the independent media, and retains control over most civil society organizations” (Burnet 2012, 193). Extrajudicial killing or imprisonment of opposition party members and others under the claim that they were promoting what the regime calls “genocide denial” has led to a further tightening of political space (Mamdani 2001; Reytjens 2004; Burnet 2008; Beswick 2010; Human Rights Watch 2010; Burnet 2012). Furthermore, the regime has not offered Rwandans the political space to come to terms with their legacy of extreme violence, despite the regime’s avowed promotion of reconciliation. Rwandan men and women are still suffering the inheritance of violence, and the regime’s re-politicization of ethnicity has led to the overt silencing of those who identify as Hutu, as they are universally framed as perpetrators. Conversely, those who are the survivors of RPF massacres and other human rights violations, be they Tutsi or Hutu, are written out of the nation’s narratives of self. Their stories cannot be told, for fear of severe reprisals (Burnet 2012). These discursive violences and silences frame the lives of both men and women in the new Rwanda and, as I explored in this study, in what many Rwandans in Toronto have come to understand as the diaspora.

## *Methods*

To understand this process of diaspora-making, Rwandans in the Greater Toronto Area were studied through in-depth qualitative semi-structured interviews, participant observation of community events, and analysis of textual and visual sources. I conducted in-depth interviews with 31 individuals who identified as Rwandan and lived in the GTA and in some cases the nearby city of Hamilton, though the majority live in Toronto, Scarborough, Mississauga, Etobicoke, and North York. The interviews and were done between May 2012 and June 2014, while my participant observation was done from July 2012 to April 2015. I recruited my participants primarily through the snowball technique, including through recommendations from leaders of the organizations that spoke on behalf of the supposed community. I did advertise for participants online, through listservs and through word of mouth, but given the private nature of many in the community, people were unwilling to approach me. I sought to find a representative sample, but primarily those who identified as Tutsi were willing to be interviewed. While there were many who identified as Hutu in the GTA, they were difficult to locate and, of those whom I located, few were willing to be interviewed. I suspect that this reluctance stemmed from the socially subordinate position of those who identified as Hutus, and I have attempted to keep this dynamic in mind as I listened to individuals who primarily identified as Tutsis.

However, from those who chose to speak to me, I sought to find as balanced a sample as I could, seeking out equal numbers of men and women, and speaking to young, middle aged and older individuals. The sample was made up of 16 men and 15 women. Of the men, 4 were 19-30 years old, 2 were 31-40 years old, 8 were 41-50 years old and 2 were 51-60 years old. Of the women, 4 were 19-20 years old, 3 were 21-30 years old, 6 were 41-50 years old and 2 were 51-60 years old. I aimed to speak to equal numbers of men and women and to individuals across a

range of age cohorts. As I had not sought out ethical approval to speak to children, I conducted no interviews with anyone under the age of 18 (the youngest participant was 19 years old), although the adults I interviewed sometimes mentioned the experiences of children or recollected their own experiences from childhood. I wanted to interview adults older in the age ranges of 61-70 and 71-80 years, but none of those I approached in those age groups were willing to speak to me, which I suspect had to do with language barriers. Thus, I could only address their experiences through the lens of their adult children and what these children said of the parents' perceptions. In short, while the interview sample size was small, key groups—especially Hutus—were underrepresented, and thus the conclusions I could draw were limited. Nonetheless, I sought to have as representative a sample as I could, given the conditions in which I did the research. Moreover, I sought to reflect in my analysis insights drawn from considering why some categories of people would not agree to interviews.

The proposal for this study was submitted to review to the Office of Research Ethics at York University, subject to the SSHRC/NSERC/CIHR Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. Under the conditions of the review, I had permission to conduct interviews with individuals aged 18-80 and attend and observe community social functions. While I also had permission to conduct focus groups, no participants were willing to meet and speak in a group setting, so I was not able to carry out the focus groups. I identified that re-traumatization was a potential risk involved in the research. Thus, I proposed that I would not ask about the violence, and where the participant chose to remain silent about it I would follow her lead. I also came to every meeting with contact information for the Canadian Centre for Survivors of Torture, located in Toronto, which offers victims of trauma free counselling, in the hopes of offering support in the case of re-traumatization. I also affirmed that I would maintain



strict confidentiality. Consent forms reviewed by the Ethics Committee were signed by all participants. I have included a sample consent form at Appendix B. There were two levels of consent: the lower level authorized me to use the information provided by the participant, but no details that would identify the participant. The second level of consent, signed by only 17 of 31 participants as indicated in the table at Appendix D, allowed me to include in the dissertation some personal information such as age, gender, profession, or time of migration, but never participant names or the names of any of their family members. Finally, I received ethics approval to ask for participant consent to have photographs taken. However, I opted to take no photos of the participants out of respect for their privacy, so no participants were asked to grant consent for this. Consent procedures allowed me to make audio-recordings during interviews (although two participants withheld this consent, so I took notes during our conversations instead). Participants were able to withdraw consent to participate in the research at any point. The ethics procedure results obligated me to destroy the audio files of the interview after I had made transcriptions of them. I have pledged as part of the ethics procedure to keep the transcripts in a secure location and, upon completion of the research, to offer them to a local archive for preservation after having removed the required identifying information as applicable. If no archives are interested in the data, then I will destroy the transcripts.

As a young white woman of Polish ethnicity, but now carrying an Anglo name, I was cognizant of my white privilege and anticipated that I might have a hard time gaining the trust of the community. However, I learned that my gender, my youthful appearance, and my migrant status worked in my favour to make me appear sympathetic and non-threatening. Of course, the former two factors were also obstacles in particular moments, as people often perceived me to be much younger than I am and therefore less deserving of notice and respect. Uncomfortably for

me, I often had to mention my marital status in order to establish my adulthood and, ironically, my professionalism. Indeed, the gendered politics of the community meant that I often faced questions about my performance of femininity. For example, I was commonly asked if I had children, and when the answer was no, I was equally often chastised to have them soon. In order to retain the trust of the community, I had to accept these admonishments with good humour. Yet, they rankled, particularly since I understood that the only reason that my fertility was being discussed was because of my gender. Thus I had a small taste of the gendered expectations that Rwandan women were exposed to.

Community meetings also had the effect of raising questions about my own ethnic and racial identity. I had not anticipated that I would be thus affected, but, for the first time in my life, I was hypervisible as one of very few white people in a space dominated by people who were racialized as black. Yet, I realized, that unlike those whom I was getting to know, my visibility did not occasion hostility; rather, I was noticed, but welcomed. Those who identified as Rwandan usually made an effort to smile at me and extend a welcome to me. Nonetheless, I was aware that my facial expressions and gestures would be noticed and remarked, because I was visibly different. The other non-black people at the events, there in a variety of roles—journalists, partners, friends—perhaps unconsciously, sought me out in the crowd and made eye contact. We never spoke to one another, as we were all there with our Rwandan friends and contacts, yet that eye contact was involuntary (and it is no mere thing to make eye contact with a woman who is barely 5'1, as I am, when one is taller, as most of the world is). It seemed that we needed that symbolic connection to counter the discomfort of becoming visible in a world that had, wrongly and unjustly, belonged to us by virtue of our whiteness. In those moments, I was given a glimpse of simultaneous belonging and non-belonging, the central dynamic of this study.

By beginning my interview process with community leaders I was able to slowly gain the trust of these individuals, who then spoke of me to others, thus gaining me entry into the group. Even so, I encountered many who, while they were very warm and welcoming, were unwilling to be interviewed for the study. When I asked for further recommendations, many were very reluctant to help me get access to someone else, and, though I was told so and so would likely be interested in speaking to me, I often had to track said person down over a matter of weeks or, in some cases, months. Interestingly, individuals who held official positions within the community leadership were very difficult to locate and often initially reluctant to speak to me, at least on record. I am very grateful to those I formally interviewed and to those who spoke to me informally, as they were remarkably welcoming and warm to the stranger in their midst, and many went out of their way to help me with my study. At social events I was always drawn into conversation and people I did not know made a point of approaching me and welcoming me. There was, however, a hesitation, a sense of caution, about participating in the project. Often it took many meetings before an individual was willing to be recorded. Even after they had consented, many needed to be reassured about what would be done with the research, who would have access, and how confidentiality would be maintained. To that end, as noted earlier, no personal details or names appear in the study. All names are pseudonyms, and only where additional consent has been granted will details like profession, age, and city of residence, be identified. When there is a risk of identification by linking a pseudonym with, for example, a profession, the individual will be referred to as participant, not by her pseudonym. In some cases, I have intentionally withheld information, as, for instance, about the non-governmental organizations within the community, to protect identities. Though most of those with whom I spoke had not participated in research before, there was a general sense of mistrust and caution

about academic research and, probably, about a white researcher in particular. This wary attitude is not surprising given the history of genocide and the role that pseudo-academic theories played in its justification (Malkki 1995; Prunier 1995; Mamdani 2001). Indeed, the fact that my participants were willing to trust me at all is surprising and deserves recognition.

The interviews averaged 1.5 hours in length, with some as long as 6 hours in total. I have indicated the total length of time that I interviewed each individual on the table at Appendix C. This data includes only the formal interviews, which were recorded and transcribed. Though there were open-ended questions on particular topics—on memories of and connections to Rwanda, life in Canada, the community here, and self-identification—often the discussion would range into topics that the participants wished to discuss. I have included at Appendix C a list of the specific questions that I asked in formal interviews. I would begin by posing the question as it appears in the appended document, but would ask follow up questions about topics that participants introduced in their answer. Each interview covered the same set of questions, but some participants chose to speak on a range of further topics that I did not specifically pose as questions. A few individuals were particularly eloquent and inclined to offer more detail and nuance than others, and these individuals have been quoted more extensively than others, although their understandings and representations of their identities and the world very often echoed those of other participants. After the initial interview, I would ask if I could contact the participant with follow-up questions and, in the cases where the answer was yes, I did so, resulting in 2, and in one case 3 separate formal interviews. I did 2 or more formal interviews with a total of 6 of the participants. I also often had occasion to speak to the same individuals on later occasions at social events, where, if they said something pertinent, I would verbally ask if I could relate that in the research. These discussions were among the 11 informal interviews that I

did during the course of the research. These informal interviews were not recorded, but I did take notes and, where the individual in question had formally granted informed consent, I was able to use the content in the research. Where no consent had been granted, I did not use the specific information in the study that I learned through the informal interviews except as part of my general impression of the event where the conversation took place. I was a participant observer at approximately 13 events over the study period, such as genocide commemorations, NGO fundraisers, church gatherings, and Rwanda Day, among others.

In analyzing the transcripts of the interviews, I utilized a form of discourse analysis. Thus, in analysis the transcripts of interviews, I was attuned to how participants understood their collective and individual identities. I focused on the language that they used to represent themselves and their understanding of Canada/Canadianess, Rwanda/Rwandaness, the event of the genocide and the creation of a community in the GTA. I paid particular attention to repeated phrases and concepts, such as the Rwandan states' rhetoric of "we are all Rwandese", which many among the participants echoed. These repeated phrases or ideas I took to be indicative of widely held shared understandings of self and other, and self and dominant institutions like the Canadian and Rwandan states, as well as understandings of events like the genocide, and more broadly, notions of what constituted shared culture. I was also attuned to divergent formulations and read these as indicative of a counter-representation that disrupted the dominant narratives and pointed to the diversity of experiences of this population of people.

In order to mitigate, as best as I can, the unavoidable tendency in academic discourse for the author to speak for someone, especially as a white women studying a racialized community, I have made an effort to "speak *with*, or *beside*, rather than *for*" those who shared their stories with me (Creese 2011, 15). This means that, while I was attuned to themes that were specific to the

dynamics that I was interested in, I also listened to what my participants emphasized and highlighted. For example, in listening to stories of their racialization, I had to also hear the emphasis that so many placed upon their sense of belonging in Canada and upon not experiencing racialization. Thus, in making arguments about racialization, I will attempt to express the nuances around how people perceived and understood these forces.

The Rwandan genocide has drawn the attention of numerous Western academics who have investigated the causes, the conflict, and the after-effects with great detail, offering their audience, often Rwandan, a narrative of the violence that differs dramatically from the narrative that the Rwandan state has developed. This discrepancy in narratives inspires deep emotional turmoil in the community. On a number of occasions, my participants insisted on telling me the “correct” history of the genocide, in an attempt to counter the academic narratives. I do not perceive that it is my role to offer a “correct” reading of the recent history; rather I am interested in the multiplicity of readings and their consequences. In order to avoid instigating further turmoil, or individual re-traumatization, I chose not to pose questions about the genocide, or any of the violence that occurred before or after. In selecting my questions, I intentionally left room for a participant to speak of the violence if she chose, but the questions did not touch on it. I respected the choices that many made to remain silent about the violence and thus attempted to practice empathy (Burnet 2012, 34). I also hoped that by allowing my participants agency over what they wished to share, I would displace some of the power dynamics.

The interviews often took place in coffee shops or restaurants, though, as I gained trust, I was invited into people’s homes—but only by some. I have included the location of interviews on the table in Appendix D. I then transcribed the interviews and analyzed them for key themes from which I drew my conclusions. I also attended a number of Rwandan community

social/cultural events, church services, genocide commemorations, and diaspora meetings with state representatives. At these events I was invited to be a participant, so I could not record or transcribe the events; however, I did record my impressions and conclusions after, and these have been included in the analysis. I often quote directly from the interviews or refer to my observations of events, which are based on the notes I took. When I am quoting I intentionally do not correct any grammatical errors that may occur in the speech patterns of my participants in order to retain their tone as much as possible. Further, I chose not to draw attention to any errors by using *sic*, because this simple gesture, so often used in academic texts, draws attention to the authority of the researcher/writer and detracts from the authority of the participant. Language is dynamic and forcing the linguistic patterns of my participants into a standard mold denies that very dynamism and their agency in using English, which, for most, is not a first language.

As a researcher, I understand that I inevitably affect and alter the very relations that I seek to observe and transcribe, especially given my positional differences from my research participants. As such, I chose to embrace this active role and where I could, I offered my services to the community in gratitude for their willingness to share their stories and worlds with me. This meant, for example, that I volunteered my services to contact institutions like the Toronto District School Board on behalf of the community to enquire about a language program, and that I looked up information about pursuing studies in a post-secondary institution for an individual, or that I helped the community find documentary film makers to record some of their stories. What follows is my attempt, based on what I have learned, to understand what it means to be a Rwandan in what is understood as a diaspora making a home and life in the GTA and Hamilton in Canada.

## *Framework of Analysis*

This study offers a constructivist reading of how nation, ethnicity, race, and diaspora are created and sustained. It seeks to move beyond the now widely agreed upon truism that nation, ethnicity, race, and diaspora are constructed by tracing the institutional logics and politics, the individual understandings and perceptions and the conditions that have created the Rwandan diaspora. It relies on, and as will be discussed later on, builds on Rogers Brubaker's account of nation, ethnicity, and race as "ways of seeing" rather than "things in the world" by focusing on how these identity markers are "practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects, and contingent events" (2006, 11). Particularly, Brubaker's idea of a contingent event as constitutive of nation is a central theoretical assumption, however, this study proposes that contingent events become ethnically or nationally meaningful by how they are remembered and what meanings are attributed to them. It further utilizes the concept of a national cosmology, that is, how a moral order is granted to the known world (Tambiah 1985), and "mythico-history", which is a moral re-telling of historical events (Malkki 1995, 55). Foundational to the new cosmology and mythico-history that the new Rwandan state had created was the contingent event of the extreme violence of the Rwandan genocide. Here, Brubaker's understanding of the state as the institutionalized form of the nation is used to explain the role of the state in the making of a diaspora (2006). In order to understand how violence becomes constitutive of the idea of Rwandaness, I relied on Brian Axel's argument that remembering and re-telling violence becomes the thread that connects disparate individuals into what then appears as a diaspora (2001). I build on Axel's argument by proposing that recollection of violence alone does not generate a diaspora. At least in this case, the new Rwandan state had to first call the diaspora into



being, then the recollection of violence, and specifically, the new nation's mythico-history, became the thread that connected those who identified as Rwandan. Further, to analyze how violence is constitutive of the new nation that emerged in Rwanda, I utilize Jeffrey Alexander's theory of cultural trauma—an event that is recalled as so traumatic that it breaks the bonds of belonging between individuals and communities (2004).

To comprehend how the Canadian state generates a simultaneous sense of belonging and non-belonging for those who identify as Rwandan in the GTA, I utilize insights from critical race theory, in particular the concept of everyday racialization/racism (Essed 1991; Henry et al. 1995), which proposes that “racism is a system of structural inequalities and a historical process, both created and recreated through routine practices” (Essed 1991, 39) enacted by the state and by individuals. Those who are thus racialized by the Canadian state and categorized as either perpetrators or victims by the Rwandan state do not submit to these classifications uncritically and to investigate the ways in which they respond and negotiate these terms, I borrow from psychoanalytical insights to understand how individual emotions effect the everyday categories. James C. Scott's notion of *infrapolitics*, that is the “wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name” (1990,19), is also useful in understanding the ways in which individuals challenge powerful state discourses. A fuller discussion of the framework of analysis appears in chapter 2.

### ***Central Arguments of Study and Key Contributions***

This study contributes to three strands of literature: the extensive literature on nationalism and the theorization of the nation; the literature on diasporas and diaspora formation; and the

literature on racialization in multicultural states. Nation, ethnicity, race, and diasporas are the products of states and institutions generating collective identities in order to justify political actions and mobilize people to support leaders and policies. The violence of the genocide broke the bonds that had bound individuals to the former Rwandan nation and to each other. Yet, the remembering and retelling of the genocide became the foundation of the new nation. Among those who identified as Rwandan in the GTA, the mythico-history of the new Rwandan state, centred on the genocide, determined who was included in the categories Rwandan, Tutsi, and Hutu, and on what terms. Simultaneously, the ambivalent welcome and the active racialization that these individuals faced in Canada generated an anxiety which drew these individuals to the Rwandan state and its narrative of belonging. Yet, a diaspora only emerged when the Rwandan state called it into being in 2007 by creating institutional structures, such as the Rwanda Diaspora Global Network, and informing those who identified as Rwandan that they were now a diaspora. Thus, Hutu and Tutsi, Rwandan and the Rwandan diaspora were all actively constructed through institutional practices, everyday categories, and cognitive schemas. They are “ways of seeing” (Brubaker 2006). Following Rogers Brubaker, I identified the ways in which “everyday ethnicity”, in this case, Rwandan ethnicity in the GTA, was constructed as it was “embodied and expressed not only in political projects and nationalist rhetoric but in everyday encounters, practical categories, commonsense knowledge, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, interactional cues, discursive frames, organizational routines, social networks, and institutional forms” (2006, 2). Ethnicity, nation and race, as closely connected classification schemes, are “ways of seeing” rather than substantial entities or “things in the world” (Brubaker 2006, 17), and the primary force in shaping these political identities in the modern era has been the state or state-like institutions. In this case study, the Rwandan and Canadian states have generated these identities.

Thus, following Mamdani (2001) I argued that Hutu and Tutsi are politically constructed identities. The new Rwandan state has generated a powerful discourse of a new ethnicity—Rwandan—to supplant the supposed faded ethnicities of Hutu and Tutsi. Yet, even as this new identity is rhetorically and forcefully enforced both in Rwanda and in its significant engagement with the diaspora community in the GTA, the state perpetuates the existence of the old ethnicities, Hutu and Tutsi, by promoting Tutsi individual and collective interests over those of the other groups in the homeland, and by appropriating the memory of the genocide as only belonging to the Tutsi. A central theoretical claim of this study, building on Jennie Burnet’s argument about the new state in Rwanda (2012), is that the new nation has been built upon the mythico-history that all Tutsis are perpetual victims and all Hutus are real or potential perpetrators. I argue that this nation-building ideology is very evident among the diaspora community in the GTA as the Rwandan state enforces a singular reading of recent history which erases the memories and trauma of one segment of the community and grants moral and social privilege to the other. Indeed, the largely Tutsi community leaders closely echoed and policed the new mythico-history of the state as they perceived that the collective trauma of the genocide had rendered them vulnerable and they needed the protection and favour of the home state to prevent a re-enactment of the violence of the genocide.

However, those who were thus constructed did not necessarily accept these terms of identification uncritically. While many scholars of Rwandan politics argue that Rwandan society is inherently hierarchical and authoritarian (Vansina 2004; Newbury 1988), I proposed that, among the diaspora, top-down impositions of identity by elites were challenged by bottom-up contestations and the everyday life experiences of those who identified as members of the group. Individuals who identified as Rwandan in the GTA daily “appropriate, internalize, subvert,

evade, or transform the categories that are imposed upon them” (Brubaker 2006, 13). Thus, individual accounts offered potent critiques of the new mythico-history by proposing alternative ways of seeing oneself and those to whom one was connected. In seeking to articulate the constructed nature of these ethnic identities, I argued that there is no collective Rwandan, or even Tutsi or Hutu, identity; rather, there is the feminist Rwandan experience, the Christian Rwandan experience, the university bound youth Rwandan experience, the upwardly mobile middle-class Rwandan experience, the working-class Rwandan experience, among many others. Each of these experiences and performances of identity, while an amalgam of many, cannot ever be reduced to its component parts. This alternative account of identity allows space for individuals to live away from the demand for allegiance from powerful institutions, such as the Rwandan and Canadian states. Understanding those who identify as Rwandans as embodying a multiversal identity aims to extinguish the violent power of nation, ethnicity and race.

In a similar vein, I argued that there is no a priori Rwandan diaspora. The memory of violence has constituted and generated the construct of the diaspora. This form of identification was not created through movement (even presuming that all who leave feel their place of origin to be their homeland), but through violence and the accompanying discourses and regulatory practices of the Rwandan state and the Canadian state. However, contrary to Axel’s findings among the Sikh diaspora in post-war Britain (2001), among the Rwandan diaspora, the violence of the genocide ruptured the former nation, but it did not generate connections between those who lived away from the homeland. These individuals were often connected to one another, even sharing memories of the violence, but they did not become a diaspora until the new Rwandan state, itself formed out of the horror of the genocide, called the diaspora into being through its

institutionalized practices, accounting schemes, classificatory categories, policy directives and discourses and offered the genocide as the foundational myth of the new nation and the diaspora.

The closely related key theoretical claim of this study is that the state violence that individuals in the Rwandan diaspora remembered, retold, and reimagined, became a condition of the diaspora's existence as it is the thread that connected disparate peoples. The cognitive experience of overwhelming violence signaled a break in one's notion of connection to a community and identity, and created new forms of identification. The genocide became a collective trauma for those who had experienced it first-hand and for those who were connected to it, even if they had no part in it. The spiritual, psychological, and physical breaking of bonds of belonging generated a need for new forms of identification with others who developed a common understanding and memory of the violence, thus creating a community. Brubaker proposes that "violence becomes 'ethnic' (or 'racial' or 'nationalist') through the meanings attributed to it by perpetrators, victims, politicians, officials, journalists, researchers, relief workers and others" (2006, 16). I build on this idea by suggesting that violence becomes ethnically or nationally significant and meaningful by how it is *remembered* and then by what meanings are attributed to it. Thus, a significant conceptual contribution of this dissertation is that contingent events (Brubaker 2006), need to be understood as constructed through discourses of memory.

As noted earlier, a key empirical finding of this study proposes that even as individuals connected to one another, they did not come to see themselves as a diaspora until the Rwandan state called the diaspora into being in 2007. Prior to this, there was a loosely connected community of individuals who identified as Rwandans in the GTA, but their connections to one another were based on inter-personal ties, not on a collective identity generated by the shared

experience of movement away from the homeland as some of the diaspora literature suggests (Bhabha 1990, Gilroy 1993, Bannerji 1997, Scheffer 2003, Agnew 2007, Ricoeur 2010).

Through the intersections of lived experience and the discourses that envelop it, individuals came to identify as members of the new ethnicity of Rwandan and a diaspora.

One of the conditions that created the ground for the creation of a diaspora was the sense of ambivalent welcome that Rwandans found in their new homes in the GTA. The other key empirical finding of this study was that even as individuals who identified as Rwandan worked to find belonging in the GTA and Canada, they were racialized as black and subject to exclusion and, at times, overt discrimination. Multiculturalism, the policy and ideology in which they placed their hopes for belonging, posited them as outside the imagination of the Canadian nation as, to paraphrase Rinaldo Walcott, to be black in Canada is to be aware of one's belonging and non-belonging (2003, 50). The simultaneous inclusion and exclusion in the new homeland, Canada, generated among this group a desire for the homeland. This community paradoxically simultaneously forged a place of belonging in Canada, and became a diaspora.

Even as individuals in this community came to see themselves as Rwandans and as part of a diaspora, they found a sense of belonging in their new homes in the GTA. This simultaneous expression of belonging in the new homeland while seeking connection to the old homeland is one of the central dynamics of this study. I propose that the condition of being Rwandan in the GTA signifies that one lives both here/there, even as one lives simultaneously in the present/time of violence. This dialectical relationship to time and place is the condition of being part of a diaspora. Thus, while state institutions expel on one end and absorb on the other, the individual's ability to exist in two places and two times is a necessary pre-condition for the creation of a diaspora.

### *Organization of Study*

The study is organized into chapters dealing with the multiple places, spaces, and discourses that those who identify as members of this community shape, contend with, and are subject to. The second chapter sets out the theoretical assumptions and approaches of this study and explains the central ideas of group, nation, ethnicity, and race it uses. The third chapter examines the role of violence and its impact on identity formation and nation-building among the diaspora. The fourth chapter explores the contestations of what it means to be Rwandan within the community and how discourses of nation, and ethnicity are internally drawn and contested through experiences of gender and class. The fifth chapter investigates what life in Canada means and explores how the Canadian state discourse of multiculturalism contributes to the racialization of those who identify as Rwandan. The sixth chapter maps out the connections between the state of Rwanda and the diaspora and how these transnational ties structure day to day lives. The seventh chapter focuses on the concept of home and how the community members have built lives, homes, and found a sense of belonging in the Greater Toronto Area. The conclusion summarizes the key arguments and suggests the contributions that this study makes to the field. While by no means an exhaustive account of the experiences of those in this community, the analysis attempts to formulate a theory of nation, ethnicity, race and diaspora and explain how these macro imaginings of states and nations are constructed through micro practices of day to day negotiations, maneuvers, and ways of seeing.

## **Chapter Two**

### **The Making of Diaspora: An Analytical Framework**

In order to analyse the processes whereby my respondents came to understand themselves as part of a Rwandan diaspora but also at home in Canada, and to make sense of the data I have collected for this study, I have relied on a series of theoretical assumptions and approaches as well as analytical concepts. These theories and concepts have shaped how I have interpreted the data and the conclusions I have drawn. The chief ontological assumption in this study has been the understanding that nation, ethnicity and race are not things in the world, but, using Brubaker's formula, ways of seeing the world. This insight has led to deconstruction of the discourses and processes that create the appearance of nation, ethnicity, race, and diaspora as bounded, concrete objects. In deconstructing these discourses, I have relied on a few theoretical insights such as the role of violence in shaping the Rwandan diaspora, the roles of the Canadian and Rwandan states as institutions which through policies of multiculturalism and transnationalism constitute the diaspora, and the concept of home which illuminates how those who are defined as belonging to this group themselves understand their identity and their place in the world.

Though it has become something of a cliché to propose to offer a constructivist account of social phenomena, this is precisely what I seek to do in this dissertation. However, following Brubaker and his admonishments that even in constructivist studies we tend to take the ideas of nation, ethnicity and race as things in the world, I seek to observe the formation of identity as a social practice and an analytical category. In attempting a constructivist reading of what it means to be part of the Rwandan diaspora in the GTA, I map out the "practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects, and contingent events" (Brubaker 2006, 11) such as the



categories of Hutu and Tutsi which correspond to perpetrator and victim, or the cognitive schema of a morally organized universe where victims actions are always just and justifiable. This study places particular emphasis on cognitive schemas and discursive frames, which I refer to as cosmologies. I borrow from anthropology the notion of cosmologies and the ways in which they are utilized to grant order to the known universe (Tambiah 1985), using this concept to trace the national cosmology that the new Rwandan state has erected. Malkki's discussion of mythico-histories among Hutus from Burundi (1995) becomes a useful resource in articulating the new national cosmology of the Rwandan state. Further, the distinct political projects that emerge at particular historical junctures in both the putative homeland, Rwanda, and among those who identify as Rwandans in the GTA, are central to an understanding of the construction of categories and their effects on individuals. I focus on the Rwandan genocide as a contingent event that broke the bonds of the nation and generated a cultural trauma (Alexander 2004), which makes death constitutive of the very category of Rwandan and thus part of the everyday. The violence and how it is remembered and recalled has become the bridge that connects those who imagine themselves as belonging to the Rwandan diaspora in the GTA, as Axel (2001) has argued about the Sikh diaspora, though I place emphasis on how memories of that violence are constructed and circulated. In contending with how race is constructed, especially in the post-colonial context, I utilize insights from critical race theory to track how conceptions of race have altered and how new ideas are scripted onto vulnerable bodies by state institutions. Finally, I utilize psychoanalytical insights to understand how individuals' emotions affect the everyday categories and situated actions of those who are part of the diaspora. This interdisciplinary approach to analyzing the construction of nation, ethnicity and race aims to delve below the surface of identities and expose how they are sustained, supported, challenged and navigated by

those individuals whom they ostensibly describe and define. The following expands on these ideas, laying out the theoretical assumptions, the key literature behind the study and the preliminary conclusions that I draw.

### *Theorizing Diaspora*

Diasporas have been studied in order to come to grips with the seemingly contemporary phenomena of globalization, the weakening of the nation-state, and increasingly transnational forms of identification. These studies have generated perspectives and theoretical frameworks that have enabled a deeper understanding of these processes. Some scholars, like Homi Bhabha (1990) and Paul Gilroy (1993), envision diasporas as the space where the limitations and fragmentations of national culture can be exposed and contested, as the diasporic subject has the potential to hail a new transnational culture that celebrates ambiguity, fluidity, and hybridity. Other scholars (Bannerji 1997; Ahmed 1999; Scheffer 2003; Agnew 2007; Ricoeur 2010) have focused on the marginal nature of diasporas and their position on the borders of nation and belonging, as the “other” to and within the body politic, subject to displacement, racialization, criminalization, discrimination, and stigmatization. These theoretical perspectives offer different readings of the place and signification of diaspora, but both rely on the presumption of the existence of their object of study.

The diaspora is usually assumed to have an a priori existence with a clear origin—ancient, medieval or contemporary, and dating from a pivotal moment that led to a mass exodus of peoples from their state or region of origin (Scheffer 2003). Diasporas, in their loosest sense, are defined as communities that engage in “endless cultural, social, economic, and especially political struggles of those dispersed ethnic groups, permanently residing in host countries away

from their homelands, to maintain their distinctive identities and connections with their homelands and other dispersed groups from the same nations” (Scheffer 2003, 7). Clifford further adds that diasporas have a “history of dispersal, myths/memories of the homeland, and alienation in the host (bad host?) country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of the homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship” (1995, 305). The diaspora is presumed to be the product of state or state-like institutions that expel on one end and marginalize on the other—in both cases, it is presumed to be created by states and performed by the members. Yet, as Brian Axel argues, this framework presupposes that “the common denominator exemplifying a diaspora is its vital relation to a place or origin that is elsewhere [...and] the place of origin or homeland—embodied in formulations of language, religion, tradition, race, ethnicity, indications of territoriality, etc.—*constitutes* the diaspora” (2001, 8). Thus a diaspora is created by movement away from a perceived homeland. Consequently, in this framework, the hostland is assumed to perceive the diaspora as a permanent threat to its cohesion and its fantasy of its own closure. Thus, regardless of birthplace, those presumed to be part of the diaspora are defined in relation to the imaginary homeland and are subject to the host states’ control either through immigration policies, or through multicultural policies.

Following Axel, I am interested in challenging this place of origin thesis by investigating the processes that constitute a diaspora, rather than assuming that movement away from a homeland imagined or otherwise necessarily creates this form of group. While there are social formations that are usefully defined as diasporas, these are not self-evident groupings with transhistorical characteristics. Rather, the particular historical formations that constitute specific diasporas need to be investigated and the processes whereby the ethnic/national subject is formed and then becomes a representative of a diaspora must be unravelled in order to understand and

foreground the agency of those defined as members of a diaspora. I agree with the reading of diasporas as marginal and existing on the borders of the nation. However, when members of diasporas are viewed as victims of expulsion, racialization, and marginalization, their role in shaping their own world and the world around them is rarely recognized. I wish to investigate the manner in which members of diasporas practice their agency and are actors in their own identification, while often being simultaneously constrained by the technologies of power imposed upon them by their hostland and homeland.

Before I proceed, I need to attend to the terms hostland and homeland. In any discussion of the movement of peoples across state borders, we rely on shorthand concepts—like presuming that states and borders exist in the first place, in order to be able to discuss the implications of these imaginings. The difficulty with this approach is that all too often, even as we are aware of the imagined nature of these presumed entities, we lapse into treating them as if they existed and were bounded wholes. Likewise, I will use the terms hostland and homeland, or Canada and Rwanda, as place holders for an ideological, geographical, and temporal space, and cannot promise that I will not reify them—but I will always try to retain a consciousness of their construction. I also remain conscious of the difficulty of thinking of Canada as a perpetual hostland to those who identify as Rwandan as it presupposes that they are always outsiders to the Canadian state's foundational myths and that Canada can never become a homeland to them. I will further develop this problematic in later chapters when I investigate how the individuals from this group<sup>3</sup> themselves conceive of their place in Canada. The term homeland is also laden with difficulty, as it carries assumptions of belonging and security, and that those who have left

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<sup>3</sup> The use of the term group is also problematic as it assumes the existence of a shared sense of identity and positionality, which may not be the case. I use this term, or, alternatively, the term community, for lack of a better one, knowing full well that the Rwandan diaspora is not a bounded discrete set of individuals who share a locus of understanding at all times. Rather, it serves to designate the notion that those whom I interviewed understood themselves to have something in common.

desire it—either as a place of return, or as an imaginary place that offers comfort and familiarity. In many cases, the presumed homeland is neither a desired space, nor, necessarily, where the diaspora wishes to return. Those who are part of a diaspora “experience[.] a dynamic tension every day between living ‘here’ and remembering ‘there’, between memories of places of origin and entanglements with places of residence, and between the metaphorical and the physical home” (Agnew 2005, 4). In the case of the Rwandan diaspora, the perceived homeland has in the past been hostile and memories of it are too often traumatic. Thus, while I use the terms, I remain aware of emptiness of the signifiers and attempt to extricate the multiple meanings and readings of the two.

### ***Theorizing Nation, Ethnicity, and Race***

To make sense of how these individuals came to identify as part of a Rwandan diaspora, we need to theorize not only diaspora, but notions of nation, ethnicity, and race. How do we come to see and understand as members of a group, disparate people who ultimately may share little in common, and by what alchemy do we then see them as acting together and thus attribute action, cognition, and emotion to this group? Social scientists have been offering answers to these questions since the turn to identity studies in the 1960s, and chief among them have been Claude Lévi-Strauss (1977), Pierre Bourdieu (1980), Benedict Anderson (1983; 2006), Amartya Sen (1985), Fernand Braudel (1988), Judith Butler (1990), Zygmunt Bauman (1992), Paul Gilroy (1993), Charles Tilly (1996), and Stuart Hall (1996). I have chosen to acknowledge the debt owed to these scholars, but to use Brubaker’s interventions to focus my analysis. Rogers Brubaker has spent considerable time challenging the practice in the social sciences of taking

“discrete, bounded groups as basic constituents of social life, chief protagonists of social conflicts, and fundamental units of social analysis” (Brubaker 2006, 9). He argues that this reification of a category of social life leads academics to reinforce the narratives of ethnopolitical entrepreneurs who seek to call into being an ethnicity. We unintentionally help these entrepreneurs summon and generate that which we seek to describe and understand. Instead, we ought to view ethnicity, race, and nation:

not as substances or things or entities or organisms, or collective individuals—as the imagery of discrete, concrete, tangible, bounded, and enduring ‘groups’ encourages us to do—but rather in relational, processual, dynamic, eventful, and disaggregated terms. This means thinking of ethnicity, race, and nations not in terms of substantial groups or entities but in terms of practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects, and contingent events. It means thinking of ethnicization, racialization, and nationalization as political, social, cultural, and psychological processes (Brubaker 2006, 11)

Further, but equally importantly, Brubaker explains that:

Ethnicity, race, and nationhood are fundamentally ways of perceiving, interpreting, and representing the social world. They are not things *in* the world, but perspectives *on* the world. They include ethnicized ways of seeing (and ignoring), of construing (and misconstruing), of inferring (and misinferring), of remembering (and forgetting). They include ethnically oriented frames, schemas, and narratives, and the situational cues—not least those provided by the media—that activate them. They include systems of classification, categorization, and identification, formal and informal. And they include the tacit, taken-for-granted background knowledge, embodied in persons and embedded in institutional routines and practices, through which people recognize and experience objects, places, persons, actions or situations ethnically, racially, or nationally marked or meaningful (2006, 11).

Following the above analytical frames and Brubaker’s advice, I do not see Rwandan identity as a unified stable set of ways of seeing the world; rather, I focus on the multiple ways that those I interviewed categorized and identified themselves. This tightening, and yet loosening, of the notion of identity sheds greater light on how the individuals whom I interviewed could see themselves and their worlds so distinctly, and yet could still, unproblematically, perceive

themselves as part of the group that calls itself Rwandan. How one identifies oneself and others is fundamentally situational and contextual, yet that does not strip the idea of ethnicity of its emotional and often deadly political power. Moving away from a focus on things in the world to how these things are created better explains the porous boundaries of national, racial, and ethnic categories. These three distinct domains of knowledge production need to be investigated individually in order to fully grasp how nation, ethnicity and race come to be seen as things in the world and treated as if they exist. Looking at categories allows us to avoid imaging a group into being, yet still to appreciate that nation, ethnicity, and race are meaningful for those who see through them. Individuals, as actors in the world, daily use categories to “make sense of the world, linked to stereotypical beliefs and expectations about category members, invested with emotional associations and evaluative judgements, deployed as resources in specific interactional contexts, and activated by situational triggers” (Brubaker 2006, 13). Thus, I looked to parse the distinct understandings associated with “Rwandan” as a continuously created and re-created identity by listening to how individuals framed their experiences, their expectations, and their emotions, including in terms of categories and discourses of nation, ethnicity, and race.

I also investigated the institutions and organizations that were central to the generation of this identity as they offered a “standardized scheme of social accounting, a interpretive frame for public discussion, a dense organizational grid, a set of boundary-markers, a legitimate form for public and private identities” (Brubaker 1994, 7). These ranged from the associations formed among those who identified as Rwandan, to the Rwandan and Canadian states as institutional structures (the latter two institutions are discussed in a latter section). Institutions or organizations “cannot be equated with ethnic groups”, rather, given their organizational capacity, they are capable of what appears to be coherent action (Brubaker 2006, 15). Thus, as Brubaker

has argued, nations are “categories of practice”, and states as institutionalized forms of the nation. Indeed, states institutionalize “territorial nationhood and ethnic nationality as fundamental social categories” by developing classificatory systems, accounting systems, registering and issuing identity documents, and reinforcing these categories in bureaucratic encounters (Brubaker 1994, 6-7). Through these institutional practices, states create, sustain and enact the nation as, fundamentally, a process. Thus, it was in the interplay between individuals and organizations that the things that we understand as a group became viable.

To begin, I understand ethnicity as a discourse that is constructed historically, culturally and politically, as Stuart Hall argues. While it is often described in primordial terms, it is not a transhistorical form of identity, but recognition that each person speaks from a particular place and time, and these lived experiences work to construct subjectivity and identity. Thus, language, culture, history, and memory constitute a framework of experience that can come to be understood as “ethnicity” (Hall 1996, 161).

In this study I use both ethnicity and nation because the two concepts are often overlapping and simultaneous. There are moments when nation and ethnicity do not overlap—for instance, “Canadian” can hardly be defined as an ethnic identity in that those who are thus understood rarely share language, culture, history, and the memory that constitute a framework of experience. Canadian identity is most usefully understood as a national identity that is actively generated through processes often originating with the state, primarily because it is a settler nation. Conversely, “Italian”, “Polish” become fluid identities, which, at times, are understood as ethnic and at other times understood as national. Likewise, “Rwandan” is increasingly becoming both a national and an ethnic category—especially among the diaspora. There are also common sense understandings about racial identities linked to ideas of ethnicity and nation and a



presumed congruence between national boundaries and racial identities. For example, to identify as Rwandan is understood by both those within the category and outside observers to encapsulate blackness as an identity and as a signifier and to exclude other forms of racialized identity such as whiteness. Thus, in thinking through how these identities are generated and deployed, it seems most useful not to get bogged down in minute distinctions which may not matter to those who think and see themselves in both ethnic and national terms without differentiating.

The key formative component of Rwandaness as a national category was the event of the Rwandan genocide, an example of what Brubaker terms a “contingent event” (2006) and the subsequent meanings that have been attached to it. Brubaker proposes that “violence becomes ‘ethnic’ (or ‘racial or ‘nationalist’) through the meanings attributed to it by perpetrators, victims, politicians, officials, journalists, researchers, relief workers and others” (2006, 16), including in the context of such events. As the next section will detail further, I build on this idea by suggesting that violence becomes ethnically or nationally significant and meaningful by how it is *remembered* and by what meanings are attributed to it. In the moment of occurrence, violence is not initially productive of ethnic or national meanings. Rather, it is when the violence is recalled and then inscribed as ethnic, national or racial, that the event of the violence contributes to creating the very idea of the ethnicity, the nation or the race. This process of remembering and reconstituting the past to form a collective narrative among the Rwandan diaspora which became the foundational myth of the new Rwandan nation is one of the central processes under investigation in this study. In seeking to make sense of this nation-building process as an essential component of diaspora-making in the case of the Rwandan diaspora, I utilize the concept of a “mythico-history” borrowed from Liisa Malkki. She defines a mythico-history as a fundamentally moral re-telling of historical events that is neither wholly history nor myth—

hence mythico-history. This mythico-history contains “a set of moral and cosmological ordering stories: stories which classify the world according to certain principles, thereby simultaneously creating it” (Malkki 1995, 54). The mythico-history is not necessarily factually false, but what distinguishes it from other forms of historical narrative is that it is focused on restoring and creating order. This mythico-history then becomes the collective history from which the nation is constituted. I pursue this idea further in chapter 3 where violence as a meaningful event is explored.

The boundaries between national, ethnic, and racial categories (the latter to be defined shortly) also call out for clarification. In speaking to and of the Rwandan diaspora, I am speaking of people who alternatively identify as Rwandan (nationally/ethnically), Tutsi or Hutu (ethnically), and black (racially). Yet, what do they mean by these categories and how do the categories coexist? If nation is a set of categories that construct an “imagined community” in Anderson’s terms (2006), or, in Brubaker’s terms, a “way of seeing the world” (2006, 82), then so too are ethnicity and race, though they are experienced and interpreted differently. When people understand themselves as Rwandans they are classifying their social world according to ideas of belonging and identifying themselves against the other—in this case, the Belgian colonial other, the Burundian fraternal other, the Congolese external other. To classify oneself as Rwandan in Canada is to locate new others against whom one might identify—the black Caribbean other, the black African American other, the black Continental African other, and the perceived Canadian other (which usually means someone who is born in Canada and thinks in collective frames and categories which are distinctly North American, if not Canadian).

The nation and the national identities that accompany it appear to be stable referents, yet the conceptual slippage of the terms demonstrates just how transitory and partial the referents

always must be. As Bhabha argues in *Nation and Narration*, “the mark of the ambivalence of the nation as a narrative strategy—and an apparatus of power—is that it produces a continual slippage into analogous, even metonymic categories like the people, minorities, or ‘cultural difference’ that continually overlap in the act of writing the nation. What is displayed in this displacement and repetition of terms is the nation as the measure of the liminality of cultural modernity” (1990, 292). While Bhabha understands the nation to be a product and measure of liminality of modernity, I am more interested in seeing how it generates common sense understandings of the social world.

To see the world through nation is also to understand oneself as being the inheritor of an ordered national cosmology. To borrow from anthropology, cosmology is defined as the ordering of the known universe. Tambiah defines this as:

classifications of the most encompassing scope. They are frameworks of concepts and relations which treat the universe or cosmos as an ordered system, describing it in terms of space, time, matter, motion, and peopling it with gods, humans, animals, spirits, demons, and the like. Cosmologies consist usually of accounts of the creation and generation of the existing order of phenomena, explaining their character and their place and function in the scheme (1985, 3).

What one sees when one sees through nation is not arbitrary, but the product of a series of understandings and orderings of the social and physical world. The borders between people (who is a friend and who is an enemy), the borders between things (where one’s home lies and where it does not), and the borders between ideas (which belief system is “true” and which is not), are all influenced by national cosmologies. These orderings are fundamentally orderings of the moral universe. Just as religion once ordered the moral universe, now the nation offers a cosmology through which we can understand who we are and our place in the world. A cosmology is not a stable, solid block of self and other understandings which is transposed unto each new generation. Rather, though it appears defined and clear, it is a system of understandings

which is constantly under strain as it is picked and prodded and shaped and unshaped by those who are its practitioners and producers. Accordingly, nationality or ethnicity is not “a continuous but an intermittent phenomenon” and “happens at particular moments and in particular contexts” when individuals understand themselves to be motivated by this identity and understand their world through the cosmology that it imposes (Brubaker et al. 2007, 207).

The place and time from which one identifies changes the content of that identification. It is a very different thing to say I am Rwandan because I am not white and Belgian, or black and Burundian, than to say I am Rwandan because I am not white and Canadian, nor black and African American. Likewise, to identify as a Tutsi means that I am not a Hutu. There are presumed social norms and mores and presumed distinct histories which ostensibly divide the two ethnic groups, yet the greatest marker of Tutsiness is its presumed difference from Hutuness. As Liisa Malkki has argued in her study of Burundian Hutu refugees in Tanzania, the identity of her study participants as Hutus or as refugees was not a stable identity, but a continual process of “making and unmaking categorical identities and moral communities” (1995, 17). Depending on their location in a refugee camp or in town, Hutu refugees saw themselves and their relationship to Tutsis in Burundi dramatically differently. In her study, Malkki found that of those who were expelled from Burundi by massacres and genocide committed by the minority Tutsi against the majority Hutu in 1972, the refugees who lived in town framed their sense of self and identity in oppositional terms to those who lived in a refugee camp. For the camp Hutus, exile had taught them finally “‘what a Hutu is’ and prepared people for the return to the place where the Hutu ‘belong’” (Malkki 1995, 209). One of the central themes of their didactic story telling was to constitute “the Tutsi” as “a categorical opposite and enemy, but also as the embodiment of such abstract moral qualities as evil, laziness, beauty, danger, and ‘malignity’. ‘The Hutu’ tended to

emerge out of this, reflexively, as that which ‘the Tutsi’ were not” (Malkki 1995, 54). Conversely, the town refugees rejected such categorical framings of their identity and instead “seemed to feel most at home in the borderland that was Kigoma [town], a zone of sheltering vagueness where national or categorical ‘species’ allegiance was not continually being extracted from them” (Malkki 1995, 193). The camp refugees saw the Tutsi as the allegorical enemy, while the town refugees developed a much less categorical understanding of their own identity, as well as the Tutsi identity. In essence, to be “Hutu” meant a very different “way of seeing” in the town than it did in the camp; ethnic identification held few stable referents and was a box that was constantly being filled by the actors thus identified and, importantly in Malkki’s study, by state and institutional structures, a subject I return to later.

Race seems to least fit this frame as it carries such a history of division and putative difference. It seems to speak to an ontological reality of physical similarities among a particular group of people. Rwandans, in particular, could be said to be black nearly universally, thus suggesting that all Rwandans share a racial identity and therefore that this is no longer just a “way of seeing”, but a deeper, more rooted, way of being. Yet, race is as much a “way of seeing” as is nation and ethnicity. Many scholars have spent much time demonstrating that there is no biological basis for the idea of race (Obach 1999; Andreasen 2000; Anderson and Nickerson 2005; Bonham et al. 2005; Smedley and Smedley 2005), and I will not spend time here rehearsing their arguments, but will instead focus on how race is a way of seeing. As Kwame Anthony Appiah argues, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century black (at the time “negro”) thinkers and ethnopolitical entrepreneurs, spent considerable time and energy on creating a sense of racial solidarity through the constructs of Pan-Africanism and negritude, in an effort to persuade their incredibly diverse audiences that they shared a common bond (1992). The very fact that their

audiences, made up of African Americans and Africans under colonial rule, had to be persuaded that they shared qualities and had “natural” affinities, speaks to the lack of an ontological reality to race. Thus, seeing through race allowed Crummell, Du Bois, Senghor, Cesaire, and others to envision that all peoples who “belonged” in Africa shared a sense of victimhood and oppression. Yet, as Appiah points out, even colonialism was perceived very differently in different parts of the African continent. Where it had existed for less than 50 years, it had left little impact on the culture of the indigenous people, and thus they did not conceptualize colonialism in the same way as those who were theorizing it (Appiah 1992, 7). The very notion of liberatory blackness or Africaness had to be constructed in opposition to racial hierarchies created by colonial machineries and filled in with new meanings designed to foster anti-colonial sentiments and anti-racism, though, often by generating new forms of racism, as Appiah argues.<sup>4</sup>

As the earlier formations of “race” were distinct “ways of seeing”, so too are more recent revisions of these concepts. Contemporary ideas about what constitutes blackness in North America are evident in the ways in which those I study, and many others, understand their social world. Consequently, “when we characterize police practices as involving ‘racial profiling’”, we are interpreting the world as if race existed and played out in day to day interactions of power (Brubaker 2006,70). Thus, when my informants explained that they were subjected to excessive traffic stops *because* of their blackness, they were expressing the way in which they and the police officer stopping them were “seeing” through race. Race does not exist, “yet it is an integral part of the classificatory system through which a racialized social order is produced and maintained” (Torres, Miron and Inda 1999, 5). Though there may not be a biological reality to

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<sup>4</sup> Appiah’s argument is that these new identities, though they were intended as a remedy for the debilitating racisms of the past, ended up taking race for granted and thus accepting its existence in the first place. Indeed, “the received concept is a hierarchy, a vertical structure, and DuBois wishes to rotate the axis, to give race a ‘horizontal’ reading, but still retains the very concept of race, thus retaining the roots of racism” (1992, 46).

race, it certainly is a way that people are identified and identify themselves, thus becoming one of a set of self and other identifications which are mobilized to make sense of and to classify the everyday world. It becomes an ontological reality when individuals are racialized and othered based on this classification. Racialization is the “process that produces and constructs the meaning of race and the structures that accompany such a process” (Agnew 2007, 9).

Racialization draws attention to how groups are defined as of a certain race and points to the processes that lead to the creation of such categories and to the imposition of these categories unto individuals and groups (Henry and Tator 2002). To say that race is also a way of seeing is not to ignore or devalue the trauma of being racialized and thus dehumanized. It is to understand how people are perceived and perceive themselves and what the consequences of these perceptions are. This way of seeing through race allows us to avoid reifying it and thus contributing to practices of racialization, while not denying its purchase on social realities. Here again, moving away from ontology, and thus a focus on what is, to epistemology and a focus on how realities are constructed, gives us an avenue to think through the ways in which potent classifications shape and enforce realities unto peoples’ bodies.

Yet, even with such a potent form of classification as race, “ordinary actors usually have considerable room for maneuver in the ways in which they use even highly institutionalized and powerfully sanctioned categories” (Brubaker 2006, 68). Correspondingly, race, nation, and ethnicity, as alternate and sometimes corresponding “ways of seeing” are mobilized and utilized every day in multiple ways, in multiple spaces and contexts. Among Rwandans, when elites organize and articulate a performance of nation and subterraneanly, ethnicity, as powerful as the annual genocide commemorations, young people attend not because of the sense of duty that is the oft publicly expressed motivation of their elders, but because of a desire to make sense of

their inheritance of loss and memory. Consequently, by bringing their own needs and desires to the event, they inadvertently become instrumental in generating both a sense of nationhood and ethnicity and the appearance of consensus around the meaning of those terms.

### ***Violence and the Making of Rwandan Diaspora***

As the analysis has already noted, violence is central in the making of collective identities, and I have argued that violence becomes ethnically or nationally significant and meaningful by how it is *remembered* and recollected, building on Brubaker's understanding of violence and of contingent events. As such, the Rwandan diaspora is unthinkable without thinking about the genocidal violence that is the condition of its existence, particularly about how it is represented in memory. In this way, the hyper-real violence of the Rwandan genocide has become the originary event for contemporary Rwandan identity both in Rwanda, and in the diaspora. It is the contingent event that is recalled and remembered as a "phase[...] of extraordinary cohesion and moment[...] of intensely felt solidarity" (Brubaker 2004, 12) among those who identify as Tutsi, and this event has become the foundational myth of the new nation.

Every nation and ethnicity, without exception, is rendered through violence, but those violences are not always remembered. As Ernest Renan famously argued at the Sorbonne in 1882, forgetting the violence of conquest, of racial and other differences is crucial in the creation of a nation (1990). Thus, most contemporary nations and ethnicities have effectively forgotten their bloody origins. But for those who classify themselves as Rwandan, their blood marks their beginning and its remembrance. The genocide of 1994 stands as the border—breaking time, space, self, and other. The genocidal violence occurred in Rwanda starting on April 6<sup>th</sup> 1994 and



there played out on the bodies of between 500,000 and 1.3 million people, not including those who died in subsequent years due to revenge killings, murders, state-sanctioned massacres, and the brutal Congolese war. The brutal termination of these nearly uncountable lives has drawn in horror and blood the stage upon which the subsequent nation and ethnicity would be constructed. Their deaths and physical remains have been mobilized as monuments, building blocks in the new edifice of contemporary Rwandan diasporic identity. The violence is initially real as there are too many bodies and absences to point to, but becomes hyperreal as the bodies and absences are recounted, reconstituted, and retold in the fused projects of remembering, forgetting and nation-building. The violence transcends the 100 days of killing in 1994 and continues forward in time, even as it is left behind temporally. It creates its own time and space, and this time can be and is called upon indefinitely. As is the case with other nation-states that are created in the aftermath of a deeply traumatizing violence, like the Israeli state, the time of the violence never ceases. It is not permitted to fade into memory as it becomes crucial to the state's narratives of self. In the case of Rwanda, like Israel, the contemporary government is a government which garners much of its legitimacy from the very violence for which it presents itself as an antidote. This Heideggerian double movement of remembering and forgetting (Hodge 1995, 104) necessitates the constant presence of the time of violence. Indeed, as the later chapter on violence will develop more fully, the ways in which the Rwandan state mobilizes the time of violence are reminiscent of the ways in which the Israeli state mobilizes the time of violence. In both instances, the time of violence and consequently the violence itself, become common place, while thought of and understood as extreme exceptions.

Axel has argued that for the Sikh diaspora the political violence of the torture of Sikh men by the Indian state has become the “central element in processes of a diasporic imaginary,

designating a fundamental and historically specific, aspect of not just Sikh subjectification but the formation of diaspora itself” (2001, 122). Specifically, the online circulation of the images of tortured bodies by Sikhs around the world has formed a “specific modality of identification and pedagogy” which is central to the formation of the Sikh diaspora (ibid., 139). Axel’s argument that “violence is the thread by which the diaspora is constituted as a community” (ibid., 156) is central to my understanding of how remembrances and representations of violence connect individuals into a community. However, contrary to Axel’s findings concerning the Sikh diaspora, among the Rwandan diaspora, the violence of the genocide ruptured the former nation, *but it did not generate connections between those who lived away from the homeland—namely, neither the violence nor recollections of it created a diaspora, at least not on their own.* As the analysis makes clear, these individuals were often connected to one another, even sharing memories of the violence, but *they did not become a diaspora until the new Rwandan state, itself formed out of the horror of the genocide, called the diaspora into being through its institutionalized practices, accounting schemes, classificatory categories, policy directives and discourses* and offered the genocide as the foundational myth of the new nation and the diaspora.

### ***States and the Making of Diasporas***

States are the institutional forms of nations from which emanate rituals, laws, norms, and classificatory systems (Brubaker 1994) which instantiate the nation. As the earlier section indicated, states are also pivotal in the deployment of violence and in the re-telling and remembering of violence as constitutive of the nation. Indeed, in the case of the new Rwandan nation, it was the state’s very explicitly outlined mythico-history of the genocide which was the

foundation upon which those who identified as Rwandese in the diaspora came to connect as Rwandans. In thinking of states thus, I am not suggesting that states are monolithic agents with unified agendas; rather, the policies that are the product of individual initiatives within large bureaucracies make states appear as unitary actors. In the post-Westphalian era we cannot conceive of nation, ethnicity, and race without understanding states, and state-like institutions (such as the Rwandan Patriotic Front in Uganda), as the central to their construction. Thus, as Brubaker proposes, we can distinguish between state-framed and counter-state nationalism. State-framed nationalism is “congruent with the state, and [...] institutionally and territorially framed by it”, while counter-state nationalism, as the name suggests, are formed in opposition to an existing state (Brubaker 2004, 144). Whether the nation is congruent or oppositional to a state, the very idea of a nation depends upon the existence (or potential existence) of a state to shape it, or to be challenged by it. Likewise, a diaspora, as the deterritorialized form of a nation, relies on the state or potential of a state to claim it or reject it. This state could be the real or imagined home state, or the host state. Yet, to propose that states are the central institution is insufficient to explain how they contribute to generating common-sense understandings, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, political projects, and contingent events that help constitute nation, ethnicity, and race as categories or ways of seeing. Indeed, the modern state is one the most significant “agents of identification and categorization” as it seeks to monopolize “legitimate symbolic force [...] and] this includes the power to name, to identify, to categorize, to state what is what and who is who” (Brubaker 2006, 42). To understand these processes, we need to delve into specific policy discourses and observe how they function. In this study, two sets of policy discourses are of particular interest: the Canadian state’s multiculturalism and the Rwandan state’s transnationalism.

The Canadian state has been a central institution in the shaping of ideas about race and generating new ways of seeing. Policies emanating from the Canadian state create discourses which generate “commonsense cultural knowledge about the social world and one’s place in it” such as “one’s own and others’ ethno-cultural nationality, and the ability to assign unknown others to ethnonational categories on the basis of cues such as language, accent, name, and sometimes appearance” (Brubaker 2006, 25). Specifically, the key policy discourse that has worked to construct ideas about race has been multiculturalism. Multiculturalism is one of the key state-sanctioned and -generated discourses which identifies who belongs to the Canadian nation and on what terms. It is premised upon the assumption that ethnic/racial minorities, historically actively excluded from the nation, are now included through a series of laws and policies that seek to offer support for the expression and practice of non-Anglo-phone or Franco-phone cultures in Canada. Yet, despite the promise implicit in such a policy, the specific form of multiculturalism in Canada has served to frame and control a potentially dangerous, and even radical other. Multiculturalism is founded on the assumption that “cultures” are things in the world and that they will inevitably come into conflict if they are not managed within a set of legal and policy constraints. Thus, in creating a policy to manage “cultures,” the Canadian state has created and reified the idea of cultures as distinct and incompatible with one another. The othered cultures have thus been interpreted as transhistorical and immutable, and fundamentally anti-modern. They have become inflexible, stolid objects that have always been enacted the same way. Multiculturalism also serves to obscure other vectors of difference within the presumed “culture”, because “in stressing ethnicity, it tended to work on and foster the assumption that ethnic groups were internally homogenous and, thus, that gender, class, or other differences were not relevant” (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002, 108-9).

Using Brubaker, the study sees Canadian state systems of classification and naming as having a great impact on generating a Rwandan diaspora, for those who migrate to Canada find themselves named and classified as the perpetual racialized other, and thus are often driven to seek out other means of belonging. Indeed, the Canadian state's discourses of racialization were a necessary, though insufficient, spur to the creation of the diaspora. Under the policy/discourse of multiculturalism, those who identify as Rwandans in the GTA find the ostensible language of inclusion, yet are in practice racialized and othered. They are racialized as black and rendered hyper visible, even in the context of a region like the GTA where 47% of residents self-report being members of a visible minority (City of Toronto 2013), Rwandans in the region faced day-to-day struggles to stake a claim in the political and social world that they also helped constitute. Most said that they rarely experienced explicit manifestations of racism—the story of one boy being called a “nigger” by a classmate was rare enough to be an exceptional story that I was told by more than one informant. Yet, they nonetheless experienced what Henry et al. (1995) have termed “everyday racism”:

Everyday racism expresses itself in glances, gestures, forms of speech, and physical movements. Sometimes it is not even consciously experienced by its perpetrators, but it is immediately and painfully felt by its victims—the empty seat next to a person of colour, which is the last to be occupied in a crowded bus; the slight movement away from a person of colour in an elevator; the overattention to the black customer in the shop; the inability to make direct eye contact with a person of colour; the racist joke told at a meeting; and the ubiquitous question ‘Where did you come from?’ (Agnew 2007, 29)

As one informant taught me, the more contemporary version of that question is “what’s your background?”—a question that I, though I am a migrant, have not been asked because I am white and have an Anglo name. Yet, nearly all respondents had encountered this question. Many understood it to be motivated by curiosity, which they were content to satisfy, while many others had grown weary of the question and understood it to be a comment on their perceived

difference. Other ways that they had been reminded of their place outside the nation's imagination of itself included non-recognition of their credentials and work experience, underemployment, accent discrimination, excessive and unmerited police stops of men driving vehicles in their own neighbourhoods, and excessive attention in stores, including outright accusations of theft. These experiences of racialization and the concomitant discrimination echoed those of other African migrants in Canada (Creese 2011, 148). Thus, the state policy of ostensible inclusion but actual containment led individuals who identified as Rwandese to desire a connection to Rwanda, understood as the homeland.

The longing for the homeland motivated many in the community to develop transnational ties to the homeland. Transnationalism fosters the development of "new subjectivities" in the global arena which engender the development of new identities no longer fixated on the nation-state, but which are now polycentric (Ong and Nonini 1996, 11). The focal points of these new identities can be ideas of cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, consumption, an international business class, and other forms of supra-national ideology and organization. For most migrants, though, the development of dual or even multiple identifications marks the emergence of a new conception of self and other. To think of oneself as both home and simultaneously away from home destabilizes the notion of home and opens up space to envision home as deterritorialized and possibly plural. Yet, it also invokes both affective spaces as formative. Thus, when those who identify as Rwandan in the GTA engage in transnational practices, they are subjected to (at least) two national cosmologies—those of the Canadian state, including its discourses of multiculturalism and simultaneous practices of exclusion as discussed earlier, and those of the Rwandan state. Yet, the idea of the self and community that emerges is not the product of a dichotomy of here/there. Rather, it is simultaneous here/there, a convergence and divergence of

time, space and location. As Westwood and Phizacklea have suggested, migration and the subsequent transnationalism often generated are a rupturing of linear narratives, wherein the term rupture “also suggests the unfinished and discontinuous nature of both the migratory process and the making of national identities and nations” (2000, 7). Hence, those who have come to identify as Rwandans in the GTA have been both agents and subjects of the making of national identities and nations, yet they have also ruptured those constructs as their presence outside the Rwandan nation state calls into question the very category of the nation-state as a territorialized locality with its associated territorialized understandings of belonging.

Transnationalism is a flexible term that has been bent to accommodate various theoretical and empirical phenomena related to the simultaneous connectedness of individuals to more than one state, community, or locality. Transnationalism belies precise definition, but is most usefully deployed to describe networks and movement of individuals, ideas, and capital. It involves, at its core, the crossing of borders, national, institutional, ideological, philosophical, and practices that are not confined within one state, but, as the term suggests, transcend the nation state. Glick-Schiller and Fouron define transnational migrants as those who “are fully encapsulated neither in the host society nor in their native land but who nonetheless remain active participants in the social settings of both locations. They construct their identities in relation to both societies” (1990, 330). Transnationalism is thus perceived “as social processes whereby immigrants create social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders, and developed multiple familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political relations that span nations” (Wong 2007/8, 81). In this way, the argument of the present study that the study participants had come to understand themselves as part of a Rwandan diaspora even while also coming to

understand themselves as at home in Canada, is an argument about the constitution of transnational belonging.

Contemporary transnationalism dates back to the origin of the Westphalian system of nation-states and the emergence of borders that were crossed and re-crossed. It is an ongoing process that has shaped the modern world. Yet, there are components that are new and thus merit recognition as novel developments of the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century. The question of whether transnationalism is, in fact, a new phenomenon, or merely the continuation of centuries-old practices echoes similar debates about globalization. The responses to both debates are likewise parallel—what is new in both transnationalism and globalization (so intimately connected) are the technologies of the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century which have enabled the speedy transfer of people and capital and the instantaneous transfer of ideas all around the globe. Yet, despite these novel developments, the state remains central to many of these processes, including the constitution of a sense of diaspora and of home, as the present study will show. Moreover, despite predictions of the state's decline, it persists and mutates with the new conditions, becoming increasingly a virtual creature. As new research into state uses of online platforms has demonstrated, the very institutional structure and functioning of modern states has altered with the advent of first the internet, then social media (Everard 2001; Fountain 2001; Gruzd, Wellman and Takhteyev 2011; Kittilson and Dalton 2011; Bruns and Highfield 2013; Bernal 2014). As Everard proposed, states' role in identity formation has only been strengthened by the transition to online platforms (2001), and the Rwandan state is no exception. To paraphrase Twain, the rumors of the death of the state are an exaggeration. It is hale, hearty and surprisingly resilient in the face of extra-state forces and developments. These developments include:

- “advances in the ‘technology of contact’”, such as “cheap telephone calls, taxes, email and Internet sites, satellite T.V., ubiquitous print media and inexpensive and



frequent modes of travel have allowed for continuous and real-time communication within global migrant networks”

- “the speed and intensity of communication between home and away has created in many contexts a ‘normative transnationalism’ in which migrants abroad are ever more closely aware of what is happening in the sending context”
- “The sheer scale of remittances represents both a qualitative and quantitative shift”
- “advances in telecommunications have facilitated wider, more intensive and increasingly institutionalized forms of political engagement with homelands, including party politics and electioneering, lobbying, mass demonstrations, post-conflict reconstruction, support for insurgency and support for terrorism” (Vertovec 2009, 15).

These extra- and intra-state changes have facilitated ever greater transnational engagements of migrants which include “reciprocity and solidarity within kinship networks, political participation not only in the country of emigration but also of immigration, small-scale entrepreneurship of migrants across borders and the transfer and re-transfer of cultural customs and practices” (Faist 2010, 11). As a set of practices and a theoretical concept, transnationalism challenges the presumption that migration causes a severing of ties with the homeland and that assimilation to the hostland replaces the affective, ideological, institutional and commercial ties to the homeland. It serves to acknowledge that migrants usually retain close ties to the homeland and even build new ones as they build lives in the new host/homeland.

### ***Home and Diasporas***

The concept of home, be it in the putative homeland or hostland, is one of the central analytical categories that forms the cosmology of the nation among the diaspora. Home is literally a building or place and an “idea and an imaginary that is imbued with feelings. These may be feelings of belonging, desire and intimacy, (as, for instance, in the phrase ‘feeling at home’), but can also be feelings of fear, violence and alienation [...] Home is thus a spatial

imaginary: a set of intersecting and variable ideas and feelings, which are related to context, and which construct places, extend across spaces and scales, and connect places” (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 2). The idea of home carries with it many affective and theoretical understandings, and to appreciate what those who identify as Rwandans in the GTA mean when they express that “Canada is now home”, it is helpful to understand what the idea of home denotes for similarly racialized communities. Many first generation migrants view the imagined homeland as the authentic home, while their current place of residence in the hostland is interpreted as a more or less temporary necessity.<sup>5</sup> Yet for all the hope invested in this idea of home, it often remains as “only a fleeting, tempting promise, always just out of reach [...] because it is impossible to recreate the lost memories” (Davis 2004, 68). Notisha Massaquoi, a first generation migrant from Sierra Leone, describes this state of being thus: “For many of us, our identity is based on a constant longing for the imagined home, the one that no longer exists, that many of us were too young to remember, that we have infrequently visited, and the one which became frozen in time and romanticized at the moment of arrival” (2004, 140). There can never be a return to this desired home because, as Massaquoi points out, the memory has replaced the reality and the memory is of a frozen time which takes on mythological proportions as the hostland fails the diasporic subject. Massaquoi explains this disjuncture of the memory of home being juxtaposed against the reality when she narrates how her upbringing in Canada was more traditional and less progressive than the upbringing of her cohort in Sierra Leone as her parents relied upon their memories to replicate what they understood to be traditional values—but the traditions had changed in Sierra Leone and suddenly they were anachronistic, even at home. Thus, the idea of

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<sup>5</sup> I use the term homeland to refer to the imagined place of origin: in the case of the Rwandan community that is the state of Rwanda, even if the person in question was not born or raised in Rwanda. The term hostland refers to Canada, but, as I have indicated in previously, a hostland can become a homeland. Indeed, very many in the study claimed it as home. Thus, I will use the awkward but more accurate hostland/homeland to indicate the variety of subject positions.

home was an unattainable, unrealizable idea that sustained the migrant, until confronted with the logic of change.

Sara Ahmed points out that within the literature on diasporas there are two distinct ways of viewing the idea of home: as a familiar, comfortable and static space, or as already inscribed with strangeness and movement in its very origin. The former reading is “associated with stasis, boundaries, identity and fixity. Home is implicitly constructed as a purified space of belonging in which the subject is too comfortable to question the limits or borders of his or her existence” (Ahmed 1999, 339). This understanding of home allows the interpreter to construct the migrant as the privileged subject who is more aware and more knowledgeable than the local subject. Inherent in this construction is the idea that migration is exceptional, as Ahmed points out, and that it generates new ways of knowing the world. Thus the local subject, who does not move spatially or temporally, becomes the limited and constrained subject. The second interpretation of home that Ahmed offers complicates the idea of home as it recognizes that this construct can serve multiple purposes and functions simultaneously. Home is already strange and movement is already inherent; there is no a priori home, as home is constructed through the mediation of those who move, those who arrive, and those who stay. Further, there is “dislocation within the very forming of homes as complex and contingent spaces of inhabitation” (Ahmed 1999, 340). Here both the migrant and those who stay shape the idea of home and imbue it with a variety of meanings. Neither position is inherently privileged. Both those who leave and those who stay construct home through sentimentalizing it as not only a space of origin, but also a space of belonging. Thus affect is central to home—how one feels about a place or time determines whether one constructs it as home, or not. However, the place one claims as home can never be

exclusively determined by affect—those who are marginalized by the community that they share space with are prevented from claiming that space as home.

As Sara Ahmed points out, “home is where the heart is”, and if the heart cannot rest easy where the body is, then home must become an imaginary space that fulfills the unsatisfied emotional needs. For the African diaspora which has been placed as the ontological other wherever in the world they reside by virtue of their racialization, the heart can never rest easy as it always knows its place of residence can be threatened. Thus the knowledge that they will not be permitted to feel fully at home in the hostland spurs their desire and connection to the ancestral or remembered homeland. Yet, they too often view the hostland as temporary and yearn for their homeland as that is the site of their dreams and hopes. Few of them return to this homeland because they establish ties and roots in the hostland and find that though they may yearn for the homeland, they have little to return to (Gilroy 1993; Tettey and Puplampu 2005; Okpewho and Nzegwu 2009). So for most, the homeland remains an abstraction, and a home in case the hostland fails them.

In the present study, these people who shared a perceived shared place of origin and a newly emerging identity were forming and developing the institutional supports that more established communities had. While many lamented that the emergent community of people who imagined themselves as a Rwandan diaspora lacked cohesion and organization, nonetheless, there was a sense of shared place, space, experience, and identity—and a much welcomed sense of common safety and belonging in the new homes that they were building, findings that will be detailed in chapter 7. Yet, that sense of belonging could not mitigate the lasting memory of violence. Those who identified as Rwandan in the GTA, subjected to state discourses about ethnicity, nation, race, and diaspora, were connected to one another through the memory of

violence which was the originary event of this group. Thus, the discussion of the empirical findings of this study begins, by necessity, with an analysis of the role of violence and memories of violence.

## Chapter Three

### Collective Violence and the Making of a Diaspora

Violence, even deadly violence, has to be understood as a component of everyday life. In many instances that means the literal fact of people facing the death of friends and kin. Every day, in every state, there is murderous violence—lives are terminated brutally and the ghost of those lives haunts those who are left. Death, especially violent death, is traumatic for those who witness and remember as it shatters their sense of safety, well-being, and wholeness. Death is always individually meaningful, but what makes some deaths collectively meaningful? Why are some bodies called upon to bear symbolic meaning within collective understandings, while others are forgotten (or selectively omitted) in collective understandings almost as soon as they are lost? The difference in the treatment and meaning of one death compared to another is not located in the person who died or even in the manner of her death, but in the meanings that are subsequently attributed to it and to the ways in which her death is mobilized. As Brubaker proposes, “how conflict and violence are seen, interpreted, and represented depends significantly on interpretative frames. Today, ethnic and national frames are readily accessible, powerfully resonant, and widely understood as legitimate” (2004, 17). Thus, large scale violence in the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century has commonly come to be understood as something called “ethnic conflict”. Yet, if, as Brubaker argues, the very idea of ethnicity is a way of seeing, rather than a way of being, then “ethnic conflict” is not a self-evident phenomenon. Rather, conflict becomes ethnic “through the meanings attributed to it” by the various actors involved directly or indirectly in the violence (Brubaker 2004, 16). I propose that violence becomes collectively significant not in the moment it occurs, or even directly after, but when it is recalled and inscribed as meaningful. The practice of remembering the violence as ethnic/national, and commemorating it as such constitutes the meaning of the event as ethnic/national.

The Rwandan genocide, like the other horrific genocides of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has come to be seen as a cultural trauma for and by Rwandans. According to Alexander, “cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways” (Alexander 2004, 1) This means that in thinking themselves Rwandan, members of this group daily contend with death as it is constitutive of the very category of Rwandan, and thus becomes part of the everyday. As Axel points out “violence today is the common thread constantly creating and transforming the relations” that make up the Sikh diaspora. Likewise, violence has become the thread that makes up the Rwandan diaspora (Axel 2001, 121). In seeing through Rwandaness, Tutsiness, or Hutuness, Rwandans in the diaspora invoke the temporal space of the genocide in order to make sense of the present. There is no Rwandan, Tutsi, or Hutu identity without the violence. Thus the time of violence and the present can be said to exist simultaneously.

### ***Rwandan Genocide as Cultural Trauma***

Cultural trauma differs from individual trauma in the scope of its impact and in the manner in which it violates individuals and, most significantly, groups. Erikson differentiates the two types of trauma thus:

By individual trauma I mean a *blow* to the psyche that *breaks through one's defenses so suddenly and with such brutal force that one cannot react to it effectively...* By collective trauma, on the other hand, I mean a *blow* to the basic tissues of social life that *damages* the bonds attaching people together and impairs the prevailing sense of communality. The collective trauma works its way slowly and even insidiously into the awareness of those who suffer from it, so it does not have the quality of suddenness normally associated with “trauma”. *But it is a form of shell shock all the same*, a gradual realization that the community *no longer exists* as an effective source of support and that *an*

*important part of the self has disappeared...* “We” no longer exist as a connected pair or as linked cells in a larger communal body (Erikson quoted in Alexander 2004, 4).

As becomes clear in the subsequent discussion of interviews with members of the community, the genocide was an individual trauma because it shattered people’s sense of self and their place in the world. At the time of writing in mid-2015, 21 years after the genocide, many of those who survived the genocide and were participants in this study are still so deeply traumatized by the violence that they cannot speak of it and live cautious, closed-off, fearful lives. Those who have found their way to speaking of the trauma expressed that they cope better with it than others, but they too displayed and cited the continuing impact of the trauma upon their lives. Many spoke of lapsing into a deep depression during the month of April, and others said that they avoided commemorations for fear of resurrecting the pain. Their individual worlds were riven by the trauma and it may take generations for this memory to cease having this destructive power.

### ***Individual Traumas***

Marie, a genocide survivor who was forced to watch her husband be killed, and then was raped by the murderers and infected with HIV, physically lives the memory of the violence every moment of every day. Every time she took the life sustaining antiretrovirals, every time she faced another infection due to her failing immune system, every time she faced another doctor’s visit, Marie was physiologically and psychologically reminded of the violence that she bore in her DNA. Marie could not forget, for to forget would be to risk literal death, so remembering the violence had become the condition of her life. Even as she daily faced the remembrances, the month of April was debilitating. She explained that every April, for 21 years, she felt that:



And me, if I'm okay in Canada, I have everything, but that shock, the shock was in my heart, the way I live in that time can never go, and if I tell you it is gone, I lie to you, because the shock it is still inside of me and that's sometime I feel like I'm not happy, especially in April, every April, I'm not happy, I lose happiness. And I feel like a, I have dream, sometime I have the dream I think I'm in my country, so I wake up, so my mind is go far away and I say, where I am? Oh, so at that time, I think, ohh, I'm in Canada, okay I'm saved.

The recurring night terrors, when she wakes up drenched in sweat, and the flashbacks, reminded her that the past time of violence continued into the present. Though she was able to remind herself that she was now in Canada, and “saved”, she could not sever the power that the memory held over her. Though she was physically distant from the place of the violence, the violence was never left behind. Though her symptoms matched the Western medicalized idea of post-traumatic stress disorder, to Marie, these were not a disorder, but the understandable consequences of the violence that she both remembered and lived day to day.

According to research by Hagengimana and Hinton, genocide survivors living in Rwanda likewise experience depression, anxiety, hypervigilance, difficulty concentrating, flashbacks, loss of affect—namely, the symptoms of PTSD. Yet, they do not perceive this to be “consequence of genocide”; rather, they understand that the genocide lives on in their bodies. Thus, hypertension, heart disease, diabetes, and many other illnesses ostensibly medically unrelated to the violence, are understood to be the physiological consequences of surviving genocide and the continuing stress of living in the memories (Burnet 2012, 90). Marie, now a subject of Western medical discourse and diagnosed with a treatable, though fatal, infection, also understood both her physiological and psychological symptoms to be the continuation of genocide within her.

Many others whom I interviewed reported that, especially during the month of April, they were unable to function and fell into a deep depression. While I was conducting my interviews,

no one would meet with me during the month of memories, as they felt they would be unable to speak of those memories and still hold themselves intact. Olivia, another survivor, told me plainly that no one would be willing to speak to me then, as the risks were too great. When we met in June, she explained that people have found ways to function, and the most common one is avoidance of the memories. They cannot prevent the memories from interfering with their lives, but they can prevent the added interruption of actively recalling the violence, and so they do. In her case, when she lived in Rwanda after the genocide, the violence was so present and real that “I had to save myself because I was going to the point where I wasn’t doing really well with the post-traumatic disorder, and then you’re being revictimized and you’re facing these people who were trying to kill you, you have these nightmares every day... It was very difficult, so I did not have much choice to stay.” Having removed herself from the site of the memories by migrating to Canada, she had since built a life and home. Yet, the month of April was still too fraught for her to be able to confront the memories.

However, at the annual genocide commemorations hosted by the Rwandese-Canadian Association in Toronto, I was surprised by how little emotion was shown. In fact, to an outsider like myself, the atmosphere was almost festive as people were dressed in bright colours, chatted amongst themselves and seemed quite relaxed. Jean, the leader of a Rwandan religious organization in Toronto, explained that the signs of trauma are not visible to the naked eye, even at moments of official remembrance, but they are nonetheless there. As he explained “You see them, physically you won’t know, you won’t know. But inside they’re hurting. They have been, they have no facilities like here. Like here, there are so many facilities, they can go for counselling, they can talk, for us we are not taught to talk what we have been through, you know people keep it inside so they are not open.” In his position as a community leader, he attempted

to foster healing by inviting people to speak of their experiences and to share them with others who had been through the same trauma. However, many remained vigilant, cautious and stayed quiet. Perhaps they were afraid of opening the floodgates and allowing the memories to take hold, or they had achieved a quiet stalemate whereby they could survive day to day and keep the memories at bay, or, as subsequent chapters will discuss, the political and social consequences of speech were too heavy to bear.

In contemporary Rwanda, silence, especially about the violences, serves both to protect the survivors, and is understood to be appropriate behaviour. As Burnet explains:

silence was a culturally appropriate coping mechanism for managing their violent memories. Rwandan children are taught that crying (or even complaining) to strangers is futile because only the family members can understand and be truly sympathetic to a child's suffering (Mironko and Cook 1996). Thus, sharing their painful memories, especially memories that could provoke them to cry, with a relative newcomer in their lives was not a culturally appropriate form of expression (Burnet 2012, 116).

To share memories of the violence with others, especially others who are not close family members, is perceived as gauche and poorly received. The survivor who needs to express these memories in order to quell their pressure, is punished for this need, further silencing her. This ostensibly putative strategy has been a necessary coping mechanism, especially in the years directly after the genocide when too many had too much to say, yet an increasingly authoritarian state system was enforcing its own exclusionary version of the genocide. Burnet, who conducted continuing fieldwork in Rwanda from 1997 and 2011, found that “few survivors were willing (or able) to recount their stories as detailed narratives” (Burnet 2012, 79). Though, as Burnet explains and I also observed, the trauma is expressed in many non-verbal ways. Nonetheless, silence remains a necessary strategy to cope with individual trauma and a closed political space.

### *Coping with Trauma*

Among the diaspora, however, new coping strategies had emerged. While the Rwandan state condoned Rwandan Diaspora Global Network also enforced silence, smaller segments of the community have begun to foster spaces where the silence was broken. Jean's organization initially sought to offer a religious home to Kinyarwanda speakers living in the GTA, but as he and other organizers quickly learned, the more pressing task was to figure out culturally appropriate mechanisms for collective healing; otherwise, few were even willing to come out to the religious meetings. So, utilizing the expertise in their community, especially the Canadian social work training that two organizing members brought, this community began to reach out to survivors. They encouraged those who attended regularly to bring others with them, and then a community leader would visit the survivor in her home and would offer her the space to speak. This approach was initially met with resistance as "people used to fear each other, maybe when they are sick because of the rape, you know, they fear, they fear their community, they want to be lonely, you know? They end up becoming worse, the situation getting worse" (Jean). Yet, with patience and persistence, some survivors began to share their stories, and they began "not to fear," as Jean put it. Western discourses of mental health are also evident in Olivia's use of the ideas of post-traumatic disorder and revictimization. However, these coping strategies had only been successful in reaching some survivors. By and large, ongoing traumatization was still persistent in the community, and silences about violence were still the norm.

Patrice, a young man who had migrated to Canada within 5 years of the study, was also a survivor of the genocide. He had lived most of his life in Rwanda and had made a home in

Canada. He explained the subtle and persistent ways that trauma shaped a survivors' social paradigm, even in the diaspora.

If you go to a party, you heard that someone is from there and there, you don't want to see that person. Cause there might be more background and maybe someone from their family did something ... You see that person, and things messed up, because again you link and you don't enjoy the party, you may even leave early because you don't want to have to talk to them, or share anything with them, you know? ... Of course, because who they are, that person never did anything, a family member, someone in his family, but he's not, he's linked to that and you have a bad perception of that ... You never tell nobody, I saw that person in the room and I had to leave. And that's when that person is organizing another party—"who's coming?" "Who's going to be there? Okay, I'll let you know after".

Patrice's point here is that there was no escape from the time of violence. Among the community, because it was so small, there were inevitably going to be people who were connected to others who may have contributed to a survivor's trauma, thus the survivor learned to cope by being increasingly cautious about social interactions and screening who would be present at social events. To fail to do so was to risk sleepless nights followed by stressful, anxious days, without respite, for:

Tomorrow I have to work, tomorrow I have friends to see—you can't explain to them, you can't tell them when they'll never understand. And if you go to someone from your country, they can give even more than what you want, when all you want is just to get away from it. It can't hurt you, but if you make it bigger, you get to those friends, you don't want to think about it.

Even as the survivor seeks to build or sustain a community, the threat of traumatization lingers and determines the array of available choices. The cultural norm of silence, learned in Rwanda long before the genocide, still conditioned many people's ability to come to terms with their trauma. Patrice was very forthright with me, but explained that he would be unable to talk to another community member about coping with trauma because in Rwandese culture "we do not really talk about personal things". Interestingly, the very fact that I am an outsider allowed him to discuss his anxiety and depression with me, yet he found himself unable to do the same within

the community. Thus the silence was a loud silence, broken by moments of revelation. Those who chose to break the silence and speak to me about their memories and the ways in which the time of violence continued to mark their days, did so with difficulty. They clearly wanted to express and verbalize what living with this kind of trauma meant, day to day, yet, they were visibly stressed while doing so. The physical manifestations of breaking that silence were shaking hands, tears just held back, a cracked or lowered voice, and long pauses. Despite the visible distress, Patrice, and many others who spoke of the silences, expressed a desire for the community to break through these boundaries and learn to speak of the trauma, because the silence was too costly. Too many survivors were struggling alone, and, because of the risks associated with interacting with the community, they were unable to reach out. So they boarded themselves up and locked their doors.

Yet, listening to the accounts of violence and deep traumatization carried a significant risk, even for those who were not themselves survivors. As the studies of psychotherapists working with victims of trauma have shown, listening to and empathising with the story and pain of a survivor has a tangible impact on the therapist. This idea has been termed “vicarious traumatization” and it denotes “changes to the therapist’s enduring ways of experiencing self, others, and the world. The effects of vicarious traumatization permeate the therapist’s inner world and relationships” (Pearlman and Mac Ian 1995, 558). Those who routinely deal with survivors of trauma report symptoms analogous with post-traumatic stress disorder, even though they themselves have not directly experienced the trauma (Pearlman and Mac Ian 1995, 559). The initial violence reverberates well beyond the moment of the violence and the victim who survived. Psychotherapists are developing new tools to cope with vicarious traumatization, to offer both the space that the survivor requires and protection for the therapist’s psychological and

emotional integrity. Yet, these coping mechanisms and resources are not available to the diaspora community. If individuals in the community were willing to listen to those who needed to speak, they opened themselves up to the risk of experiencing the symptoms of trauma. Thus both the survivors and those who did not survive the violence of the genocide were subject to the tyranny of trauma.

Migration to Canada had allowed many the physical distance from the site of the memories to be able to build new lives. Yet, even that measure of respite had not ended the time of violence. Seraphine, another survivor who was a teenager during the genocide, explained that living in Rwanda became impossible because “knowing that you’ve lost people in the same area, you remember that every day, you are just reminded. Everybody was of course crying, because of losing people, but uhh, my, the only concern for me was just to get out of the country.” She fled the site of memory as soon as she was offered the chance to do so, but she too stated that the memories were not gone, they were just less urgent. Angelina, who was not in Rwanda during the genocide, but who also lost family during the violence, explained the continuing sense of anxiety linked to Rwanda, when she expressed that “it can never be a home because you are not feeling secure enough to go back.”

Individual trauma is an inescapable psychological consequence of witnessing extreme violence and experiencing the fundamentally altering fear of imminent death. Individual traumas like those described above affect the individual who was harmed and her close family and friends, but they do not form a collective narrative. A state or state-like institution is necessary to connect individual traumas and to turn them into a cultural trauma that has the power to break the nation.

### *Creating Cultural Trauma*

The violence and death individually traumatized those who witnessed and survived and, in many cases, heard of it second-hand. However, the genocide took on the status of a cultural trauma not at the moments of violence, but in the meanings that had been subsequently attributed to it and in the ways that it had been remembered and re-constructed as a mythico-history. As Alexander argues, “it is the meanings that provide the sense of shock and fear, not the events in themselves” (Alexander 2004, 10). The process of imagining, remembering, and returning to the violence collectively, generated shared understandings of the trauma, which then had the effect of breaking the social order. The process which turns a violent event into a collective trauma has, according to Alexander, a series of necessary markers. The trauma becomes cultural through “a claim to some fundamental injury, an exclamation of the terrifying profanation of some sacred value, a narrative about a horrible destructive social process, and a demand for emotional, institutional and symbolic reparation and reconstitution” (Alexander 2004, 11). Kansteiner, writing about collective memory in post-war Germany, cautions against an overly psychoanalytical reading of the concept of trauma as it relates to groups because this leads to accounts of traumatic injuries leaking into the collective unconscious—a theoretically untenable position as a group cannot have an unconscious in the same way that an individual does (2006). Groups do, however, have a shared store of unspoken and unspeakable objects which can, in some ways, resemble the idea of the unconscious. Nonetheless, however, I will abide by Kansteiner’s critique and do not propose that a cultural trauma is the outcome of unconscious processes; rather, in this case, ethno-national elites generated a narrative of the genocide and framed it as a cultural trauma to serve their political interests of building a new nation. While



Alexander, writing in 2004, explicitly states that the Rwandan genocide did not constitute a cultural trauma (26), I argue that it has become one among the GTA diaspora, perhaps even in the few years since the publication of his book. Since 1994, the genocide has come to be understood as a cultural trauma, which has had the effect of dissolving the imagined community that existed and generating a new imagined community.

Why, then, was the genocide so different from previous violences? What was it about that event that differentiated it from previous murderous violences that had occurred in Rwanda? In 1963 and 1964 there were massacres of Tutsis throughout Rwanda. By 1964 the Hutu Power ideology had provided the political grounds and justification for extreme oppression and massacres of Tutsis and argued that “the Rwandan nation was Hutu and, therefore, power in an independent Rwanda must also be Hutu [...] Tutsi may live in Rwanda, but only as a resident alien minority, at sufferance of the Hutu nation” (Mamdani 2001, 126). Tutsis, as a group, had been subjected to expulsion, oppression, and murder. Depending on estimates, between 5,000-20,000 Tutsis were murdered during this time (Mamdani 2001, 130). Yet, these massacres have not been interpreted by the diaspora leaders in the GTA and by their counterparts in Rwanda as a cultural trauma. They were and remain traumatic for those who fled Rwanda or lost relatives, but they did not have the power to break the social bonds in the same way as the genocide did. What is the difference here? Is it the scale of violence? I propose that the scale of violence has little to do with how the violence has come to be remembered and represented. Both instances of violence were horrific and destabilizing, but only the genocide broke the nation. This, I argue, is because the genocide ended when the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) finally defeated the Interahamwe in late July 1994 and proceeded to create a new government, led by RPF elites. Thus, these RPF elites were in a position to generate an understanding of the events and

crystallize the individual traumas into a collective trauma. Conversely, after the previous massacres, the Hutu regime remained in place, albeit with some changes in the locus of power as new contenders outmaneuvered old ones; the Hutu regime had no interest in generating a narrative of trauma. Indeed, under these regimes, the massacres were seen as consolidating power, not as a fundamental, crucial, injury to the body. Individual Tutsi communities in exile remembered the violence as trauma, but their remembrances were too atomized to constitute a whole. Thus, only when there are centralized elites who have the capacity to generate narratives and achieve a measure of consensus around them, can an event such as genocide become a cultural trauma.

The notion of belonging in a community or society relies on the existence of bonds of shared experience and shared understandings of the world. The national cosmologies that I have referred to before encompass the idea that those who share a sense of an identity—be it ethnic or national—understand the social world in very specific ways. Beyond a sense of shared language and history, this idea of a national cosmology indicates a shared understanding of what certain terms mean, beyond the annotative meaning. It also conveys a shared understanding, often incomprehensible to outsiders, of the social ties that bind one individual to another and to a greater whole—the imagined community. Rwanda in 1994 suffered a fundamental rupturing of the very idea of “Rwanda” as a social, emotional and cognitive space. The social ties that had bound individuals were broken, and they experienced the social world as ruptured and devoid of connection.

The breaking of the social order of Rwanda is most evident among the diaspora’s recollections of the days, months, and years following the genocide. Of those who chose to speak of the genocide and the time of violence, nearly all expressed that after the genocide there was

“nothing”. The idea of nothingness, so often echoed in the narratives, represents both a literal absence of family, friends, and neighbours who had perished or fled, institutions which had crumbled as the state disintegrated in the midst of violent conflict, and a symbolic absence of the ties that had bound people to people, to place and to institutions. Seraphine, a genocide survivor, explained that after the extreme violence of the genocide, “you just have nothing, there’s nothing, basically like you’re surviving”. As she told of this emptiness, she had difficulty speaking. Olivia, another survivor, said that when she and her family returned home after the violence had died down, “there was nothing left there”. Janvier, who lost family in the genocide, but was already long settled in Toronto at the time, also echoed the idea that after the events “there was hardly anything left in Rwanda”. Those who had survived the genocide and those who were emotionally caught up in it, but were spatially far away, as was the case with Janvier, near universally expressed the same idea. Angelina developed this theme when she explained that, upon visiting Rwanda:

We took a ride across there from the city for events and how that looks like now, so it was emotional. I had to see that it’s no longer my home or association, so I felt like oh my goodness, so that’s gone. Now I have to create another meaning to Rwanda, another relationship to Rwanda and what does that mean now? Do I call this home? This is a new living experience.

This framing of “Rwanda” as a space that is devoid of the old meanings and associations and now a space of nothingness, expresses that the social world ceased to be recognizable. These members of the diaspora were expressing that there was a clear break from what they had understood Rwanda to be, and what it became for them. That the language of this break is so similar in many individual accounts, suggests that there is now a collective understanding of the individual experiences of violence and social dissolution.

Among the informants whose families were forced into exile and who often lost close family members, it was not the massacres and the subsequent exile that they mark as the most significant historical event, even though for many that meant that they were born outside of Rwanda. Rather, their exile and loss became significant next to the sense of belonging that they now perceived in the contemporary Rwandan state. Thus the larger meaning of the massacres and the exile derived not from the events, but from subsequent events—namely, the creation of a new Rwandan state and regime, as the product of the genocide. This interpreting of the past through more recent events demonstrates well what Anderson, who has been echoed throughout the above, but not yet referenced, argues about remembering and forgetting. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson argues that the forgetting that Renan describes is an active process, but so is the remembering. So, the dead who are remembered for their sacrifices, “even when these sacrifices were not understood as such by the victims”, become the symbols of the new nationalism (Anderson 2006, 198). Deaths, which rarely have much, if any, collective meaning, are mobilized and re-narrated as meaningful. In this case, the deaths of the genocide are mobilized as the sacrifice that allowed the new identity to emerge. The “nation’s biography snatches, against the going mortality rate, exemplary suicides, poignant martyrdoms, assassinations, executions, wars, and holocausts. But, to serve the narrative purpose, those violent deaths must be remembered/forgotten as ‘our own’” (Anderson 2006, 206). Among the Rwandan diaspora, the current remembering, or bringing the past to the present, resurrects the deaths of those who died in 1994, between April and July, as uniquely meaningful, among the dark array of potential violent deaths of the last half century. These deaths become significant as *Tutsi* deaths, and as *Rwandan* deaths, and are thus remembered as “our own”. Consequently the violence of that moment is both remembered as a cultural trauma that broke the bonds of the

social world, tentative as they may have been, and it became productive of a new Rwandan identity.

Between 1997 and 2008, a new nationalism had emerged and a new cosmology had taken root. The new cosmology appropriated the history of the pre-genocide state by narrating a historical continuity between the post-independence Kayibanda regime, from 1961 to 1973 and the subsequent Habyarimana regime, from 1973 to 1994, and the new regime, initially led by a coalition government, but, upon the institution of elections in 2003, hence led by Paul Kagame (Prunier 2010). The Kayibanda regime and the Habyarimana regimes are comprehensible as the development of one national ideology and nationalism, but the Kagame regime, which has consolidated power since 1994, has generated new understandings of the very idea of Rwanda, its past and present. A new nationalism, founded on the mythico-history of the genocide, had been actively constructed by the regime.

Alexander identifies four discursive pillars in creating a new master narrative: firstly, the “nature of the pain” must be established—i.e., what actually happened; secondly, the “nature of the victim” must be identified and clearly articulated; thirdly, the relation of the victim of trauma to the wider audience must be established; finally, responsibility must be attributed (Alexander 2004, 12-15). The post-genocide Rwandan state mechanism has effectively generated a master narrative that encompasses all these dimensions, and thus it has re-framed the violence of the genocide as a collective trauma which severed the social world that came before and had since generated a new nationalism and cosmology. In the aftermath of the genocide, on July 19, 1994, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) established a new government and began the long task of building a new nation. The central ideological principle of this new nation was to generate a centralized and uniform narrative of the genocide in order to clearly articulate who was the

perpetrator and who was the survivor/victor/liberator. In the face of circulating reports of RPF atrocities and mass killings (Mamdani 2001), it was perceived to be politically necessary to affirm the “truth” in order to gain a measure of legitimacy.

Officially, the contemporary Rwandan government avoided the use of ethnic labels, claiming that all were “Rwandans” (Mamdani 2001, 226), but practice countered rhetoric. The RPF leadership, dominated by Kagame, narrated a story of the genocide which paints it as an ethnic genocide intended to wipe out the Tutsi minority, rather than a political one aimed at the opposition of the Hutu extremists. This “Tutsification” of the genocide had enabled the RPF to maintain strict control of political space under the auspices of promoting reconciliation. According to the current RPF-dominated Rwandan government, “The Genocide of the Tutsi in 1994 was a carefully planned and executed exercise to annihilate Rwanda’s Tutsi population and Hutus who did not agree with the prevailing extremist politics of the Habyarimana regime” (Republic of Rwanda 2010). The official government line acknowledges that there were many Hutu victims; indeed, it states that “over one million Rwandans were killed,” rather than stating the numbers in Hutu and/or Tutsi killed, yet the genocide is always referred to as “the Genocide of the Tutsi” (Republic of Rwanda 2010). Commemorations of the genocide focus on the Tutsi victims and the fact that they were targeted for their ethnic identity. At a memorial site where 250,000 victims are buried, the guide tells visitors that the site commemorates only the Tutsi victims of the genocide, yet the audio guide states that the site is dedicated to both Hutu and Tutsi victims (York 2010). While both Hutu and Tutsi were “victims” of the genocide, only Tutsi are “survivors” because, according to official rhetoric, the genocide was aimed only at the Tutsi. The parallel assumption is that all “moderate” Hutus were killed during the genocide and any who survived were either active participants in the genocide or, at best, passive onlookers. In this

narrative the Hutu majority bears the moral culpability for the genocide and all Hutu are presumed to be perpetrators (Mamdani 2001, 267).

This framing of one ethnic group as universally morally culpable for genocide echoes similar narratives that have emerged in the wake of the Holocaust, the Cambodian genocide, and the conflicts in the former Yugoslavia (Hughes and Pupavac 2006; Clark 2008). In each of these cases, one ethno-national group has been framed as universally guilty of the atrocities that were committed, often in the name of the ethno-national groups' nation-building. However, as Clark argues, "the concept of collective guilt is an impediment to peace-building", as it others the ostensible group that is framed as guilty and exonerates us of understanding why the crimes occurred (2008, 673). A similar argument is made in Ian Buruma's investigation of German and Japanese memory and the wages of guilt in the post-conflict societies (1995). Collective guilt also justifies retaliatory violence against the purportedly guilty ethno-national group, by proposing that retaliation is a form of justice (Clark 2008). Indeed, this is precisely the discourse that has emerged on the rare occasions when the RPF massacres of Hutus have been raised.

To label the Rwandan genocide "genocide of the Tutsi" is to ignore a large portion of the victims of the genocidal regime and neglect all the victims of the RPF (whom I will discuss later). In 2000, the Rwandan government conducted a census and determined that 1,074,017 individuals perished in the genocide and of those at least 94% were Tutsi (Reyntjens 2004, 178). These numbers are inflated and accredit far more Tutsi victims than there could have been, as Human Rights Watch estimates that a total of 800,000 perished, of whom 293,000 (36%) were Hutu (Human Rights Watch 1999). According to the 1991 Rwandan census the total population of Rwanda was 7,600,000, of whom 8.5%, according to their identity cards, were Tutsi— which places the number of Tutsis in Rwanda at the time at around 646,000. After the genocide there

were between 130,000 to 200,000 Tutsi survivors in Rwanda, which means that between 446,000 and 516,000 Tutsis died in the genocide (Human Rights Watch 1999). If we accept the Human Rights Watch estimate of 800,000 dead, then between 284 000 (35%) and 354 000 (44%) of victims were Hutus. Surveys conducted by the Ministry of Education in 1995/6 found there to be 721,000 victims. Among these 515,000 (71%) were Hutu. A 1996 survey conducted by the Ministry of Youth, Culture, and Sport estimated numbers of 834,000 of whom 628,000 (75%) were Hutu (Davenport and Stam 2009). The most accepted estimates assume that about one third to half of the victims were Hutu. Most outside observers agree that the largest group of victims were Tutsi, but that Hutus also suffered heavy losses under the *génocidaires*. To leap from multiple studies that found a range of 36-75% of victims to be Hutu, to a census that finds 94% of victims to be Tutsi appears at best poor methodology and borders on propaganda intended to minimalize the perception of suffering of Hutu *vis a vis* the suffering of Tutsi and reinforces the perception that all Hutu are perpetrators, in this instance in order to legitimate the Tutsi dominated RPF stronghold on power.

The re-writing of history in order to consolidate power also takes a much more overtly political form in contemporary Rwanda. In the aftermath of the genocide, the RPF, in keeping with the spirit of the Arusha Accords, created a “genuine government of national unity.” The new President, Pasteur Bizimungu, was an RPF supporting Hutu; the Prime Minister, Faustin Twagiramungu was a Hutu from the MDR (the main opposition party under the former regime) (Reyntjens 2004, 178); and fifteen new ministers were Hutu, while six were Tutsi. The ministers represented the political spectrum in Rwanda, with the notable and legitimate exclusion of the Hutu extremist wing, as the MDR put forth four ministers, three came from the Parti Social Démocrate, three from the Liberals, two from the ranks of independents, one from the Christian



Democratic Party, and eight from the RPF (Prunier 2009, 7). The newly minted government of national unity did not last long, as in August 1995 Prime Minister Twagiramungu, Minister of the Interior Seth Sendashonga (an RPF Hutu assassinated in Nairobi in 1998), and Justice Minister Alphonse Nkubito, resigned. From exile (only Alphonse Nkubito stayed in Rwanda and was murdered by 1997), Sendashonga alleged concentration and abuse of power, assassinations, massacres by the RPA (the RPF military wing which became the Rwandan national army), and “massive violations of human rights, insecurity and intimidation, discrimination against the Hutu and even against Tutsi genocide survivors” (Reyntjens 2004, 180). Faustin Twagiramungu, from exile, criticised the new state’s policy of unity and reconciliation by stating that “reconciliation is not an administrative matter, and should be the business of the Rwandese...a truth commission is an ideal way to allow people to give views about genocide and bad politics...the problem is killers trying to punish killers” (Brunet 2012, 160).

The resignations continued in early 2000 as Speaker of the National Assembly Joseph Sebarenzi, a genocide survivor, resigned amid growing tensions between the Tutsi who had survived the genocide in Rwanda, and the returnees from Uganda (from whose ranks the RPF leadership hails) who were closely tied to the RPF (Reyntjens 2004, 181). Accusations emerged that the RPF regime was less interested in protecting and supporting the genocide survivors and more interested in promoting the interests of their so-called “old case load” refugees (referring to those who had fled to Uganda in the 1960s)(Prunier 2009, 7). Subsequently, Prime Minister Pierre Célestin Rwigema resigned, followed by President Pasteur Bizimungu, who was then arrested and jailed in 2002 (Reyntjens 2004, 180, 193). The “Tutsification” of political and economic elites continued after 2002 as the “majority of MPs, four of the six Supreme Court presiding judges, over 80% of mayors, most permanent secretaries and university teachers and

students, almost the entire army command structure and the intelligence services were Tutsi [...]

Many of the returned old diaspora ('old caseload refugees') have indeed settled in towns and cities where they became the majority, 'squatting' homes, shops and businesses" (Reyntjens 2004, 188). The Hutu majority, making up 85% of the population, have consequently become marginalized socially and economically and denied access to a significant political voice.

As political pressure was applied within the government, repression was waged against civil society. The whole editorial staff of *Imboni*, a Rwandan newspaper formerly close to the RPF, fled into exile in early 2000 after being threatened for publishing stories critical of the government. All media outlets in Rwanda knew to toe the official line or face threats to their lives. Civic organizations were being "cleansed of all but a nominal Hutu presence" (Mamdani 2001, 271). Leading up to the August 2010 elections, the state actively suppressed all independent voices in the media by suspending *Umuseso* and *Umuvuzigi*, two independent newspapers, and calling for their permanent closure on the grounds of being a threat to national security (Human Rights Watch 2010). The political repression had silenced all opposition and the state had effectively become the "arbiter of historical truth"(Morrill 2006, 17) as it practiced ethnic politics by eliminating or silencing predominantly Hutu opposition and replacing them with loyal Tutsis, while publicly performing a narrative of "national reconciliation" after the "genocide of the Tutsis".

In April 2010, Rwandan authorities arrested Hutu Victoire Ingabire, the leader of the United Democratic Forces, an opposition political party formed in exile, for reportedly denying the genocide and aiding Hutu rebels in the Democratic Republic of Congo (York 2010). Ingabire, contrary to the accusations, "repeatedly acknowledged and condemned the 1994 genocide. She draws a distinction between the slaughter of the Tutsis--which she calls a genocide--and the

killings of many Hutus, which she describes as a ‘crime against humanity’” (York 2010). She migrated to the Netherlands before the genocide occurred and returned recently to attempt to form a viable opposition that would take into account the deep and abiding concerns of the Hutu majority. Her message is clear--“not all Hutus are killers, and not all Tutsis are victims” (York 2010). However, the message is so threatening to the mythico-history that the government promotes, that she was arrested and prevented from running for office in the August 2010 elections. Subsequently, she was tried and found guilty and is serving a sentence of 8 years for treason and genocide denial (Leeuwen and Huttuin 2012). Likewise, opposition leader Bernard Ntaganda was arrested in 2010 and detained for questioning regarding inciting ethnic divisionism, among other charges. Members of both PS Imberakuri and the United Democratic Forces have also been detained (Human Rights Watch 2010).

The master narrative, or mythico-history that the state practices is particularly troubling in light of the fact that the RPF stands accused of massacring between 25 000 and 45 000 people or as many as 100,000, *including Tutsis*, during the genocide (Prunier 2009; Reyntjens 2004, 194), killing another 200 000 Hutu refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo between 1996-1997, and co-instigating a war in the DRC between 1998-2003 which claimed the lives of 3 million people, mostly civilians (Prunier 2010). Between January and August 1997 the RPA massacred around 6 000 mostly unarmed civilians, while between October 1997 to January 1998 it massacred another 10 000 civilians. Since 2000, the scale of political violence within Rwanda has decreased, but violations of human rights continued en masse as forced villagization (forced population transfers to designated villages) was practiced in order to make the population more manageable (Reyntjens 2004). The narrow binaries that form official discourse have allowed the RPF to lead a repressive dictatorship which had effectively silenced all opposition either through

direct political violence or through the threat of labelling it “friends of the génocidaires” or as “promoting genocidal ideology,” (Prunier 2010) which carries a prison term in Rwanda.

The notion of “genocide of the Tutsi” at the expense of the Hutu victims is also evident in changes to the 2001 Gacaca laws which govern the prosecution of all genocide crimes with the exception of planning and leading genocide. Initially, the 2001 Organic Law (the name of the legislation that governed jurisdiction of crimes committed during and after the genocide) used both the term “*itsembabwoko*” and “*n’itsembatsemba*” whereby the first meant to exterminate an ethnic group, race or tribe, and the second referred to massacres (Morrill 2006,17). Thus the initial form of the law covered both the killing of Tutsis and the killing of Hutus, which were not motivated by ethnicity, but by political orientation or ideology. However, in 2004, the law was altered and the two terms were replaced by “*jenocide*,” a term borrowed from international legal language. In the new formulation of the Organic Law there is no reference to massacres, only to ethnically motivated killings. Constance Morrill interviewed a number of prisoners awaiting trial and found that most perceived the linguistic change to marginalize the Hutu victims of both the génocidaires and the RPF, and to focus attention on the Tutsi victims. As one prisoner said: “For me genocide means *itsembabwoko*. *Itsembatsemba*—this concerns everyone. Yes, I think there was a genocide against the Tutsi, but they shouldn’t exclude the Hutu in this genocide because they were killed at the same time as the Tutsi” (Morrill 2006, 18). Likewise, the former Senior Advisor for the African Continent at Human Rights Watch, Alison Des Forges, indicated that this change in the law “is an attempt to limit the focus [...] to killings only of Tutsi” (cited in Morrill 2006, 18). Thus the violence of 1994 has been re-written as the “genocide against the Tutsi”, which has effectively erased the deaths and suffering of thousands. Those who remember and grieve for the erased cannot do so within the confines of the new Rwanda. The genocide,

framed as a collective trauma, has been called upon to bear the weight of the new Rwanda and to mark the boundaries of who belongs and who does not.

In conducting my research among the diaspora I did not set out to determine the truth of the genocide. Nonetheless, I was informed by a number of participants what the “truth” of the genocide was. Individuals who chose to speak of the genocide as a collective experience, rather than expressing their own personal narrative, often called upon the Rwandan state’s narrative. Christophe, who survived the genocide, lectured on the topic to various interested audiences. He told both his personal story and the “history” of the genocide as part of his lectures. He explained to me the explicit and intentional targeting of Tutsis during the “genocide against the Tutsi.” When I asked what estimates of deceased Hutu and Tutsi he used in his lectures, he emphasized that “of course that doesn’t exclude that they are Hutus who are dead in the genocide, but they were not the target of the genocide” and did not offer a numerical estimate of dead (Christophe). He further explained to me that I was referring to a “Double genocide, for they say there are people who were killed who are Tutsi, but there are also others who say the RPF, the ruling party, they killed, they killed Hutus, as they were invading the country. So I think that is what you are talking about” (Christophe). The “double genocide” refers to revisionist narratives which paint both the RPF and the Interahamwe as having committed genocide and thus effectively denies that Tutsis were intentionally targeted for their ethnic identity. This narrative is a version of genocide denial and is very ethically dangerous. To avoid being cast as a genocide denier, I rapidly reassured Christophe that I did not subscribe to this narrative. Effectively, I could not pose questions that were seen to challenge the dominant narrative without being implicitly called a genocide denier.

I had a similar experience with another participant who asked to see what I had written as part of my Master's research on the Gacaca Courts. I was uncomfortable with this request as I knew that my critical reading of the Rwandan state was in direct contrast to this individual's personal politics, but I could not deny the request and retain his trust. Therefore, I explained that I had since changed my intellectual approach and many of my conclusions and that was why I had not sought to publish the paper. He accepted my explanation, but proceeded to lecture me about using the works of Catharine Newbury, one of the leading scholars on the Rwandan state and politics for the last 40 years, because she is not "a friend of Rwanda" (Richard). Thus, he intentionally echoed the narrow reading that the Rwandan state had adopted and reinforced the academic silencing that this reading had necessitated, as many scholars who had been writing on the subject for a long time had come to be called either "genocide deniers" if they insist on RPF crimes, and, as Mahmood Mamdani does, if they discuss the RPF's repoliticization of ethnicity, or as "not friends of Rwanda" if they fail to support the current regime. This message was made explicit at the "19<sup>th</sup> National Commemoration of the Genocide against Tutsi" which was organized and hosted by the Rwanda Diaspora Global Network in Canada (the umbrella organization for Rwandans in Canada) and the High Commission of Rwanda in Canada. While commemorations and other such community events will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters, it is worth noting that the keynote speaker at this event was Dr. Gerald Caplan and his talk was titled "Fighting Denial while Keeping Resilient." The talk consisted of a litany of those who were engaging in genocide denial, ranging from the "Hutu Power" elites who still reside in France, the FDLR (Forces démocratiques de liberation du Rwanda—an armed militia made up of génocidaires) in the Democratic Republic of Congo, the allies of the Habyarimana government in the Catholic Church, the French establishment, and, increasingly,

the Congolese people, even those living in Toronto, as well as the “left-wing anti-American intellectuals, lawyers, and academics.” He then proceeded to list off a dozen names of mostly academics writing on the topic, including Noam Chomsky, who are, according to this talk, genocide deniers. Mahmood Mamdani was then listed as *not* a friend to the regime, though not a full denier. Ultimately, while this distinction is made, the consequence of either is that whether one is called a denier or merely not a friend, one has been labeled as expressing either a criminally wrong view (as genocide denial is a criminal offence in Rwanda) or merely just an ethically wrong view. Thus, the organizers chose to use the commemoration to reinforce whose version of the genocide is the correct one and to very explicitly warn members of the community and other participants away from those who were deemed deniers.

### *State Appropriation of Survivor Narratives*

A public alignment with the Rwandan state and its mythico-history was echoed in many venues and at many moments. The individuals who thus spoke publicly also echoed the same narrative privately, including a sustained and universally positive reading of the contemporary Rwandan state, which I will address in subsequent chapters. However, survivors of the genocide were less likely to offer a unilaterally positive account of the current regime. While few of the participants in the study openly criticized the regime, many survivors spoke of the regime’s neglect of survivors in Rwanda. They often expressed the same sense of neglect and silencing in the diaspora community as well, as has been discussed earlier.

In Rwanda the population is divided by state rhetoric into 5 categories: returnees, refugees, victims, survivors, and perpetrators.

The returnees are, first and foremost, the mainly Tutsi (and some Hutu) exiles who returned to Rwanda with the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF). The refugees are divided into two: the ‘old caseload’ refers to mainly Tutsi pregenocide refugees, whereas the ‘new caseload’ refers to the wholly Hutu postgenocide refugees. [...]The victims are said to be both Tutsi and Hutu—the latter victims of the massacres of the internal political opposition [who are not perceived to be victims of genocide]. But when it comes to identifying living victims, this identification is limited to the ‘Tutsi genocide survivors’ and ‘old caseload refugees’; ‘new caseload’ are not considered victims and as such are often not entitled to assistance for the construction of homes. Finally, survivor is a term applied only to Tutsi (Mamdani 2001, 266-7).

In the 2000s, accusations emerged that the RPF regime was less interested in protecting and supporting the genocide survivors and more interested in promoting the interests of their so-called “old case load” (referring to those who had fled to Uganda in the 1960s) refugees. “Many of the returned old diaspora (‘old caseload refugees’) have indeed settled in towns and cities where they became the majority, ‘squatting’ homes, shops and businesses” (Reyntjens, 2004, 188). The state, while outwardly expressing the need and desire for healing and reconciliation, had devoted too little energy and resources to the complex needs of survivors, while focusing on the returnees as its political base and its clients. While in Rwanda these divisions translated into material gains and political access, or lack thereof, in the GTA diaspora the divisions between “old caseload” refugees and survivors had translated into subterranean conflict and contestation.

During another community event, Rwanda Day, when the floor was opened up to questions from the audience, a Rwandan woman took the microphone and proceeded to speak for about 5 minutes in Kinyarwanda. My neighbour translated her comments for me; she was telling of the loss of her whole family in the genocide. As she spoke, I observed a noticeable discomfort among the other participants in the event—people were shuffling and whispering to one another. I asked my informant what was going on and he explained that everyone was uncomfortable because “this is not the place for it” and if the President were already there (he was expected within the hour) he would have told her that her comments were not on topic (Felicién). After



she had finished speaking, the MC took the microphone away and did not address her directly, nor did any of the public speakers on stage respond to her story. The momentary silence in the midst of a celebratory event was jarring. Thus, though this survivor forced her story into the discourse of nation building, she broke the social norm of generalized silence about the violences and was subjected to covert disciplining for it.

As the subjects and objects of extreme, unthinkable violence, survivors had experienced, on their very bodies, the devastating power of nationalism taken to its extreme conclusion. Yet, it was this very enactment of power and destruction that led survivors to be hesitant and reluctant to fully submit to a new nationalism. In the moment of its greatest violence, the limits of the nation were exposed. Survivors thus became the embodiments of the nation's rupture. For the new nation that emerged after the genocide, they served as a potent illustration of the rationale for the exhaustion of the former nation, but, simultaneously, having survived what was for so many unsurvivable, they became dangerous because their continued lives and, indeed, resilience, demonstrated the limits of all nationalisms, including, potentially, the new nation's. In their selective engagement with the new nation, survivors demonstrated pragmatism—where it worked in their interests, they would see through nation and echo its cosmologies, but, in the moments when it became dangerous to their person or well-being, they sought alternative ways of seeing the world.

These divides between survivors and those who were outside Rwanda during the genocide, but still suffered the loss of family and friends, is reminiscent of the struggles of the Jewish diaspora after the Holocaust. While retaining and acknowledging the historically specific nature of both these genocides, it is useful to compare how the memories of the genocides and

the bearers of those memories were deployed by the Israeli state and the new Rwandan state and the ethnic entrepreneurs within. Idith Zertal argues that:

although the Holocaust was to become the most powerful and effective argument in the Zionist quest for a Jewish State and ‘the central myth of Israel’s present civil religion’; and although the new state saw itself as the spiritual and political-material heir of the Holocaust victims, the historic event itself and the direct bearers of its memory—the survivors—were almost totally repressed and erased from public discourse and the official sphere in the first decade of the ‘statist’ period. It was heroes’, not victims’ time (Zertal 1998, 283).

The diaspora Jews who lived outside of Europe and those who would shortly thereafter create the state of Israel needed the memories and the bodies of the dead, but could not bear to live with them. Though many survivors found their way to Israel in the decade after the genocide, they did not find the welcoming home that they had hoped for. Their presence was accepted as a necessity, but they were not welcome to speak or make the terror of their memory known. Zertal uses Freud’s theory of the uncanny to explain the relationship between survivors and nation-builders. Freud argued that deep anxiety is provoked:

through an encounter with something which, paradoxically, is experienced as at once foreign and familiar, distant and close, totally estranged, unknown and at the same time strangely recognizable and known [...] what is evoking profound, inexplicable anxiety is not something new and completely foreign that appears all of a sudden, but, on the contrary, something that in the past belonged and was close, and which then, under certain circumstances, was repressed and concealed, and is now again resurfacing (Zertal 1998, 291-292).

Zertal demonstrates that this very kind of deep anxiety was produced by the encounter of the Zionist-Israeli community and the Holocaust survivors. The survivors in the diaspora are the unconscious of Zionism. The horror of the Holocaust was the condition of the existence of the Israeli state and its founding myth, yet it was too terrible to be confronted. So the survivors become the “bearers” of the burden of memory of the attempt to exterminate Jews. “Total horror was thus converted into a kind of untouchable sanctity. The ‘otherness’ of the horror, severed

from the very logic of life and defying any attempt of being directly looked at, of being understood, represented and memorized, is thus transformed into the awe-inspiring sacred and its terrible numinous force” (Zertal 1998, 292). To have confronted the broken souls and bodies of survivors in the years of state formation and nation-building would have been devastating to the newly emerging nation. Those who used the memories of the survivors could not see the people that held those memories—they needed to be dehumanized in order to be palpable. Interestingly, in the decades after the initial nation-building project was complete, the now elderly survivors were called upon to tell their stories in order to make the horror real for new generations that had no other connection to the Holocaust.

The Rwandan genocide differs in magnitude, duration, and forms of victimization, but the necessity of remembering the genocide while forgetting the survivors is similar in both cases. Among the diaspora, the survivors are necessary to constitute the historical veracity of the genocide and, thus, the new nation. However, to fully confront their suffering would negate the optimism necessary for a nation-building project. To fully confront the memories of a survivor of genocide is to gaze too long into a nihilistic abyss, where human bonds and, indeed, humanity itself, ceases to be. Much like the Final Solution sought to consecrate the German state by twinning the people and the nation, so too the Rwandan state in 1994 sought to realize a myth of itself as a Hutu nation.

In both instances the survivors became the bearers of the memory of the immense violence of nation making. This memory must be relegated to the subconscious because to empathize with a survivor is to understand that life, personhood, and identity are empty and can be so easily erased and that the bodies that we live in can be disposed of and forgotten. It is to see far too clearly that all our lives and loves are meaningless. Indeed, the survivors themselves

often do not wish to open up to this gaze as it is both too penetrating and too debilitating. They need to rely on the hope and resilience of others in order to relearn humanity, yet that relearning is so very difficult and painful and fraught and asks so much of the fraternal other. Thus, until the horror of the genocide recedes, it may be too much to ask the community to confront the survivors. Perhaps sidelong glances and glimpses into their private worlds are all that we can hope for, and all that they can bear.

## Chapter Four

### **Individual and Institutional Practices of Identity Formation**

To be part of the Rwandan diaspora in the GTA is to be engaged in ongoing processes of translation, re-imagination, and reconstruction of the category of “Rwandan”. It is to be an inheritor of a national cosmology, yet to be simultaneously re-writing this cosmology and altering its constitutive categories to fit new day to day experiences and multiple forms of individual identity. Those who belong to this group are subject to didactic messages from the Rwandan state which are potent in shaping who belongs and who does not, and the terms of belonging. The collective trauma of the genocide has generated an overdetermined national narrative, powerfully enforced by the Rwandan state. While all diaspora communities are subject to national discourses from their home state (if there is one), the Rwandan diaspora is especially exposed to the powerful homogenizing narrative because the collective trauma has generated a collective identity that imagines the diaspora as vulnerable, and those who become leaders in the Rwandan GTA community thus perceive that they need the protection and favour of the home state, for fear that they could, once again, face genocide. Nonetheless, individual identities are never shaped from above alone; among this group, as among any other, individual members contest, challenge, and engage the narratives that they inherit and receive. Thus, the Rwandan diaspora in the GTA is a site of construction of the notion of “Rwandese”. For instance, as the Rwandan state used women to promote itself internationally as a state that is committed to gender equity, individuals in the diaspora offered counter-narratives of the normalization of gender-based violence in Rwanda. Likewise, as the state narrated a new ethnicity of “Rwandan” to supplant Hutu and Tutsi (and Twa), individual stories and experiences demonstrated the degree to which these ethnic identities persisted and how state practices actually served to

reinforce these distinct identities. Thus, even as a unified nation was performed, contestations of this overdetermined idea emerged.

Anytime there is a grouping of “Rwandans” as Rwandans, the very category of “Rwandan” comes under scrutiny and debate, on the surface, or subterraneanly. Each of these moments contains negotiations of “thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural production” (Bhabha 1990, 4). The instability of the notions of nation, ethnicity and race are exposed at these moments, and the multiple ways of seeing through nation, ethnicity and race generate overlapping and contentious understandings.

As Brubaker argues, ethnicity, race and nation are not groups or entities, but “practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects and contingent events” (Brubaker 2006, 11). In moments when Rwandans meet as Rwandans, all these interrelated categories, actions, schemas, frames, routines, forms, projects, and events work to instantiate Rwandan ethno-nationalism, and generate the perception that it is a thing in the world. Yet, simultaneously, as Brubaker proposes, this imagined reality is challenged by those who are thus classified. They, consciously or otherwise, offer understandings of themselves and the world that do not neatly fit the narratives of the nation. This contention between can be called the “‘micropolitics’ of categories, the ways in which the categorized appropriate, internalize, subvert, evade, or transform the categories that are imposed upon them” (Brubaker 2006, 13). Among the Rwandan diaspora in the GTA this dialectical process is most evident during community events when those who identify as Rwandans meet *as* Rwandans. In these moments, institutions, be they a cultural or ethnic association or the Rwandan state, impose normative understandings of what constitutes Rwandaness. Yet these understandings are contested and challenged by those who are defined or

classified as Rwandan. The following chapter will first outline the moments of apparent unity and cohesiveness, and then examine the fractures, challenges, impositions—in short, the micropolitics of naming the Rwandan diaspora in the GTA.

These contentious and overlapping meanings were most evident to an outside observer in gatherings of associations which presumed to speak on behalf of those who identified as Rwandan and which assumed that they represented these diverse peoples' interests. One of the first signs of a newly emerging identity is the formation of associations dedicated to the promotion of said identity. As Brubaker argues, only organizations which have “certain material and organizational resources, [...] are capable of organized action, and thereby of acting as more or less coherent protagonists” (2006, 15). To trace the history of the idea of a Rwandan community in the GTA is, by necessity, to trace the history of associational life, as without associations or clubs, there are no coherent protagonists who can be said to act on behalf of a community. There may well be individuals who meet socially and understand themselves to share an identity, but they are not visible until they form a common front which is then taken to be the actualization of this identity. As migration to the GTA by those who call themselves Rwandan is a relatively new phenomenon, the history of Rwandan associations and clubs only dates back to the late 1980s. While no one has kept written records of this history, those interviewed who participated in the early associational life were able to share what they recalled.

### ***History of Diaspora Organizational Life in the GTA***

The first migrants to the GTA, as has been mentioned earlier, were young, well educated, men who had refugee status from the UNHCR and were granted asylum in Canada in the mid to

late 1980s. They largely originated in the diasporic Rwandan communities in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, yet shared a sense of historical connection to the imagined homeland of Rwanda and spoke the Kinyarwanda language (though a few admit that their Kinyarwanda is weaker than they would like it to be). These young men, initially about a dozen or so, also shared a family history of exile from Rwanda (most were born outside of Rwanda), and a lack of a new homeland as the African states that had received the refugees had refused to grant them citizenship and a new nationality (Mamdani, 2001). They found each other through contacts, or, in at least one case, by hearing someone speak Kinyarwanda on a Toronto street, and they bonded over their isolation and visibility in a dominant white society and their sense of connection to their imagined homeland. The family histories of exile and a lack of belonging had also fostered a desire for return to the imagined homeland. In particular, those who had never lived in Rwanda expressed a “longing to go back” (Mathieu). Thus, when the RPF in 1987 formed and began military incursions into Rwanda, these young men eagerly watched. In particular, those who came from the Ugandan exile group expressed a sense of solidarity with the RPF, as it was formed in Uganda (Mamdani 2001). They wanted to help with what they called the struggle, but understood that to declare themselves members of the RPF would open them up to legal scrutiny by the Canadian state as the RPF was defined as a terrorist organization at the time. Instead, they formed the Rwandese Canadian Culture Association (RCCA).

The RCCA was both a social club and an information-sharing space where the latest news from friends and family in the struggle was related. Ironically, the first Rwandan association in the GTA was a counter-state organization which fostered a sense of shared identity by virtue of its opposition to the regime in Rwanda. Those who participated in the early years of this organizing fondly recall the sense of closeness within the organization as “the community



was small but very tight” and “really had a sense of community.” Initially, without a shared space, the group met on the campus of York University, in empty classrooms or in the University’s parkland. A few members of this group were attending the University and lived nearby, so “we took York like our own community” and used its semi-public space to socialize, play music, dance, and talk (Simon). The social world that they created came to be a place of shared understanding and belonging. As a group made up of young men, it was little different from any other social group as the members laughed, joked and danced together, but, in the midst of this social bonding, there were larger purposes at play as the politics of the RPF instigated war, referred by RCCA’s members as the struggle, further knitted the members together. News from siblings fighting “in the bush” were relayed, remittances were sent to support the struggle, and some members of the groups even traveled to Uganda and joined the ranks of the RPF. One participant recalled that “there was a tall Rwandan, I forgot his name, he was very tall and he was very quiet, when I came, 3 months later, he left and for me I look at him, this person had everything. He’s in such a beautiful country, and he left to live in the bush. He left and he never came back, but he didn’t die” (Simon). Simon’s surprise that someone would leave behind “everything” to go fight in the “bush” suggests that though the organization was ostensibly in support of the RPF, the degree of the support among its members varied. Indeed, those whom I was able to speak to may have supported the conflict, but did not feel so personally engaged that they chose to return during the conflict, or after. Nonetheless, some of the early migrants returned to join the war and died in battle. Thus the young association was directly linked to the war and the members’ sense of connection to one another and to their burgeoning collective identity was further tightened by their link to violence.

The RCCA also took on the role of a settlement agency for Rwandans who, beginning in the early 1990s, began arriving in increasing numbers. After the genocide, in late 1994, the tide of new Rwandan migrants rose sharply. In the early 1990s the RCCA took over the lease of a house near York University which became known as Rwanda House and this venue served as both the meeting place and as a shelter for new migrants. Through telephone communication with family and friends in Africa, community members knew whenever a new migrant was arriving and “regardless that he is coming from Rwanda, from Congo, from somewhere else, they know someone is coming, they were going to take him out of like shelter, and bring him to Rwanda house, till he finds a home” (Simon). Thus, any new migrant who arrived in the GTA was automatically enfolded into what was becoming a significant community of those who identified as Rwandan. Rwanda House also served as a shelter for the now older community members if they found themselves without a residence. The joint imperatives of supporting a nationalist struggle and of welcoming new migrants turned what had been a largely social club into a formal organization with political alliances and interests.

When the genocide ended and the RPF formed the transitional government in Rwanda, those who felt closely connected to the now governing regime could join the RPF. A number did so, and a rift appeared in what had been presumed to be a shared identity. The RCCA had been made up of anyone who chose to be a member because it was a “cultural group” and any Rwandan could be a member. However, to be a member of the RPF, one had to ask permission of the RPF leadership in Kigali, which suggests that those who desired membership wanted a closer affiliation with the regime, and, simultaneously, the regime was beginning to look for allies abroad. Beginning in 1995, those who were close to the new regime began returning to Rwanda, among them the general secretary of the RCCA (now the head of the Post Office in

Kigali). Concurrently, the Rwandan High Commission in Ottawa reached out to the organization and suggested that there was no need to have the RPF and RCCA as distinct entities. The leadership of both factions agreed and merged into a new organization: the Rwandan Canadian Association of Greater Toronto (RCA). Because the leadership of the now defunct RCCA had left the country and returned to Rwanda without passing on the information about membership, bank accounts, etc., the new leadership of the RCA had trouble maintaining continuity. The financial records and membership rolls were lost. Thus, the new RCA began its life with the assumption that every Rwandan was a member. But this assumption “was not good for the organization because you don’t know who to count on because everyone is a member, and everybody is not a member” (Simon). So, during the latter 1990s the organization lost steam, and became a shadow of its earlier versions. Where it had once been able to elicit the presence of nearly all those who identified as Rwandese and lived in the area, now it might count on having at most 100 people coming to a big event, though the leadership estimated that there were about 1000 Rwandans in the GTA at the time. As one participant commented, “Before, there was a struggle, it was bringing people together, now that there is no real cause to fight for, everyone was just going there for fun, and if the fun as not there, it was about politics, you would not see anyone going.”

In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, even as the numbers of new migrants from Rwanda or the African Great lakes region that identified as Rwandan grew, there was no clear sense of a shared identity as a unified community. Individuals and families were still connecting, often on the basis of a shared understanding of self, but there was a lack of a unified, collective sense of an ethno-national community. During the early 1990’s “we were very close”, but by the end of the decade, “people were separated” (Mathieu). Instead, people were connecting based on other

loci of identification. Women created their own group, *Umurage*, which met in individual homes and served the particular needs of women, as well as their own conception of the community. Here they “start knowing each other’s strengths—what are the strengths that we have within the community. So women identify themselves as having ... let’s say value to keep the culture ... and value to teach the kids, the Rwandan culture. So then we develop some kind of cultural club for the kids where they can learn the language” (Angelina). While the RCA sought to generate a sense of shared identity through cultural activities, *Umurage* focused on specific needs, such as language instruction for children, social support for families struggling with the upheaval of migration, and the day to day struggles of racialized women. This group, which had a fluid membership, was also an information-sharing space where women shared survival strategies, economic opportunities, and taught each other how to navigate gender regimes. Other individuals who identified as Rwandans formed branches of opposition political parties in support of what appeared to be democratization in Rwanda. Others yet moved away from those who identified as Rwandan and created their own social worlds, unconnected to any sense of ethno-national affinity. Many others chose to return to Rwanda in hopes of starting over. During these years, Rwandaness, as a national/ethnic event or category, failed to crystallize in the GTA, despite the efforts of what Brubaker has called “ethnopolitical entrepreneurs” and the ongoing elite-level ethnopolitical conflict in the remembered homeland (Brubaker 2004, 12).

### ***Emergence of a “Diaspora”***

In early 2007 the Cabinet of President Kagame declared that a Diaspora Office ought to be created to connect Rwandans in the “diaspora”. Thus, in 2008, the Diaspora General

Directorate was created under the auspices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The new Directorate had a mandate to “mobilize Rwandan Diaspora for unity/ cohesion among themselves targeted for the promotion of security and socio-economic development of their homeland” (Republic of Rwanda website 2014). This new Directorate established branches of a new umbrella organization called the Rwandan Global Diaspora Network in all the states where a significant group of those who identify as Rwandans resides. Hence, there are branches in Senegal, Kenya, Burundi, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia, United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, Denmark, Belgium, France, Poland, Austria, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Canada, United States, India, China, South Korea and Australia (Rwanda Diaspora Global Network 2014). Under this new initiative, in 2008, the Rwandan High Commission to Canada launched a new organization in Canada with branches in all the urban centres where there were a significant number of those who identified as Rwandan. Thus, the Rwandan Diaspora in Toronto, also known by its formal acronym RDGN (Rwandan Diaspora Global Network), presented itself as the organizational body of the community in the GTA and was the conduit for the Rwandan state, via its High Commission to Canada, to connect to individuals who identified as Rwandese and lived in the GTA. Its primary function was to organize the annual genocide commemoration and other, less formalized, community events. These events are part of an active effort by institutions, the state among them, to call into being the “diaspora” as a community. Without a central organization to call into being the identity of “Rwandan” and to mobilize individuals to frame themselves as Rwandan, it would be difficult to argue that there is such a thing as a Rwandese community in the GTA. There would be those who identified as Rwandans, but their connection to one another may have been tenuous. Thus, to a certain degree, the existence of an organization like the RDGN, or its precursors, is a necessary condition for a diaspora to exist, for

though ethnic leaders do not create ethno-national groups, they can strengthen ethnic solidarity and thus heighten ethnic consciousness (Zucchi 1988, 142), generating a sense of shared space and identity, which manifests itself in the idea of a diaspora.

As the central body of Rwandans in the GTA, during the year 2013, the RDGN worked towards the following goals:

Working effectively and efficiently with the Rwandan High Commission in Canada for the mutual benefit of Rwandans here and in Rwanda. Being a voice in the wider society of Canada. Social activities such as BBQs. Promotion and facilitation of Rwanda day in Chicago and Boston. Promotion of investments in Rwanda. Agaciro fund. The very successful and well attended 19th Commemoration of Genocide against Tutsi. And of course the best Rwanda day ever held. It was befitting that the first Rwanda day in Canada be held in Toronto given its rich history of activism and always a vanguard. (email correspondence from President of RDGN sent out to internal listserv)

Its executive was made up of an annually elected President, Secretary General, Finance Secretary, Youth and Sport Representative, Gender Representative, Communication Secretary, and Knowledge Transfer Representative. Positions and elections were open to all members of the community, though only a small cadre of individuals nominated itself. Aside from its formal capacity, the RDGN also offered settlement support to new migrants. Before leaving Rwanda, many migrants already had a phone number for a leader in the RDGN as their first contact to the Rwandese community in Toronto. If they lacked a contact for the Toronto chapter, they had a contact for the Ottawa or Montreal chapter, through which they would be put in touch with the RDGN. The leadership of the RDGN would then delegate further and connect the newcomer to others who may be useful in finding employment, housing, schooling and all the necessities of a new life. This kind of service was assumed to be part of the normal functioning of the organization, but not its primary mandate. Indeed, there was no official representative assigned to newcomer support. Partly this was a consequence of the fact that, by 2013, there were fewer newcomers from Rwanda than there had been in the previous two decades, as it had become

increasingly difficult to be accepted on humanitarian grounds as a refugee from Rwanda, as the UNHCR revoked refugee status for refugees from Rwanda in June of 2013 (Toeka Kakala 2013). Thus, to migrate to Canada, Rwandans needed to apply under the categories of skilled workers, family sponsorship, business or student visas, or live-in caregivers (Citizenship and Immigration Canada). This policy change had limited the numbers of Rwandese newcomers to Canada, though census figures to support this were not yet available. Meanwhile, for those who were able to migrate and chose to seek out the Rwandese community, the RDGN was their first point of contact.

Yet, despite the Rwandan state sanctioned organization, many people in the community did not feel an immediate affiliation with the RDGN. Rather, the sense of connection was with other individuals whom they had known for years and trusted. Thus, when the RDGN organized an event and sent out email invitations, it could not be assured of attendees. So, to ensure attendance and success of the event, the RDGN relied on the inter-personal relationships of its members and affiliated individuals. There were a few people who were very well connected and kept in touch with many of the disparate groups and they were then called upon to communicate with their contacts and issue the invitation themselves. So, despite the organizational edifice and the assumption of collective action that it created, the community emerged as a community because people were individually tied and connected to one another, not because they shared a sense of obligation as “Rwandese” in the GTA. The ostensibly ethnic/national ties were in fact ties of interpersonal trust. Indeed, many of these central actors who connected others often choose not to take up leadership positions in the community because “you take it and now you lose your freedom. Now you have to say what is politically correct, instead of what you think”

(Simon). So, the organization appeared to be the face of the ethnic/national community, but it was only an edifice that relied on other types of community and interpersonal ties.

### ***Remembrance and Performances of Unity***

The ethnopolitical entrepreneurs of the community perceived themselves to be the boundary makers of the definition of “Rwandese”; thus, at formally organized events hosted by community leaders, there was usually an active narration of the nation, often closely linked to the Rwandan state’s narratives of self. These community events can be seen as what Brubaker calls “contingent events” whereby groupness, or the appearance of cohesion, happens, but is not a constant. Thus there can be moments of “extraordinary cohesion and moments of intensely felt collective solidarity”, but, these are moments, not given or fixed things in the world (Brubaker 2006, 12). Groupness was evident at the RDGN’s annual commemoration of the genocide hosted in early April. This event served as the central rallying point for the community, and as an active moment of nation-building as the genocide and the subsequent nation was narrated. The commemorations were performances of unity in a community that was internally divided by ethnicity, gender, and age. These were moments when markers of difference were harnessed and repositioned as markers of shared values and shared ways of seeing. The 19<sup>th</sup> commemoration, held in 2013, and subtitled as “Let’s Commemorate the Genocide Against the Tutsi as we Strive for Self-Reliance” (no one could explain to me precisely what self-reliance meant), and hosted by the Rwandan Diaspora in Canada and the Rwandan High Commission of Canada, took place



over the course of two events.<sup>67</sup> The first event was a flag-raising ceremony held at Toronto City Hall, and the second event was a day-long program of speakers at an auditorium at Ryerson University. Both events were enacted to commemorate the genocide, but, as with all such public performances, the underlying motivation of this nationalized practice of mourning was a performance of nation.

No one who feels a connection to Rwanda either by birth or by ancestry is liable to forget the genocide. Especially survivors, as I discussed earlier, recalled the genocide during April, often despite themselves, as the physical and psychological symptoms of trauma invaded and overturned their lives. The genocide will not be forgotten by those who lived it, nor by their children, who live their lives under the shadow of the trauma, much like the children of Holocaust survivors lived with “the ‘elephant in the room’—a subject barely spoken but nonetheless unavoidably present” (Stein 2007, 87). Before the inauguration of the RDGN in 2007, small groups organized their own ceremonies of remembrance. People met on the occasion of the anniversary and together remembered the events and those that they had lost. Harnessing people’s memories into a centralized performance of remembrance is not about remembering, as that was already an active process. It was primarily an opportunity to create a sense of a group and to generate ethno-national narratives. Official commemorations of traumatic events are rarely intended for remembrance; rather, these are moments of nation-building as the deaths that have been compelled and granted meaning are mobilized to serve the ends of identity formation. States utilize a fictionalized account of a traumatic event to generate political legitimacy and

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<sup>6</sup> I attended the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> commemorations of the genocide during the field work for this study. I focus the analysis here on the 19<sup>th</sup> commemoration as it was more extensive and had a longer program, but I will reference the 20<sup>th</sup> commemoration in chapter 6, when I discuss Rwandan transnationalism.

<sup>7</sup> All the public events hosted by the RDGN were held in both Kinyarwanda and English, with the intention that outsiders, like myself, would be able to participate. Also, many among the youth did not speak Kinyarwanda, so English became the lingua franca.

mobilize its constituents. The commemorations of 9/11 in the United States serve to illustrate the degree to which that traumatic event has been harnessed as a nation-building narrative as Americans are re-narrated into collective victims of a deeply wounding assault. In this case, the Rwandan state, acting through the High Commission in Ottawa, actively worked to re-write the history of the genocide in order to re-inscribe a version which posited the RPF as the saviours of the nation, and which actively denied any of the atrocities committed by the RPF. The formally ascribed motivation for the genocide commemoration is remembrance and resolution of trauma, yet neither is the outcome. In Rwanda, commemorations are moments of nationalized mourning, which:

minimized and denied the multiplicity of truths about the genocide. Nationalized mourning poses difficulties for genocide survivors who find that the dominant discourses do not fit with their own experiences. Other Rwandans find that the politicization of survivorship resulting from nationalized mourning denies their deeply personal memories of violence, loss and trauma. While attempting to forge a new, unified national identity around a single understanding of the genocide and a single version of Rwandan history, national mourning homogenizes the diverse experiences of victims of the genocide, the civil war, and afterward. (Burnet 2012, 92)

Likewise, in the diaspora, the commemoration was a site of reinforcing the mythico-history and the correct telling of the genocide. Fidèle explained that the official commemoration was “a government thing, but it’s not about to remember people. And even if you go there, there’s a few survivors. You see people from Uganda, from here...” The point he was making was that those who were in Uganda or in Canada during the genocide were not survivors, yet they were the ones who attended the commemorations. There was an understanding, at least among some of those to whom I spoke, that the official commemorations were no longer about remembrance, but about nation-building. As I have recounted earlier, this even extended to identifying those who were now deemed “genocide deniers”. In this re-telling of the genocide, the voices of those whose experiences did not fit the national narrative were silenced and their grief, terror, and loss

negated, again. It also served the purpose of narrating a fictionalized unity of the community both to members of the community and to outsiders.

The first portion of the commemorative program, which I attended, took place at Toronto City Hall on a Saturday prior to the fuller program. The purpose of the ceremony was to raise the Rwandan flag above city hall and inaugurate a week of reflection. The flag, flown above Toronto City Hall symbolized the community's desire to carve a space out where its grief would be recognized, valued and they would be granted the dignity of the bereaved, not just the pity and revulsion of a society that perceived their past to be barbaric. The organizers of the event were very pleased that they had been able to book city hall as a venue. One explained that it was the first time they had been able to book such a prominent venue and expressed pride that the city had allowed the event to take place. There was also an invitation sent out to the mayor of the city, and the organizers had hoped that he would attend, but were disappointed. Nonetheless, the symbolism of holding the commemoration at city hall was very powerful, and the 50 or so attendees at the flag-raising ceremony were audibly proud of this evidence of their belonging in the civic space. A few people I spoke to were chagrined that the mayor had neither attended nor officially declined the invitation. A key organizer spoke up and chastised the group by reminding it to be grateful that for the first time in Canadian history the Rwandan flag would be flown over a Canadian city hall.

Upon our arrival to the nearly empty city centre, we were ushered into a committee room. As the room slowly filled with mostly members of the community, there was a subdued tone of collegiality. The crowd was made up of mostly middle-aged adults with very few adolescents and children present, though many of the people there were parents, suggesting that they had intentionally kept their children home. We were invited onto a terrace of city hall and there, upon

the flag pole, was the Rwandan flag. As soon as we were all gathered, the Canadian national anthem was played on a sound system, and then the new Rwandan national anthem was played. While everyone had lowered their heads respectfully for the Canadian anthem, none had sung along, yet many in my vicinity sang along to the Rwandan anthem. During the anthem, the Rwandan flag was lowered to half-mast. We were then invited back to the committee room to hear short speeches. A community leader spoke for a few minutes, first chastising the crowd for being so small. He reminded the crowd that it was their responsibility to remember and to bring others to remember. I noted that there were few survivors there and that the speaker who was admonishing others to remember was not himself a survivor. This observation echoed what survivors had expressed in interviews—that the community did not pay enough attention to the needs of survivors. It also illustrated the ways in which the experiences of those who survived the violence were called upon in nation-building moments, but the people themselves were erased.

The speaker then thanked the city for the facilities and remarked how historic it was that the city had issued a proclamation of making April 7<sup>th</sup> a day of remembrance, though there were no city representatives on hand to deliver this message, begging the question—who was doing the remembering? The symbolism of holding the event at city hall and the Rwandan flag prominently displayed above the building spoke to the notion that this space could contain multiple identities and national narratives, yet the noticeable absence of representatives from the municipality suggested that the while multiplicity of meanings could be contained in one space, the memory and trauma of this community was insufficiently significant for the civil servants of their city to formally acknowledge.

The ceremony, though sparse and short, was nonetheless significant for the multiple meanings and messages that it conveyed. The most visible message was the message of the rightful place of this community in the civic space of the largest city in Canada, though the message was not reinforced by representatives of the city. Another significant narrative that emerged was that of who ought to remember the genocide and how. The nationalist symbolism of the flag-raising and the anthem playing very prominently coupled the practice of remembering the genocide with Rwandan nationalism and equated the two. In so far as modern states rely on overt performances of their own existence and significance through flag-raising and waving, the Rwandan state was performed as a modern nation. While many of the attendees had expressed a sense of belonging in Canada during interviews, no one sang the Canadian anthem, while many in my vicinity sang the (new) Rwandese anthem. This small group of attendees demonstratively performed their ownership of Rwandan identity in that moment. But, the group was small, and the very notable (and noted) absence of many others suggested that the need to demonstrate ownership of an identity did not supersede the frustration of having to attend two separate events. Very many parents had expressed sentiments like those of Theodosia who said that “most of time either I didn’t get the communication when they are meeting, second when they are meeting I don’t have time to go” to community events, and this event was no exception, having been promoted only through the community listserv.

Furthermore, the community leader’s admonishment of attendees for being so few in number suggested that the event was not about expressing solidarity with the victims and survivors, but about performing a civic duty of Rwandan nationalism in a Canadian civic space. The pairing of these two national narratives expressed the notion that those who identified as Rwandese in Canada were proud of both their native nationality and their hyphenated nationality.

It was both a performance of belonging in the Rwandan nation and belonging in the Canadian nation. As with all overt performances of nation, there was no room for any expression of dissent from this official narrative, thus creating the impression of full consent and unity of identity and purpose.

The second portion of the commemoration was a day-long event of a series of talks followed by an evening vigil held at Ryerson University in downtown Toronto, which was much better attended. By the middle of the program, there were about 150-200 people in attendance, and, by all accounts, this was a very good showing. While this number is triple those who attended the previous ceremony, it is still a fraction of the local community, which is estimated to be up to 5000 strong. In this instance, absenteeism at a genocide commemoration organized by the RDGN and the Rwandan state representatives in Canada is one measure of quietly resisting the appropriation of the recent history and the new nationalism that had emerged. Absenteeism can be interpreted as an example of what James C. Scott calls “infrapolitics”, which is “the struggle waged daily, by subordinate groups,” yet is “beyond the visible end of the spectrum” (1990, 183). In moments where the subordinate group cannot openly declare its opposition because the cost would be too great, it speaks in a “hidden transcript” which can include speech acts or “activities such as poaching, pilfering, clandestine tax evasion, and intentionally shabby work” (14), and is “designed to minimize appropriation” (Scott 1990, 188). As one informant explained “I’ve not been in three years, because for me, I don’t see it as a commemoration anymore, it’s a government show-up.” As the title of the event suggests, there is no room at this moment of myth-making for the remembrance of any dead except Tutsi dead at the hands of the *génocidaires*. Thus, for those who carry the burden of remembering Hutu dead, or Tutsi dead at the hands of the RPF, this commemoration obliterated their memories.

Georges, a Hutu who was living in Europe during the genocide, expressed that during genocide commemorations “I’m not supposed to mourn my own people”. His people were his father, two sisters and a brother who were kidnapped and killed by the RPF well after the genocide had ended. His losses were as extensive as the losses of many Tutsi families, yet his memories were negated, as there was no space in the official narratives to even mention those who were murdered by the RPF in the months and years following the end of the genocide. Even in private recollections, his dead are erased. If he raises their ghosts, he faced the threat of being labelled a genocide denier. When I asked how is it possible to not mourn one’s dead, he responded “You can’t! I left Rwanda when I was young, it was tough, it’s a tough situation to lose people, especially to lose 3 people together same day... [Interviewer]: Incredibly traumatic, and then to be told you can’t mourn them. [Georges]: You can’t say it, you are genocide denial. I don’t deny the genocide happened.” To be labeled a genocide denier is dangerous as it carries the risk of social ostracization from the community in the GTA, but, perhaps more significantly, it carries the risk of criminal prosecution in Rwanda. Others fear that return to Rwanda would have lethal consequences; Fidèle asserts that “I can’t go there, I can get killed” because he actively opposes the governing regime. So, rather than openly protest and risk being detained for “genocidal ideologies” according to the governing regime, or even potentially killed upon visiting Rwanda, many in the GTA diaspora chose to subvert the performance of unity by their absence at state sanctioned commemorations.

Those who attended the commemoration were not passive objects of the myth-making. Rather, they listened carefully and showed their approval vocally, even during talks. While assent was vocal, dissent from the narrative presented was less obvious, but no less real. I, as an outside interlocutor, had difficulty seeing the moments of dissent during the commemoration,

but, during private conversations after the fact, I slowly began to see moments of unravelling and divergence, beyond just absenteeism.

The talks focused around three themes: narrating the genocide and attributing responsibility, connecting the genocide to the Holocaust and the Armenian genocides, and national representation/nation building on the edifice of remembering the genocide. Of the 16 talks by a variety of individuals from a variety of organizations, none opened up the narrow frame of the “genocide against the Tutsi”. To tell the story of the genocide, genocide survivor and Professor of French Literature at McMaster University, Dr. Eugène Nshimiyimana, spoke first. Though his research focuses on memory and identity construction, his talk was so dense with academic jargon that I had trouble following his argument. The audience also seemed to be subdued, I suspected, because they too did not follow what he was saying. Thus, he may well have offered an account that troubled dominant narratives, but because he masked it so well behind the language of an inaccessible academy, his points were lost on his audience. The next speaker was Dr. Amanda Grzyb, of the University of Western Ontario, who offered a very compelling account of how the Globe and Mail coverage of the genocide exhibited casual racism. The audience responded vocally, openly and loudly scoffing at the claim made in newspaper that the conflict dated back 500 years. The next speaker was PhD candidate Berthe Kayitesi (University of Ottawa), who argued that the children of perpetrators are not guilty of their parents’ crimes and should not bear the burden of responsibility, yet she simultaneously spoke of these children “inheriting genocidal ideology”. Again, the audience responded with audible agreement. The final component of the first part of the program was given by Dr. Egide Karuranga, who told his harrowing story of survival and escape. His narrative broke the mold of the academic talks of the first session as he spoke of his first-hand experience, yet his narrative



fit the dominant narrative as he was a Tutsi and he explained the violence that he witnessed and fled was a continuation of the violence from earlier decades. He expressed that “in 1973 they took our teachers, killed them and threw them in the river” and that, when he had to flee, 20 years later, he had to escape through the same forest where the teachers were killed. His focus on the Tutsi as a victim group that had been persecuted in the modern history of Rwanda is amply supported by evidence. Yet, the continual framing of the Tutsi as victims, long after a Tutsi-led regime had been in power in Rwanda, speaks to an appropriation of the narratives of the Rwandan state which relies on the framing of Tutsis as perpetual victims and therefore never as perpetrators, and of Hutus as perpetual perpetrators and therefore never as victims.

Likewise, the talk by the PhD candidate also offered the same narrative, as the children of Hutus were presented as inheritors of “genocidal ideology”, thus, even though they had nothing to do with the genocide, they carry the burden of their parents’ crimes and the subsequent classification of (potential) perpetrators henceforth. This representation of one ethnic group as perpetual perpetrators is reminiscent of how the Kagame regime frames the genocide and its aftermath. As one person explained, in 2013, just outside of Kigali, during a speech to hundreds of young people, 18 to 19 year olds, Kagame asked the Hutu youth to stand up and to apologize to the Tutsi youth for the crimes of their parents (Fidèle). This is troubling as the young people in question were born after the end of the genocide, thus neither the Hutu youth nor the Tutsi youth lived through the trauma. Likely, the experience of living with the absence of murdered or incarcerated family members meant that this new generation shared more than was recognized yet, instead of understanding and building on their commonalities, Kagame and those who accepted his logic, reinforced the differences and power imbalances.

### **Opening Thoughts about Sexual Violence**

Even as the speakers represented the violence in ways that erased Hutu dead and Tutsi dead at the hands of the RPF, there were challenges to Rwandan state practices that illustrated that the members who made up the leadership of the RDGN, although closely tied to the regime, expressed some nuanced counter-narratives to universalizing state narratives. For example, one speaker opened up space to discuss sexual violence. While the Rwandan state has been lauded internationally for its commitment to gender equity, (indeed, it has the highest percentage of female members of Parliament in the world), sexual violence committed during the genocide, or since, remains a deeply taboo subject. In speaking explicitly to the issue of rape, the speaker was countering the Rwandan state's national discourse of fostering gender equity.

Dr. Karuranga, the final speaker on the panel, expressly narrated accounts of women being raped in the midst of the slaughter. The degree and extent of sexual violence during the genocide has been recorded by outside researchers. According to the UN special rapporteur, at least 250 000 women were systematically and brutally raped during and after the genocide (UN Commission on Human Rights 1996). Yet, despite the enormous human toll of this violence, as Dr. Kararunga stated, "this story will never be told because in our culture we don't speak of rape. A woman is raped and she is ashamed as if she did something wrong." He then issued an invitation to begin a conversation about sexual violence, thus subtly challenging social and state practices in Rwanda.

Sexual violence is silenced in most ethno-national communities, especially post conflict, yet among those who identify as Rwandese and live in the GTA, there were those who were actively speaking about gender-based violence. Grace, a genocide survivor who was raped and

intentionally infected with HIV during the genocide, had settled in Toronto, yet the memories of the social stigmatization and ostracization that she suffered in post-genocide Rwanda haunted her. As a Tutsi woman, she suffered the fate that so many others did; she was forced to watch as her husband was murdered before her eyes and then she was repeatedly raped, beaten and left to live with these memories. In 1996 she learned that she was HIV positive and feared that the daughter she had borne after the rape was likewise positive (thankfully, her daughter was negative). Unemployed, doubly stigmatized as a rape victim and as an HIV positive women, Grace and her four children suffered hunger and extreme poverty. She recalled that:

Just like that you lose everything, you lose hope, you lose respect, you lose your dignity, you lose everything because many people knows about your rape, and many people know about your infection, HIV, so they stigmatize and discriminate. And the family too, from the family, my family from my husband's side, they stigmatize me, every people you know, and they make me to be poor, not have a peace, not have a hope, not have a wish.

In the years following the genocide, not only did she suffer the physical trauma of HIV, but she also suffered social isolation and ostracization as a rape victim. Her story could not be told in Rwanda, because, as Dr. Kararunga stated, gender-based violence is a taboo subject.

Violence against women is still prevalent in Rwanda. Despite the passage of a law against gender-based violence in 2009 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Rwanda, 2009), traditional norms and values sustaining masculinity and femininity that sanction gender-based violence prevail, especially in rural areas (Slegh and Richters 2012, 133). In a study conducted by Slegh and Richters, 59.4% of men and 70.6% of women agreed with the statement that “Violence against women is needed to control a wife, and women sometimes deserve to be beaten” (2012, 140). Of those in the study, 98% regularly attend religious services and, during the focus groups, often used Biblical verse to reinforce the ideal of a “good man” and a “good woman” (2012, 142), thus lending institutionalized religious justification for gender-based

violence. Many participants in Slegh and Richters' study found the law against gender-based violence to be too punitive to men as it mandates heavy sentences for sexual assault. They also expressed that the law grants women too much power. Women are perceived to provoke violence, and those who have reached for greater economic autonomy have suffered for it as the data support that "violence against women tends to intensify when women's income increases" (Slegh and Richters 2012, 139).

This social phenomenon was one area of dissent from official state practices, as many in the Rwandese GTA community stated that they were troubled by the treatment of women in Rwanda. Simon's life and work was in Toronto, yet he took his vacations to run anti-gender based violence workshops for youth in Rwanda. As Simon told me, young, well-educated women who went in search of jobs, encountered the following from the older men who would hire them: "say, how old are you now? Say, maybe 23, 24? You are mature enough to see that if you see that I am helpful, you can be helpful in another way. Go, you are mature enough you think about it, you come back." The implied message was that the cost of employment is extreme sexual harassment, and even sexual assault. As Simon explained, some young women leave and look elsewhere, but others feel that this is the only way to get a job and so submit to the violence. These young women are then unable to speak of the violence inflicted upon them, and are doubly victimized, first by the perpetrator, then by not being able to publicly speak of the harm. Simon used the example of a young girl, 14 or 15 years old, who was pregnant by her foster father's brother. She was afraid to speak of the rape because "if she complains, she will not have a home. And what was happening was that they were blaming [her], instead of blaming the aggressor, they were blaming those girls—you are such a stupid, how can you do this?" Simon wondered why she did not charge the man with rape, which the new law covered, but she was

afraid of both the social fallout and the possibility of the charges being dropped as the onus is on her to prove that a rape occurred. Her community was more likely to support the perpetrator's version of events than the victim's, so, despite the new legislation, she was still subject to an oppressive gender regime which exposed her to extreme sexual violence and threatened ostracization and homelessness if she tried to challenge it. The new legislation had established a legal framework for protecting women, but it had not significantly altered everyday realities and discourses about gendered expectations and social roles. Thus, inviting the attendees at the 19<sup>th</sup> genocide commemoration in the GTA to engage in a public discussion of sexual violence challenged current practices in Rwanda (and elsewhere). Though the Rwandan state had passed extensive legislation ostensibly protecting women, it had not opened up public debate on the topic. As Dr. Kararunga pointed out, "we don't speak of rape." Yet, the trauma inflicted by gender-based violence marked the lives of many women who identified as Rwandan.

Dr. Kararunga's call to open up discourse about sexual violence was an interjection into an otherwise narrow inscription of Rwandan state narratives. The subsequent speakers included individuals from the Jewish community and the Armenian community who, as outside actors, intentionally or otherwise reinforced the dominant narrative about the genocide, and de facto, the state's origin myth. The Jewish activists spoke of resilience and the importance of documenting and publishing survivor's accounts. The activists from the local Armenian community positioned the Armenian genocide, the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide in a continuum of genocidal violence. Unsurprisingly, neither group raised any contentious issues about the violences that they represented (such as Israeli state appropriation of Holocaust survivors' stories), nor invited their audience to understand these violences as complex events with far-reaching consequences. Understandably, in narrating genocide, a simple and straightforward

narrative with clear protagonists and clear antagonists is the most practical approach as it demarcates clear moral terrain. Yet, rarely are moments of hyper-real violence simple or uncomplicated, as the earlier discussion of Israeli state-building practices demonstrated. Nor are the practices of remembering and re-telling these violences void of political interests and motivations.

The politicization of the Rwandan genocide was exemplified in the concluding component of the talks. Dr. Gerald Caplan, a Canadian academic and journalist who had spent 15 years studying and discussing the genocide and who had been called by President Kagame a “friend of Rwanda” (by his own admission), was called upon to conclude the discussion. Caplan’s discussion of “Fighting Denial while Keeping Resilient” which primarily focused on identifying and outing those he claimed were engaging in “genocide denial” actively and forcefully reinforced the Rwandan state’s singular narrative of the events. Some of the individuals whom Caplan identified were engaging in what can be accurately described as genocide denial as they claim that the numbers of dead are exaggerated. Yet, many of those he identified were investigating the very complexity of this violence and offering more or less plausible analyses. Such a debate about the violence is necessary to maintaining open spaces where the voices of those who are silenced by the Rwandan state’s narrative can be heard. Someone like Georges, suffering the loss of too many family members, is silenced and his grief and his dead erased if all dissenting voices are silenced. Silence about violence serves to reinforce narrow state narratives which further harm those who have already suffered too much.

### *Celebrations and Performances of Unity*

Unity is also performed during celebratory moments, such as the launch of a new Rwandan youth group, CARY. The Canadian Association of Rwandan Youth (CARY) was a new organization that had emerged as part of the Rwandan state's efforts to constitute a diaspora. There were three regional chapters as of June 2013: one in Montreal, one in Ottawa and one in Toronto. CARY was intended to be an organization that connected young people who identified as Rwandan and offered them a psychological and emotional space whereby they could be "Rwandan". As Mathieu explained, the inspiration for CARY began at a series of summer camps hosted in Ottawa by the Rwandan High Commission with the express intent to connect young people to their ostensible culture and to each other.

Yeah, I remember it was specifically focused for young Rwandans in the diaspora, and it was one of the things that put my foot in the door, to you know, connect more. So, umm, meeting a lot of young Rwandans from Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener, GTA, Edmonton, Montreal, Quebec City, Ottawa, London, Ontario, and realising that, how many more, young Rwandan adults are there, with similar upbringings to me. I mean some were born here, and some moved here, but we all kinda did share a lot of the same experiences. So that was something that opened the door, kind of. (Mathieu)

The High Commission, as a branch of the Rwandan state in Canada, hosted these camps for youth to learn their own identity, which alone suggests the degree to which ethnicity is not a thing in the world, but a way of seeing. In this instance, the Rwandan state was explicitly creating a way of seeing through ethnicity and nation and very intentionally training young people in this cosmology. It is telling that these young people whom Mathieu speaks of had not connected on their own in any significant way before the state mechanism explicitly formed a connection between them. Though they "kinda did share a lot of the same experiences," as Mathieu put it, this connection and sense of affinity is not synonymous with an ethnic identification. Indeed, youth from many different migrant communities can be said to have had

similar experiences of migration, alienation, and marginalization which could form the basis of communal ties. It is only when the state mechanism harnessed the similar experiences of this particular group that the youth came to see themselves as *Rwandan* youth. Mathieu expressed this idea when he explained that “I mean we all started as friends, cousins. But at the same time, though we were connected, only a few of us had reason to build our friendships—like a lot of us who played basketball together, uhh, a lot of us, who went to school downtown, or in Toronto...” Here the bases of previous claims of affinity were familial ties, an interest in sports or even just geographic proximity.

Other young people, especially ones who migrated recently, expressed that they intentionally sought out ethnic and national diversity in their social group because experiencing ethnic diversity was one of the benefits of living in Canada. Patrice explained that:

Then you start looking around and see some people that you can kind of watch, that’s when you meet someone, maybe from Africa, and you become friends, you go from Congo, even though Congo used to clash, but you go, oh, why not try something different because you are in Canada? So you start a new life in Canada. So that barrier of country, language, culture, is no longer there. That new thing, that new experience, and they become your friends. That’s when I started hanging out more with people from other countries, intentionally, because you are interested in knowing who they are, because they are not what you was expecting them to be. And it’s a reality and you gotta adjust, and you changing then, you losing the, the part of Rwanda start fading, it start going away.

Thus, individuals like Patrice rarely joined organizations like CARY because, as he explained, he did not move to Canada to only associate with other Rwandans. Ironically, the youth who grew up or were born in Canada, lamented that those who had recently migrated were unwilling to join CARY with them. So, the membership of CARY was largely made up of those who did not have a living memory of Rwanda, yet had grown up haunted by the ghosts of the recent past. Their knowledge of their Rwandaness came from stories that they had been told, or through a few visits (most families were unable to visit regularly as the airfare alone was very expensive, but



nearly all had gone back at least once). Their understanding of the place that many imagined to be a homeland was mediated through the memories and understandings of their parents. These both serve to create a longing and desire for the homeland and concurrently created an emotional and intellectual distance from the object of desire. In seeking out other Rwandan youth, they were seeking to fulfill a desire for belonging and to make sense of their inheritance of loss. Simultaneously, those who lived most of their lives in Rwanda and had recently migrated were seeking to expand their social and conceptual boundaries, so, while maintaining ties to others who identified as Rwandan, they nonetheless created an intentional distance from them.

Jeanne, a young woman who identified as Rwandan but had spent most of her youth in the GTA, expressed her desire for connection with a mythical Rwandaness and her disappointment that those she encountered did not fit her idea of who a Rwandan ought to be.

Jeanne: And it's so sad, because now I'll meet someone and they'll say you're the first Rwandan I've met, and Hotel Rwanda comes to mind, and the funny thing is that I'm always looking for Rwandan friends, because all my friends are Canadian, from different ethnic groups, and I'm always looking for Rwandans that are my age. That's why I was really excited that the new group was starting, but most of the time, they speak English, or they're even more Canadian than other friends that I have.

Interviewer: And that's disappointing?

Jeanne: Yeah! Yes it is [giggles]. I want someone that forces me, continues to umm, force me to stay connected to it. But they're also looking...and every now and then, when you meet someone who is recently from Rwanda, they're looking to learn English, so you know...

She desired connection with others who identified as Rwandan because she felt that her connection to the culture was tenuous, so she wanted others to pull her back. But, upon meeting them, she has learnt that "they're even more Canadian than other friends that I have." Thus, her desire for a mythical culture was transposed onto the geographical space of Rwanda as she

expressed that she dearly wanted to visit the state, because she had not been back since her family migrated when she was a very young child.

Other youth who identified as Rwandan had been socialized by their parents to expect certain cultural traits from Rwandans, such as reserve and quiet dignity and were delighted that the youth they had met through CARY did not fit this cultural paradigm. Natalia expressed that:

But the young people are great. So, like, chill, and relaxed. ‘Cause it’s like, of course, like what I told you, of how you hear all those stories, people from Rwanda are very to themselves, and I’m the opposite of that. So once I meet the young Rwandan youths here, especially at this CARY, it’s crazy—they’re just like me, it’s amazing! ‘Cause it’s like not only can you share the same culture, and the same, sometimes views, sometimes not, and stories together, but also, they’re not these isolated creatures that you were brought up to think that they are. (Natalia)

The multiple expectations and assumptions that young people brought to the organization generated new meanings and new understandings. Even as some came looking for a reinforcement of the identity that they had been taught by their parents, others were intentionally looking for young people who embodied a multiple and hybrid identity. The very nature of the organization then became one of oscillating between nationalist narratives and more cosmopolitan ideas of self. CARY echoed the earlier RCCA in that both were created by young people of Rwandan origin or identity who desired a closer affinity with one another. While RCCA was created as a counter-state organization devoted to the creation of a new Rwandan state form, CARY was a state-created organization, devoted to the maintenance of the current Rwandan regime. Yet, interestingly, perhaps because CARY was made up of young people who had largely grown up in Canada while RCCA was made up of young people who had grown up in exile, CARY’s members were less politically motivated and involved. They gravitated to the organization in a search for identity, not necessarily out of a political drive to support (or overthrow) a regime.

### **Song and Dance as Expressions of Rwandaness**

The launch of the Toronto chapter of CARY was an opportunity for those who perceived themselves to be part of a community to gather in celebration of a younger generation of individuals who identified as Rwandan. The senior members of the community were vocally supportive of the youth and took every chance they could to express their pride in “our youth”. The possessive pronoun in this commonly repeated statement implied both a sense of ownership of the activities of the younger group members, as well as a claim to the collective identity of Rwandan. This identity making was demonstrated at a gala that was hosted by the newly formed CARY Toronto which the community was invited to attend. Unlike commemorations, this was an opportunity to gather together as Rwandans without the weight of the memory of violence. The evening was joyful, playful and boisterous, as the cultural strictures of reserve and silence were loosened and community members enjoyed themselves. It was also an opportunity to perform Rwandaness through song and national dance. The young members of CARY took it upon themselves to entertain the crowd and did so very well as a number of them performed songs and danced. There was an interesting duality to the performances—the songs were Western (a Beyoncé song was sung and another performer sang his original R&B tracks), but the dance was “Rwandan” national dance. To hear a Beyoncé song and R&B music at an event celebrating the launch of a Rwandan cultural association spoke to the cultural hybridity of the younger generation who perceived themselves as Rwandese, but also, simultaneously carried and performed multiple identities— Canadian, African-Canadian/American, hip-hop, among many others. Yet, they also expressed their desire for Rwandaness in explicit ways. One of these ways

was through dance. In the mid-2000s, a Rwandan dance troupe was formed by some of the women in the community. They taught their daughters Rwandan dances, mainly *Ushashaja*, the dance traditionally performed by Rwandan women, which the young women regularly performed at communal events. This dance is made up of a gentle swaying motion originating from the hips, followed by an undulation of the upper body, conducted by a line of dancers who move in formation. It is very repetitive and rhythmic. Unlike the traditional male dances from Rwanda, it does not allude to specific practices such as farming or hunting (Simon). The dance troupe also performs at churches and social events outside of the community to demonstrate Rwandan culture.

Dance becomes a literal and figurative antidote to death as the bodies in motion negate the stillness of dead bodies. In light of the recent hyper-real violence associated with Rwandaness, witnessing (or performing) Rwandan dance becomes an act of symbolic reinscription of this identity as alive and breathing. National dances serve to embody the nation as an expression of culture because they are a medium that “is especially well suited for displays of identity, combining music, dress, body, and movement to convey ideas of a group’s distinctiveness” (Reed 2010, 5). When dances are framed as national dances they lose their fluidity and become ossified as a particular expression of the nation. Post-colonial states, as part of their nation-building exercises, followed the earlier trend that European states had established of labelling and framing folk dances as national dances, and then monumentalizing them by establishing museums and schools devoted to teaching these ideas of new nations embodied in the dancers (Reed 2010, 6). Dance and national culture are perceived to be so intimately paired that the two become referents for each other. Rwandaness was understood as dancing in a particularly ethnic way. Dance became more a marker of identity than even language, given that

many in the dance troupe did not speak Kinyarwanda, yet happily performed Rwandan dances in Rwandan costume.

At the gala, the local dance troupe was joined by a male dancer visiting from Rwanda. He, I learned from my tablemates, was well known in Rwanda as a dancer and performer and came from a long line of performers, following his father and grandfather in the profession. His very body, the medium of his art, represented an idea of the nation superimposed onto the bodies of his grandfather, his father, and him, thus telescoping the history of this nation backwards through genealogical time. His performance was framed by the local troupe as he moved among and between them. But, as the only man on the stage and as the only performer who sang along with his performance, he was also an active transferer of cultural texts—a storyteller. Conversely, the young local women, dressed identically in white tank tops, flowing skirts and headbands, and moving collectively as one group, were de-individualized and did not possess the creative power of story-telling. Their young, beautiful bodies expressed the nation, but they seemed to have little individual control over this expression, unlike the male performer.<sup>8</sup> During the performance, the women dancers left their formation, dispersed into the audience and bodily invited members of the audience to dance with them. This bodily invitation created a moment of intimacy as diverse audience members, myself among them, danced for a moment or two with the young Rwandan woman. For a moment, she and her partner moved rhythmically (or, in my case, awkwardly) together creating a bodily interpretation of the idea of Rwandaness. In that moment the dancer invited insiders and outsiders to be momentarily Rwandan, as we emulated her sinuous movements. Her body, moving beautifully, became Rwanda. But when the dance was stilled, we returned to our fragmented, individual identities, as even the dancers changed

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<sup>8</sup> While there are clearly gender differentiated dances suggesting specifically gendered expressions of nation, I know too little about them to fully explore this dimension.

into their own clothes. As each woman left the main floor and returned, clad in her evening outfit, she put away her momentary role as the embodiment of Rwanda and reclaimed her own personality and positionality.

This bodily articulation of nation was roundly welcomed by all gathered at the event. The outsiders were impressed by the aesthetic beauty of the movement and quieted by their incomprehension of the story told by the male dancer. The insiders, those who identified as Rwandese, reveled in a shared understanding and the non-verbal communication of their identity as a thing in the world. This moment appeared to be a moment of unity as all gathered seemed to be caught up in a simultaneous experience and emotion. Yet, as one participant explained, the very idea of a Rwandan dance is a negotiated concept as there are different regional dances, some of which have been fused into one dance, but “there’s so many different—they all look almost the same, but different meanings and when you go to Rwanda it’s really distinct and you can see the difference when they perform it. But our generation here they don’t know about *Abahamba*, they don’t know about *Ichibera* [specific regional dances]<sup>9</sup>, they do it sometimes without knowing” (Simon). Furthermore, when these traditional dances were performed by local youth, they, intentionally or not, fused contemporary hip-hop moves with the traditional dance, thus inscribing their own hybridity onto the dances. As one of the dancers, Louise, explained: “most of the songs say are traditional songs, then we really have to figure it out by ourselves. And if it’s just other dances, sometimes we can learn from Youtube, also sometimes we have to really figure it out ourselves [...] there’s no expert. We just sit down together and like, okay guys, let’s do something, let’s find out something. I think it’s really a good point, everyone participates because there’s no boss.” The dance troupe is, in effect, reinventing the dances and

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<sup>9</sup> The spelling of these dances is as dictated by the participant. I did not find a record of these dances, so could not verify the spelling.

reinterpreting them as a uniquely localized expression of their own version of Rwandaness. In a small way this newly introduced hybridity is challenging the hegemony of the Rwandan state by altering the modes of expressing Rwandaness. Even if the hybridity is unintentional, it nonetheless poses a challenge by offering alternative expressions of national identity.

### *Micropolitics and/or Internal Contestations*

#### **Ethnicities**

These moments of groupness, to use Brubakers' term, suggest that these people, who are present at these moments of unity and performance of nation, appear to share ties and understandings of self. Yet, simultaneously, even as individuals were actively and even joyfully performing unity, there were underlying contestations and challenges playing out about what it meant to be a Rwandan in the diaspora community of the GTA. The deeply riven divide between those who are identified as Tutsi and those who are identified as Hutu was one of the most potent and visible points of contestation among those who belonged to the community. The performances of nation at community events were always ostensibly performing Rwandan nationalism, but the subtextual performance was of Tutsi identity writ large as Rwandan identity. Nearly all the community leaders, speakers at events, and event organizers were Tutsi, though they rarely identified themselves as such because they echoed the Rwandan state's narrative that "we are all Rwandan". Yet, as I got to know the community better (though I could never know the group as well as an insider and always my experiences were mediated by cultural translators), I noticed the dearth of those who identified as Hutus at events. When I broached this topic during interviews (with mostly Tutsis) I was told that Hutus are present, but no one could point any out

to me. They always seemed to be just beyond my peripheral vision, and so I came to perceive them as peripheral in the community as well. This interpretation was reinforced by the few Hutu with whom I had the opportunity to meet and speak.

I was commonly told by community leaders that though the ethnic identities of Hutu and Tutsi were relevant in the past, now “we are all Rwandese”. One such ethnocultural entrepreneur explained it thus:

We are all Rwandese. We are Rwandese. And really, as a social scientist, you can hardly take the Hutu and Tutsi, if people speak the same language, inhabited the same geographical area, intermarry, and as a practice, how do you tell who is a Hutu and a Tutsi? Okay? In the past, the moment a Tutsi would be, if his cows would die, under a certain number he would become a Hutu. You see, when you move from one. So there are questions of kinds of misreading. Yes, there were Tutsis, you can see them through physical structure, yes there are Hutu, but now, we would rather be Rwandese. (Janvier)

Janvier was drawing from the state’s script which frames the division between Hutus and Tutsis as a division of class recognized by ownership of a certain number of cows. Another informant who had recently migrated from Rwanda, also explained ethnic divisions in Rwanda as classes:

Yeah, so what, what do we have in Rwanda, actually? It’s classes. We have classes. So you have like, like, you can have rich people, you can have, you know. Yeah, yeah, So I find classes. You cannot tell me how I would go to your house in Rwanda and I would feel comfortable. The language, the food, the way you dress, it’s the same. So, that’s, not ethnic, that’s not an ethnic group. (Christophe)

This narrative closely echoed the framing of national reconciliation that the Rwandan state had been promoting since 2001. As a key tenet of its mandate to foster reconciliation, the Rwandan government officially erased ethnicity by declaring that “ethnic identity would no longer be an official factor in the bureaucratic life of citizens or the state” (Burnet 2012, 155). On numerous occasions, President Kagame had stated that there were no more ethnic identities in the new Rwanda. During an interview with Al-Jazeera’s Rhiz Khan, Kagame explained the following:



I think there is a bit of confusion here. When we banned the use of the identities that were used to divide the people of the country – erroneous though, because people think we have tribes, yet we don't have tribes. We simply have social classes made up of people who were farmers, those who used to keep cattle and those who were dealing in handicrafts. This is how the society is divided. But we said: "You can call yourself whatever you want to call yourself, but you cannot use it against somebody who is different from you. Above all, we are all Rwandans. You can say you are Hutu, Tutsi or Twa – but you cannot use it politically to the detriment of the other one who is different from you." This is all we have said and this is an open debate and you can't say better than that. (Office of the President 2011)

The parallels between Kagame's oft repeated formulation and the statement by a GTA community leader were striking. Both statements identified the distinction between Hutus and Tutsis as "social classes" and that these "classes" had been demolished in favour of a unified narrative of "we are all Rwandans". On the surface, these statements point to a surprisingly successful reconciliation program which appeared to have, in the space of merely 20 years, extinguished Hutu and Tutsi as ethnic identities and made them social classes. This re-framing implies that social classes are less fixed than ethnicity as one can shift one's position within a class hierarchy. Thus, the idea of a uniform "Rwandese" ethnicity can be crystallized as older ethnic narratives are reformulated into other social categories, without challenging the hegemony of ethnicity.<sup>10</sup> Rather than understanding ethnicity as a construct and thereby undermining the ideological basis of the state, this re-framing allows the state, as embodied in the figure of the autocratic president, to claim that those who had previously identified ethnically as Hutu and Tutsi were mistaken in their perception of their own identity and that they were actually referring to class distinctions, while their ethnic identity was all along Rwandese. There is a seductive logic to this reasoning as it offers an explanation of the genocidal violences as caused by colonial and post-colonial elites who manipulated class distinctions and called them ethnicity to incite

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<sup>10</sup> It is at times difficult to distinguish between expressions of ethnicity and expressions of nation. The most appropriate term seems to be ethno-national as Rwandan is both an ethnic identity associated with a language, culture and imagined shared history, as well as a national identity as it is tied to a bordered geographic space.

conflict, while this explanation also offered the common people an underlying shared identity. Yet, despite the emotive appeal of this logic, in the Rwandese community in the GTA, tensions around ethnic identity remained a significant source of conflict.

As one participant explained, many in the community disagreed with the official line that “we are all Rwandese” because it concealed the ethnicization of the new regime. Thus, as Tutsi make up 10% of the overall population of Rwanda, yet “they work at 90% [of government positions], so if you say there’s no ethnic, and even if you see the whole government is Tutsi, you can’t say the Tutsi have more power” (Fidèle). Those who pointed out this disparity did not do so out of a sense of altruism or even justice, but because they genuinely feared that the current governing regime was recreating conditions for another genocide. Yet, despite these simmering anxieties, ethnic affiliation had become a taboo subject.

There was a public consensus to avoid discussing ethnic identities and, since I did not pose any questions directly related to ethnicity, many of the participants in my study did not identify their presumed ethnic background or discuss the presumed ethnicity of others. Based on this initial observation, it would appear that the ethnic categories of Hutu and Tutsi had indeed receded in importance for day to day life. Yet, despite the oft repeated claim that “we are all Rwandans”, as I gained trust within the community, a number of participants in the study directed our conversation towards inherited ideas about ethnicity. Many among the community in the GTA explained that, because it was relatively small, everyone knew who was a Tutsi and who was a Hutu. Indeed, “here in Canada it’s much easier to know who’s a Hutu or Tutsi than in Rwanda. Because in Rwanda now, the government is trying to avoid it, it’s not like they are so successful about it, but...” (Simon). Community members “know” through a complex set of cognitive associations which rely on the cosmology that they inherited from their immersion in

Rwandese culture. Those who grew up in Rwanda before the genocide had an extensive social map of familial and community associations. So, for instance, Simon explained that he “knew” that a young woman was Hutu because he had known her uncle in Rwanda where ethnic identity was determined and marked on identity cards, and thus knew the family’s presumed ethnic identity. Based on this knowledge he extrapolated her identity and understood her to be Hutu. Those who grew up outside of Rwanda would not have had access to this kind of lived memory since they did not have a day to day experience in a neighbourhood of Hutus and Tutsis. Rather, the diversity that they knew included individuals who identified as belonging to other regional ethnic groups, other national groups, other linguistic groups. So, how would they have learned, upon first sight, who was Hutu and who was Tutsi? Natalia, a young woman who had grown up in Canada, offered insight into how this kind of classification can be learned and inherited despite not encountering individuals from the ostensibly other ethnic group.

Natalia: I can tell who’s Rwandan. We just have these traits that I can identify. The forehead, the eyes, you know, the long face, the skin, the legs. There’s just so many things. So I can tell what someone is. Sometimes it’s hard. You don’t know. When you go to those events, there’s some people you meet and you’re like—You’re a Rwandan?

Interviewer: Does that challenge your presumption of what it means to be Rwandan?

Natalia: It does and no, because at the end of day, it’s like you went to Somalia, or Ethiopia, which are the countries known to have a specific type. There’s a look. You can just tell. So, once we tell.

Interviewer: Really you’re talking about Tutsis?

Natalia: I am, I am, I don’t know...that’s what pisses me off, because I can’t differentiate it. Of course, Hutus, we were brought up to think they were the shorter, darker, scruffier, everything feature wise, they were more wide.

Interviewer: So you were taught that too?

Natalia: Well, no, I wasn’t, I just read it from the research. My mom would not talk about—my mom would not describe it. But my mom would be like, she saw one, she’d be like—he is Hutu.

Interviewer: So you had a visual image of what that means.

Natalia: Yeah, but most of the people that I see, I could just...it's weird, it's interesting that you say that, I could, I know the differentiation between and Tutsi and a Hutu, but when I see a Rwandan, I just say they're Rwandan. I don't think there's a Hutu or there's a Tutsi—I think Oh, there's a Rwandan, and I speak English. At the end of the day, there is something different about both people because of what.

What was interesting about Natalia's account was the degree to which she had been trained to see a physiological type, yet when she met people who were identified as Hutu, she often found that they did not match the presumed physiological characteristics. However, rather than lead her to question the existence of the type, she was "pissed off" *because* she "can't differentiate". Yet, she is simultaneously echoing the narrative of "we are all Rwandans". This cognitive dissonance seemed to be easily glossed over. Even as migrants from Rwanda taught their children the new ethno-national identity, they continued to inscribe ethnic differences onto individuals.

Delphine, herself a genocide survivor, lamented this continuation of what she saw as the roots of the genocidal ideology. As she explained, "I don't know how to tell the difference between Hutu and Tutsi, I just don't know. It's like you're asking me between Chinese and a Korean, I just feel like they look the same. I don't know anything. I don't know how people tell. Other people, maybe, not me. They look the same" (Delphine). As someone who grew up in Rwanda and survived the genocide, it would be safe to assume that she would be able to tell the two ostensible groups apart better than anyone else, yet she genuinely could not and was troubled that others could/thought they could.

These ostensible differences dictated silences at social and community gatherings. Jean-Paul, a young man who survived the genocide as a child and had since migrated to Canada on his own, explained that when he socialized with his Rwandan friends, a group of young men who, like he, had migrated relatively recently, they shared the "happy memories". They discussed

childhood memories (though not genocide narratives—childhood here means their early youth, before 1994), but the moment “someone wants to mix that with some political situation, about how things are going now, then we stop”. They would share “information about what happens, but not the analysis, the whole thing.” They avoided offering their individual understandings and opinions of current politics in Rwanda because the group was mixed. It is made up of Hutus and Tutsis and the understanding was that the ethnic identity would lead to conflicting interpretations of events, so, to keep ties, they created spheres of silence. Christophe, another young man, also described that he would avoid certain topics because “there’s a Hutu, or because there’s a Tutsi.” Neither man avoided interacting with individuals from the other ethnicity, but this interaction came with a cost of carefully choreographed silences and omissions, as those who identified as Tutsis were sometimes aware of the power of the genocide narrative and the subsequent framing of all Tutsis as victims and all Hutus as perpetrators. Christophe, as a Tutsi, would not discuss anything to do with the genocide, the single greatest marker of Rwandaness in the contemporary moment, with his Hutu friends, because “no matter what, that kid is going to know his ethnic affiliation” and when the frame is that “Hutus killed Tutsis”, he may say that “I was not even born, I don’t even know about these things”. So, to avoid alienating his friends, Christophe chose to keep the silences. Yet, though he avoided imposing his power over his friends, he used that same power to establish himself as an expert on the genocide whose interpretation of the events was inherently legitimate because he was a Tutsi.

Another informant described how he, as a Tutsi, befriended a young Hutu man. He wanted to throw his new friend a party for his birthday, so he invited his friend to extend an invitation to his friends. Thus, to his surprise, the Tutsi man found his home filled with young

Hutus. He was delighted by this as he aimed to try to connect the two groups within the larger group. Yet, the challenges of sharing social space reared their head at the party:

Participant: Yeah, so I looked—there was no one, everybody was Hutu, and also I can see when they meet, what kind of discussion they have. Because they was so excited to be here, they were so wonderful to me, they came with their wives, their children, it was so nice evening, but one was dating a Canadian girl, and the Canadian girl didn't know, and so she started talking about politics, “yeah, your dictator, how do they call him—Kagame?” and talking so negative.

Interviewer: Right, she'd learned this from her partner?

Participant: Yeah, and I can see that they was so, so like, so shocked, and they wanted to stop her.

Interviewer: Was it because they were here, in a Tutsis home, and they didn't want that conversation which normally happens when they are together?

Participant: Yeah, that conversation. And someone had to say, oh, can we go outside just to have a smoke, and when she came back, she was quiet [laughs]. And so, this is how I see, like the community outside is different than the community in Rwanda.

Despite his desire to befriend those who were identified as Hutus, the host was unwilling to listen to criticisms of Kagame, and his guests knew this well, so they ensured that the appropriate silences were maintained. Indeed, they were “shocked” by the rupture as their private conversation was brought to a quasi-public realm. As James C. Scott argues, the resistance of subordinate groups is waged quietly, often beyond the public view. This is a “tactical choice born of a prudent awareness of the balance of power” (Scott 1990, 183). In this community, Tutsis were the dominant group both in terms of numbers and in terms of relative social power. They were, by and large, perceived by most audiences as the victims and survivors of the genocide, which granted them latitude and a significant measure of social authority in the community. They also tended to be associated with the current governing regime, thus granting them institutional support and legitimacy. There were a number of Hutus who were also allied

with the regime, but their affiliation depended upon their full acceptance of the state's mythico-history. They were not permitted to dissent, as the examples of Victorie Ingabire and her colleagues in Rwanda demonstrated.<sup>11</sup> Tutsis likewise were not permitted to dissent, but they did not face the same risks as Hutus. As one dissenter explained, "in my position, it's safe what I do because I am a Tutsi and I am a genocide survivor, so I can't be genocide denier, because I'm survivor...A Hutu can't be in my position—they can say anything to him, but they can't say anything to me" (Fidèle).

According to the Rwandan state's narratives, Hutus were always read as guilty, murderers by association, and Tutsis were always read as innocent, victims by association. Angelina described how this framing of ethnic identities informed social interactions:

Angelina: Yeah, so, you wanna be careful about your conversation, your choice of topics, you avoid political stuff if you are not sure.

Interviewer: So conversation about the current regime in Rwanda?

Angelina: Yeah, current regime, politics in Rwanda, even race, those ethnic differences—I can't say are you a Hutu? Because it might be offensive to this person because the two groups are associated in a different way—Hutus are associated with the genocide, and Tutsi, you might be scared that they might say, ohh, how do you think about me now, since I'm revealing that I'm a Hutu, what do you think of me now, right? Are you thinking I'm the one associated with killing?

Like Christophe, she expressed an awareness of the social and political power of this understanding of contemporary ethnicity in Rwanda and its parallel assumption among the diaspora in the GTA. But she also expressed empathy for those who were understood to be Hutus and the assumption of guilt that this interpretation carried. Yet, despite the alliance of those who identified as Hutus and those who identified as Tutsis, and attempts to understand the perspective

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<sup>11</sup> The treatment of the political opposition in Rwanda is discussed in chapter 3.

of the other, there remained potent emotional obstacles, especially for those who were first generation migrants and thus had a recent lived memory of the supposed other.

Both those who identified as Tutsi and those who identified as Hutu expressed anxiety associated with interacting with the ethnic other. Those who identified as Tutsi, both genocide survivors and those who were not in Rwanda during the genocide but nonetheless lost much of their family, spoke of fearing Hutus, in the years following the genocide and even 20 years after the violence. Patrice was a genocide survivor who was only 7 during the horrific events, but they had marked his life since. Having grown up in the new Rwanda, he wanted reconciliation and wanted to move past ethnic division. His desire for acceptance conflicted with his psychological and physiological responses to the memories of violence.

Patrice: I know how they look like, I know who they are. But I don't feel like I need to judge anybody. But the thing is I know what they did, 'cause I still have memories, I still suffer.

Interviewer: That trauma doesn't go away.

Patrice: But I think having a chance to move away, leaving that reality and being taken away from Rwanda, seeing a different side, different people, sharing food, sharing different things. And perhaps people change. And for young people it's easier to change than a much older person.

Interviewer: Do you have friends who are from the other group?

Patrice: Yes. Even in the church, there they are. Someone will say, oh they are this, but they are not taken away or chased from the group, there is a lot of that though. But uh, some person may come, [and say] this person is this. Yeah, I know. And do you know this? I'm like yes.

Interviewer: So, they'll warn you?

Patrice: Yes. They'll warn you.

Interviewer: The older people?



Patrice: Yeah, they'll let you know.

Interviewer: Because they are cautious, worried?

Patrice: They're worried, they may think that they're protecting you, and they change your perspective on that person. You know what I mean? I saw that person as a person, he was this and this, I accepted him, as a friend. Now you're telling me this and I'm a little bit afraid. Because then I link him to what happened to this and this and this.

Interviewer: Right, and he's not involved. He was probably a child as well.

Patrice: Exactly. Either way it creates a little distance. It's hard, but what are you going to do?

Patrice's narrative exposed the degree to which some senior members of the community policed ethnic boundaries and ensured that younger community members retained these markers. This policing of boundaries served to harden and reinforce the putative differences between those who were identified as Hutus and those who were identified as Tutsis. Yet, the cost of maintaining those ethnic markers was borne by Patrice, as the constant reminder of who was what incited his anxiety and generated fear, despite his desire to cross ethnic boundaries. As a young migrant, he sought to build a community and a support system, but the community then denied him a feeling of safety. Those whom he had perceived to be friends were re-framed as the other, and he was left with disquiet. The emotional toll of confronting this trepidation and unease was often too great for survivors, so they chose to retreat further. The social policing of ethnic boundaries by the senior members of the community served to perpetuate distrust and anxiety, but it also prevented survivors like Patrice from feeling safe and thus beginning to heal his psyche.

Many of those who identified as Tutsi perceived it to be their duty to police the boundaries of ethnicity and when they encountered a Hutu passing as something else, to expose them. Olivia, as a Tutsi woman who often encountered newcomers in her professional capacity,

took it upon herself to expose what she perceived to be a lie. She explained that when she met migrants from the Great Lakes region in Africa who claimed to be Congolese, for example, but carried Rwandan names and spoke Kinyarwanda, she confronted them with what she understood to be their deception. She acknowledged that some may have been choosing not to identify as Rwandan because they did not wish to carry the stigma of others' crimes, but she still understood their deception to be evidence of their guilt, if only by association. Yet, in the same conversation, she maintained that in the community the terms Hutu and Tutsi were no longer used as all saw themselves as Rwandan.

Angelina also recounted the deep-rooted tensions that she had observed within the community. In the years after the genocide, the local, largely Tutsi community in the GTA, feared to hold social events, because "If we bring this social gathering, who knows, some Hutu might just come and say 'I'm going to put a bomb here and kill all these people'"(Angelina). The generalized fear of the other was difficult to overcome, but, 20 years since the violence, it had largely died down. Most cited the sense of day to day safety that they experienced in Canada, as well as the rule of law which served to deter acts of violence. Nonetheless, individual fears remained as Angelina expressed that there are very many Tutsis in the community who "can't stand being with a Hutu, because they're still resenting that, they can't let go" and Hutus who aren't "sure whether you're going to accept them either, or whether you associate with them, even if they have nothing to do with the killing that happened in that country...so they withdraw...and they form their own group." This divide was echoed in the geography of the new diaspora communities, as the individuals who identified as Hutu often chose to settle in Quebec, or Ottawa, where there were larger groups of people identified as Hutus, thus, they no longer formed such a minority within a minority. The ones who chose to cross ethnic boundaries were

subject to scrutiny and suspicion, even though there were very many individuals in the community who wished to see reconciliation.

Those who identified as Hutus faced the social policing of boundaries and surveillance if they chose to remain part of the community. As Angelina explained, many chose to absent themselves and form their own social circles and groups where they could feel more at ease. Yet, many others sought out the larger community and wished to collectively identify as Rwandese. Georges, a Hutu man who was studying in Europe during the time of the genocide (and thus is exempt from accusations of being directly involved) and who lost close family members at the hands of the RPF, was one of those who desired to remain in the community. Yet he was very aware of the dangers that he faced. He knew many others who had chosen not to connect because “especially Hutus who took refuge in Congo and then came here, it would be difficult. I know there’s some good innocent people, they are here, I meet them... They keep a low profile. The accusation can be...” He was referring to the accusation of being a perpetrator in the genocide. To be accused of being a perpetrator in the genocide had the power to destroy one’s life. As he explained, having witnessed other judicial systems, once such an accusation is made in a North American system, “they accuse you, it’s up to you to defend. In Europe the prosecutor has to prove guilty. .. Somebody can accuse me and you can’t reverse that.” Even those who had been exonerated of all crimes still carried the mark of the accusation hence forth, as, for example, those who were found not guilty at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda in Arusha, were still treated as if they were guilty, even by the Canadian state. Georges explained that a few of them had family in Canada, but were not permitted to even travel to Canada as they were denied visas, let alone settle here.

Despite external performances of unity, the inherited and actively propagated division between those who identified as Tutsis and those who identified as Hutus remained a deep divide within the community. As I have sought to express, very many in the community were actively trying to come to terms with this divide and desired to share a sense of identity and peoplehood with those whom they perceived as the other. But this desire was very often paired with fear and anxiety which remained too difficult to overcome. Others yet, while extolling a unified national Rwandan identity, actively worked to demarcate those who were Tutsi, and thus understood to be innocent, and those who were Hutu, and thus understood to be at least suspect, if not guilty.

### **Gendered Divisions**

The performances of unity that were the public façade of the Rwandese community in the GTA were also riven by gendered divides about the very meaning of Rwandaness, usually referred to as “our culture”.<sup>12</sup> Migration and movement away from Rwanda had altered the gendered understandings that individuals had learned and inherited. Men and women expressed the challenges of new ideas about gender roles and expectations and how these had affected their interpersonal lives and relationships. While I will spend more time discussing how migration, settlement and racialization affect men and women differently in chapter 5, here I will focus on how gender is connected to Rwandaness as an ethnic/national identity.

Early on in my research, I began hearing of how migration had “destroyed” families, and how this troubled those who spoke of it because “in our culture, we would like to see our people stay together” (Connie). Separation and divorce in families was understood by many participants

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<sup>12</sup> At times participants in the study used the language of “culture” to describe sets of ideas or behaviours within the presumed community. I understand this to be an expression of ethnicity as it relates to language, culture, history and memory, which constitute a framework of experience that can be understood as ethnicity.

to be an outcome of migration and the imposition of new ideas about gender roles, but also, significantly, as a challenge to cultural integrity. Many worried that the dissolution of marriages was a sign of breakdown within the community and thus identified it as a threat to the integrity of the Rwandese identity in the GTA diaspora. The increase in incidences of divorce was often presented as a disintegration of Rwandese culture and traditions. Even those whose focus was on empowering women in the community, lamented the increased rates of divorce. While these participants spoke positively about the increased economic and personal liberties that women had in Canada, they were concerned about the effects of these new liberties on the cohesion of the community.

As Angelina explained, migration had exposed men and women to new ideas about gender and a new legal and institutional regime which facilitated women's greater autonomy.

There is different power dynamics when you are in Rwanda, between men and women. The men is really they have bigger power, the respect of women is very compromised sometimes there, but, when the women are here, they feel they have power, because there is a voice for women, number one, there is protection here, and she knows that economically, if worse comes to worse, the government will help you out. But over there in Rwanda, when a men and woman disagree or so forth, you have no job, so your survival is compromised, so women feel safe to here, because they know there is a better opportunity for them. (Angelina)

Rwandese women in Canada were able to take advantage of a legal structure and system of social support which enabled them to leave marriages that were abusive or too difficult to keep intact, and some chose to do so. This new trend was similar to what the Ghanaian community in Toronto also experienced. With respect to the latter, Manuh explains that “a persistent complaint among [Ghanaian] men is that the Canadian state is ‘spoiling’ the women by making them conscious of their rights and that this consciousness is leading to high divorce rates. Men also contend that the state benefits available to unmarried or divorced women with children [...] undermine the authority and power of husbands to maintain particular kinds of relations with

their wives” (1998, 487). Likewise, Creese, studying the new African diaspora in Vancouver, observed the same trends as “both men and women agonized over the increasing incidences of divorce and the loss of community support. For the most part, however, women identified the men’s failure to adapt as the central issue, while men were more likely to blame women for the new and unreasonable expectations” (2011, 155). Marital discord and disintegration appeared to be common features of African diasporic communities in Canada as members of these communities dealt with the immense stress of migration and settlement as well as the new gendered expectations.

While marital discord among African diasporic communities was the product of a clash of gender regimes and stress, it was often understood in the Rwandese community as a failing to perform Rwandese culture appropriately. Connie explained that while in Rwanda many middle class women did not need to work outside the home, or, if they did, they could afford to hire domestic help to run the household, in Canada, these same women were in a position where the family was struggling for economic survival, so they had work in the labour force, but could not afford domestic help. Women faced the struggles of building a new life and a double work day and, often, found that their partners were not able to bend to the new circumstances. Instead, the men asserted their national/ethnic identity as a “Rwandese man” to attempt to reinstate gender norms that they had assumed would continue. They then accused women who contested these norms of forgetting the culture. In a caricature of the men’s role in this dynamic, Connie stated “I don’t know how to cook, so I won’t cook. I didn’t know how to clean the house, so I won’t do it. I am a Rwandese man—why did you forget about our culture?” The accusation of forgetting one’s culture is a challenge directly aimed at the woman’s identity and sense of belonging in the Rwandese community. This painful accusation echoed the Rwandan state’s narrative of nation as

women were to be the bearers of the nation, but only as long as they performed a closely policed gender appropriate script of the docile and passive woman. Much like the state used women as the façade of its progressive policies while neglecting their safety and well-being, this interpersonal and domesticated interpretation of ethnicity and nation relied on women performing their roles with appropriate passivity. The accusation of forgetting one's culture, hurled in the midst of heated arguments, stayed in the memories and narratives of women. When they recounted their marital troubles, this claim of forgetting their culture was a key injury that they expressed, especially since, in this community, it had been the women who had formed their own groups in order to teach children and youth the language and dances of their culture, thus, the women had carried the burden of transmitting culture to the next generation.

Young women were also taught by their mothers how to behave as a “Rwandese woman”. Behavioural codes for women associated with performing this national/ethnic identity focused on personal modesty, respectability, reserve and appropriately “moral” behaviours. In Rwanda, “women are viewed positively when they are reserved, submissive, modest, silent and maternal, when they maintain a ‘respectable’ household, when they raise ‘wise’ children. They are viewed negatively when they gossip, are loud and overly emotional, or have a dirty house or rude children” (Burnet 2012, 44). In the diaspora, these “negative” behaviours were read as contrary to national/ethnic identity, not only as violating gender norms. Thus, young women were trained to abide by the following rules, as Natalia recounted:

Oh my god, going out late at night. My curfew, to this day, is still 8:00, even though I come home late. It's just that as a Rwandese woman, you are not supposed to be home, like past 11:00. Or else, my mom says it's like prostitution, that's what you're going to be called, especially like in Rwanda. I don't know if other interviewees told you this, but a lot of women like to gossip. So, it was basically shame to the family if the girl would be... wouldn't have something called *umucyo*. *Umucyo*, it's basically having value for yourself, and having respect for yourself, as a woman. Not coming home late, keeping everything in order and clean, especially in the house, and so on. (Natalia)

Violating the norms of Rwandan culture carried the risk of being labelled a “prostitute”—one of the universally damning condemnations of a woman. In such a small community, which, despite its dispersal throughout the GTA, maintained close ties of communication, a young woman’s challenge of these gendered norms would become known, because, as Natalia indicated, gossip, or information sharing, was a common practice. This challenge was read as a violation of ethnic/national norms and the young (or older) woman in question would be socially marginalized within the community.

Women who broke the gendered social codes faced a challenge to their identity in the diasporic community *and* in Rwanda. When they traveled to Rwanda they were no longer perceived to be “Rwandese”, but as “Westernized”. Women, having lived in Canada and claimed some of their rights, no longer accepted their role as subservient to men, and “if you try to speak up and be the one—she is Westernized, that one” (Angelina). She was accused of no longer respecting men or her husband and the cost of this was social isolation. So, to remain accepted in the community both in Rwanda and in Canada, women developed survival tactics. Thus, “even though you know better, you tend not to speak up too much, you just find a tactful way to balance that kind of bias, so that you are not cut off from the society completely, or you have to know who you are speaking to, or find a better choice of words. You have to gain their approval, otherwise, people will isolate you” (Angelina). This tactic of guarding what was said and to whom was a common strategy to mitigate against conflict and social isolation. Marie, a single mother living in the GTA, had mastered the difficult art of navigating between different gender regimes while still maintaining a space within her community. Divorce was perceived as a social stigma for a woman in Rwanda because she was granted status through her male relatives or husband. Thus, the severance of a marriage meant that she lost her social status, though her



husband did not suffer the same consequence (Burnet 2012, 46). So, as a divorced woman, Marie had chosen to only share her divorce with her immediate family in Rwanda. When she had been able to travel to Rwanda, she had maintained the illusion that her husband stayed in Canada and could not travel with the family. This white lie ensured that she was welcomed and treated with respect as a Rwandese woman. She had learned to navigate the terrain of who a good “Rwandan woman” was, while still asserting her own needs. She understood that Rwandaness was a way of seeing, and so showed only the narrative that fit the dominant discourse.

Nation and ethnicity, as “ways of seeing”, rather than objective realities, nonetheless shaped the lives of men and women in the Rwandese diaspora community in the GTA. As the many examples here have illustrated, despite inherited ideas about who belongs and who does not, and on what terms, individuals negotiated, navigated and re-narrated these identity markers. Even at moments of heightened performance of “Rwandaness”, there were multiple understandings of that idea at play. These multiple interpretations interacted with the dominant discourse about nation and ethnicity and individuals teased out spaces of mediated, at times temporary, belonging. Yet, even as individuals created openings in narrow state-derived discourses, others within the same community work to counter these openings and reinforce what it meant to be a Tutsi, a Hutu, a Rwandese man, a Rwandese woman. These plural power plays illustrate the instability of ethnicity and nation.

## Chapter Five

### **Ambivalent Welcome: Canadian Multiculturalism and Racialization**

As Rinaldo Walcott argues, “to be black and at home in Canada is to both belong and not belong” (Walcott 2003, 50). Those who identified as Rwandans in the GTA daily negotiated the slippery terrain between belonging in Canada and the routine reminders of non-belonging. They faced an ambivalent welcome in their new host/homeland, as they were constructed and read as black and inherently and irrevocably different. Yet, even as they were daily reminded of their difference and subject to scrutiny, they affirmed their agency by demonstrating their deservedness of full citizenship and insisting that they faced discrimination and marginalization only in certain moments. They were very well aware of the ambivalent welcome that they received, but claimed that, having been habituated to extreme exclusion in Rwanda, Canada had offered them a safe haven where they could build new lives. The seeming paradox of simultaneous belonging and non-belonging that this chapter explores encapsulates what it means to be part of a diaspora—namely, to have built new lives and new identities in a new host/homeland, yet to be aware of one’s ambivalent place in the new host/homeland and the potential for exclusion and even expulsion. Thus, for the Rwandan diaspora in the GTA, a lived memory of deadly exclusion cast a rosy glow on the terms of inclusion that they experienced in the GTA, but those who identified as members of this group were not oblivious to the contradictions of belonging in the new nation.

When a white, often Anglo-Saxon by ancestry, Canadian encounters another person socially, they rarely feel any qualms about asking “what’s your background?” Indeed, many would conceive of this question as expressing flattering curiosity about the other. Yet, beneath the seemingly polite exterior of this question, lurk a number of assumptions which fundamentally

challenge the claim that all Canadians are indeed equal. This question is only posed to those who look or sound different; I, as an immigrant, and thus as someone whose ‘background’ is not Canadian (whatever that may mean), am not asked this question because I am white and have a Southern Ontario accent. Those wishing to show polite interest in me ask me about my profession, my hobbies, or even my weekend plans, but never about my “background” as they assume that they know it, and therefore presume that I belong within the imagined notion of what constitutes the “Canadian” nation. Yet, nearly all who participated in this study have encountered this ubiquitous question before. Some laughed when it came up as it had become something of a joke—the polite reminder that one does not belong, one cannot be ‘from here’, and must have a foreign ‘background’. These seemingly polite euphemisms reveal how normalized day to day racism and the assumption that to be Canadian always means to be white and often to have Anglo-Saxon ancestry have become. Nearly all those who participated in this study expressed that they were constantly reminded of their visible difference and led to understand that they could not be Canadian *because* they were black, contrary to the claims of Canada being a multicultural nation.

This chapter explores the central dynamic of this study which is the simultaneous belonging and non-belonging that is foundational to the creation of a diaspora. As previous chapters have proposed, the memory of the extreme violence of the genocide has been mobilized by the new state to generate a diaspora. However, this process would not be possible without an ambivalent welcome in the new homeland. If those who identified as Rwandans living in the GTA had found belonging and acceptance in their new homeland, then they would not long for the imagined homeland so acutely. In offering a conditional welcome, the Canadian state contributed to the creation of the diaspora. The analysis begins by exploring the micro politics of

identity construction in the GTA and the subtle ways in which those who are racialized as black are excluded from belonging. It then explicitly addresses the ways in which individuals are racialized as black, and concludes with the economic effects of these micro politics.

### ***Multiculturalism***

Contemporary Canada is oft cited as one of the successful examples of multiculturalism as an ethic and a practice (Kymlicka 2012). It is held up as an example (albeit an imperfect one), for states struggling with their own “ethnic/cultural” conflicts. Racialization, racism and exclusion, though they are acknowledged, are assumed to be anomalies, or failures of multiculturalism, rather than inherent components of this state discourse. Canadian multiculturalism, enacted in 1971 and enshrined in the 1988 *Multicultural Act* and underwritten by the 1982 *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Puplampu and Tettey 2005; Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002), has become one of the central myths of the contemporary Canadian nation. It is officially premised upon the central idea that ethnic minorities, historically excluded from the narratives of the nation, are now included. According to the initial formulations of the policy, it “gave explicit recognition at the federal level to Canadians whose origin was non-French, non-British and non-Aboriginal. Thus the policy served to reconfigure expressions of ‘Canadian identity’ in a way that was inclusive of ethnocultural and racial minorities” (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002, 105). In contemporary parlance, the language has shifted somewhat from ‘ethnic minorities’ to ‘visible minorities’ which, according to the *Employment Equity Act* of 1986, means the following: “Chinese, South Asians, Blacks, Arabs, West Asians, Filipinos, Southeast

Asians, Latin Americans, Japanese, Koreans and other visible minority groups, such as Pacific Islanders” (Statistics Canada 2006).

The policies of multiculturalism panned out in the creation of, initially, a Multiculturalism Directorate within the Department of the Secretary of State, then, a Department of Multiculturalism in 1989, which was then subsumed along with other departments, into the Department of Canadian Heritage in 1993 (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002). Initially, the policy objectives were to:

- to assist cultural groups to retain and foster their identity;
- to assist cultural groups to overcome barriers to their full participation in Canadian society (thus, the multiculturalism policy advocated the full involvement and equal participation of ethnic minorities in mainstream institutions, without denying them the right to identify with select elements of their cultural past if they so chose);
- to promote creative exchanges among all Canadian cultural groups; and
- to assist immigrants in acquiring at least one of the official languages (Dewing 2013).

Concurrently to this study, as of 2008, multiculturalism has been transferred to the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, where its mandate is now to:

- support for the economic, social, and cultural integration of new Canadians and cultural communities;
- facilitation of programs that promote mentorship, volunteerism, leadership, and civic education among at-risk youth of different cultural backgrounds; and
- promotion of intercultural understanding and Canadian values (democracy, freedom, human rights and the rule of law) through community initiatives, with the objective of addressing issues of cultural social exclusion (parallel communities) and radicalization.

In 2010, it was additionally mandated to:

- to build an integrated, socially cohesive society;
- to improve the responsiveness of institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population; and
- to actively engage in discussions on multiculturalism and diversity at an international level (Dewing 2013).

As evidenced by the different articulations of Canadian Multiculturalism, it is a discourse that has evolved from a focus on institutional support for folkloric activities and the teaching of “heritage” languages (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002), to a focus on social/cultural “cohesion” and curbing of the threat of “at-risk youth” and “radicals”. The focus of both the discourse and the practices is now on explicitly controlling and managing a dangerous, potentially “radical” other. Though these policies appear to have different outcomes, they are ideologically consistent as Multiculturalism is founded on the assumption that “cultures” are things in the world and that they will inevitably come into conflict if they are not managed within a set of legal constraints. Explicitly, it presumes that those “others” listed above are the possessors of dangerous and threatening “culture”, while it assumes that the keepers of the nation, the Anglo minority, are devoid of dangerous “ethnic” culture, and only possess the civil democratic virtues of “freedom, human rights and rule of law”. As Sara Ahmed has argued, multiculturalism “posits difference as something ‘others’ bring to the nation, and as something the nation can have through how it accepts, welcomes or integrated such others” (2007, 235).

Will Kymlicka, as a foremost scholar of the contemporary phenomenon of multiculturalism, perceives this state form as both a discourse and a legally codified system which holds the potential to remedy the flaws of the Westphalian state system. He explains that:

Ethnic minorities have not fared well under the Westphalian system of sovereign ‘nation-states’. Various policies of assimilation and exclusion have been directed at minorities in the name of constructing homogenous nation-states, and the international community has historically turned a blind eye to these injustices. Today, however, there is a growing commitment to remedy this situation, and it is increasingly accepted that the treatment of minorities is a matter of legitimate international concern, and should be subject to international norms and standards. At a minimum, these evolving standards set the limits on the means that Westphalian nation-states can use to pursue their visions of national homogenization. But these norms also, implicitly at least, offer an alternative vision to the Westphalian state, one with views diversity as an enduring reality and defining feature of the polity, and which views tolerance as a core value (2007, 5).

While Kymlicka recognizes the many shortcomings of Canadian multiculturalism, he nonetheless optimistically perceives this institutional form as the appropriate container for the diversity of the nation. His optimistic account of multicultural states imagines a state system that is based on diversity as a central ethic, and thus works to mitigate exclusion and marginalization. Yet, despite its recognition of diversity, the inherent assumption that ethnicities/races exist as things in the world, rather than as ways of seeing, ascribes perpetual difference to those who do not fit the imagined nation. They become the eternal others who must be tolerated, whose day to day practices are inherently and troublingly different and whose “culture” is ossified as the counter to white/Anglo culture. The practice of multiculturalism holds within it the seeds of reactionary politics as those who are perceived to be the keepers of the nation—in Canada’s case the Anglo-Saxon minority—are called upon to learn to tolerate the sometimes intolerable difference of the ethnic/racial other, yet they also retain the ability to reject the other. They possess the “power and control to decide who the newcomers should be” while the “others” “have to demonstrate their worth in order to gain entry and earn their place in the receiving society” (Li 2003, 10). In times of economic and political crisis, as the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century have proven to be, the “immigrant”, the “foreigner”, the eternal “other”, can be called upon as the lamb to sacrifice on the altar of the nation state. It is no accident that during these decades the rallying cry of the increasingly more powerful right wing in Western democracies has been to limit or completely reduce immigration. Thus, immigration, used as a code, becomes “a euphemistic expression for racist labour and citizenship policies” (Bannerji 2000, 4). As Peter S. Li has articulated, a folk understanding of “immigrant” associates it with “people of colour who come from ‘Third World’ countries, who do not speak fluent English and who occupy lower positions in the occupational hierarchy [...] skin colour is the basis of social

marking [...] the term *immigrants* also implies undesirable newcomers who are too culturally and racially removed from mainstream Canadians of European culture” (2003, 44-5). When the code word “immigrant” or “foreigner” is raised, the conflict framed by political elites as ethno-cultural, is in fact conflict about ever dwindling resources and the imagined threat that new others pose to future scarce resources.

Yet, there are other potentials within the idea of multiculturalism; among them is the potential to understand the nation as the socio-legal frame for a plurality. Here, I intentionally use the term plurality as opposed to diversity to distinguish between the narrative of multiple cultures bent on conflict, as opposed to a recognition of many forms of difference at many junctures. Indeed, “diversity has become a codified concept to refer to unbridgeable differences of people and to injurious consequences that such differences have created” (Li 2003, 125) in both popular/folk discourses and state discourses. Thus, in my understanding, plurality recognises that nation, ethnicity and race are ways of seeing, not things in the world, and thus aims to avoid reifying them by recognizing the inherent fractures, breaks, and overlap between them, as well as the moments when they do not define or determine one’s identity. Plurality further recognises other pivotal components of identity: class, age, gender, sexuality, ability, religion, etc. This interpretation echoes Bannerji’s liberatory notion of multiculturalism as speaking to “multiplicities of tradition and power relations between them, marking the internal power-inscribed differences within the space of the nation [...leaving] behind the Weberian paradigm of tradition-modernity and a facile post-colonialism which threatens to become a form of culturalism” (2000, 5). Yet, despite the potentials within the ideas of multiculturalism, the form it takes in the Canadian nation state is one that “construct[s] and ascribe[s] political subjectivities and agencies for those who are seen as legitimate and full citizens and others who



are peripheral to this in many senses. There is in this process an element of racialized ethnicization, which whitens North Americans of European origins and blackens or darkens their ‘others’ by the same stroke” (Bannerji 2000, 6). Multiculturalism in Canada, it seems, has not offered the promised welcome to the newly included members of the nation.

Multiculturalism, as both discourse and policy, has changed its face over its 40 years of existence, as the earlier discussion of the changes to the legislation indicated. Even as multiculturalism had been declared a failed project in many European states, including Britain, France and Germany during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it persists in Canada, finding relatively little opposition (Sucharov 2013). As Elke Winter proposes, multiculturalism in Canada in the 1990s “acquired a different meaning, from a seemingly group rights based approach to a much stronger and openly acknowledged emphasis on individual choice. This reduced multiculturalism’s imputed divisiveness and rendered it socially acceptable, even to many of its critics” (2014, 141).

With the emergence of a new post-9/11 global order, the same order that rendered the idea of multiculturalism defunct in Europe, Canadian multiculturalism also changed; however, now it shifted further from a neo-liberal focus on individual choice to what Winter terms “republicanism”, namely, grounding the idea of multiculturalism on the foundation of “English-Canadian values and institutions” (2014, 143). The new policy direction that the state has taken since 2006 illustrates this new (and old) ideology through the publication of a new guide for migrants in 2009 entitled “Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship”. The guide begins by affirming the centrality of the British monarchy over the symbols of civic nationalism: “In Canada, we profess our loyalty to a person who represents all Canadians and not to a document such as a constitution, a banner such as a flag, or a geopolitical entity such as a

country. In our constitutional monarchy, these elements are encompassed by the Sovereign (Queen or King)” (Canada 2009, 2). Under this new policy direction, the monarchy has become the new symbol of the Canadian nation, as the navy and air force became, once again, “royal”, and all embassies and missions were requested to hang a portrait of the queen (Winter 2014, 143). The citizenship guide also affirms that “serving in the regular Canadian Forces (navy, army and air force) is a noble way to contribute to Canada and an excellent career choice”, while also perpetuating Islamophobia by emphasizing that “Canada’s openness and generosity do not extend to barbaric cultural practices that tolerate spousal abuse, “honour killings,” female genital mutilation, forced marriage or other gender-based violence” (Canada 2009, 9). As the second decade of 21<sup>st</sup> century got underway, multiculturalism, which, as Bannerji and other post-colonial scholars have argued, posited white Anglo-Saxon culture as dominant, is now “officially identified with British traditions, values, and institutions such as the monarchy” (Winter 2015, 651), and has staked out Muslims as the new and threatening other. Yet, even as new forms of virulent and violent racialization mark Muslims in particular, the old forms of racialization remain intact, and blackness, as embodied by those who identified as Rwandan, largely remains outside the imagination of the nation.

### ***Loving the Hostland/Homeland***

Those who identified as Rwandan in the GTA, though they were well aware of their position outside the imagination of what constituted Canada, nonetheless insisted that though they may encounter resistance and an emotional/cognitive distance from the keepers of the nation, they felt that they belonged and often explicitly stated that they preferred to live in

Canada over any other country. Many went so far as to refuse to criticize the society that had granted them ambiguous welcome precisely because it was a kind of welcome. In setting out to conduct this study, I expected to encounter many stories of day to day racialization and reminders of difference among those who identified as Rwandese. I did hear these stories, but I also heard, emphatically, that though there were struggles—economic, social, individual—the Canadian state and the society it represents had offered this community a far better home than they had encountered elsewhere and that the community has thrived here as it has not been able to do elsewhere. Thus, in offering my analysis of what it means to be a Rwandan in the GTA and to contend with discourses of multiculturalism while faced with racialization, I must begin with how those whom I am speaking alongside perceive their new hostland/homeland.

Very many of the participants in this study insisted on the fact that they felt that they belonged in Canada and that Canada had become a very good home to them. While often these same participants would later in the interview discuss instances of racialization and marginalization, they remained insistent that these moments did not challenge their place within the nation. Initially, I thought that perhaps this insistence was due to my outsider status and the fact that I appear to represent the dominant culture in Canada. However, as I gained trust in the community and many came to perceive me as an ally, the narrative did not change. Of course, I remained an outsider, and thus my outsider status comes to bear in my interpretation of this dynamic. The apparent contradiction is difficult to reconcile within the theoretical frameworks that exist as the state is read as *either* accepting *or* as exclusionary. Yet, I had to hear what the participants were saying, and thus accept the contradiction. Though this insistence does not fit the paradigms I was equipped with, it does demonstrate the degree to which ethnicity, race and nation are ways of seeing as my participants were capable of seeing themselves in multiple ways.

Thus when they expressed a love of “Canada” while describing instances of explicit racism, they were expressing the dynamic and contradictory experience of both belonging and not belonging. They were articulating the paradox of simultaneously building a home and becoming a diaspora.

In the participants’ accounts there emerged three central narratives about belonging in Canada. The first of these was an unequivocal statement that Canada was great/good/best, the second was that Canada was a much better home than other, especially European, states, and finally that Canada was preferable to Rwanda because it afforded basic civil liberties. Janvier very emphatically repeated that “Canada, is one of the best countries in the entire world [...] It’s a place that has really blessed me, blessed my family, [...] and I have kind of integrated so well.” Like most of the participants, he mentioned incidences of racialization, which I will discuss in greater detail later, but he was insistent that Canada as a state/society had offered him welcome and economic opportunities. He was eager to demonstrate his national pride and his ability to contribute to the society, as he recounted that one of his children was an army cadet, suggesting the child’s potential willingness to serve in the military in the future. This paternal boast demonstrates both Janvier’s desire to be seen as a contributing member of his new host/homeland, as well as his pride in socializing his children to do the same. Theodore likewise avowed his appreciation and sense of belonging:

[I know] Both sides, French side, English side, so I know this country. It was a really good experience because I came to this country because I want to come, you know? Until today I don’t regret being in Canada, I love it. It is good, there’s a lot of opportunities, a lot of friends, and you know, if you have a dream, you can realize it, do whatever you want to do. You have to work hard as everybody they are doing. I had a chance to go to school, study what I was dreaming to do, I’m working what I was dreaming to work, you know?

Both these men point to two dynamics of their belonging—that ‘Canada’ afforded them blessings/opportunities and that they took advantage of those blessings/opportunities. They focus

on both the external conditions and institutional structures that enable new migrants to pursue education, find employment and establish themselves, as well as the individual agency and fortitude required initially to migrate and then to fight for one's belonging. Pierre also pointed to these two factors as he explained that:

After the war I sent all my kids here to study. Because the barrier was open and it was better to send kids here to study, because at that time Rwanda was not good, after the war. Many people send their kids outside, me I would prefer Canada. Canada is the best country, the best! Before Rwanda was the best, it was paradise, now no more. It's better in Canada, I sent everybody here. And when you are old, its better you live with your kids. My wife and me we are now Canadian and have the whole family here.

Pierre's account also emphasizes the external/state opportunities, as the phrase "the barrier was open" indicates that the Canadian state was receiving refugees and migrants from Rwanda; it also emphasizes his agency, by pointing out that while others sent their children elsewhere, he chose Canada. These articulations of pride and belonging are not empty rhetorical gestures, but, rather, recognition of both the opportunities that had been denied elsewhere as well as the agency of the speaker in migrating. These are badges of belonging as the speakers are insisting on their part in the dialogical relationship between state and citizen. They are asserting their individual agency in the face of larger state structures, such as immigration policies, and claiming their place of belonging.

Other respondents likewise expressed their sense of belonging, but it was mediated by the memory of exclusion and marginalization elsewhere. Fidèle, having lived in Europe in the early to mid-1990s, expressly contrasted Canadian multiculturalism with continental European monoculturalism. He explained: "The racism. It's very, very high in Europe. I think because Canada is a multicultural country, everyone comes from somewhere else too... You don't have any limits in Canada. That's why I love Canada." Unlike the earlier accounts of affection and pride, Fidèle's account expresses "love" for Canada based upon the contrast between his day to day

experiences in Europe and those in Canada. The sense of contemporary belonging and “love” is rooted in the negative memories of exclusion and outright racism in his previous hostlands, rather than in any positive attributes of Canada. While many participants used the language of “love” in speaking of their affective response to the idea of Canada and their experiences in it, it seemed to embody a broad range of emotional responses encompassing pride, attachment, fondness, contentment, appreciation and gratitude. Georges, in his account, expressed a muted appreciation as he contrasted his experiences in Germany to his experiences in Canada:

Then I came here, I applied to come to Canada, I had different options, I chose Canada. I think it was a good choice. Far from Africa, compared to others, but... And after 3 months I found my first job, and I'm still there today.[...] I used to live in Germany, you don't see like a lot of people from different nationalities, and then, you're at the airport [in Toronto], you see like, Indian, Black immigration officers—it's different. From the beginning, from the airport, you can see it's different. [...]Umm, hmmm, I belong to Canada, I have no choice now. It's different when people come here, as an immigrant, voluntary, but I came here as a refugee. I had no options.

Georges' narrative embodies the ambiguity of belonging/non-belonging. As a refugee who cannot return to Rwanda, he has “no options”, thus he must, if he is to make a life and establish a world for himself and his family, come to terms with the nation that he has made his home. Those terms are not glowing, rapturous words of “love” or “greatness”, but rather a quiet appreciation for the fact that the institutionally inscribed multiculturalism bears itself out in the visibility of non-white people in civil service positions. Yet, his narrative also points out his agency in the process as he emphasizes that he rapidly found work and has continued to work for the same organization for well over a decade. This points to his ability to make himself valuable as a worker/employee. In a neo-liberal society where only those who work in the formal labour market are deemed deserving of full citizenship, Georges is thus asserting his worth and merit, thus his deservedness of full citizenship.

The third narrative of attachment or belonging that emerged was an explicit appreciation for the civil liberties that are constitutionally enshrined in Canada but not afforded in the remembered homeland. In these accounts, the affective attachment was rooted in the individual possibilities that civil liberties afford. Thus, Bernard explained that he was attached to the idea of Canada because:

first of all the rights of the people, its different than in Rwanda—people have their rights to speak—freedom of speech, right? It’s totally different back home, in Africa in general, but the right to right to speech.... I’m a Canadian, I’m proud of it. Yeah. Whenever I go with a Canadian passport, I feel I’m proud so, yeah, I love it. Even if you pass on the airport you feel okay. So many people they don’t have that opportunity to be Canadian, I get it. I’m really proud. Actually, I’m proud of being Canadian, being Rwandan-Canadian, I’m proud of it.

Here the emphasis is less on the institutional opportunities or advantages, and more explicitly stated as a sense of relief. The narrative of pride is based on the fact that the speaker no longer has to fear saying the wrong thing or being detained illegally. Jean likewise expressed his appreciation of this dynamic thus: “I haven’t been to other countries where I am so accepted, [...] you can do anything, as long as you are, you know, you are doing your own thing, not doing bad things like, you know, you are not breaking the law, you know? But here you can work, you can study, you can do business, you can start a church like this one, you know, you can do anything.” These accounts do not negate that there is racialization, racism and exclusion, but they express that these exclusions are mediated by the perceived rule of law and equality before the law. Christophe, having spent his whole life in Rwanda, expressed his approval of:

a good country that respects human rights, so I mean also the freedom of expression where you cannot see politicians, I was going to say politicians who are not in tension, but there is a tension among politicians everywhere, but here, Canada, is one of the first world countries, you know, like to take me back to what I was saying, diversity. Diversity in the sense of ideas, where you have people from a different political party, but they still sit together in the parliament and discuss the issues that constitute the interests, the interests of all Canadians, but I don’t think we have reached that point, of course this is in

comparison with where I came from, Africa, generally speaking, where, uhh, the opposition is regarded as a threat to the government, not an asset. So this is different here, so the opposition actually is, let's say the opposition leader is someone who is very, a VIP, who the government has an obligation to take care of. So that's where, that's how I see Canada, a country of great opportunity, a country that everybody who would wish to come.

This explanation seems laudatory of Canadian political institutions, but in fact reveals the speaker's disappointment that his remembered homeland has not "reached that point". More explicitly so, Olivia frames her emotional response to "Canada" in terms of her experiences in Rwanda as:

I came here as a stranger, I came here a different colour, I came here as completely different. I wouldn't be surprised if someone discriminates me, because I've been discriminated by my own people anyways. I grew up where I couldn't access public school, I couldn't access good public jobs, I couldn't access anything. My parents struggled to pay my private schooling, because Tutsis weren't allowed to go to public school. So, it would hurt me less, if a white person, or a person of another colour discriminates me because I was discriminated with my own people, so.

Her response is a wary expectation of harm because she had been socialized to extreme exclusion. Her account also offers a clue into how the other participants can express love for a nation-state that offers them a mediated and often partial sense of belonging. The long habituation to a repressive state system and highly exclusionary politics impart a rosy glow onto Canada, yet the participants in this study were not unaware of the contradictions inherent in their welcome.

Beyond asserting their worth to be citizens, in speaking of "love" for Canada, the participants in this study were also responding to the newest articulations of the multiculturalism discourse, as many expressed an awareness that they are perceived as potentially dangerous outsiders, as subsequent sections will demonstrate. As of 1997/8, the federal government reframed the focus of multicultural policy to "fostering a society that recognizes, respects, and reflects a diversity of cultures such that people from all backgrounds feel a sense of belonging



and attachment to Canada” (Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002, 113). This re-articulation, with its focus on “attachment to Canada” was a response to emerging (unsubstantiated) criticisms that multiculturalism was weakening national unity. These critiques have only proliferated in the 2000s, and new migrants cannot help but be aware of the insistence that their first allegiance be to their new homeland, otherwise they are perceived as acting in a divisive manner. Indeed, one needs only to read the majority of comments under any news article addressing migrants in Canada to understand that migrants are to assimilate and be grateful. Thus, when my participants insisted upon their “love” for Canada, they were both expressing a genuine affective response, as well as responding to a discourse which posits them as deviant if they fail to make this assertion. They risk being perceived as “radical” and their youth as “at risk” if they fail to clearly articulate their attachment to the new homeland. As perpetual others, they are well aware of the scrutiny that they are under. Despite a changing political culture in the post-9/11 Canada, I do not need to assert “love” for Canada, as it is assumed by any interlocutors that I feel affection and attachment to my homeland (even if that were not true), but a racialized group like Rwandan migrants must abide by the public script, or risk facing outright hostility and having their place in the nation questioned and possibly revoked.

### ***The Role of Migration Stories in Creating a Shared Narrative***

The decision to leave one’s homeland, even in the midst of violence and the threat of imminent death, is never an easy one. One faces unknown languages, cultures, isolation from one’s friends and family, the possibility of personal and financial defeat, psychological stress and anxiety, marginalization in the new host society... Yet, for the participants in this study, the

decision to leave, and the decision to choose Canada as a new home, granted them a sense of safety and security. This point was repeated often, as a statement of fact. Diane's unequivocal claim that "When I came, I felt peace and protected" exemplifies the degree to which a sense of day to day insecurity was a motivating factor and the concomitant relief that settling in Canada provided. The sense of security usually refers to physical integrity, as Olivia explained that:

I wasn't given any other choices, it was the first choice which presented to me, so uhh, but I think it would be my first choice, but at that time, I did not have many choices, I had to save myself because I was going to the point where I wasn't doing really well with the post-traumatic disorder, and then you're being revictimized and you're facing these people who were trying to kill you, you have these nightmares every day, and they are writing you notes saying hey we're gonna kill you anyways, blah, blah blah. [takes a deep breath] It was very difficult, so I did not have much choice to stay.

Others understood the idea of security more broadly when they pointed out that migrating and settling in Canada ensured that they no longer had to worry if they would have enough to eat the next day. Jean-Paul explained that he was "looking for greener pastures, I guess, I was trying to see if I could get a place where my life is assured, I have safety for living, I have cash for tomorrow, I know what I will eat the next week or whatever, like, yeah. That kind of thing I was looking for, some better kind of life." Like other migrants who flee violence, those who migrated from Rwanda to Canada did so to find a peaceful home. Yet, also like others, they wanted to ensure themselves and their families a better future with greater economic opportunities.

The decision to leave was not an easy one for any of the participants who discussed it at length, but the choice to migrate to Canada, provided that they had a choice, seems to have been more straightforward. Jean explained that "I chose Canada because, as I said, I was a refugee for more than 10 years, and I didn't have any, you know, acceptance in the country where I was, even though I was in Africa, but I was not accepted as one of them. But here, in just three years I was able to be a citizen, to study, to work, to contribute to the Canadian society." Others,

especially those who migrated in the 1980s, stated that Canada was the only country willing to accept them as refugees. Implicit in this is both an expression of gratitude that there was a place for them in Canada, as well as a condemnation of the African states that denied citizenship to refugees. Those who expressed their status claims in this manner were calling upon a cosmopolitan narrative of universal human rights and the fundamental human need for dignity. Yet, even as they used a rights discourse, they still expressed heartfelt gratitude for entry to Canada. In the midst of a long discussion of the structural and institutional racism in Canadian immigration policy and multiculturalism, Olivia expressed that “I don’t even know how to express my gratitude to this nation.” The gratitude expressed here is genuine, and I do not wish to challenge its expression, yet the fact that so many participants expressed gratitude for being granted basic civil liberties and some basic social rights speaks to the fact that human rights are rarely understood as rights. Those who perceive themselves to be in a position to grant these rights understand them as a set of liberties that can be as easily revoked. Likewise, those who are the beneficiaries of these rights also know very well how tangential and uncertain they can be. Though these migrants chose Canada as their destination, they are also perpetually aware of the need to *not* express entitlement to precisely those rights that, as citizens, they ought to be entitled.

The initial shock of arriving in Canada was often expressed in the trope of one’s response to the weather in Canada. Very many, though not all, participants explained that they had never seen snow before arriving in Canada and they ruefully recounted their shock and awkward attempts to cope. “But when it came to September, October, by that time, it was snow, it was my first time to see snow, you know? And it meant I could go out and start catching, you know, picking it up, the snow, the whole thing, I was falling down, I slip, I didn’t know what to do”

(Jean). André explained that the first winter was “very dramatic” as there were only two other Rwandans that he could find, but for a long time he saw no other blacks. That first winter he did not know how to cope with weather as he overdressed and nearly passed out from heat exhaustion indoors. He fondly recalled the vision of “Two black men walking like they are on the moon” in order to not fall on the ice. Others recalled arriving in the summer and being stunned by the heat and humidity. One participant was settled in Windsor where he recalled that it was “very hot, humid, very humid”, as Windsor tends to be in June. He began job searching wearing a “nice tie even when it is so hot.” In recalling this story he laughed at the younger version of himself who insisted on wearing a suit and tie in the midst of a Windsor summer, “sweating in Canada like crazy!” Simon also recounted a weather tale:

I remember when the plane was landing, I started panicking, because I never saw snow before. And I’m looking down, it was completely, white, I thought it was water. And people, I look at them, they are laughing, talking, and for me, I was so nervous—I’m wondering what’s happening, are we landing on a lake. I couldn’t take it, I had to talk to someone. I said “what’s going on?” “Why?” “We are landing on water!” “It’s not water, it’s snow” [laughs].

These stories, fashioned into humorous anecdotes, bore the mark of many re-tellings. They had clearly been shared with many a friend and family member and had taken on a quality of myth. These (tall?) tales were these individuals’ personal pieces of Canadiana. They too were markers of belonging, because, after all, which Canadian does not have a story or two of extreme weather?

Yet, alongside these claims of belonging, were narratives of alienation, isolation and individual struggle in the face of a new culture and society. Migration is never easy, but the stress and challenges that it poses can be magnified or diminished, depending on the conditions that one encounters upon arrival. Many of the participants in this study expressed their loneliness in the months and years following migration. Jean, who above expressed his appreciation for the

life that he had been able to build, explained that he faced “culture shock” when he migrated. New climate, new foods, and new language often amount to what has been ambiguously termed “culture shock”. One’s psychological and emotional classificatory systems are inadequate to fully apprehend and explain the unusual, uncomfortable, new world. Yet, there is a particularity to Jean’s “culture shock” which does not fit a universal account of migration. He moved to Alberta and “it was hard because at that time that was when I still needed, I was feeling homesick, you know, I wanted to go, because there at that time, no Rwandese community there. Very few Africans, I remember I used to pass in the street one in Calgary, there, you know, as an African, we would greet each other without knowing each other” (Jean). He traveled to visit Toronto and “I found it was quite different, I found people of different culture, people of different background, people from Rwanda, Burundi, so I felt here, even when I came from Calgary, I told my friends there that I’m coming to Toronto to visit, just to visit then I will go back, but when I arrived here, that’s when I saw my people, I said I’m not going back” (Jean). Those whom Jean identified as “my people” were those who likewise identified as Rwandan or Burundian, those who shared a national cosmology and a language, yet, they were complete strangers.

André likewise recounted initially settling in Edmonton and feeling lost and alone, seeking out the few black faces in the crowds, but, when he travelled to Toronto to visit an acquaintance, he found that “there were Africans” and chose to settle in Toronto. The significance of both these narratives is that both men settled in the late 1980s and early 1990s in Western Canada, which, until the latter 1990s, did not have significant groups of African migrants. Both men expressed a sense of relief at finding greater numbers of African migrants in the GTA. It is most useful to contrast these accounts with the account of Richard, who initially

settled in a small town in New Brunswick. There, in a small community of about “eleven thousand very warm people,” Richard felt welcomed and included. Even though there were only 2 black men (himself included) in the town, he expressed that “I wish the economy wasn’t so bad—really I would not have moved to Toronto” (Richard). When I asked if moving to New Brunswick from Africa was a culture shock, he replied that it “Was not! Surprising, and again, because of the travelling you do, I did, rather, anyone who travels will testify to this—you learn to adjust, you learn to accommodate, actually take people and learn from where you are at” (Richard). All three men settled in cities that had small numbers of those racialized as black, but only two of the three felt this as isolating and marginalizing. Richard’s recollection that the people of his new town were warm and welcoming stands in stark contrast to the accounts of culture shock above. It appears that the shock was less about confronting unfamiliar environments, and more about how the people in those new environments classified and categorized these newcomers. Indeed, André explicitly stated that the isolation from Canadian society knit the Rwandese diaspora closer together.

Very many in the Rwandese diaspora community in the GTA expressed the common theme of facing depression in the first few years after migration. Bernard recalled that “When I came, I feel like going back home. The first year was very hard. Very, very hard. Stressful, I got depressed, to interact, to integrate, it was so hard, so hard. It takes time, it takes time... but still, I had my family, I had my sister, I had my cousins, I had my aunt, a big number of people, but I felt it.” Likewise, Janvier expressed that in the first six months “I felt so low and I wanted to leave this country”. Olivia explained the causes of the depression among so many new migrants thus:

You go there, there’s many losses, you come from a country where you’re somebody and you come here you’re absolutely nobody. It does something, psychologically, and, and

besides, you are traumatized from what you went through, so now you have to manage all those losses, you lost family, you lost your properties, now you're losing your country, but where you're going, umm, you, you losing identity altogether [...] And I can tell you that by the time a newcomer comes here, especially those who come here as refugees, by the time you go through your immigration process and this and that, by the time you get a job, by the time you do this, five years later you, you're done. The ambition you came with, depression, guilt of being a loser, because you came here with these ambitions—to go to school, to do this, to go to work, to make money and to contribute to society, but then you meet all the systemic barriers in terms of not being able to go to school because you don't have your immigration papers yet, and not being able to hold a job in your career because no one, your, your, your diploma or credentials are not accepted here, but there's less willingness or services to upgrade your credentials, also if you are willing to do so. So there's so many barriers, by the time you spend five years here, low income, no job, or, or, or, labour, or trade, or low, whatever it is, whatever the situation is, and disconnection from your community, you, you, you're basically not productive as you would, would have done, if your integration has been done in a very nice way (Olivia).

Olivia explicitly pointed out the institutional barriers faced by new migrants as the causes of both psychological stress and depression, as well as a loss of actual productivity. In this analysis, the very system that is ostensibly designed to integrate newcomers in order to spur economic growth has the outcome of marginalizing them and reducing their productivity due to an overall decline in health. Olivia's observations affirm what many scholars have reported about new migrants. As Bierman, Ahmad and Mawani report, new migrants “have better than average health on arrival”, but, over time, immigrants with non-European origins “were more likely to report a change from good, very good or excellent health to fair or poor health” (2009, 112). Precisely as Olivia observed, individual factors such as exposure to violence and traumatic events, as well as community factors such as discrimination, lack of recognition of credentials, and social dependence all play a role in affecting new migrants' health outcomes for the worse (Bierman et al. 2009, 112-120).

Another significant factor in the well-being of new migrants is their access, or lack thereof, to their own families. Many families have to deal with extensive periods of separation due to the increased difficulty in sponsoring family under Canada's immigration policies. As

Peter S. Li has demonstrated, “there is no doubt that the government places a higher premium on independent or economic immigrants because they are deemed to bring a greater economic value to Canada than those admitted under family class or the refugee class” (2003, 43). As a consequence, it has become increasingly difficult to sponsor family members in the family-class, leaving many families in limbo for years. Grace’s children were adolescents at the time of her migration as a refugee to Canada. Since then, they have grown into adults, but she has been unable to witness this as “it is not easy to bring them because to sponsor them, it is not easy” (Grace). Her separation from the children was a significant burden for her as she had to choose between raising them and supplying herself with anti-retroviral medications. Her choice, which was really not much of a choice, meant that she could not see her children as her new homeland, which had assured her physical well-being, denied her psychological and emotional well-being by not enabling her to sponsor her children.

Those who wished to have their family visit them in Canada faced increased scrutiny as African visa applicants are very commonly denied, more so than other groups, based on anecdotal evidence (Tettey and Puplampu 2005, 35). A 2009 internal Canada Border Services report warned that Canada could face increasing numbers of African migrants as the European Union had stepped up its policing of African migrants who will “take advantage of generous social programs and a ‘sympathetic’ refugee processing system” (O’Neil 2009). This fear has a long history in Canada’s immigration policies, which are still “neo-racist” and thus defined by the following features: “constrained access to immigration officers and difficulties with application procedures in certain countries; an attempt to link crime with immigration, and by extension, an entire ethnic group; labour market segmentation in which the ethnics occupy the bottom rungs of wages and benefits, despite their qualifications and skills” (Tettey and Puplampu



2005, 33). As of 1998 there were only 8 Immigration Offices on the whole continent of Africa; since then the numbers have increased to 20 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada), but potential migrants must still face the stereotypical view among Canadian immigration officials that all Africans are economic refugees and potential burdens on the social safety net (Tetty and Pupilampu 2005, 34). This racial profiling leads to high rates of rejection of visitor visas for Africans. In 2010 a Halifax-based African aid group was denied travel visas for eight of their African colleagues to travel to Canada to attend and teach at a conference. Despite letters from MPs, assurances that the Gambians in question have families and jobs in Gambia, then Immigration Minister Jason Kenney denied their request on the grounds of fears of illegal migrants (Foot 2010). Among the Rwandan diaspora in the GTA this relatively higher risk of denial of entry means that attempting to have a family member visit bears a very high emotional, psychological and financial cost. Revocata explained that she had witnessed how easily migrants from other regions were able to attain visas for their loved ones, and that her difficulty in attaining the same reminded her that she did not belong and that her family was viewed as a threat, not as welcome tourists.

### ***Keeping Families Together***

The families that had been able to sponsor loved ones, especially elderly parents, encountered new obstacles. Elderly community members often ended up very isolated as they lacked daily interaction with anyone outside of their nuclear families. Those families, despite their best efforts, could not offer sufficient interaction as usually both heads of the family worked and any children/grandchildren spent most of their days at school, leaving the elderly

parent/grandparent alone for most of the day. This contrasted sharply with the remembered experiences of “back home”. Many participants expressed that one of the things that they missed most about life in Rwanda was the close community bonds. As Christophe explained, back home, neighbours and friends “just drop in, they don’t have to ask you, so... how are you, how was your day? You know you have that, that, that connection to people around 24 hours seven” (Christophe). While in the GTA, “emotionally, it’s challenging because you live here by yourself [...] You go near your home, you do what you have to do, you watch T.V., you go to bed, so, but back home it’s not like that” (Christophe). Olivia agreed with this sentiment and articulated that “sometimes I feel like it’s not pleasant to be a senior in this country [laughs self-consciously], as much as I support them and I try my best, they live in isolation and back home I know social life is more, people are more close, communities more close.” The new social norms of greater individual autonomy coupled with the geographic dispersal of those who identified as Rwandan in the GTA led to very little social interaction for elderly community members. The diaspora community in the GTA had attempted to remedy this situation by hosting social events in an effort to “cater to our older parents because they lose that social connection” (Angelina). Despite these efforts, the day to day lives of the elderly parents in the community were marked with isolation and marginalization due to a lack of services directed at elderly migrants. The anxiety about the treatment of senior citizens and the presumed more favorable conditions in Rwanda mirror attitudes held by other African migrant groups. Tettey and Pupilampu, in their extensive study of the new African diaspora in Canada, also found that many African-Canadians contrast:

the perceived anomie and loneliness of old age in Canada, in general, with the imagined emotional succor that elderly people in Africa enjoy through the constant flow of interactions with friends and extended family. It is worth acknowledging that the reality in Africa is slowly shifting away from this ideal, nostalgic image ingrained in people’s minds as modernity creates changes in African social structures, and as families begin to experience trends similar to what these African-Canadians are worried about (2005, 154).

Thus, even as families struggled to meet the complex needs of elderly parents, the remembered homeland was, in this regard, increasingly a fiction, especially since in many of the cases the reason that the family sought to sponsor their elderly parents was because there was no longer an extended family to care for them in Rwanda.

### ***Raising Children in the Host/Homeland***

Another unanticipated challenge that those who identified as Rwandan faced in Canada was the loss of the extended family to share child-rearing responsibility. Gillian Creese, in her study of the new African diaspora in Vancouver (2011), found that many of those who identified as African also lamented the new challenges in raising their children. As Creese recounts, the mythical idealized African family offered childcare, social connection and moral training. In Canada, new migrants argued that the lack of the extended family “can make the family very dysfunctional” (Interview quoted in Creese 2011, 152), and intensified the child-rearing responsibilities of the conjugal family, thus adding new stressors. These new stressors were borne largely by women who:

experienced the brunt of increased parenting duties and other domestic work in Vancouver, as well as new forms of isolation in the absence of a more communal environment in which to accomplish these tasks. Isolation from neighbours, cooking indoors instead of outside, keeping doors locked, and always having to be physically present with youngsters were difficult aspects of women’s lives (Creese 2011, 153).

Theodosia, like the African women in Vancouver, explained that child-rearing norms in Canada posed new challenges. She clarified that: “I think it’s busy with most of the parents, especially here where you don’t have like, umm, a, family looking after your kids. Like back home, that’s one thing I actually enjoy. Back home I have family looking after kids, you are able to go out, to

have your social life, but here it's not easy" (Theodosia). Coping with a double work day, as well as being the sole caregivers to children, causes significant stress for parents, especially among those who belonged to the middle class in Rwanda where they could afford domestic help, along with child care from relatives.

Beyond the loss of class-based privilege, the absence of an extended family means that the conjugal family is wholly responsible for language and cultural training as well. As many in the study sheepishly admitted, they tried to teach their children Kinyarwanda, but English ended up being the language most commonly spoken in the home because it was the children's first language and "When I want things to go faster, I speak in English" (Theodosia). The parents often recognized that the children were struggling balancing being simultaneously Canadian and Rwandan. Angelina explained this tension in the home thus:

My children, as opposed to me, they are born here. They are really true true Canadians, right? They don't even have the minor accent, like we have. They feel truly, strongly Canadians. They even tell, us as parents, they tell "I'm Canadian—you guys came from Rwanda..." It's like we're divided. It's how they're socialized, I guess. They think of themselves as more Canadian than us because we speak a different language in our household, and we blend in the two cultures [...] When we went with them this summer to Rwanda, they seemed lost. Once they don't speak the language, the culture is even weird to them (Angelina).

Bernard identified the same dynamic when he articulated that:

I speak Kinyarwanda, but his mom is fluent in English, you know? She talks in English, she studied here, but I try, because when kids go back home, because sometime they will want to see where their fathers are from, and they find it very hard to know what people are talking about, they are the odd man out—they don't even understand what's going on. For example, we used to have like a dance here. But if we meet we speak totally Kinyarwanda. So the kids, they find themselves out of the community (Bernard).

The parents in these cases expressed an internal struggle as they wished for their children to have the rights of full citizenship and the concomitant sense of belonging in their new home, but they also feared that the new home might prove unwelcoming and the children would need to have a

back-up plan, so to speak. Angelina explained that “we worry about them, having to face some barriers, if things don’t change. You hope for the best, but they could be there, some people are not fully, umm, fully, educated around acceptance, around different race....” Theodosia stated this point most explicitly when she argued that “If you don’t belong here and you don’t belong there, then you belong where? You are nowhere. But once you know that you belong, you have your identity as Rwandese, then it’s not gonna break your heart when people tell you those stories, you are negro, you are this, you are that, you have accent, whatever.” The children in this community, whether they were born in Canada or in Rwanda, face conflicting value systems as the ideas they are taught at school and in the playground do not neatly fit with the ideas that their parents offer. Rather than embody the easy hybridity that is often assumed of second generation migrants, these children must navigate often murky terrain between competing cultural scripts and expectations, and between competing national cosmologies that shape their day to day lives. The discussion of youth experiences from the previous chapter illustrated this dynamic as those who had grown up here felt pulled in opposing directions.

Another source of anxiety for parents in the GTA diaspora group was the perceived excessive freedoms of children. As Puplampu and Tettey have observed, “many African-Canadian families complain about the fact that they are sanctioned for bringing up their children in the *African* way which, in the uni-dimensional system defined by mainstream society, is construed as *backward* and abusive [...which] has led to a clash between Africans and Canadian state institutions” (2005, 40). Creese also observed that the pathologization of the African family “can lead to more intensive scrutiny of African immigrant families” by police or social services (2011, 151). While I did not hear of any families being directly involved with Family and Children’s Services, I did hear the fear of this state institution resonating through parents’

narratives of the struggles of raising their children. Bernard narrated a story he had heard from another parent about such an encounter:

That's mean they give them too much freedom and then you can't, there's an extent, you can't even talk to them. So there's no respect there. You see, they give them their freedom, they misuse it. Always when I got to work I visit the shops, and I was talking to a father who had two kids, his son, he used to bite him and his sister, the father got tired of this so you know what he did? He took his son and bite him so that what happened, the mother called the police [chuckles]. So many people they are concerned because they say, that's not your right, because you have to watch your kids and they say what you do is wrong. The mother said "my husband is abusing my son" she told the story and the police took him. And when they caught, they charged him, for six months he was in jail. Imagine! (Bernard)

Implicit in this narrative is the assumption that the state grants excessive rights and privileges to children, while the parents are under surveillance and are not free to parent according to their values. This is usually narratively juxtaposed against the imagined freedom that parents have in Rwanda to raise their children as they see fit. Jean also voiced this anxiety when he expressed that "the culture I grew up there is, you have to, you know, to behave like our father, your grandfather [...] But here kids are different, you know? They have to, that's what they are taught in school if your daddy does this and that to call 911 or if your parents don't do this and that report to a teacher, so, we have to be careful in the way you approach them, because they have their rights" (Jean). While this study was not focused on parenting strategies so I cannot extrapolate larger arguments from the evidence above, it is interesting to note that only fathers expressed the fear of state surveillance, while mothers' anxieties focused more on the children's capacity to cope with conflicting cultural scripts. This may be a product of the overall increased state surveillance of black male bodies, expressed in this case in a fear for their children's well-being.

Both fathers cited above also expressed trepidation about “stranger danger” and the inability of children to move around freely that it implied. Bernard explained that when he and his children visited Rwanda, the children “have freedom—they find other kids who know the city and go with them, so a sort of freedom which is not here”, which stood in stark contrast to the streets of Toronto, where “you don’t know what will happen, somebody can come take your kid.” When I pursued the point, Bernard explained that the difference lies in the fact that in Toronto “there are so many strangers around, it’s harder to befriend people, because it’s a multicultural city, people are different, totally different.” The multiculturalism that is so publicly lauded as the virtue of Toronto here is re-framed as a source of tension and anxiety. The assumption here is that one can trust those who are similar to oneself, but the cultural differences of the other are read as dangerous, especially to children. Jean also expressed a similar anxiety when he explained that “I talk to someone, you know, they fear here much, yeah like here, my kids can go to the neighbours and play with them, back in Rwanda I meant, they can go to neighbours and play with them, but here you have to always be with your kids to know where they go, to follow them, to bring them back to school, you know.” Both fathers voiced unease about state surveillance of their actions and parenting strategies, and, simultaneously, over the lack of care/attention that their children merited in public spaces, generating the perception that they may be vulnerable to violence. This exemplifies the position of racialized people in Canada—on one hand, subject to surveillance and pathologized, on the other, neglected and subjected to violence. As Rinaldo Walcott argues, “blackness in Canada is situated on a continuum that runs from invisible to hyper-visible” (2003, 44), and these two men find themselves, at different moments, on both ends.

### *Families and New Gender Regimes*

The new anxieties and stresses that migration brought were often compounded by new gender regimes in the host/homeland. Mostly women spoke of the new tensions in the nuclear family and their consequences, one of which had been the dissolution of many marriages. Olivia, a single mother of two, articulated that the loss of social and economic capital upon migration is harder for men to bear because “men lose a sense of their manhood. As a woman, you have no choice—you have to move so your children can survive here. Women are more integrated and have more opportunities and they grab at those opportunities.” Because women had been socialized to expect less from life, they were less devastated by the losses that migration brought and thus willing to take on survival jobs in order to support their families. New domestic responsibilities put added stress on the partnerships, as there was no extended family to share childrearing duties and domestic help, easily accessible to the middle-class in Rwanda, was no longer an option. Thus, women were faced with the double day and, in many instances, could not rely on their partners to help with the new pressures. Connie explained this dynamic thus:

Outside, in Rwandese culture, the women are so, they are still think, they are down the men domination. And when it mixed with Canadian culture, we have many problems in marriages. That is a big issue. So, you come from work, you go home, you have to cook, you have to clean the house, take care of the children, and the husband is there watching T.V. and you come from work. And he comes home, instead of helping you, he watch T.V., and when you talk about the T.V., when you ask him why he cannot help you—‘I’m a Rwandese man’. In Rwanda, men come from work, give the money for the stuff at home, and then sit home, watch the T.V., and you make the food for him, wash the clothes, and that’s it—he’s a king there. But many women are facing that problem, and the big problem is that they don’t talk about [it] (Connie).

Connie’s explanation, echoed by many other women, identified two key changes in the partnership. Firstly, she pointed out that Rwandese women were subject to men’s domination, even after arrival, and this dynamic was understood by Connie, and many other women in the



community, as a troubling dynamic. Olivia also expressed patriarchal domination in the household as a problem in itself when she explained that in Rwanda men often preferred less educated wives, because “when you were very educated in the country [Rwanda], you were having a hard time to getting a husband, because there is a degree that you would challenge them, you are more elite, and uh, you might not want to settle with some of the treatment that you see, so you risk of not getting married, because no one wants to go with you with a Master’s degree or with a Doctorate.” Yet, both she and Connie understand the need for women to gain an education and to participate fully in both their households and in the community. Secondly, Connie explained that the new expectations within the household were borne largely by women because the domestic tasks of survival are presumed to be the women’s role. Yet, these same women were now carrying the burden of working in the formal economy as well as in the domestic economy, and were run ragged.

Increasingly, women who would have stayed in a bad marriage out of necessity in Rwanda had the ability to leave that situation and did not necessarily face homelessness or hunger in their new host/homeland. Their survival was not compromised, and they felt safe. As Angelina explained, a woman may not have “a lot of money, but at least there is a way--she can do some odd jobs, and she can have some housing and she can see her kids in a better support here” (Angelina). Women perceived their new host/homeland to offer them greater autonomy and dignity, even as the new pressures broke down marriages, and often left them as single mothers. As Angelina explicitly stated, “Your dignity is preserved here. Some of them put themselves through school, and got better jobs as well, they feel empowered” (Angelina). This echoes what Creese found among the African migrants in Vancouver, where “for women, new models of spousal partnership provided spaces for greater autonomy within the family that most

women strove to attain” (2011, 155-6), even as they lacked the family and community networks that they had had access to in the homeland.

The above narrative of marital discord was a common refrain that I heard from many participants, especially women. The perceived difference in gendered expectations was usually held up as the casual factor in marital dissolution. Yet, given the prevalence of gender-based violence in Rwanda and in Canada, it is hard to believe that there was no gender-based violence among the Rwandese diaspora in the GTA. However, none of my participants raised the issue of gender-based violence, which suggests that it remained sufficiently taboo that few spoke of it within the community. There is also the possibility that those who spoke to me about marital dissolution chose to omit gender-based violence from the narrative in order to avoid further pathologizing African families. Nonetheless, a study focusing on wife assault in Toronto’s African immigrant and refugee community found that:

African Canadians who are most vulnerable to wife abuse share the following characteristics: they are recent immigrants to Canada; come from a ‘home country’ with a violent and tumultuous recent history; are relatively young (below 35 years of age); are the mothers of one to three children; have been sponsored by their spouses but are still individually recognized as landed immigrants or refugees; and have an annual family income of less than \$30,000, to which the woman contributes less than the husband” (Musisi and Mukta’s 1992 study discussed in Cottrell, Tastsoglou and Moncayo 2009, 74).

Many of the participants fit into all, or nearly all the conditions cited above, suggesting that it is highly likely that gender-based violence was a significant factor in the marital discord in the community. However, given that my study focused on identity, and not family/marital relationships, it is impossible to draw conclusive arguments. Nonetheless, research conducted among other migrant groups indicates that migration and the subsequent stressors, including the loss of the male breadwinner model, contributes to increased risk of gender-based violence (Kulig 1994; Morash et. al 2000; Tang and Oatley 2002; Jiwani 2005).

Men also struggled with the new gender regimes that they encountered in the new host/homeland. Olivia argued that men who migrated to Canada “were somebody back home”, and the loss of status compounded the loss of family, property, and belonging. Likewise, among the African diaspora in Vancouver, “men, on the other hand, were challenged to give up some of their authority, fundamentally redefining their concepts of masculinity. Some men readily accepted the new partnership model of masculinity, but many more lamented their wives’ changing expectations” (Creese 2011, 156). I encountered a number of men within the community who had renegotiated domestic duties in order to achieve a more equitable balance of labour in the household. Richard spoke of this process implicitly when he narrated his professional and personal trajectory over the last 15 years. He explained that he had achieved a satisfying career in an industry that he really liked, but when he and his wife chose to have children, he chose to move to another company where his position was not as satisfying, but he had greater flexibility and was able to be home with his kids much more. The wife was the primary breadwinner in the family and the husband was the primary caretaker of the children. Yet, despite his choice to sacrifice his career in order to be more present with his children, he seemed to still feel the need to justify his decision and to explain to me, an outside observer, that these were his choices and the rewards that he gets from them, suggesting perhaps that his decision is not universally understood or appreciated. Though there were a number of men like Richard who had chosen to split the domestic labour and child-rearing duties more equitably with their partners, there were many who, faced with new expectations and a re-negotiation of power in the household, chose to leave the family unit and return to Rwanda. While I did not speak to anyone who had made this decision, I did speak to a few former partners of these men who, with some bitterness, felt that the choices made by these men were self-serving, as the

women were now single mothers with the full financial, emotional and psychological responsibility for their children. I also heard, from others, that these single mothers rarely got any child support from a former partner once he had returned to Rwanda. Nonetheless, many of the women expressed that “I don’t want to go to Rwanda where I won’t have any voice there, the next thing he is just driving me to his own place only, and I can’t even come back, I may not even have a ticket to come back here. No, I’m not going there” (Angelina). It appeared that, despite the significantly increased labour and social isolation of migration, women in the community coped better than men. By and large, Olivia’s claim that women in the community were more resilient because they had been socialized to expect less from life seemed to bear out in my findings.

### ***Confronting Multiculturalism***

Although Multiculturalism, as a federal state policy, “remains obscure and the program content of multiculturalism is periodically modified”, it is perceived as appealing because it “symbolizes a tolerant feature of Canadian society that stands as an opposite to what most Canadians believe to be a strong pressure to conform and assimilate in American society” (Li 1999, 149). As an ideology, among Canadians there is general perception that “it is a desirable idea,” but no clarity about what it refers to or how it is enacted (Li 1999, 164). This very ambiguity, arguably intentionally fostered by state institutions which can fit all manner of meaning into the box labeled ‘Multiculturalism’, also leaves a space for individual interpretation. In conducting this study, I heard numerous interpretations of Canadian multiculturalism expressed by the participants in the study. Even as multiculturalism framed them as the eternal

other, those who identify as Rwandan in the GTA filled it with their own hopes and expectations for belonging.

Patrice juxtaposed Canadian multiculturalism to Rwandan monoculturalism as he explained that in Toronto he met “white people, Arab people, you know from other countries from Africa, and that’s something also about Toronto, there’s a lot of variety of people that you can meet. I meet all type of people, all type of ages. It is good, because I’m thinking I like that, I like new people” (Patrice). Patrice framed Canadian multiculturalism explicitly as encompassing greater plurality than just ethnic diversity when he identified “all type of people, all type of ages.” In his understanding, it is this very plurality which enables him to feel safe as he perceived that in Canada difference was not dangerous the way it had been in Rwanda. Indeed, he explained that the degree of plurality was protective, unlike in Rwanda where difference was cast as either Hutu or Tutsi and only those two ethnic identities were perceived as significant. Yet, even as he appreciated plurality, he was aware of the tensions between ostensibly different ‘cultural’ groups as “I work with different type of people and when we go out, we cannot go together, because when we are together, some people feel so isolated, on the side, because they don’t like the music I listen to, or, they have different background, different life. When you live with them more, you enjoy with them, whenever you go out of work and share a drink, it’s a problem” (Patrice). Interestingly, he does not perceive the tensions between people of ostensibly different ethnic backgrounds in terms of a clash of cultures, but, rather, in more quotidian terms as divergent musical preferences, for example. Yet, these fractures are significant enough that they cause tension and “problems”, preventing a deeper interpersonal engagement outside of work.

Like Patrice, Seraphine also identified plurality as a prominent and progressive feature of life in the GTA. She also contrasted this plurality to a monocultural society, when she stated that: “I love other, like diversity of people, I don’t like to be in one, uhh, because I value other people, I value other nations and we have uhh...one of the good things with Canada is that is has diversity of people, its multicultural, you meet people from other nations, whether you don’t know them, but you get a chance to connect with them, knowing you, ‘cause I love to know about other cultures” (Seraphine). The implicit contrast, stated in “I don’t like to be in one” (“one” referring to one culture/ethnicity) is to the remembered homeland, which, for Patrice and Seraphine, was extremely traumatic as they were both survivors of the genocide. Thus, for both of them, the plurality that they encountered was reassuring and comforting. In both their accounts, there lies the assumption that as long as they are one of many who are different, they will not be targeted as the group that is too different to tolerate, and be re-subjected to genocidal violence. Of course, this assumption ignores the genocidal history against Canada’s indigenous population, but it is a comforting notion to those who survived genocide elsewhere.

Christophe also lauded Canadian multiculturalism as he explained that in his workplace he encountered individuals from a variety of presumed ethnicities. Thus, “in my department I’m from Rwanda, I have another colleague from Eritrea, I have another colleague from Pakistan, another is from India, another one is from Jamaica, I have another one is from Filipino, so that kind of stuff. You know we enjoy it, we have the same kind of connection, we respect each other. Yeah we live it every day [...] Yeah, yeah so that that tells you how diverse Toronto is” (Christophe). The absence in this litany of “diversity” was most striking to me—he did not mention any people from Europe, and all the ethno-national groups that he identified are racialized minorities in Canada. In this account of “diversity” whiteness is the background

against which his and his colleagues' visible difference plays out. They are rendered different by virtue of non-belonging to the white majority group. This is actually an account of the manner in which racialization marks men and women who are understood as non-white as the visible externalized face of multiculturalism. It is also important to note that the workplace in question was a call-centre, which is generally a low-wage, low-skill workplace. Thus, Christophe's account also demonstrates the degree to which the low-wage, low-skill service sector industry in the GTA is staffed by racialized people—a point I will return to later.

The inherent contradiction of multiculturalism as both including all manner of ethnic difference and only marking racialized peoples from the so-called Third World was articulated by Theodore. He explained that:

But you know there are some people they are not uhh, I cannot call open-minded, they don't understand that the country of Canada is big, that people from all over the place, so that's why I have to explain myself. But someone who knows that this country belongs to everybody, like you came from Poland, I came from Africa, someone from India, together we build this country, so it doesn't matter where we are from, or the, the colour of your skin, you know? We build this country together, so you have to explain to them and you have to understand them, that's reality that people are facing" (Theodore).

Interestingly, Theodore perceived that it was up to him, and other migrants like myself, to explain to those who are not "open-minded" what Canadian multiculturalism entailed. He did not see it as a completed project that granted space and belonging to all new migrants, but as an ongoing process necessitating patience and understanding on the part of the migrant. Rather than perceiving multiculturalism as having created space and understanding for him and his family, he understood it as his burden to expand and educate those who are not "open-minded", or, in other words, the keepers of the nation. While many in the study expressed disappointment with the incomplete welcome extended to them, Theodore was unfazed by it, and happily took up the challenge of building the nation. This perspective stood in sharp contrast to Olivia's earlier

account of migrants exhausting themselves trying to “to go to school, to do this, to go to work, to make money and to contribute to society, but then you meet all the systemic barriers in terms of not being able to go to school because you don’t have your immigration papers yet, and not being able to hold a job in your career because your diploma or credentials are not accepted here”. Partly, this difference in emotional response to the lack of welcome is attributable to the age at which one migrates, and therefore how much social capital one is able to acquire in the host/homeland. Olivia arrived as an adult with a family to support, while Theodore arrived as an adolescent and acquired his secondary and post-secondary education in Canada, making his professional goals more easily attainable. Thus, it is less surprising that Theodore had energy for nation-building, while Olivia was fatigued, though undaunted.

Probably the most interesting account of the complexity of Canadian identity and his place within it came from Simon:

I cannot really define who is a Canadian, and uh, I don’t know how I can define who is a Canadian. Sometimes I can hear on the radio, people are discussing themselves about being Canadian, and people are so vocal about it, sometimes I see they are the ones who are minorities, and they are talking about my flag, the Canadian, but it’s not the majority. The majority of people, they are Canadians because they just stay back and do their own business, be tolerant. And even being a Canadian, for people who are so passionate about it, it scares me. Because I see that they are becoming more like Americans. Yeah, you go to USA, you see on each house the flag, everywhere. And with the whole mentality, and we are not Yankees. And uh, it’s why I feel like I am, because I belong to the majority of people who are more tolerant, who are more accepting of everyone doing their own business and who have a sense, of umm, tolerance. [...]in the beginning when someone was talking to me about being a Canadian, I would say—‘it’s being polite’. They would say ‘how can you say this’? Because you go on a bus, by mistake, you step on someone, and the person will say to you-‘oh, sorry, sorry’. You are the one who stepped on him or her, and she is the one who is the one telling you ‘sorry, sorry’. I say, they are so polite. And uh, [chuckles] more time you spend, you see on the street people just giving the finger to everybody, and people yelling, and you are in a workplace, you see people who are undermining each other, but you feel so disappointed, because you create a myth about what is being a Canadian, and this myth is being destroyed by people, and uh, you feel so disappointed. But, at the same, time, when I look at it, I feel like, oh, maybe, now



I belong. Because now I see more than I was seeing before, before it was like a fantasy (Simon).

Simon's fascinating analysis revealed that he, having lived in Canada for over twenty years, perceived that belonging comes when one is able to see through the myths of nationalism and grimly accept the often unpleasant reality of communal life. Yet, he also observed and contrasted an exclusionary form of xenophobic nationalism, like that of the "Yankees", to a more liberal, tolerant model of multiculturalism. These two competing Canadian national cosmologies play out in day to day lives, as well as in political theatre. Simon, as a racialized man, confronted both narratives. The trepidation that he expressed over those who are "so passionate" about the mythical nationalism that he saw emerging points to an understanding of nation as contingent, as fragmented, and as uneven. Unlike those whom I quoted earlier, Simon did not feel a compulsion to exclaim his love for the imagined community of Canada. Yet, those whose nationalism he fears, would demand such tribute from him, explicitly because he is a racialized migrant from a so-called Third World country, and thus, according to the xenophobic, closed narrative of nation that he observes, he must demonstrate his worth in order to attain belonging. He is haunted by xenophobic nationalism as it hovers over his day to day life. Its manifestations are the moments when he is racialized and reminded of his difference.

***Reminders of non-belonging: "What's your background?"***

As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, one of the most common means by which those who are racialized are reminded of their place outside the nation is through the ubiquitous query "what's your background?" Many participants in this study explained, with

grim humour, the perennial sprouting of that pseudo-polite question, and it's very clear, though implicit, meaning:

Theodore: It's not like you, because what are they going to ask you when they see your name, but for me, if they sees me, they says, ah, you're a Canadian, where are you from, where's your background?

Interviewer: What's the difference?

Theodore: The difference in term of colour, people think because you are white, to be Canadian is normal. You see that's reality where we are coming from.

Theodore's matter of fact explanation of the meaning of this question echoed what many others also understood to be the underlying message—you do not belong here *because* you are black.

Revocata, facing this question, explained that she was not ashamed to explain where she came from, but understood that the question meant that “even though I call myself Canadian, I am not treated like a Canadian” (Revocata). To be black in the GTA is to be perpetually framed as external to the nation's imagination of self; it is to be the eternal other that those who belong can mark and remind of her non-belonging. Theodosia argued that “Canada has its good own things to offer. But still, in Canada we don't belong. We are still immigrants. We don't belong” (Theodosia). After over fifteen years of living in the GTA, she baldly stated that she and others like her, implicitly those who are likewise racialized, “are still immigrants”. I too am an immigrant, yet I do not encounter the above question, nor am I led to understand that I am still an immigrant (expect once, at the U.S. border, where the border guards, seeing my place of birth, Poland, tapped into racialized discourses about Eastern European women and enquired if I was being trafficked across the border by my partner). Having attained citizenship, I am treated as a citizen because I am white and bear an Anglo name. Yet the same is not true of those in this study. Many, if not most, had likewise attained citizenship status (and proudly proclaimed it),

yet, they remained framed as perpetual immigrants, because of their blackness. As Rinaldo Walcott puts it, “the impossibility of imagining blackness as Canadian is continually evident even as nation-state policies like multiculturalism seek to signal otherwise” (2003, 48).

### ***What do you know about Rwanda?***

Another injury oft expressed by the participants in this study was that many Canadians knew very little about Rwanda, and exhibited little or no desire to learn more. While none of the participants were surprised by the overall ignorance about one African nation, a good number were hurt by their co-workers’, neighbors’, and state representatives’ lack of desire to learn about the difference that those who identified as Rwandans purportedly carried. Theodore stated that “before I come I know where is Canada. I know. Because we went to school they teach us where is Canada, where is Europe, Egypt, they teach us all these things—you know, since you are young” (Theodore). Yet, contrary to his experience, in Canada “even when they teach them, they don’t have that curiosity to find out” (Theodore). This common observation demonstrated the limits of multicultural tolerance. We, as a society, are reluctantly willing to allow those who come from elsewhere to settle here, but we do not care to understand, appreciate or think about what they carry with them, nor do we imagine that their culture/ethnicity could enrich our communities. That is the source of the injury that Theodore and others expressed—that what they bring is automatically perceived to be valueless and not worth learning about. In this manner, all the history, philosophy, art that they understand Rwandaness to embody, is negated and erased. They become subjects of external racialization and their value as individuals and as citizens is dictated by the (white) keepers of the nation.

### *Racialization in the Host/Homeland*

The reminder of coming from somewhere else and the lack of interest in that place serve to remind those who are othered of their difference. These day to day, subtle practices are part of a broader set of practices of classification and identification of who belongs and who does not in Canadian society. Those who identify as Rwandan in the GTA are racialized as blacks in a dominant white society. Racialization refers “to the process, and the structures that accompany such a process, that produce and construct the meaning of race” (Agnew 2009, 8). It classifies and marginalizes individual people, but also refers to “specific traits and attributes as, for example, accent, diet, name, beliefs and practices, and places of origin” which are interpreted as “abnormal and of less worth” than the dominant culture (Agnew 2009, 8). As Philomena Essed has argued, racialization (though she uses the term racism) “is routinely created and reinforced through everyday practices” (1991, 2). This process plays out in institutionalized practices, like a segregated labour market, underrepresentation in political institutions and a lack of recognition of the contributions of minority groups in the national history, as well as on an individual level, when in day to day interactions individuals remind the person who is racialized that she is presumed to be in some way inferior. Essed points out that both of these levels of experience are connected as:

From a macro point of view, racism is a system of structural inequalities and a historical process, both created and recreated through routine practices. System means that reproduced social relations between individuals and groups organized as regular social practices. From a micro point of view, specific practices, whether their consequences are intentional or unintentional, can be evaluated in terms of racism only when they are consistent with (our knowledge) of existing macro structures of racial inequality in the system. In other words, structures of racism do not exist external to agents—they are made by agents—but specific practices are by definition racist only when they activate existing structural racial inequality (Essed 1991, 39).

Thus, when we hear an individual account of someone being called by a racial epithet it is an example of racialization/racism because it is part of a larger system of inequitable access to social resources and is an example of one group enacting power over another, played out in one symbolic interaction. Everyday racialization/racism is “the integration of racism into everyday situations through practices (cognitive and behavioural) that activate underlying power relations” and through these practices racism becomes “part of the expected, of the unquestionable, and of what is seen as normal by the dominant group” (Essed 1991, 50). The other side of racism, often obscured, is the privilege that the dominant group exercises precisely because it is able to dominate other groups. Thus, in Canada, whiteness has been and continues to be read as normative and those who are racialized as white are granted privilege (Nelson and Nelson 2004, 3), such as some of those I have mentioned experiencing, while those who are racialized as other are subject to scrutiny, surveillance, over-attention, avoidance, marginalization, and neglect.

Those who identify as Rwandan are racialized as black, which, in the GTA, carries specific assumptions of criminality, immorality, vulgarity, loudness, and visibility (Henry 1994). They are also racialized as black African, which is associated with primitivism, violence, tribalism and a general backwardness (Mudimbe 1988). These cognitive frames preexisted the Rwandan community in the GTA, yet those who were part of this community found themselves read, measured and, often, found lacking, according to those yardsticks. Men, women, youth and children, though subject to the same ideas about who they are based on how they look, experienced racialization in specifically gendered and age-specific ways. Both young and older men were assumed to be criminals, but the manner in which this assumption played out differed. Older men spoke of being the subject of covert, nervous glances, white hands tightening on purses, security guards or police following them, unmerited police stops, and the day to day

undermining of their authority in workplaces. Young men discussed being perceived to be “black youth” and thus subject to police surveillance, and overt and coercive performances of authority from figures of authority, like school principals. Unlike their partners, brothers, and sons, women were less likely to be assumed to be criminal, but they faced sexualization, surveillance, oversight and disregard. Women discussed being ignored in classrooms, being overlooked for placement or promotions in workplaces, and having their sexuality surveilled, commented upon and judged. Young women seemed to be least affected by racialization, yet they too experienced the loss of interest of a potential employer, the lack of attention in a classroom, the increased scrutiny in a shopping mall.

Regardless of age, gender or social class, those who identified as Rwandan described a process of routine racialization. However, many also insisted that these were moments of racialization and that, by and large, they felt accepted and welcomed in their new homeland. They actively resisted being framed as victims and insisted on their agency in these encounters. Indeed, some even spoke disparagingly of friends who resisted racism through activism or public declarations, thus creating a moral dichotomy of victim/resister and agent/educator. I will try to accommodate this very often expressed sentiment by referring to racialization as sporadic and enacted in particular moments; thus, rather than drawing a picture of complete marginalization and oppression, I will refer to *moments* of racialization.

### **Racializing Children**

While I did not interview any children for this study, parents often spoke of their fears and anxieties about their children’s place in the host/homeland based on the stories and

experiences that their children brought home. Olivia discussed her son's experience of racialization thus:

I remember and experience where my son, my middle son, he was what, maybe 5, or 6? He went to school, in the class there was no other black kids, and uh, the kids were never exposed they come from rural area of [city of residence], they, they were never exposed to colour and they would touch him thinking he's dirty. They would say if you wash yourself really well, would the dark come off? [chuckles, a bit bitterly] and he came home very, and he says mom, these kids are so ignorant. He was only 5 or 6. But he did not take it personally, he says they touch my hair, they touch my skin, and they think I don't shower. And I says, how did you react to that, and he says well, they're just ignorant, they don't know. I said, you can't blame them, they've never been exposed, so they, so they overcame (Olivia).

The children in the classroom (implicitly called parochial) exhibited simultaneous desire and repulsion; they were drawn to him, needed to touch him, yet presumed his colour to be dirt and imagined that if he bathed, he would look more like them. They were enacting, on the small stage of a kindergarten classroom, the drama of the colonizer and colonized, the drama of the black body seen, perceived, known and rejected through the eyes and touch of whiteness. Yet, Olivia was insistent that neither she nor her son "blame" the children, as the children were merely "ignorant", rather than well-versed in racial mythology which places blackness hierarchically below whiteness. Olivia's insistence is also interesting in light of the fact that while rural Ontario remains largely white, it is not a space without blackness, as T.V. and other forms of media inform these spaces with larger racist mythologies and narratives. A recent case is that of a secondary school in Sutton, Ontario, which made national headlines first because students were regularly wearing the Confederate flag and claiming it was a symbol of rural pride, then, a year later, because a black (Nigerian) student was viciously beaten while being called the "n" word by onlookers. This school, according to interlocutors, was primarily a white school, yet as the incidences above demonstrate, it was a space that was suffused with racist mythologies. Thus, Olivia's insistence on the need to educate and "expose" the kindergarten class to her son's

difference must be read as her desire/need to not be read as a victim of racism. Though she was well aware of racism and had many other stories to tell, each narration emphasized that the source of these incidences was ignorance, not hate. Yet, she was clearly harmed by the events and worried over her children's ability to cope and have full lives in a white-dominated society. As she explained, her other children had also faced racism in the classroom as one had been called the "n" word after a lesson on the harm that the word carries, and her other child had faced daily belittlement of her surname. All three incidences were narrated as moments, as passing phases, rather than a pervasive racist mythology built upon the assumption of a white nation. Yet, the toll of confronting this mythology was evident as she recognized that "we always have to work harder, justify ourselves, confirm ourselves, try to just be accepted, because people judge you before they even see" (Olivia).

Other parents also expressed the pain of watching their children suffer racialization in classrooms or on the playground. Angelina, whose children were born in Canada, explains that:

So now they're really Canadians. So now, the worry is, they're going to look for a job and the same question will come to them—Where do you come from? Or they might not be equally participants in terms of job opportunities, or run for presidency of this country, or being any dreams fulfilled, because there's that association of their colour. They speak perfect English, they have the whole history of Canada, they appreciate the love on Canada. You know? It's who they are. So if they face discrimination, they end up not being so considered as true true Canadians, they lose out [...] Yeah, there's that tension. So sometimes we ask them, so, do you feel like you are picked differently at school, and stuff. "Oh mom, yeah sometimes, yeah, there is racism" I don't know how they interpret that, but they tell me that there is racism. "How come anybody who is doing bad things is always black? Or bad neighbourhood is black?" (Angelina)

The mother's anxieties over her children's chances in life were starkly clear, but neither she nor her children could point to exactly how racialization was enacted in these instances. Yet, the children were aware that their society criminalizes black bodies when they asked why the media is fixated on black crime and why predominantly black neighborhoods are portrayed as "bad".



The parents suffered over the fact that the children knew racism and were aware of it, but even more so because it was so subtle that there was nothing that they could do to fight it. Unlike Olivia, they could not go to the school and demand that...what? How could parents combat racialization that is so commonplace, so pervasive and yet so subtle? Diane also pinpointed this dynamic when she recalled that her child was commonly asked “where he was from, even though he was born here” and that this indicated that “they see him as black” and always “you are from somewhere else” (Diane). How can parents protect their children from the bone deep harm of subtle, even at times polite, racialization? Diane’s six year old son fell on the playground and broke his arm, yet none of the teachers were aware that he had severe bruising because he was “so dark”, so his broken arm was untreated till he went home that night. Diane was enraged. The principal apologized. Did that change the fact that “the teacher did not care” enough about Diane’s son? The experience of Rwandan children being racialized is similar to those of other African groups in Canada. As Creese recounts, African parents in Vancouver told stories of “children being unable to find playmates, being told negative comments about the colour of their skin, or being viewed as ‘dirty’ or ‘too yucky’ to touch” (2011, 178). The parents in Creese’s study expressed heartache over these new challenges and adopted new, protective parenting strategies to protect their children.

Parents’ anguish over the harm their children suffered echoed through the stories I heard. Richard worried that his children would come to hate the colour of their skin because “they are more comfortable with, they’re more in tune with white, which, as a black person, it’s dangerous” (Richard). He recalled overhearing a little black boy in his child’s class telling his grandmother that he did not want to be in the sun because “he didn’t want to be turned dark” (Richard). Richard tried to protect his children by teaching them that “you should be proud of

who you are—it will never change, it will never change you being a Canadian, however, you should be proud of your complexion, you should proud of your hair”(Richard). His attempt to broaden the narrative of who is “Canadian” to include his black children is the only remedy he has available to shield them, yet, it is an ineffectual rebuff when in nearly all other social interactions his children are reminded that they are different and that their difference, their blackness, their nappy hair, are outside the nation’s narration of self and they are framed as external to normalized whiteness.

### **Racializing Men**

Men in the community experienced the most overt forms of racialization of all the groups as they were explicitly criminalized. Middle aged men described the various moments when they were reminded of their marginality and the externality of their blackness. Those who had lived in the GTA since the late 1980s remembered more explicit and overt moments of racialization, compared to the more subtle forms it had taken by the time of this study, in the 2010s. During the 1980s and early 1990s, many of my informants recalled being called by the “n” word on the street, people physically shying away from them on elevators, buses, being denied rental accommodations, and being denied jobs. Richard recalled vividly the common experience of “you walk in the elevator [...] women—they shrink away from you and clutch their purse”, people on the streetcar intentionally bumping into him and referring to him as “one of those”, being detained at a shopping mall on accusations of theft, and many other day to day incidences of overt racism (Richard). Jean remembered that when he lived in Calgary in the late 1980s, “I remember there was a time when you got to a bus and nobody want to sit next to you. You know? And sometimes you would go to outside and the kids would come and touch your skin to

see” (Jean). Both men contrasted these explicit moments of racialization with the more subtle, yet no less insidious forms that they encountered in the 2010s.

One participant joked that he preferred the racism of the 80s and 90s because it was more explicit and he knew how to respond to it, while now he worries that his reading of a situation is subjective and someone else would not think he was being racialized. This anxiety over the interpretation of an event was a common theme; a number of participants, when asked if they had experienced discrimination, hedged that they had, but could not directly explain how, and seemed to fear that I, as their listener, would not believe them because they could not point to a clear event or moment. Bernard explained that “it’s not open. It’s not direct because of laws, it’s not like in other countries, but, people are not free of discrimination. You can see by, by action, you can see it, by the way they talk, or the action, but it’s not open. Not like in other countries, like in Europe, here it’s there, but...” (Bernard). This collective forgetting and denying that racialization/racism affect and often shape the lives of people of colour have the secondary effect of making them feel that they are imagining the event and that they are exaggerating. Thus, not only are they harmed by the instance of racism, but they are also then doubly harmed by being led to question if they imagined the event. Indeed, it becomes evident why my participant jokingly preferred the good old racism.

Yet, they are racialized in subtle but insidious ways, as Richard’s story demonstrates:

And the way, people, sometimes you approach them, and they nearly tell you’re black, English is not your first language, so, far, now, you start talking to them, now they are going through the process of doing their judgment—by the time they realize you’re talking to them in English, they’ve lost what you’ve said and say--“pardon, what did you say? I didn’t hear what you said.” And, most people they don’t realize that’s what’s going on in a human being, and to me, I didn’t take it—if I’m in a bad mood, or something else has affected me, I’ll get irritated (Richard).

The amount of emotional energy expended in negotiating these moments of being seen as a black man, and therefore not being seen as a person, can amount to exhaustion. To daily navigate and negotiate for a measure of dignity and respect is wearying work that only those who are racialized have to engage in. I never have to repeat myself because someone imagined that I was threatening and therefore failed to hear what I had to say. When I speak, I am usually heard; when a man racialized as black speaks, he is often not heard, or misheard. André also offered many stories of how he, as a black man, was denied respect personally and professionally. He was a manager in his workplace, yet, routinely, he was presumed to hold a lesser position in the organization. On visiting city hall in his professional capacity, he was assumed to be a social assistance recipient and directed to the wrong department. On another occasion, he arrived late at a conference for managers in his field and the doors were already closed. He asked a janitor to be allowed in, but the janitor responded with scorn that the conference was only for managers and he would not be permitted. It took some time to persuade the janitor that he was a manager and belonged inside; the janitor was contrite, but André was once again reminded that as a black man he is never assumed to be in a position of legitimate authority.

Excessive and unmerited police stops of racialized men in the GTA have become routine for those affected, to the point that they train their sons to be passive and polite in order to deescalate the situation. Overall, black men are “more likely to be stopped, questioned, searched, and generally harassed by the police” than any other group (Abdi 2005, 57). André has long learned that if he is stopped by the cops he is “prepared to be extra nice” because if you “resist they will arrest you” (André). Richard, as another long-term resident of the GTA, has also developed the same strategy for dealing with this issue. He told the story of trying to persuade a

white friend of the reality of unmerited police stops and narrated the friend's response as follows:

Richard: 'you guys exaggerate sometimes', you guys, you mean us black people? He said 'yeah!' I said I'm not offended, you're my friend, I'll classify that as ignorance because I can be granting certain things and it's not a judgment call. He said 'prove it to me'. He was driving that time, his dad had a 7 series BMW. I said 'really? I'm not a betting man, but I'll let you drive fast for a few minutes, we'll go to different areas do all kind of things. In fact, roll through that stop sign, where there's a cruiser, and I'll point it out to you, there's a cruiser, I'll do the same, eventually when it comes to my time and we'll see.' He drove we did a couple things which are obvious and most of the time...

Interviewer: Should have merited a stop.

Richard: Yes. He said, 'yeah, if I was a policeman I wouldn't even give it to you'. I said, 'that's how you think?'. So we switched. 3 times within less than the time he was driving, I was stopped [by a police officer]. I was given a warning, he said 'do you realize you rolled through the stop sign?' I said, 'officer, I'm so sorry.' And again, it's, you know, one of, you get taught, and this was when I worked with the YMCA, with young people, black people, we say, when a police officer approaches you, give him the best respect you can give him, don't be controversial, don't confront him, just respect him.

Interviewer: Right, so you're training young black men to deal with that harassment?

Richard: Imagine.

Interviewer: So you actively train them.

Richard: We did, we did. We did workshops where we did those kind of things. I apologized, he said you can cause an accident.

Interviewer: So when you were so deferential, his power was already reinforced, so he didn't need to then punish you further?

Richard: Indeed, indeed. And when we left, he stopped, as I was driving, he [the friend] said, 'you know, I'm so sorry.' I said 'don't apologize, I can understand where you're coming from, but where we're coming from, this goes on every day to a lot of us.'

The above excerpt demonstrates both the fact that Richard's coping mechanisms are necessary as he is indeed more likely to be stopped because he is black, as well as the degree to which this day to day reality is denied by others. The friend, as a white man, does not face this form of

institutionalized discrimination himself, but to add insult to injury, he does not believe the black man who tells him about it. Thus, not only is Richard's experience denied, his ability to honestly assess his experience is read as exaggeration as "you guys" are presumed to be prone to unrealistic assessments. He is thus read as irrational and untrustworthy, which is another element of the insidious racialization that he is subjected to. As another participant explained "you get angry, then you give up in a sense" because he had learned to expect racism (André).

An interesting reading of day to day racialization comes from Simon who described working in a "completely white" town where "knowing that I was from Africa, it was like everyone wanted a small piece of me—to touch me, to talk to me"(Simon). In this experience, which he recalled fondly and told me in order to demonstrate that he had experienced moments where he was prized for his difference, Simon was *desirable* for his blackness. He was valued not because he was competent at his job, but *because he was a black man* doing the job. While he recalled this warmly, it too was an example of racialization. And, though Simon did not perceive it as harmful, it still served to underscore his difference based only on his physical traits. In a way, he internalized this racialization as he explained that:

The discrimination might be there, but at the same time, the only way for me, the only way I see to be successful, is to avoid discriminating yourself. When you start seeing others as different, you behave in a way that you black yourself and you don't reach out, you don't open yourself to others, and I can see, even within the community, there's people who have been here for so many years, but they're always by themselves (Simon).

His reading of "black[ing] yourself" puts the onus on the person who is being racialized to not only pretend not to see the racialization, but also to not be affected by it. Thus he criticizes those who "don't reach out", "don't open yourself to others", as, in effect, causing their own isolation and marginalization. This criticism, which I also heard from others, points to a troubling dynamic whereby community members buy into narratives about the decline of racism and

racialization and then, if someone points it out its continuance, she is presumed to be “black[ing]” herself. This idea of “black[ing]” oneself is interesting as it suggests both the understanding that blackness is constructed through day to day practices, as well as the negative association with North American blacks. When Simon refers to “black[ing]”, he is referring to behaving like North American blacks, which, as he reads it, is detrimental and pathological. This flip in agency is damaging as it proposes that those who are systematically denied access are themselves to blame for this denial. It also demonizes those who speak out against racialization, thus denying them the power to name their experience and offer a potent critique of Canadian society.

### **Racializing Young Men**

Young black men in the community also experienced racialization, but they were more inclined to understand it as Simon understood his experiences—namely, that if they avoided “black[ing]” themselves, they would not be racialized. The internalization of racism is a fairly common response among young black men who face daily discrimination, but it comes with a great cost as it negatively affects physical and psychological well-being (Pierre and Mahalik 2005). In some cases, as the case of Somali youth in Canada, the external racism that they face is paired with Islamophobia, doubly othering them (Naji 2012). Rwandan youth are not externally perceived as Muslim (though some are) and thus do not face the double burden of racism and Islamophobia. Nonetheless, they bear the burden of coping with internalized racism.

Patrice expressed internalized racism in discussing the ubiquitous hoodie which is a piece of clothing that is twinned in racist mythology with criminal and deviant black bodies. His interpretation of this piece of clothing is very revealing:

And also, you know how they say a black guy wearing a hoodie is bad? I mean is it wearing the hoodie, or the way you behaving yourself wearing that hoodie? [...] I wear a hoodie every day and I don't feel rejected. But a brother of mine who's wearing a hoodie behaved differently, being rejected. Maybe he didn't wanna come in a Starbucks like this wearing a hoodie, cause he felt like he would be rejected or labeled, being from a gang member, or something like that. [Laughs] I don't care! I know who I am, I know what I do and who I am, so I'm going to wear it because it's cold. Cause I don't wanna bring like a big jacket, so, I think it's about self and how you understand it. And that's when you end up being rejected, by taking yourself out of the world because of the way you see it (Patrice).

Patrice clearly had been exposed to the racist mythology as he was well aware that “they say a black guy wearing a hoodie is bad”, yet, rather than interrogate who “they” are, and what the consequences of this narrative are, he framed the matter as a personal choice as “it's about self and how you understand it. And that's when you end up being rejected, by taking yourself out of the world because of the way you see it”. This individualization of a racist mythology which pathologizes black male bodies is a defense mechanism as it allows Patrice to perceive that he has agency and he can avoid being racialized. Yet, its final consequence is to submit to the racialization by taking on the injury and internalizing it; thus, if Patrice, acting as he does, is then rejected or marginalized (which the earlier examples suggest he will be, often), he cannot point to a system of structural racism and can only look inwards and blame himself for this imagined failure.

Another defensive move practiced by young Rwandan black men is to assimilate/appropriate the cultural codes of African American youth, in particular hip hop culture, and therefore to join a collectivity that has made a space of resistance to normative



mythologies (though, admittedly, this space has been appropriated and colonized by dominant discourses). As Ibrahim argues, “once in North America, continental African youth enter a social imaginary: a discursive or symbolic space in which they are already constructed, imagined, and positioned, and thus treated by the hegemonic discourses and dominant groups, respectively, as Blacks” (2004, 278). Their appropriation of hip hop culture is an “articulation of the youth desire to belong to a location, a politics, a memory, a history, and hence, a representation” (Ibrahim 2004, 280). In Ibrahim’s research, his young subjects analyzed their own relationship to hip hop culture as “a search for identification [...] for someone who reflects you, with whom you have something in common” (2004, 287).

This pattern of consciously seeking out hip hop culture as an alternative to dominant discourses was also evident among the young Rwandan men I encountered, though not all chose to seek belonging by identifying with this sub-culture. Mathieu recalled that during his adolescent years:

I was heavily influenced by hip hop culture, so I mean that’s also another thing that I was really connected with fellow black students. So I know, a lot of times, the way I would dress, the way I spoke, when we were together, we went around together, and a lot of times there was somewhat of a negative perception by authorities, not so much peers our age, or even our parents, more so authorities. I remember getting questioned a few times by police, never for really doing anything. I’m not even going to say that each case was racial profiling, because that would be unfair, but there is, there was scenarios, that I did, you know we were questioned. And I’m not surprised because we were in a large group, and you know, whether it be late at night, or whatever, that was kind of a perception, we did feel, especially from authority figures (Mathieu).

Mathieu’s recollection is interesting for two reasons: firstly, he is cognizant of his choice to join/appropriate this sub-culture and its linguistic/stylistic modes as a means of connecting with other black youth; secondly he acknowledges that there was greater scrutiny upon him as a black man, but he attributes this to the supposed negative perception of hip hop culture. His self-aware choice to participate in this sub-culture demonstrates the degree to which young men consciously

negotiate discursive framings of themselves as black men and actively seek to negotiate spaces of community and belonging to counter their racialization. Yet, even as Mathieu sought to resist these framings, the disciplinary gaze of police and other authority figures reinforced the racialization of young black men as criminal to the point that Mathieu, in recalling this phase, expressed that “I’m not going to say that each case was racial profiling because that would be unfair” and that he was not surprised “because we were in a large group.” This statement is interesting because it reveals both a recognition that the moment could be read as racial profiling, but he is choosing *not* to read it so, and suggesting that *because* they were in a large group, the questioning may have been justified. He is slipping between resistance to racialization and internalization of racialization, never fully comfortable on either ground. Indeed, his further statement that “there was a few instances [...] in my primary years, a few times in my secondary years, not a lot, but the majority of the times I was quiet, I never had any issues with police, never anything like that, or, umm, but like I said, there was a few times the perception from authority figures, as well as other students who unfortunately were a bit ignorant [called him the “n” word]” (Mathieu), reveals that he avoided further disciplining because *he* was quiet. Again, the agency is flipped and the assumption that if he stays quiet, he will not face trouble, fails to recognize the additional burden placed upon him because he is a young black man and must therefore strive to avoid the disciplinary gaze as it is always watching. Further, Mathieu excuses his classmates for using the most obliterating racial epithet in North American dialect on the grounds of ignorance. Yet, by definition, one uses such an epithet correctly because one knows whom to call the “n” word—its very usage is an example of knowledge of racist mythologies, not ignorance. But Mathieu, like Olivia, like Patrice, needs to sustain the idea that racism is an anomaly, an aberration, in order to be able to create a space of belonging.

## **Racializing women**

Rwandan women also had to contend with day to day racialization as their bodies were daily misread as black women's bodies and thus cruelly adorned with either neglect or dismissal, or sexualized and subjected to blunt surveillance. As with men, older or middle-aged women<sup>13</sup> were more inclined to observe and reflect upon the moments of racialization than young women. Perhaps this was an indication of the long-term exposure and exhaustion of the older women, or perhaps, young women, who are socialized to be perceived as adornments, find little strange when they are thus treated. A common refrain that emerged from a number of middle-aged women was that in day to day interactions they were silenced, neglected and made invisible, while simultaneously becoming visible against a backdrop of whiteness. Revocata explained that whenever she approached a service counter she encountered suspicion and a heightened awareness as the question "Can I help you?" created a shield. It was not posed to enquire if she could actually be helped, but as a sharp reminder that she was being watched. Her role, in that moment, as a customer (and thus, in a capitalist system, worthy of respect) was subsumed under the visibility of her blackness and the parallel assumption of presumed criminality. A similar dynamic played out in her professional setting where she held a high position, yet was nearly always assumed to be customer/client and thus was denied the professional respect that she merited. As an expert in her field, even in her professional capacity, her expertise was denied/undercut in favor of white colleagues.

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<sup>13</sup> I am referring to older/middle aged women in order to distinguish them from young women who are in their late teens and twenties, rather than as a marker of age/attitude. Older/middle aged here means 30-60 years of age, roughly.

Marie experienced the same dynamic when she attended a post-secondary institution. She recalled that she was the only black student in the class, thus making her hyper-visible, yet, as she was made visible, her presence was simultaneously erased because she was silenced. She recalled an incident when, in a group activity:

Marie: they asked for ideas to bring and I had an idea from my own book, from group discussion and I brought an idea, an idea forward. And there were like 5 students. And I strongly believe that my idea was right, but one of the kids, you know, the young kids, didn't seem to believe me, you know? They believed the other, the guy's, idea, and I knew it was wrong, which it turned out to be wrong.

Interviewer: Right, because he was a young man...

Marie: [chuckles] male, white....so he has the right answer.

Interviewer: right, and you as a black woman...?

Marie: I have the wrong answer.

Marie further explained that she often felt that professors were less likely to call on her to answer a question than on her classmates, especially if the classmate was a white male. Diane experienced the same dynamic in her post-secondary education, though in her case she was in a female-dominated field, but she still found that white women were called upon more often than she, because she was black. Both women explained this dynamic matter-of-factly, because they had learned to expect this kind of treatment. They expected that they would, as Diane teaches her children, "have to work hard, double what others have to do", because they are black and women, so doubly disadvantaged.

The visibility that black women are ascribed differs from the visibility of black men because black men are pathologized as criminals, while black women are deemed to be sexually immoral. In the GTA the largest group of those racialized as black is of Caribbean descent and many participants in the study indicated that they were often presumed to be Caribbean, which

they often found troubling as this assumption carried moral weight. Caribbean women are likely to be single mothers in a continuation of familial patterns after migration and, in the new economic reality, they are often subsequently economically marginalized because of the lack of two breadwinners. This familial pattern, the consequence of colonialism, migration and economic inequality, is read as “pathological or deviant by professionals who interact with Blacks” (Henry 1995, 99). This interpretation shapes the discursive framing of black Caribbean women as immoral, especially if they are single mothers. Rwandan women, like many black women in the GTA (see Henry 1995), are often assumed to be Caribbean and thus judged as morally inferior to the dominant white society, my participants told me. Marie, a single divorced mother, found herself interpreted and assessed by her work colleagues as such:

Marie: Here there is also the stigma of uhh, you know, your race, your income is low, low-income, poverty...

Interviewer: Especially as a woman?

Marie: Yeah, poverty, and a woman of colour, you know, you like to have children, is the assumption.

Interviewer: I see, so it is the presumption that you are not as moral as others, because you are black?

Marie: Exactly! [very emphatic]

Interviewer: Where do you encounter this?

Marie: You know, at work, colleagues, you know?

Interviewer: How do you know that that’s what they are thinking? How do they show you that that’s what they are thinking?

Marie: They made comments. Oh they’ll say, ‘oh, aren’t you having another child? I thought you guys liked to have many children’ you know?

Interviewer: That’s pretty clear that that’s what they presume.

Marie: [laughs] You know? They don’t look at the individual person!

“You guys”, used by Marie’s white colleagues, here means Caribbean black women and becomes a code word, also used by Richard’s white friend, to refer to black men, signifying a foreign, different and marginal presence within the dominant society. It implies that those who are thus labeled, behave and think differently—they are not “we” or “us” but “you guys”—distant cognitively and emotionally, and, by implication, inferior, in this case, in normative morality.

Being daily read as black Caribbean women meant that Rwandan women were assumed to carry the cultural (presumed inferior) traits of that community. Thus, Angelina was commonly asked by her employers “how come you don’t behave like a Jamaican?” and when she pressed and asked her boss why he asked her this question, he replied that she had “a different demeanor”. She understood this to mean that not only did she not fit narratives about “louder” and “vocally aggressive” black women, but that she was in a stable marriage. Thus, in her workplace, rather than be judged on her merit as a worker, she is assessed for her conformity or non-conformity to racist scripts about behavior and sexual patterns. She is then lauded and appreciated for *not* acting “Jamaican”, suggesting the depth of racism in the workplace.

### ***Labour market integration and segregation***

Racialization contributes to labour market segregation as those who are racialized as black and African face considerable obstacles finding satisfying employment. Many in the community were able to find employment relatively quickly after arrival—usually within a few months if they spoke one of the official languages. But, like nearly every other non-white migrant group, few were able to find employment commensurate with their previous education

and experience. As Creese has argued, “there are three overlapping barriers that privilege local Canadian-born workers over foreign newcomers and collectively constitute a process of deskilling skilled migrant workers: 1) the demand for Canadian work experience, 2) the demand for Canadian educational credentials, and 3) the demand for a local Canadian accent” (2011, 69). These three barriers contribute to a system whereby African migrants often have high levels of education, yet are employed in low-wage, low-skill jobs. Overall, both men and women who migrate from Africa tend to have a higher level of education than those who migrate from any other region, or their Canadian-born counterparts. Indeed, according to Laryea and Hayfron’s study, in 1996 56% of African born men possessed a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 45% of Asian men, 26.7% of Caribbean/Latin American men, 29.8% of U.S./European men, and 26.6% of native-born Canadian men. Likewise, 46% of African born women had a bachelor’s degree or higher, compared to 41.3% of Asian women, 24.8% of Caribbean/Latin American women, 31.3% of U.S./European women and 31.2% of Canadian born women (2005, 116). Yet, despite their overall higher level of education, “there are significant earnings gaps between African-born immigrants and their Canadian-born counterparts,” and “African-born immigrants are less likely to be employed in a high-skilled occupation” (Laryea and Hayfron 2005, 126). To cope with the new reality, African women and men settled in Vancouver pursued three survival strategies: to accept any work, including low-wage manual labour; to volunteer in an unpaid position in order to gain some Canadian experience; to pursue post-secondary education in Canada to attain Canadian credentials (Creese 2011, 82). Those who identified as part of the Rwandan diaspora in the GTA faced similar obstacles.

While the employment outcomes of those who identify as Rwandan but were raised in Canada appear to be equivalent to their Canadian-born counterparts, it is difficult to assess this as

of yet, as among this diaspora group the youth are only now beginning to complete their education and entering the workforce in full time capacities. However, those who migrated as adults certainly faced the same obstacles as other African migrants in Canada. Both men and women faced similar obstacles, but the employment opportunities available to them differed as women found themselves even more segregated into low-wage service sector positions like personal support work or customer service, while men, after much struggle, were often able to find employment in white collar work, though rarely equivalent to the jobs they had had in Rwanda or elsewhere. Among this migrant group, those who arrived prior to 1994 tended to be largely young well-educated men with, at least, an undergraduate degree. Those who migrated after 1994 were more economically diverse and thus some had completed post-secondary education, some had completed high school education, and some had only completed primary education. Nonetheless, there was great emphasis on education and those who arrived without post-secondary education often pursued it after migration, gaining Canadian credentials in the process. Nearly universally among the study participants, those who arrived with post-secondary degrees found that their credentials were not fully recognized. So, a four year Bachelor's degree from an African institution was counted as one year towards a Bachelor's degree (Richard), a Master's degree was counted as a Bachelor's degree I was told, and this meant that the social capital that they arrived with was erased as they then faced the choice of returning to school and accruing debt, or attempting to find employment with the now degraded qualification. Some men, like Richard, felt offended by the devaluing of his credentials as "they say, we'll give you only one year, and you have to do three years—and I said –really? British system?" and chose to take his chances in the labour market at the time (Richard). Thus, rather than rely on his education, as he had assumed he could, he pursued work in a field that only required a secondary



degree. Others learned that the only work available to them was at “seven eleven, to be a cashier. I said how can they do this to people? When they told me to this point they want me, a man in a suit, a university graduate, [...]The reality did not meet the illusions I had. I expected, I expected things to be very different, I tried looking for employment, I couldn’t, the employment that was there for me was beneath my education” (Janvier). Yet, in Janvier’s case, persistence paid off and he attained a job that fit his actual qualifications better, though it was still a lesser position than his education merited.

Yet, others chose to accrue debt in order to attain a Canadian education and Canadian credentials. This strategy, while it mitigated one of the barriers Creese identified, carried the risk of a significant delay in one’s capacity to earn an income, which, for those who had dependents, was rarely an option. Further, as some found, even Canadian credentials did not guarantee full-time employment. Thus one participant, who had been a professor in Rwanda, did not have his credentials recognized, so to pursue teaching in Canada he had to first complete his Bachelor of Education. Upon finishing that credential, he was only able to find work as a substitute teacher for many years before finally being offered full-time employment. Thus his earning potential was significantly deferred.

Others chose to find so-called “survival work”. For instance, one man who had owned a company and had overseen the installation of major water works in Rwanda, found work as a plumber. Many women in the study migrated anticipating that they would be able to work in their professions, but found themselves marginalized in the low-wage service sector. When Connie migrated, despite the post-secondary education that she had, she could only find work in housekeeping. She explained that it was “a hard, hard job. When you come from Africa [...] things are not as you expected, and you have to deal with those things, and you have to get

money, you have to live, and when you are here alone, with your family back home, [...] it's a struggle, but I did my job." The work exhausted her physically and emotionally but she continued to work as it was preferable to being on social assistance. Likewise, another participant, despite having a post-secondary degree, was only able to find work as a personal support worker. This position was "something I would never do with my status where I was at. But my experience wasn't recognized, my degree wasn't recognized, so I had to start somewhere and I had to support my young children who were still overseas. So yeah, the beginning was tough". Many women spent years in these positions, and, exhausted by the stress and the labour, decided to return to post-secondary education to pursue Canadian education. Thus very many of the women I interviewed were at the time of the present study enrolled at post-secondary institutions, or had very recently completed their new degrees. Yet, even with Canadian credentials, many were still either underemployed in short-term contracts or unemployed and volunteering in order to attain that all important industry experience. This pattern of underemployment of women of colour has been observed by many scholars (Chui and Zietsma 2003; Aydemir and Skuterud 2005; Frenette and Morissette 2005; Zaman 2006). Indeed, "the position of immigrants of colour, and in particular of immigrant women who are already marginalized in a gendered labour market, has considerably worsened in the last two decades as economic restructuring and 'flexibility' have increased low-wage, non-standard (particularly part-time and temporary) work" (Creese 2011, 63).

### *Accent Discrimination*

One of the socially acceptable forms of pointing out someone's difference in the GTA is to comment on their non-standard accent. This too is a form of racialization as it serves to denote that that person with the purported accent does not belong and needs to be reminded of this. This admonition serves to remind not only of non-belonging, but of the hierarchically lower position of the speaker, as she is "perceived to be less competent (or, indeed, incompetent) and have more difficulty being heard or having [her] speech taken seriously" (Creese 2011, 34). The ability to speak English in the GTA is a form of social capital and "Native speakers in predominantly White English-speaking nations remain its privileged purveyors" and possess the power to "define legitimate forms of knowledge or expression" (Creese 2011, 35). This power is enacted in "practices of misrecognition, trivialization, and the 'refusal to hear' non-standard accents," which are "everyday forms of linguistic domination" (Creese 2011, 36) and systematically deny the racialized minority upward mobility.

Many in the study spoke fluent French if they had completed secondary school in pre-1994 Rwanda or had lived in the Democratic Republic of Congo or Burundi. Those who lived in Kenya, Tanzania, or Uganda usually spoke English upon arrival. There were also some who lacked linguistic capital in either official language, but possessed unrecognized linguistic skills as many spoke at least two, if not more, African languages, such as Swahili, and, of course, Kinyarwanda. Given the time of migration of most in this study—the late 1980s or early 1990s—those who spoke French often found work relatively quickly, predominantly in customer service. Yet, many others struggled to find employment due to accent discrimination, and even those who did find employment were disciplined for their accents. Among the participants in the study, it was predominantly women who spoke of being disciplined for having a non-standard accent.

That few men mentioned this suggests that their greater social power relative to Rwandan women protected them somewhat from this form of othering. Seraphine recalled that “it was tough to get a job, very very tough. Like, you, the, the, minute you go for the interview, they hear the accent... [...] It was a big barrier. A big one. I think I lost like how many jobs [...] and they are very polite, they tell you, oh thank you, we will call you if something comes up and right then I knew there was no job for me.” This systematic denial of access to employment because of a non-standard accent contributes to the economic marginalization of new migrants.

Theodosia recalled that even though she found work in customer service and thus was able to contribute to her family’s economic well-being, she still faced regular discrimination:

I used to be customer service agent on the phone. When I speak with the Canadian people, people who speak Canadian English, they would say, oh you have an accent. I said, Yeah, thank you, I know that, how can I help you? You know? You move on, you know? And, sometimes when I speak to them, they say, oh, can I speak to someone who speaks better English. And then the question is—is it better English you are looking for, or you are looking for someone who can service your needs? Right? So there you get hassled. But hey, you get to live with it and you bypass it. I still do have an accent for sure, but I don’t need to be told because I know (Theodosia).

The perpetual reminder of her accent was another racial code signifying, effectively, “Ohh, you’re black.” It serves no other purpose than to signal to the speaker that the listener is aware of the speaker’s presumed difference. Even over the telephone line, Theodosia was reminded of her place outside the nation. Diane, who migrated fully fluent in French, assumed that her linguistic capital would aid her in economic integration. It allowed her to find work relatively rapidly as there was a demand for Francophones at the time of her migration; yet, her non-standard accent in French was likewise noted. In one instance a client claimed that he needed to speak with “white from Quebec” and refused to speak with her, even though she spoke French. She went to her manager who supported her and told her to hang up the phone (Diane). That the client could

identify her as non-white merely by virtue of her accent, suggests that accent discrimination is likewise a form of racialization, as individuals possess knowledge of accent origins and can usually place an accent from Latin America, Eastern Europe, South Asia, Africa, and so on, and thus associate accent origin with a presumed racial identity. Olivia likewise had to contend with assumptions about her competence because of her accent. When she was “working with the older population, and you can’t blame them, they’ve never been exposed, when you have an accent, they judge you from that even before they know who you are and what you can do. You have to work harder to be accepted, much harder than anybody, any regular co-worker who was raised here” (Olivia).

Not all remarks concerning one’s accent are discriminatory. Angelina illustrated the different connotations of the same statement when she explained:

Angelina: “Oh, it seems you have an accent, where is that accent coming from”?

Interviewer: Is that code for something else? Does that statement mean ‘you are different than us and I am telling you you’re different’?

Angelina: Yeah, yeah. It’s automatically telling you you don’t belong here—maybe I perceive it that way. [...] Others will say “I love your accent” “Yeah It’s a beautiful accent—where’s that from?” So those are more welcoming and more umm, they take your, they take your approval in a way, like you feel there is an interest, approval telling you they accept your accent, rather than saying I don’t understand and even asking you, you know.

Those who are thus reminded of their presumed difference are well versed in identifying the motivation for the question. Indeed when the latter version of the question is posed, many appreciate the interest and happily tell of their remembered homeland. Significantly, in Angelina’s account is a recognition that the power to accept or decline someone lies squarely with native-born speakers.

The day to day racialization that Rwandans in the GTA encountered ensured that, despite their persistence, ambition and perseverance, they were not perceived to be fully Canadian. The Canadian state, as a central institution of national discourses, has actively maintained a systematic hierarchy of belonging whereby white Anglos are presumed to be the keepers of the nation and they possess the power to name and classify those who belong and to remind those who do not belong of their place outside the national cosmology. Thus, Rwandans in the GTA faced state constructed, reinforced and maintained racialization. They simultaneously faced racialization in their interpersonal and day to day encounters with classmates, co-workers and neighbours. Those who identify as Rwandans encounter these systemic barriers in their day to day lives as they are systematically racialized as black and as African. By generating discourses of multiculturalism and thus holding out the promise of belonging, the Canadian state offers a tantalizing promise of a new space of belonging. But, too often, as the above discussion has demonstrated, multiculturalism is the window dressing of a hierarchical system whereby those who are racialized are institutionally denied their place. This only partial inclusion in the nation in which they have made their home creates a need for belonging elsewhere, and, for many, that need for belonging is thus inscribed onto the idea of a Rwandan diaspora and a connection to the homeland through transnational practices.

## **Chapter Six**

### **The Contradictory Dynamics of Transnationalism**

Previous chapters have spoken at some length about the universalizing national cosmology that the Rwandan state has sought to impose upon those who identify as Rwandan but make their homes and lives in the GTA. Yet the dissemination of knowledge, especially about who belongs in the nation and what constitutes the nation, is not uni-directional. Those who identify as Rwandans in the GTA actively engage in transnational ties with the imagined homeland of Rwanda and individually and collectively negotiate the parameters of belonging. They sustain transnational ties with family and friends in Rwanda, generating a sense of closeness and connection, despite the vast geographical distance between them. Thus they sustain dual emotional worlds—the one in the GTA of the nuclear family, and the one in Rwanda of the larger Rwandan mythical family. Many in the community also have developed charities and other forms of non-governmental organizations which allow them to participate in the civic life of Rwanda as well as determine their own idea of belonging to the Rwandan nation. Finally, most in the community are also subject to state-generated and driven networks and connections to Rwanda. Yet, though the Rwandan state seeks to monitor and control who belongs in the Rwandan nation, these individuals' sense of belonging is hotly contested. They consciously create connections and imagine new versions of the state, even as a universalizing one is imposed upon them. Though they are subject to the narratives of transnationalism that the Rwandan regime imposes for its political and economic ends, those who identify as Rwandans in the GTA are transnational agents in their own right, who often actively challenge the regime's mythico-history and policing of identity.

There are three broad trends of transnational activity that Rwandans in the GTA undertake: individual/familial connections, non-governmental engagements, and state-driven networks. Individuals retain very close ties to the families that they have in Rwanda through phone communication, internet communication and through travel to Rwanda. Though not all of the participants in this study had the financial means to travel to Rwanda, nearly all expressed a deep desire to do so. Those with the financial means of travel often did so annually, and perceived it to be a duty, as well as a pleasure. The internet provides the most readily accessible means of retaining ties to friends and family in Rwanda as social media had enabled quick and efficient communication and many participants reported daily contact through Facebook and other forums. This form of connection, retained despite the uprooting of the migrant, serves to create an affective transnational community, whereby national state borders do not have a monopoly on classification and identification. This type of transnationalism, largely established and maintained beyond the scope of a state (provided that the state does not limit access, to, for example, the internet, and thus does not intervene), is an example of so-called “‘little’ transnationalism---of household and family” and is probably one of the most durable forms of transnational activity (Vertovec 2009, 18).

Another common form of transnational engagement among the Rwandan community in the GTA was the formation of non-governmental organizations devoted to many goals, but, most commonly, to development in Rwanda. Among the community in the GTA, I counted at least 5 different charities/organizations, formed by those who identify as Rwandans in the GTA and committed to promoting economic and social development in Rwanda through various activities such as: funding education for youth, offering training in Christian ministries, training widows in skills such as sewing, and offering housing and support to orphans. This form of transnational



activity often also entailed physical movement between Canada and Rwanda, but, more commonly, it entailed the diffusion of expertise and capital from Canada to Rwanda. It is an example of transnationalism “from below” which denotes “local, grassroots activity” (Vertovec 2009, 18). As Mahler points out, transnationalism from below “can generate creole identities and agencies that challenge multiple levels of structural control: local, regional, national, and global” (2009, 68). This type of transnationalism is not instituted by state institutions in that it is instigated and enacted by individuals and communities, yet it relies heavily upon the cooperation of a state system, both to permit the movement of capital and expertise across state borders, and then to enact the grassroots vision of development within the state. It may be “from below”, but it is subject to the regulatory power of the state, and, thus, unlike “little” transnationalism, it does not weave around existing state institutions, but necessitates the active participation and intervention of states.

The third category of transnational activity is that instigated by the Rwandan state. During the period of the present study, this included regularly held Rwanda Days whereby President Kagame traveled to major urban centres in Europe and North America and met with the local diaspora community in order to encourage investment in and return to Rwanda. This was supported by a well-funded information campaign paired with infrastructure development in Rwanda to facilitate such investment. It also included programs whereby the state offered funding to bring diaspora members to visit Rwanda and “Come and See, Go and Tell” how well reconciled and developed the nation state had become. This program supported the Rwandan state’s project of ‘reconciliation’ by exposing those living abroad to the developments in Rwanda. Those who were thus funded were then tasked with telling their friends and colleagues in the diaspora just how developed and reconciled Rwanda had become (Government of Rwanda

2014). Interestingly, according to one participant, this program specifically targeted Hutus in the diaspora in order to persuade them that the ethnic divides were a thing of the past and return to Rwanda was, once again, a possibility.

This form of state-led transnationalism begs the question—was this *transnationalism*, or *internationalism*? It seemed to be an example of state institutions acting on behalf of the state mechanism in an international capacity. However, the audience and subjects of these activities were not other states, nor an imagined international community, but migrants who had left Rwanda and made their homes elsewhere. These are transnational interventions because the Rwandan state was transcending the state order/system and speaking to a group that it had labeled the diaspora. In creating this label, the Rwandan state had generated a space of extra-state belonging and existence. Yet this space of belonging to a deterritorialized notion of Rwanda is not open to all who would wish to seek it out. The Rwandan state created a narrative of belonging for those who had agreed with its national cosmology, and denied belonging, potentially even life, to those who had challenged its mythico-history.

The Rwandan-state led initiatives served the primary purpose of encouraging return and investment in Rwanda. Yet, perhaps more significantly, they also served to enforce and disseminate the Rwandan state's myths beyond its borders. As Brubaker suggests, the modern state is “one of the most important agents of identification and categorization”, but “even the most powerful state does not monopolize the production and diffusion of identifications and categories” (2006, 43). The individual/familial and non-governmental forms of transnational activity generated narratives that offered alternative notions of what it meant to be a Rwandan residing in the GTA. As such, before discussing state-led transnationalism, it seems most useful

to begin a discussion of transnational practices by investigating bottom-up, individualized practices and those enacted through non-governmental organizations.

### *Little Transnationalisms*

Those who have family in Rwanda had been able to sustain long-term close ties and contact with the imagined national community by communicating with those family members who still resided in the remembered homeland. The more urbanized and middle class the family members, the greater the ease of communication as they now had access to technologies like the internet and cell phones. These universally human ties sustained affective connections to individual people, such as parents, siblings, children left behind, spouses, cousins and friends, thus creating a sense of community and belonging, in the absence of a new community in the new host/homeland. Yet as the migrant slowly built up new affective ties in the new host/homeland, one would expect that the ties to those in the homeland would slowly peter out and become secondary to newly formed connections. However, as Janvier demonstrated, daily interaction with those from “home” was an integral part of many migrants’ lives:

I call Rwanda every morning. I’m glad that my parents are still alive, they’re in their eighties. I make sure that I call them every day, and I make sure that I call my brothers who are also there. So thank god technology has facilitated all that, we now buy calling cards it’s no longer exorbitant the way it was in the ‘80s or the ‘90s. We now have calling cards and they also have cell phones, which is another technology which has really made the whole [...] even faster. Communication has developed faster than other areas. So I’m in touch on a daily basis (Janvier).

Even though he had lived in the GTA since the 80s (and thus had lived away from the imagined homeland for nearly three decades), Javier still called his parents *daily*—which is more than many adult children who live in the same city as their aging parents. But his bond extended

beyond his parents as he phoned his brothers nearly as often, as well. This daily connection allowed him to sustain the sense of kinship with his biological family, as well as the affective imagination of his place in the nation since he was able to daily hear gossip from the street, the neighbour's troubles, the other neighbours daughter's successes, another neighbour's drunken altercation with the beat cop. These snippets of largely irrelevant day to day life narratives, the actual stuff of life, placed Janvier in the homeland affectively in a way that was impossible when he lived there. When he had lived in the homeland, he would not have been able to chortle at the neighbour's drunken altercation because he would have been angered at the vomit on his front step; he would not have been able to cheer on the other neighbour's daughter's success because he would have been jealous that his children were not as lucky or successful. He would have had to face, day in and day out, those whom he held responsible for the genocide. However, at the literal remove of thousands of kilometers, Janvier could indulgently hear these stories and thus create an idealized homeland narrative where people are closer to one another (than in Canada), and to feel "proud of being Rwandese" because "look at who did what in the genocide and how they are living in harmony with their neighbours" (Janvier).

Yet not everyone had such a rosy picture of "back home"; many who had migrated and made new homes in the GTA engaged in forms of little transnationalism, but were not enthusiastic about it; rather, the practice carried emotional and financial responsibilities which were not easily borne. Because Patrice migrated by himself, it could be assumed that he would have eagerly sustained ties like Janvier had done. However, in reality, sustaining transnational ties to his family and friends became more of a burden than a joy:

Patrice: when you got here, they expect you to bring something for them. So, for them you are living a better life—making more, so everything is better so they expect you to bring something. You cannot just bring \$500, or a \$1000, no, no, if you take some money first of all for your family, everybody knows after a week that you're there.

Interviewer: You have to bring gifts for everyone.

Patrice: Everyone. It may not be money, but it's, it does something too. Some people are even like 40, like, older than you, start coming to you like "how are my kids going to go to school?" "What can you do for me?"

Interviewer: Right, they start asking you for favours.

Patrice: And you cannot afford it. And sometimes you live a different reality here, you say no to the person asking, like what's going on? You're kind of confused. You can't say no. You feel uncomfortable. And then someone else will come, what am I going to do?

Interviewer: Right, then word will get around that you are giving away money.

Patrice: And I know people who will go there and plan to stay there for a month, and come back after 2 weeks because they have no money left. They can't afford to stay.

Interviewer: That's really prohibitive.

Patrice: It is. It's, it's a challenge. But the thing is that's where, like, if, I decide to go, I think I would have to plan like I'm going on a mission, or something like that. Yeah, cause the first time when you go back, the first thing you have in your mind is oh, I wanna see my family. I wanna see them, you don't really expect that they will ask for that much. And it's also going back to see friends. For me when I see friends, I'm going to have fun, have a meal, share something, but then you see people after the meal, saying that, start asking things—you don't expect that. And then, then, okay, so you came here to help people or you came here to see people? That's when I'm saying next time when you go back you have to change how you view it. So that, the first thing you think is "I'm going back home", you expect to go and have fun. It doesn't happen, it's different (Patrice).

So the transnational migrant, who was barely able to support himself in the new homeland where he had been relegated to a low-wage service sector position, found himself unable to travel to see his family and friends without undue financial burdens placed upon him by those very people whom he wished to see. Even those outside his direct circle felt that it was appropriate to ask him for favours and gifts as they now perceived him to be a "Westerner" and thus, by definitional fiat, economically successful. The result of this dynamic was that Patrice, and others who had not attained middle-class security in their new homeland, were unable to travel "home" even if they were able to travel to Rwanda, because "home" was now the site of demands and subsequent

guilt when the migrant was unable to live up to the expectations placed upon him as a transnational migrant.

Maintaining transnational ties carried emotional burdens alongside significant financial burdens as well. Olivia explained that she needed to travel to Rwanda because it was “part of my healing process too, like every time I have a chance, I can afford it and I have time to go, I will go. Cause I still have a strong attachment with that country”. Yet she also explained that travelling back to Rwanda awakened what she termed “survival guilt because I worked with women survivors, I worked with orphans, I worked with people in need, who were physically and psychologically hurt, so when I had to leave, it felt like there was some unfinished business for me”. This survival guilt was paired with guilt that “my personal contribution was not there”, that she had been unable to offer service and aid in the development of a new Rwanda. Thus, the technologies that enabled the migrant to retain closer ties than ever before also come with an emotional cost and placed burdens upon the new migrant attempting to build a life for herself in a new homeland.

### ***Little Digital Transnationalism***

Engaging in individual/familial forms of transnationalism across time and space creates an alternative idea of the nation, which does not rely on territorial claims or state institutions; rather, it fosters and feeds an affective nation, whereby the migrant who is no longer within the nation-state does not feel any less Rwandan for his distance. Further, as Kadende-Kaiser has observed in the case of Burundian digital activism, online interactions can create spaces in which victims of political violence may find room for healing (2003). While none of the following

examples deal explicitly with trauma and healing, the memory of violence is ever present in the references to the mythico-history, and in individual attempts at connection. The migrant thus can envision that the Rwandan nation transcends the state and its geo-political limits. Jean-Paul describes this affective tie when he explains that:

I don't see myself as a Canadian, I see myself as a Rwandan. I don't have any Canadian papers. Sometimes when someone calls me Rwandan-Canadian, or Canadian-Rwandan, I'm like, I should be called Rwandan. Just that, you know? It's so great that you can't let it go in any way, yeah. Even if things change, if things were like whatever, I still feel that I'm so connected to my country in a way that I can't explain. I don't know how. I mean, I find myself laughing at myself sometimes, I mean I spend a great amount of time reading about local [Rwandan] stuff, the newspapers have some websites I keep reading them, anyone who has written anything, my Google alerts are saved for Rwanda. I'm like, why do I have to do this? I'm not there, if they are doing anything it does not affect me at all, but something forces me to keep in close touch with Rwanda and I can't give it up. Like I can't get it out of my head (Jean-Paul).

Jean-Paul was aware of his literal and psychological distance from Rwanda as he recognized that “if they are doing anything, it does not affect me at all”, yet he could not help but sustain his emotional connection to the nation as inscribed in news feeds and social media. This ability to keep informed and, potentially, to intervene in the dialogue on social media, enabled him to imagine that he was exclusively “Rwandan”, which he distinguished from “Rwandan-Canadian or Canadian-Rwandan”. These hybrid hyphenated markers did not sit well with his sense of self. His insistence upon his unitary identity, despite migration to the GTA, is itself a form of transnationalism. Though it seems to challenge the implicit hybridity of the transnational migrant, the fact that his chosen national identification was to the nation-state that he no longer resided in, and had no plans of returning to, suggests that hybridity is not the only form of transnational identity. Indeed, his intellectual and affective ties were so strong, that he “can't get it out of [his] head”; his identification with the imagined deterritorialized nation seems compulsive, and unconscious. Yet, the maintenance of this tie required active engagement with

the imagined homeland and with those who resided there. Jean-Paul had to continue to follow the social media and news outlets in order to feel that he was close and connected, despite the distance. He, like the Eritreans whom Victoria Bernal observed online, understood himself as deeply rooted, involved and “acting on behalf of [his] nation” (Bernal 2014, 4). He was participating in the creation of a digital transnational idea of the nation. This idea goes beyond the state and its policies, the geographic space designated “Rwanda” and the people who identify with this identity. This third space, very much a contemporary component of diasporic Rwandan identity, is the virtual notion of ethnicity/nationhood, whereby the individual in question reads, comments, posts on forums, news sites, and in social media, and thus imagines that he is an active participant in national affairs, as well the domestic affairs of the distant family. Bernal proposes that this new relationship between states and diasporas is altering the meanings and the practices of citizenship and sovereignty and that “the diaspora used the internet to create Eritrean space online in ways that extended the nation and the sovereignty of the state into the diaspora and the virtual” (2014, 27), a topic that will be further explored in the section that deals with state-led transnationalism. Many scholars have also observed that rather than weaken ties to the nation-state, migrants’ ability to connect through virtual connections has led to a strengthening of national identities (Dahan and Scheffer, 2001; Parham 2005; Erikson 2007; Bernal 2014).

The evolution of digital technologies, especially social media like Facebook, had further facilitated interpersonal transnational connections as families regularly communicated through these means. Theodosia explained that her children were able to sustain a sense of family with family members whom they had not seen in a long time (or, in some cases, ever), through Facebook. She was warmly proud that:

when I speak to my mom, they ask me –ohh, who is that? And I say grandmother, and they say, oh, grandmother, can I speak to her? You see now they have this relationship of



wanting to speak to their grandmother, of wanting to speak to their nieces and cousins, their aunts. Yeah, sometimes when I see them, sometimes when I am on the Facebook, when I see their picture, I say ohh come and see so and so. So it's a connection. And that's the connection I wanted to build with the family back home. So because when they go there and they see there and when I talk to them, and when we come back and they see the pictures, they can write to each other, they can remember each other. That's a connection, that's the relationship I wanted to build with the family back home (Theodosia).

The children, who were born in Canada, were able to imagine a kinship with people who were born and raised in an East African nation-state (not necessarily Rwanda), because they travelled to visit these people and then were taught to reinforce and deepen the shallow ties to these people who really only shared genetic material and ancestry, as social media platforms enabled the perception that one was emotionally and psychologically close to them. This notion of family bonds would have been impossible in a pre-internet era as letter writing was arduous and largely only undertaken by those who already shared an affinity and tie (Bernal 2014). Thus, children born to migrants outside of the homeland would not as easily have been able to imagine a distant family as emotionally close because they lacked both a shared history and the capacity to regularly interact with said distant family. In this sense, the intergenerational transfer of affective ties and connections to specific people, not just to an imagined community, is a product of new technologies, especially the world of Facebook.

Yet not all transnational migrants were delighted with the ability to sustain digital ties easily. Especially Facebook could serve as both a means of togetherness, and generate simultaneous distance. Patrice explained that having the ability to glance into other people's lives became a double-edged sword when what he witnessed was his friends' successes and these stood in sharp contrast to his circumscribed efforts to build a new life. As he put it: "right now everybody is getting Facebook, so that's really helping to keep in touch—pictures and stuff like that. And something interesting, most of my friends, they are married, some of them might have

even kids, [...] Whereas here, you're still trying to make a life, you know? To settle down" (Patrice). He was happy for his friends, but his difficulty in attaining the same worldly goods in the host/homeland sharply accentuated his distance from the old homeland. His experience stands in contrast to the celebration of the virtual nations and nationhood as it illustrates that even in a virtual world, economic marginalization in the hostland can weaken ties with the homeland as the migrant feels individualized shame, thus he chooses to distance himself.

### *Children's Transnational Imaginations*

As I mentioned above, the children of migrants, especially those who were either born outside Rwanda, or so young at the time of migration that all their conscious memories were formed after, were still able to develop transnational connections with those in Rwanda and thus tap into an affective Rwandan nation. André described how his children, all of whom had been born in Canada, carried with them an imagined Africa and were very trepidatious when they first visited. Despite being the children of migrants, these children were fully saturated in the Canadian/Western cosmology of the West as the centre of civilization, commerce and modernity, and the rest, especially Africa, as the site of savagery, tribalism and tradition. As the father explained to me, they could not envision Rwanda as a cultural/linguistic/economic entity apart from larger Africa. Rather, they conceived that they were travelling to a mythical Africa of famine and danger. Much to their father's grim amusement, they anticipated that Rwanda would be primitive and have insufficient food to feed them, and that there would be wild animals roaming the streets. As André explained, "kids who are born here live in another world" and were unable to imagine the Rwanda of which their parents spoke. Thus, when they encountered civility, order and modernity in the form of urban streetscapes with restaurants and shops they

were “very impressed”. They were stunned to realize that the wild animals, especially the famous gorillas, which they had half feared and half desired, were only present in national parks and not roaming the streets of Kigali (though the image is an amusing one calling to mind something out of a Kipling narrative), and that there were no lions in Rwanda (contrary to the mythical world of Disney’s *Lion King*, which was one of the few images of Africa that they possessed). This culture shock, for it can only be called that, calls to mind the culture shock, discussed in the previous chapter, of those who migrated from Rwanda to Canada. Thus the children of the migrants experienced a similar sense of dislocation and displacement upon travelling to Rwanda.

Yet, upon adjusting to this alternate reality, the children, according to the reports of parents, came to truly love the parent’s homeland. André’s children got to spend time on their grandmother’s farm and encountered the delights, so often foreign to urban children, of eating fresh produce and fresh dairy. According to their parents, they were further delighted by the extended kinship system of everyone being called “auntie/uncle” or “grandma/grandpa” as they were used to a narrower conception of family. Theodosia likewise described that her children initially experienced dislocation, but rapidly came to see the pleasures of having a distant homeland. The language of Kinyarwanda, which was often the only language spoken by grandparents in Rwanda, became an initial obstacle as the children who were raised in Canada were unlikely to understand it and felt excluded from all adult interactions. However, after some time spent among family, children often began to pick up the language and were able to interact with their new family and “they loved it, they enjoyed it, it was a good experience for them” (Theodosia). Children seemed to especially take to the idea of having an extended family as their experience in Canada had been of the nuclear family only. The addition of so many people into one’s circle of “family” created a sense of belonging and acceptance, though, as many parents

reluctantly admitted, after a few weeks of this type of immersion, the children yearned to return to their Canadian lives and to their PlayStations. Thus the children's transnationalism differed from the parents' transnationalism as it inverted the experiences and expectations as few children would come to see Rwanda as the primary home—for most, home would remain Canada, but Rwanda could become a second home, accessed through online interactions and occasional visits. This echoes the findings of many studies that focus on the second-generation experience of migration and transnationalism, though the particular circumstances and internal politics of each diasporic group determines the degree of affiliation that second generation migrants feel for the homeland (Christou 2006; McAuliffe 2007).

For many children of migrants, the experience of suddenly becoming exotic and desirable and not just other, was an intoxicating adventure. Simon's daughter first travelled to Rwanda when she was 8 years old and the experience of "everybody wants to take care of you and so she felt so special, seeing everywhere she goes that they treat her with consideration" allowed her to see herself as someone of value, not just a tolerated outsider in a dominant white society. She gained "a strong personality" and confidence from being perceived and treated thus, and, upon returning to school in Toronto, "she was talking to everyone in her school about her family in Rwanda" (Simon). Yet, as her father explained, he worked hard to teach her she is neither Canadian nor Rwandan, but "I want her to grow up feeling just she is human" (Simon). While he was delighted that his daughter had learned to feel connected and even proud of his homeland, he stressed a fundamental anti-nationalist humanism as his personal challenge to the terrors that that occurred in the name of hyper-nationalism in Rwanda. His ability to envision himself as neither Canadian nor Rwandan was a direct consequence of migration. It was the dislocation from the

territorial state that opened up affective and ideological possibilities of belonging to new imagined communities.

### ***Imagined and Real Transnational Interventions in Rwanda***

Those who understood themselves to be transnational migrants framed themselves as actively involved and invested in contemporary developments in the imagined homeland.

Janvier, in extolling Rwanda's virtues, constantly used the pronoun "we", as in:

Rwanda today is the envy of so many African countries. Economically, politically, socially, and otherwise. We have leaders in Rwanda who tell us that being in an environment of blind people, we shouldn't take any pride that we are partially blind. Okay? Which translates into—we shouldn't compare ourselves to other impoverished countries around, okay? We should aim at being Singapore, we should aim at being Canada, so, being better than the way things are in Uganda (Janvier).

The persistence of the personal collective pronoun indicated his affective attachment and his perception that he had as much of a stake in the doings of the Rwandan state as those who resided within Rwanda. While in some ways this is an imagined attachment as, living and working in Canada, the socio-political events occurring in Rwanda only marginally affected him, yet, in other ways, those in the diaspora often have a deep stake in domestic events. Especially those who contribute through remittances have not only a stake in the outcomes, but also a claim to affect those outcomes. Yet, few were eager to mention if they sent remittances or how much they sent, though there was a general understanding that most families sent some form of remittance back, as Patrice had indicated. In some cases these took the form of buying property for elderly parents, or purchasing cattle and other livestock for family farms, or sending school fees for a niece or nephew. Others bought themselves land in Rwanda, as they imagined that they might one day return to retire in the remembered homeland. Yet, few wanted to discuss the

details, and when one participant mentioned that he had bought his parents cattle, for instance, he was very quick to explain that this was a form of wealth in Rwanda and that it would ensure the elderly parents a stable income. It seemed that because the forms of remittance were not only monetary, and thus perceived as Western/modern, the participant felt that I, as an outsider, would not understand the value of the gift, or, perhaps, feared that I would read the giver and recipient as pre-modern, according to western mythologies of Africa.

Many migrants felt an emotional stake in the efforts at reconciliation in post-genocide Rwanda and, as Christophe explained, firmly believed that they had a role to play in preventing a recurrence of genocide, even though they lived in Canada. He argued that:

I think that there is a role that everybody can play to make sure that the past we have seen that doesn't come back, that the history doesn't repeat itself, and it's not because the international community is there, it's going to do something, it's not because there are people who are outside who are going to do those things, because it's a process, so it's only Rwandans who can build successfully that process. So, and I feel also that there's a role that I can play to make sure that my kids will not experience the same history that I experienced (Christophe).

Even as he was building a life in Canada, he still worked to create a future for his potential future children that was free of the violence that had marked his life so profoundly. His intervention is an interesting one to understand as an act of transnationalism as his activism was to offer lectures in Canada to school groups, church groups, and any other organization willing to listen, on the history of the genocide (his version closely resembled the state's narratives, as I discussed in chapter 3). His intervention in homeland politics was to lecture on this topic to *Canadian* audiences. The identity of the audience is significant because it points to the nature of transnational activism. As Christophe envisioned, his activism was geared towards reconciliation and recovery in the homeland, but he was seeking to attain this end by engaging with those who were not connected to Rwanda. While from the outside this appears contradictory, it makes sense

if we understand that his idea of Rwanda and Rwandaness extends beyond the national/geo-political entity to an idea, a possibility of a future free of violence, and this idea, while directed at the geo-political space of Rwanda, could be enacted elsewhere.

The belief that such a future was possible, perhaps even already occurring, was another common feature of narratives of transnational emotional investment. Revocata spoke at length of the degree to which “the country was completely destroyed” after the genocide and how a new Rwanda had now emerged. Her pride in the new Rwanda was evident as she explained that where Rwanda was now was remarkable as Kigali was “now safer than some areas of Toronto” and though “some types of leadership may not be the same as in Canada”, “the country is trying very hard” (Revocata). While she did not place herself in the narrative the way that Janvier and Christophe had, her personal stake and investment in the new Rwanda was evident in the ardour with which she defended it against an (imagined) attack.

### *Absence of Affective Transnationalism*

To propose that the above discussed engagements are indeed transnational, we need to be able to point to moments/engagements where the migrant does not develop transnational ties, otherwise, transnationalism is simultaneously everything and nothing. Seraphine discussed how astounded she was to perceive the changes in the new Rwanda. Yet, at the same time, she no longer perceived herself as belonging to that society. She was impressed with “progress” and “development”, for instance, that “the president has a system where students do study for free, like the whole primary, elementary school—like it was not there before. Uhh, that is something that I said, wow this is great, even if you can’t manage to pay for high school, but at least you

have that basic education. And umm, even in general, to see how the country is progressing” (Seraphine) At the same time, she felt that “but I don’t think I can live there”. She did not perceive herself as having a transnational identity whereby she could feel a belonging in more than one locality at once; rather, her narrative was one of the decline of identification with Rwandaness as her identification with Canadianess emerged. She articulated that

in the first few years when I just got here, I was still back in Rwanda, ‘cause I was not sure what’s here, how, how do I integrate here, how do I come around and feel at home, but after those years, after now, I don’t, I just, when I go to Rwanda I feel like I’m a visitor. A visitor who is excited to see how the country is progressing, to see how, what has happened, but I don’t feel like I’m there, I’m part of them. I don’t feel like I’m Rwandese (Seraphine).

After years in Canada, she came to see herself as “Canadian, like I’m, I’m a Canadian, I feel like this is my home”. Interestingly, she framed herself as an outsider, a “visitor” when she traveled to Rwanda, unlike others who ardently maintained that they belonged in Rwanda and reinforced this affective tie with physical ties such as land ownership. Though she was still connected to Rwanda and Rwandaness, as her travel to Rwanda indicated, she did not see herself as transnationally identified.

Likewise, Angelina was impressed with the economic and social progress that she had witnessed in Rwanda when she traveled there, but also understood herself to be an outside observer:

I do not fully feeling like I’m a Rwandan, any longer. One is because I never lived there as a child, to have a very strong bond with the country, I can see Rwanda and associate it with my extended family, but I really don’t have anything to miss much, uhh, I still feel, when I was going there I felt I’m more Canadian than Rwandan. But I have love for Rwanda because I know people who I grew up with,[...] but I feel like I’m a visitor (Angelina).

Both Angelina and Seraphine used the term “visitor” to describe their place in the imagined homeland, which, evidently, is no longer their homeland. Both women expressed a greater



emotional affinity for Canada than for Rwanda, thus challenging the assumption that migration necessarily creates transnational identities. Interestingly, both women traveled to Rwanda and were invested and interested in developments there, but used third person pronouns to describe these developments—“they”, “their”, etc.—rather than the personal possessive pronouns evident in Janvier’s discussion of Rwanda. These women’s attachment to Rwanda was qualitatively different than the attachment expressed by others mentioned earlier, and it is by taking account of the difference in their degree of affective ties that it becomes evident that there is no universal experience of migration nor of subsequent transnational identification to Rwanda while living in Canada; rather, each individual experience, while subject to the universalizing narratives of both states, is shaped by the individual agency and perspective of that person.

### ***Transnationalism from Below: Civil Society***

Non-governmental organizations have long been considered a significant part of contemporary transnationalism. These organizations are often perceived as a component of the assumed assault on the state as they breed an idea of transnational civil society that has the ability to affect national interests and introduce new social and political norms into the state. As Steffen Mau argues, “the role of civil society actors is crucial, because they can have an important function in the articulation of political claims and interests which can no longer be sufficiently represented in the framework of the nation-state” (2010, 163). Indeed, in the case of post-genocide Rwanda, the state had little capacity to offer any services, and the proliferation of external civil society actors did serve to articulate new claims and interests. However, with the creation and establishment of the post-genocide regime, the state has increasingly come back as

the central political actor. Thus, though it initially appeared that the nation-state's dominance and utility was in question, its return has once again inscribed it as the pivotal institution in the formation of Rwandan society and diaspora, as will be argued below. Nonetheless, those in the diaspora, seeing the initial needs in the wake of the genocide, rallied individually and in small numbers and created non-governmental organizations to offer multiple services. As I mentioned earlier, during my research among the diaspora in the GTA, I counted at least 5 distinct NGOs that had been created in the 20 years since the genocide.

The first example of this relatively new form of transnationalism for this community was an informal religious network that offered skills training in Burundi, Rwanda, Congo and Uganda. A number of religious leaders in the GTA had organized themselves into an informal network that offered what they termed "discipleship" training in Rwanda and other states in the region. This program was designed initially to help fill the spiritual gap left by genocide in Rwanda, but as it slowly took on life, religious communities in states adjacent to Rwanda became involved, and it came to serve a much broader regional purpose. While it was organized by religious leaders, it was not centralized through any one church or central organization and instead relied on the contacts and expertise of the few who participated, making it very much the brainchild of the creators. Jean explained the purpose of this organization thus: "I go there to train some local pastors because most of the pastors there died during the genocide, so we have to train people and also to encourage Canadian missionaries to go there and help, and also, you know, not only missionaries, but other people who are trained in different ways, as teachers and so forth" (Jean). Not only did this organization offer spiritual support, but it also offered more bricks and mortar aid, as it sent funds for particular projects, like the building of a church or school, found teachers able to teach in the school, and filled other gaps left by the state.

Interestingly, it was not only those of Rwandan descent who offered their services, as “missionaries from Kitchener, Ontario, different areas, from Thunder Bay, we are doing some good work there, you know, different ways” (Jean). As Jean and his colleagues sought to offer their skills in order to rebuild Rwanda, they also tapped into their new Canadian networks and utilized the expertise of other members of their new religious communities, indeed, explicitly, as Jean explained, those extending to “white churches”, in order to provide services in Rwanda. Of particular relevance to the present study was the fact that this organization brought to the fore new ideas about who participated in the civil society of Rwanda. Now, non-Rwandans, people who had had no previous connection to Rwanda, offered not only financial support, but, more significantly, skills and expertise as they travelled to Rwanda as missionaries with a variety of additional practical purposes. Interestingly, this ongoing grassroots intervention upset Western discourses of the primitive, undeveloped ‘Rest’ needing the aid of the civilized, developed ‘West’, even as Western missionaries traveled to Africa, replicating a centuries old narrative (Mudimbe 1988). As Jean expressed, the white, non-Rwandan, missionaries were very surprised by what they encountered in Rwanda and often expressed a new found love/affinity for the region. Indeed, they “like it more than we actually [...] expected”, and they returned to their Canadian homes with a new idea of a very particular culture (Jean). This transnational intervention of non-Rwandan Canadians served to undercut universalizing narratives about Rwandan primitivism, while sustaining universalizing Christian narratives, but, perhaps more significantly, it served to re-frame how those of Rwandan origin in the GTA were perceived by their religious peers. The missionaries who had traveled, presumably expecting to find primitivism and poverty, likely the same tropes that André’s sons had expected, encountered economic development and growth, cultural plurality, warm hospitality and, effectively, a

society fully embroiled in day to day modernity. As a few participants explained, their colleagues learned to see them differently, from associated with primitivism and genocidal violence, to agents and subjects of complex subjectivities and plural, transnational identities. Thus the involvement of non-Rwandans in this transnational activity had the effect of altering how Rwandans in the GTA were perceived and read, effectively altering the discursive understandings about Rwandaness in the GTA.

Another transnational engagement which has had the effect of altering discursive meanings of Rwandaness (and, consequently, Canadianess), has been a more institutionalized NGO called *Shelter Them*, created and fostered by two Rwandan community members in the GTA. This organization described itself thus:

Shelter Them is a Christian charitable organization dedicated to helping orphans and vulnerable children in Rwanda receive the basics of life.

Shelter Them was birthed in the hearts of Rwandan genocide survivors, Josephine & Jocelyne in 2005. In just a few short years Shelter Them has grown from a small feeding program into a recognized charitable organization. We are rescuing the homeless orphans in Rwanda and giving them a chance to become a part of Rwandas bright future.

**Our passion and purpose is to rescue orphans and needy children from a hopeless life on the streets, and provide them with a bright future** (Shelter Them 2014, *emphasis in original*).

As the brainchild of two genocide survivors, this type of grassroots intervention served to appease the survivor's guilt by utilizing the energies and resources in the new homeland to help build "Rwandas bright future". The fact that the mission statement of the organization pointed out that it was "birthed in the hearts of Rwandan genocide survivors" inextricably connected the emotional needs of the survivors with the activities of the organization. Thus, even as the organization sought to engage on the ground in Rwanda, it served to meet the emotional needs of Rwandans in the GTA by making them feel (rightfully) that they were potent and able to affect change in the lives of those who lived in the remembered/imagined homeland. By creating this

type of NGO, those in the diaspora community in the GTA were actively working to alter their own narratives as survivors of genocide and migrants in a new homeland. Their ability to transcend borders and generate a “transnational social field” (Mahler 2009, 75) altered their self-perception as Rwandans, and specifically, as Rwandans who survived the genocide, while also altering how they were received in Canada. The creation of an NGO could be read as positing them as global citizens within the domestic order of Canada and demanded that they be seen as potent and globally engaged, rather than as victims and passive interlocutors within the national imaginary of the Canadian state. Every year the founders of the organization took 12-15 volunteers to Rwanda where they engaged in various labours, such as building a playground, offering workshops, and visiting with the children whom the charity provided for. These volunteers, not unlike the missionaries described above, traveled to Rwanda with a set of expectations and returned with new ideas about the place and the people in it. Again, this discursive shift in the meaning of Rwandaness forced these volunteers to see their hosts/organizers in a new way as they become the agents of both sites, fluent in the languages and cultures of both Canada and Rwanda.

Even as this organization served to alter self and other perceptions of those living in the GTA, it also affected the meanings associated with Rwandaness within Rwanda. This organization had actively partnered with the Rwandan state in order to secure land and resources to build a village outside of Kigali to house the beneficiaries of the charity. Its focus was on offering services in order to fill the gaps left by state services. As such, even though it was a grassroots initiative of two genocide survivors, it necessitated state intervention and cooperation. While *Shelter Them* did not overtly challenge state narratives or power, by virtue of offering social services, with the blessing of the Rwandan state, it pointed to the significant absences, and

effectively, to the inability of the state to offer its citizens necessary services. Yet, even as this type of charitable organization exposed the absences, by partnering with the Rwandan state, it reinforced the hegemony and legitimacy of the state and served to expand its ambit.

### ***Rwandan State-led Transnationalism***

In light of annual remittances ranging from \$10 million in 2003 to \$91 million in 2010 (World Bank), or, according to the Diaspora General Directorate in Rwanda, \$42.85 million in 2005 to \$172.4 million in 2009 (Fransen and Seigel 2011, 10), the Rwandan state has a significant interest in retaining close ties with those who have migrated and settled elsewhere. Therefore the state instituted the Rwandan Diaspora Global Network, as was discussed in chapter 4. Indeed, the founding documents expressed the sentiment that: “the Government of Rwanda (GoR) strongly believes that the Rwandan Diaspora is an important constituent that cannot be ignored and which, if it is well harnessed, can contribute to national socio-economic development” (no longer available, quoted from Fransen and Seigel 2011, 13). The Constitution of the RDGN further expresses the state’s desire to “harness” those who have migrated in expressing “the need for the Rwandan Diaspora members to actively participate in the social, cultural and economic development of their motherland and the duty the Rwandan Diaspora owe to their future generations” (Constitution of the Rwandan Diaspora Global Network). These policy documents actively frame the diaspora as not only another “pillar” of the Rwandan nation state, but also as owing allegiance and loyalty to said state. In order to enforce this allegiance, especially in the form of further economic remittances, the Rwandan state has actively generated transnational ties with its diasporas by reaching out to the ethno-political entrepreneurs in

diaspora communities who usually already have ties to the Rwandan state apparatus, and, even, by hosting events for the diaspora communities in their new homes.

### *Diaspora as Desirable: Rwanda Day*

During the period of the present study, the most visible articulations of the state's attempt to encompass and return to the national fold those who have migrated were so-called Rwanda Days. These were one-day events hosted by the Diaspora General Directorate and organized through its local branch of the RDGN. As of 2014, there had been six Rwanda Days: Chicago (U.S.A.) 2011, Paris (France) 2011, Boston (U.S.A.) 2012, London (U.K.) 2013, and Toronto (Canada) 2013, and Atlanta (USA) 2014. Their stated purpose was as follows:

Rwanda Day brings together Rwandans and friends of Rwanda living around the world to reaffirm their core national value of *Agaciro* celebrate the country's progress and discuss ways of being part of Rwanda's social-economic transformation. It is an opportunity for Rwandans to meet, interact and exchange views on their country and how they can contribute to the vision of a modern, unified and prosperous nation. Rwanda's success depends on Rwandans living at home and abroad working together as well as partnering with friends of Rwanda to achieve set goals. Past events held in Boston, Chicago, Paris and Brussels were a resounding success and attracted many thousands of Rwandans who are committed to their country's development (RDGN 2014).

*Agaciro* means dignity and self-respect, but also encompasses a variety of meanings spanning national self-definition, individual willingness to submit to the larger good, and specific, contextual meanings that only become clear within a given context. I was lucky enough to be able to attend the Rwanda Day held in Toronto on September 28, 2013 and thus observe both the performance of nation and the response of the GTA community to this performance.

In the weeks leading up to the event I started hearing rumors that maybe there might be a Rwanda Day in Toronto, but it was only 2 weeks before the event that the organizing committee

(made up largely of local RDGN members) was informed that it would take place and began the truncated process of planning. At this point nearly everyone in the community knew it would be happening two weeks hence, but no one knew where it would be held. An invitation was sent out through the RDGN listserv and we (those on the listserv) were asked to sign up online. The online registration required us to indicate our involvement and our role, neither of which struck me as strange, until I had a conversation about the topic with Fidèle a few weeks after the event. He explained that he and others like him who openly criticize the Kagame government for its human rights abuses and repression domestically were not permitted to attend as “They know me, so if I tried to go there, they would not let me in” (Fidèle). Indeed, the most notable part of the event was the extensive security apparatus involved. Up till the night before the event, no one was informed where it would be held. Again, this odd detail was explained by Fidèle, who had been an organizer of protests held outside the Rwanda Day venue against the Rwandan involvement in the gross human rights violations in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. Apparently, in order to avoid the protesters, Kagame’s team switched both the hotels and the venue for the celebration in the days preceding the event. However, because the Toronto Police Services were involved in security for the event, those organizing the protests got wind of the changes and were informed of them and thus able to alter their plans as well. Fidèle described the cat and mouse game thus:

Fidèle: A week before, the police came to my house.

Interviewer: Canadian police?

Fidèle: Canadian police. I was at work, they give a business card to my wife, asking them to contact they need to speak to me. My wife gave me the number, I call him, say, so what do you want to talk about? He said ‘I wanna talk about Rwanda Day’. My thinking maybe the Kagame people who is here they want me to stop what I am doing, so I was not surprised that my name came up. But I didn’t know who gave them my name. So, I told them, anytime you can see me. He asked me, can I see you today? I said, I’m



working but after 6 we can meet. He said, okay, let's see you tomorrow, then. After that, because we have, I don't know if you know, [Christopher Black] he's a lawyer for the ICC in Arusha—he's helping us. I asked him what do you think, should I see them? He said, don't worry, I'm gonna come too. So he came with me, and we meet across from my work and I asked them, they asked me, are you agreed to do a peaceful protest. Of course I'm going to do a peaceful protest. I asked them if I'm allowed to do a protest, 'Of course, 100%, this is Canada, you can do it'. I asked them, how come my name come up? They say, okay, we didn't supposed to tell you that, but I'm gonna tell you why. So, there was a Kagame security, two people, so everybody somebody come to the country, like some big figure, they have to do research, they have a system, they put Rwanda and whatever names comes up, so they have to see them. They say, your name come up as a first name, that's why we're here. But we're not here to tell you don't protest, you can protest, but we're here to do your security too, because anything can happen.

Interviewer: So, it wasn't a threatening visit, it was a visit checking in to make sure everything was okay on both sides?

Fidèle: They even asked me, do you need a body guard? I said no, I don't need anybody, but if I need, I will let you know. So, that's why the success of the protest, is because of them too.

Interviewer: Because they were supportive?

Fidèle: No, not really that, but I push them in a corner that day because they have to give me their permission. Because the Kagame team they didn't want to say that, even the people who support him, they didn't know until the last minute because they didn't want the protest, so they say at 5 o'clock on Friday, so we could not get a permit. But they don't know the rules that you don't have to have a permit. You have to tell them where you are going to be, so they can be there, but I told them, if you ask me to protest peaceful, I need something. To be able to protest peaceful, I need to know where they are going to be, otherwise, imagine if they doing, we go to the Sheraton hotel, and they doing it at Weston, and we find out at the last minute. I'm not responsible for what happens, the movement of people from Sheraton to Weston, they say, oh, really, how many are you going to be? I said, we are going to be more than 500, so I'm not responsible, if these things happen. Just so you know. It's okay, we're going to stay peaceful, and protest [Rwandan military incursions into the Congo and its funding of militias there]. They said, okay, stay in touch, I'm going to tell you every move they make. We worked together, and they gave me all the information.

Fidèle's account exposes a regime that is unwilling to face any criticism, including from peaceful protesters.

As a participant in the event to which Fidèle was denied entry, I also observed a regime that was excessively anxious and sought to very carefully control the situation and the events of the afternoon. Kagame traveled to Canada with a team of roughly 160 people, which seemed like a large number for the sole purpose of attending an afternoon event with 3000 members of the diaspora community, especially since the logistics of the event had been organized by local individuals. The majority of those in his retinue were security personnel who tightly monitored the grounds of the hangar building in Downsview Park, where the event was finally held. It took me an hour and a half to enter the building (even though I arrived 1 hour before the event was to begin), as everyone attending was first confirmed on a list, verified against photo ID, then passed through a full pat down, a metal detector, had all belongings x-rayed, and then had their belongings searched. The intrusive security procedure culminated with my research notes being read by the security personnel. I was allowed entry (apparently my notes were not incriminating), but felt somewhat violated by what I perceived as a breach in my privacy (I particularly took offense at my notes being read without my consent). This excruciating security apparatus did not lie dormant during the event either. We were not permitted to have our phones on during the day (though some intrepid participants evaded the steely gaze of security and surreptitiously filmed the day, then posted the films on YouTube), and had to shut them down at the security gate. To make a phone call I had to leave the building, and then, to re-enter, had to pass through the whole gauntlet of security again. I was carrying a water bottle with me at that point and was not permitted to bring it back inside (where I had obtained it). The purpose of providing this narrative is to illustrate the excessive degree of anxiety of the state, even though only those identified as “friends of Rwanda” were permitted to enter the event. The siege mentality of the organizers of the event underscored how little tolerant of criticism and any challenges this

regime is, and how it perceives those who would question it as illegitimate and outside the parameters of the nation.

The very fact that those who were perceived as critics were denied entry to the event, despite that event being presented as non-partisan and for all Rwandans in the diaspora, points to how narrowly the state defines those who belong. Those who protested Rwanda's military incursions into the Congo were not even permitted to participate in the discussion. To pose a question during the event, one had to submit the question beforehand, and, if one had not done so, there were security personnel standing behind, ready to take the microphone away. The only questions that were permitted were ones that reinforced the regime's narratives of peace, reconciliation, and economic growth. From the inside, it appeared as though everyone agreed with these interpretations as people seemed happy and enthusiastic; they joyfully applauded the Presidential address. However, a part of that joyful energy could be ascribed to the fact of the event itself, as the GTA community, which often had occasion to meet, welcomed those who had traveled from New York, Boston, Virginia, Washington D.C., Detroit, Edmonton, Calgary, Kingston, Ottawa, Laval, Quebec City, and Montreal; the ambiance was of a reunion. Indeed, two of my friends ran into a woman with whom they had gone to elementary school and had not seen since the genocide.

The duality of narratives—the carefully orchestrated state narrative inside and the challengers kept outside the doors—leads to a bifurcated image of the new nation-state. On one hand, the testimonies of investors and entrepreneurs who find in Rwanda unparalleled opportunities cannot be ignored. On the other hand, the fact that I overheard the Rwandan security forces refer to the protesters outside the venue as “undesirables”, cannot be ignored either. Inside the hangar was a joyous, festive atmosphere as various speakers spoke of

“sustainable development”, “unity”, “investing in ourselves and our future”, “telling our stories”, and, from an investor from Vancouver, “tell people about Rwanda, they don’t know, tell them what a great place it is.” The deadly history was mentioned. A Hutu poet described how his poetry helped him recover from the genocide, and how, through his poetry, the “stigma of being a Hutu was lifted from my shoulders” as, “the difference between the old generation and us—we need to tell the truth and consider everyone one nation”. A media entrepreneur from Ottawa who had founded a magazine titled *African Perspective* discussed how the audience needed to look at what happened and “try to bring positivity”. He lamented that people only knew Rwanda through the genocide, but “please don’t confine us in that arena”. These narratives of recovery and resilience were bolstered by an account from an investor who had found in Kigali a city that was “safer than Vancouver”, a country that was, in his experience, totally free of corruption, where he could employ 300 workers, pay them a fair wage and offer them health insurance, while still making a profit. Another investor of Rwandan origin who had moved from Toronto to Rwanda spoke of how rewarding his role as a coffee exporter was as he was able to connect with farmers in Rwanda and consumers in Toronto, and how he could live in both worlds, thanks to his transnationalism.

These optimistic narratives of a new and boldly developing country—indeed, as one speaker joyfully explained, “Rwanda is only 19 years old!”—were reinforced by glossy brochures and magazines handed out at the event touting Rwanda as having “Sustained high growth; Robust governance; Investor friendly climate; Access to markets; Untapped investment potential” (Investing in Rwanda 2013). The impressive brochures (one with an image of a golden spigot spewing money (Investor Info Pack 2013)) presented Rwanda as a country open to investment, ready to facilitate business, offer support, and encourage greater enmeshment with

global markets, while focused on renewable resources, ethical practices, green energy and, overall, sustainable development. The brochures suggested that for the transnational transplant, Kigali would soon offer a modern housing project that could rival those in any major cities with its modern spacious designs, its amenities, and location (Vision City n.d.). On paper Rwanda looked admirable: a place that anyone would wish to visit, invest in and settle in. According to the transnational investors, it was, increasingly, a sound investment opportunity with reliable returns.

### *Diaspora as Threat*

Yet, one of the costs of this economic growth has been the quelling of open discourse, freedom of press, conscience and dissent. While the opposition parties in Rwanda and their allies and members in the diaspora had long been aware of this increasingly authoritarian trend, those outside of Rwanda were confronted with the Kagame's autocratic rule when former RPA Lt Gen Faustin Kayumba Nyamwasa, who had fled Rwanda and gone into hiding in South Africa after a very public falling out with Kagame, was shot in front of his home in June 2010. The South African authorities launched a probe into the shooting, and "a South African foreign ministry official said foreign 'security operatives' were involved in the shooting", meaning Rwandan security ("Rwanda Anger at South Africa Nyamwasa shooting Probe" 2010). In the following year, the Rwandan security apparatus once again made headlines, this time in the U.K., as Scotland Yard investigated an allegation that "the Rwandan government is masterminding an alleged assassination plot in Britain against dissidents critical of the east African country's

increasingly authoritarian regime” (Milmo 2011). *The Independent* further reported the following:

Rene Mugenzi, 35, a survivor of Rwanda's 1994 genocide who is a British citizen and now runs a London-based social exclusion think-tank, said: “I am bewildered that such a thing could be happening to me. I am not a political figure in Rwanda, I left when I was 17. How can it be that in Britain, a foreign government can be allowed to threaten the life of a person? Every time I go outside, I am looking over my shoulder, wondering if there is an assassin around the corner.”

The disclosure of the murder plot comes after an investigation by *The Independent* revealed last month that MI5 has warned the Rwandan High Commissioner to London to halt an alleged campaign of harassment against critics of Mr Kagame living in the UK.

But the Rwandan government’s activities against dissidents have increased dramatically recently. Last week police served a “Threats to life warning notice” on Mr Mugenzi and a second Rwandan, Jonathan Musonera, laying out the danger facing them.

Mr Musonera, a former member of the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) army led by Mr Kagame which halted the genocide, is one of the founding members of the Rwanda National Conference (RNC), a new political party led by exiled military officers which poses a threat to the president (Milmo 2011).

The Rwandan High Commission in London insisted that “The government of Rwanda does not threaten the lives of its citizens wherever they live” (Morris 2011). *The Guardian* reported the same threat, adding:

He [Mugenzi] may have been targeted because of comments he made about the Rwandan president, Paul Kagame, in March when asked on a BBC programme about the prospect of the Arab spring uprisings spreading to his homeland. He replied that criticisms of Kagame suggested that he was ‘a despot who doesn’t tolerate any form of opposition; that under his leadership, Rwanda has become a dangerous place for those who publicly disagree with him or his ruling party’ (Siddique 2011).

Further allegations of the Rwandan government engineering assassinations emerged in early 2014, when Mr. Nyamwasa’s home in South Africa was ransacked and another dissident, Patrick Karegeya, the former head of the Rwandan security agency, was found strangled in a hotel room in Johannesburg (“South Africa Links Rwandan Diplomats to Attacks” 2014). Following the

death of Karegeya, the Rwandan Prime Minister tweeted the following: “Betraying citizens and their country that made you a man shall always bear consequences to you” (Laing 2014).

Human Rights Watch published a report in January 2014 detailing the assassinations and assassination attempts against former regime members who have fled into exile to Uganda, Kenya, South Africa and Europe. HRW has documented seven cases with sufficient evidence to reliably point to the Kagame regime as the perpetrator. It further states that “there have been other cases of Rwandans who were murdered, attacked, threatened, or who died in unclear circumstances in various countries, but are not included because of insufficient information surrounding these attacks” (Human Rights Watch 2014). Journalists reporting on these cases have been subject to a harassment campaign on Twitter, in an effort to dissuade them from pursuing the stories. As an independent journalist, Steve Terrill, revealed in March 2014, a pro-government twitter account (under a false name) that was hostile to journalists was emanating from the President’s office. Apparently, the twitter user had been harassing a journalist who had been reporting on the assassination attempts, and, when Terrill demanded that the “misogynistic harassment” of the journalist stop (the journalist in question was a woman and the vitriol directed at her was highly gendered), Terrill received a reply from the office of the President of Rwanda, Kagame. This apparently erroneous use of the wrong twitter account confirmed what many journalists had long suspected—that the harassment and intimidation had been originating from the presidential office. In retaliation for this revelation, Terrill was rapidly deported from Rwanda (Smith 2014).

In my research I also came across an allegation of an assassination attempt by a Rwandan operative in the GTA. Fidèle told me of an attempted assassination of a former RPA (Rwandan Patriotic Army) serviceman in the GTA. He said that the Rwandan High Commission in Ottawa

was under investigation by the Toronto Police Services for the attempted poisoning of this individual. Unfortunately, I was unable to verify this as I did not have enough information to submit a detailed enough Access to Information Request. In fact, my Access to Information Request, made on May 13, 2014, received the following response: “Re: Threats against a Rwandan resident in the City of Toronto [...] records regarding the above-noted incident could not be located” (Toronto Police Services 2014). Nonetheless, the rumor, even unsubstantiated, was significant because the fact that those who publicly opposed the Kagame regime said they felt threatened indicated that they were not able to freely voice their views nor publicly challenge the current regime. I asked Fidèle how this had affected the perceptions of the regime among the diaspora, and he replied thus:

Fidèle: They send poison everywhere now.

Interviewer: Do you feel intimidated by that?

Fidèle: Yes and no. Yes, because I know, I will never go to anybody’s house to drink anything I don’t know. But they can’t shoot me here.

Interviewer: Yeah, that’s much harder—it was hard enough in South Africa, and South Africa is much less secure than Canada.

Fidèle: In Canada it’s very hard, you have to be a in a very certain area, like Jane and Finch. But the major thing is poison. And they start already to do everywhere in the world.

Interviewer: Is your organization talking about this publicly?

Fidèle: Yeah, we talk about that.

Interviewer: Right, so you’re trying to raise awareness internationally.

Fidèle: We don’t do that just to tell people, like be careful, but we ask people who try to get involved with that like be careful with that. There’s young kids, 25, 24, they get told go do this, poison this one, and we try to tell them no, they send you. I just write something two days ago—I explained to them the government before genocide, the government have Interahamwe, youth, to try to intimidate people. Kagame start that too. He doesn’t



have Interahamwe, but he has Intore. Intore<sup>14</sup>. So what I tell them, if you keep doing that, the Interahamwe start the same way. It was a group of people enjoying life, now look what happened to them. If you keep doing that, look what happened to them.

Interviewer: Let me ask another question—in Canada, with all its faults, and it's not a perfect place to live—we don't poison people when we disagree with them politically. We do other things, but we don't kill.

Fidèle: Right, we don't kill. That's what I try to tell them—we don't do that in Canada.

Interviewer: Right, so, how do people who live here, for as long as many have, how do they feel about their own government doing this kind of thing, when they are used to other kinds of politics?

Fidèle: That's what I keep telling them! Why you support people who poison, who kill other people?

Interviewer: Do they not believe that it happens? Do they deny it?

Fidèle: I know they believe, but they deny it. I know they believe. When you in private, you talk to two people, they say yeah, but... I say 'don't say that! You're gonna be like the Interahamwe in 10 years!'

Interviewer: Have you ever asked them—how is it that you can support this when you understand different politics?

Fidèle: I ask them that, but publicly they deny that. They say 'No, the Rwanda, it's beautiful, it's peaceful, Kagame's a good president, he doesn't kill anybody'. They keep denying.

Interviewer: So there's a wall...

Fidèle: Yeah, there's a wall—they don't want to admit that. But, privately, they do, they do.

The Rwandan ruling regime seemed to both desire its diaspora for the capital and skills that it possesses and could return to the nation-state, while, simultaneously, fearing it for the challenges it could pose to its legitimacy and longevity. Those who have left are both beautiful for their shiny francs and dollars and dangerous because of their ability to speak in challenge to the regime. This diaspora is thus caught in a web of longing and repulsion which often echoes the longing and repulsion that the members themselves feel for the imagined homeland. Of all

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<sup>14</sup> There is no such organization as Intore affiliated with the RPF.

the participants whom I spoke to, both formally (recorded conversation) and informally, none, except for Fidèle, explicitly mentioned the well-publicized cases discussed above. Some alluded to the coverage, but framed it as a smear campaign designed to undermine Rwanda's gains. I suspect that most of those whom I spoke to were well aware of the allegations facing the regime, but chose not to speak to me about them as they were tired of always being associated with political violence and feared that I, as an outside interlocutor, would fixate on the violence and neglect to tell their stories of day to day resilience and successful integration into the new host/homeland. Others, perhaps, truly still hoped that the man who ended the genocide could not be similar to those who instigated it, and they needed to keep this hope alive as upon it resided their ability to persevere. After all, if Kagame was as dangerous as the Interahamwe, what hope could they hold for their future and their children's future?

Perhaps the extensive public relations campaign that the Rwandan state had paid for had been effective in re-framing how Rwanda and its government were perceived internationally and online, including by the diaspora. In 2011 the government of Rwanda hired London public relations agency Racepoint Group Inc. to "implement a full scale public relations blitz communicating the positive story of Rwanda. As the country moves to a new chapter, emphasizing continued economic improvement, stability and social justice, it is crucial to educate key audiences about the 'new Rwanda.'" This public relations campaign was deemed necessary because "Expats living in Europe who favored the previous government are effectively using the web as a means to undercut perceptions of progress in Rwanda; and certain NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch, continue to advance a story of an unstable Rwanda as a means of continuing to attract donors and wield influence in the region" (Contract between Government of Rwanda [Mushikiwabo] and Racepoint 2011, 13-14, available through the United States

Department of Justice, Foreign Agents Registration Act database). To achieve the above stated ends, the PR firm stated that the goal of the campaign was to “Offset the negative and factually incorrect information of those parties with vested interests in mis-portraying Rwanda’s advancements. This includes expats with ties to the previous government, NGOs who rely on a weak Rwanda as a means for attracting donor dollars and certain members of the UN, whose interests lie in a different path for Rwandan development” (Contract between Government of Rwanda [Mushikiwabo] and Racepoint 2011, 15). Thus, utilizing modern methods of information dissemination, the government of Rwanda sought to challenge the rumours (too often proven true) from those it termed “ex-pats” who, apparently, sought to present an “unstable Rwanda as a means of continuing to attract donors and wield influence in the region”. While courting the favour and capital of certain segments of its diaspora, this regime actively smeared and attempted to delegitimize the segments which challenged its legitimacy and which brought to the fore its extensive human rights violations.

The well-publicized murders of dissidents and harassment campaigns instigated and carried out by representatives of the ruling regime in Rwanda had led to a re-evaluation of its merit by many observers in the international community. At the same time, as Fidèle explained, few among the diaspora were willing to speak of their anxieties and growing unease. Many were vested in retaining their perception of state representatives as virtuous because they still perceived that they may be a benefit to them. For instance, during the period of the present study, one participant returned to Rwanda, ran in the parliamentary elections and became an MP in Kigali. Yet, the conversation about Rwanda’s future was an ongoing one and perhaps the best indicator of this was the speech given by Gerald Caplan at the 20<sup>th</sup> genocide commemoration in April 2014 held at Friendship House in Toronto (which I attended). Merely a year after he had

publicly denounced “genocide deniers” including Noam Chomsky, Caplan appealed to his primarily Rwandan audience thus: “if everyone is saying something is wrong with Rwanda, maybe we should listen”. His audience rustled at these words, and later there was much chagrin and gossip, but they had been spoken, publicly, by the man that the community had long embraced as its closest friend and ally in Canada and the GTA, and could not be unspoken.

## Chapter Seven

### **Belonging in our homes: Claiming Space and Citizenship**

Even as those who identified as Rwandans in the GTA became part of a larger diasporic group and came to see themselves as belonging to a deterritorialized nation, they developed a rooted sense of belonging in the new homeland of Canada. This seeming contradiction of feeling at home in the new homeland while actively seeking out a sense of belonging in the remembered homeland encompasses the tension inherent in becoming a diaspora. This tension, explored throughout previous chapters, both reinforces and defies the readings of diasporas as either exposing the limits of the nation-state (Bhabha 1990; Gilroy 1993), or as marginal, always on the border of the nation and belonging (Bannerji 1997; Ahmed 1999; Scheffer 2003; Agnew 2007; Ricouer 2010). The ambivalent welcome that the Rwandan community had experienced in the new homeland of Canada echoes the critical readings above. Yet, as this chapter explores, the majority of those who identified as Rwandan in the GTA robustly expressed their sense of belonging and their deserving of citizenship in their new homeland. The articulations of belonging varied: all participants emphasized their sense of security; many expressed their appreciation of the liberal democratic values that they perceived ordered day to day life; others spoke of how they had changed as a consequence of migration and settlement and had now become “Western” or “Canadian”; the middle class participants affirmed their virtue as good consumers through home ownership, while their working-class counterparts framed their belonging in terms of their non-material contributions; others claimed their stake by expressing dissent and practicing their democratic rights; and, finally, others framed their sense of belonging in their intimate relationships which rooted them to the broader GTA community. Though the framing of belonging differed, each participant in the study expressed pride in being Rwandan in

Canada, and this crucial expression encapsulated the perception expressed by the participants that they, as an ethno-national group, were part of the larger national group of Canadians. The absence of violence and insecurity, the relative material success of the community, and federal and provincial policies that permit (if not encourage) difference allowed members of this ethno-national group to feel at home in Canada, and specifically, the GTA.

Possibly the most compelling argument for understanding ethnicity, race, and nation as ways of seeing, rather than ways of being, is the ability of those who identify as the Rwandan diaspora to make their homes in the GTA. For all the challenges, impositions, and competing discourses that those who identify as Rwandan in the GTA have faced, the majority of the participants in this study expressed that they felt at home in Canada. They have been able to build their lives and create for themselves and their families a sense of safety and comfort in the GTA. Indeed, many expressed that while they had experienced challenges that they had not anticipated, the daily absence of anxiety and fear that so many associated with Rwanda, even the new Rwanda, had enabled them to build better and happier lives than they had imagined possible. Canada, specifically the GTA, had offered them the day to day safety and security of person that is so important to building a home. Even in light of the racialization and marginalization that previous chapters have recounted, most participants insisted on their belonging in the new homeland, and in their new homes.

### *Claims of Belonging*

Of those who identified as Rwandans in the GTA, very many claimed the GTA, and Canada more broadly, as their home, if not always their homeland. The experience of exile and,

for many, statelessness, had persuaded them that citizenship and the legal rights it granted was tantamount to home, and so they asserted their place in the new homeland. As Creese proposed, “unequivocal statements of belonging based on security in place, and the knowledge that the rights of Canadian citizenship could not be arbitrarily taken away” marked those who migrated as refugees (2011, 209). Very many participants in this study echoed the claim that they felt at home because they felt safe and able to do largely as they wished. Revocata argued that “I can go anywhere in the world, can do whatever I want as long as I don’t violate the law. I am a free person to do what I want to do.” Jean, likewise, stressed that:

Canada is a, it’s good, yeah, actually I love it, you know I haven’t been to other countries, where I am so accepted, you know, it’s, you know you can do anything, as long as you are, you know, you are doing your own thing, not doing bad things like, you know, you are not breaking the law, you know? But here you can work, you can study, you can do business [...], you know you can do anything. Yeah, so it’s a free country, it’s a good place to live in, yeah.

Indeed, he explicitly contrasted the ease of day to day life, and hence a sense of belonging, with the challenges that he encountered when he returned to Rwanda, as “it’s not easy to fit in there, because you have so many things here [in Canada], you can do anything [...], you go to a bank where you line up, you do things, nobody to pass by, you know, they are in order. But sometimes there [in Rwanda] you find people, you have to know each other, you know, so here you can apply [for] anything and get papers without hindrance, whatever you want, you know?” (Jean). Jean was pointing out a fundamentally different social order in Canada than the one he had experienced in Rwanda; in Canada he expected a social world based on norms of rule of law and equality, while in Rwanda he expected a social order based on social hierarchy and nepotism. He had found a sense of individual freedom that enabled him to build a life, start a business, go to school, effectively, as he explained, do anything he may have wished to do, while in Rwanda he found that even going to a bank was arduous as people did not abide by the social norms that he

had become accustomed to in Canada of lining up and respecting the queue. His sense of disorder in Rwanda stemmed from being accustomed to a different set of social expectations in Canada. Thus, his acclimatization could be said to be complete as his internal narrative of what constitutes a normal social world was based on the world that he participated in day in and day out in the GTA. The GTA had become his home in more than just name as he could not envision life elsewhere anymore. He had adopted the national cosmology of Canada as the site of order and security, rule of law, freedom of expression and conscience, freedom of mobility, and political equality, where life unfolded predictably and safely.

This day to day ease of existence, underpinned by democratic values and civil liberties, was repeated by many participants, especially in contrast to the presumed challenges that day to day life in the new Rwanda brought. But, perhaps more significantly, many participants, especially those who had lived in Canada for a decade or more, expressed that they felt that they were more “Westernized” and thus now could only belong in Canada, but no longer in Rwanda. Angelina expressed this phenomenon thus: “I have more years than in Africa here, so, I find that this is more home, psychologically, and socially, yeah. I feel more Westernized.” This framing of home as both a psychological and social site demonstrates the understanding that home is “*both a place/physical location and a set of feelings*” (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 22). Thus, in Angelina’s account, home has become the Western hemisphere, culturally and materially distinct from her remembered homeland of Rwanda, as well as the assumptions about what that geographic space means. Namely, she is referring to the fact that when she travels to Rwanda, others identify her as visibly paler for lack of sun exposure, as linguistically different with her fluency in English and her loss of easy fluency in Kinyarwanda, and as culturally different in her expressions, ideas, and ways of seeing the world. She has become a product of her new home,



marked, quite literally, by the lack of sunlight, as non-African. Interestingly, her claim to belonging in the GTA also serves to alter what must be considered “Western”. Even as she is marginalized and made to feel that her place in the new homeland is contingent, the moments when she is able to feel at home and to enact agency in the new home mark her as belonging within the socio-geographic space. Her very presence in the GTA reconstitutes what must be considered “Western”. As all Canadians of colour have emphatically demonstrated, no longer can “Western” easily and comfortably denote exclusive whiteness; it must be stretched to account for the visible plurality that Angelina and her family embody.

Janvier’s affective attachment to his Canadian home differed from that expressed by Angelina as he inadvertently exposed his anxiety about belonging in the new home, while insisting on his place within it. Janvier explained that “Canada is wonderful to me, I raise my kids, my son is in the cadets now, navy cadets. Yeah, I tell him if you want to get into navy, go ahead! He is now a petty officer, in the summer he will be training, in Trenton, he will be going there to train. So if you want to go to military academy, go! He can die for this country if need be, go! That’s the Canada I know.” His desire to show his affinity for the new home is framed in the rhetorical willingness for his child to serve in the military and, even, “die for this country if need be”. This rhetorical strategy serves to both demonstrate his affinity, as well as to demonstrate his worthiness as a citizen who is completely committed to the new homeland, as he is even willing to sacrifice his child’s life in the name of the homeland. This desire to show devotion denotes his framing of nationalism as based in blood, and claims of belonging as necessitating the spilling of blood. This narrative suggests that if one spills blood, one has a greater claim to belonging in the new homeland. Unlike the participants who migrated in the late 1980s and whose affective statements focused primarily on liberal democratic virtues, Janvier

was referencing the new, post-9/11 Canadian nationalism of a warrior culture which presupposes the need to spill blood in order to affirm national belonging and merit citizenship (McKay and Swift 2012). Appropriating this new national cosmology demonstrates his anxiety about his place in the new homeland as he feels the need to demonstrate his worthiness of belonging, chillingly, even at the cost of his child's life.

A more quotidian, though not banal, statement of belonging was the expression of participating in the day to day life in the city and doing so confidently. Jean-Paul explained that he first realized that he had begun to feel at home when he recounted that:

I'm here, I'm paying taxes, I'm working, I'm doing everything that everyone else is doing, why should I consider myself as second? It's not, and umm, yeah. So that's how it started, and then some confidence builds in, you go to the subway, you see someone you think is a Canadian asking you the directions, and you think, oh, my goodness, I can be of some use here. Even small things like that that make you feel part of the environment.

His first experience of someone else presuming that he belonged enough in the space that he could give directions pleased him enormously and brought with it the realization that, despite day to day racialization, he could still find a home in the new community. Further, he also staked his claim of deserving belonging in the new home on participating in citizenship obligations like paying taxes.

Middle class participants also expressed their deserving of citizenship and calling Canada home due to being good consumers, and, thus, in a neoliberal state, good citizens. Quite literally, in these accounts, the fact of home ownership became the marker of having earned one's place in the new homeland. Home ownership embodies the ideals of "material achievement and stability" (Blunt and Dowling 2006, 117), and thus suggests both the family's financial security as well as its place as a stable site of ongoing consumption. Indeed, "the living environments of poor and working-class people have often been deemed 'unhomely', or morally and aesthetically

inappropriate and sometimes inadequate. The suburban home, on the other hand, is constructed as the proper place of moral, aesthetic and familial acceptability, even superiority” (Dowling and Blunt 2006, 118). Fidèle echoes this construction of political belonging based on consumption when he proudly proclaims that merely two years after migrating to Canada he bought his first house, while “I see some people 20 years after, they still don’t have a house. And most Rwandese are like that, they think it’s so complicated to do it, so they don’t do it.” The implicit moral judgement of other Rwandans places them as culturally, even intellectually inferior, because “they think it’s so complicated”, while he was able to do so within two years of migration. Yet, this account erases the material differences between individuals, as, for instance, Fidèle migrated with European work experience and education, enabling him to attain a professional position quite rapidly, and thus an income that allowed him to buy into the housing market. Conversely, as I discussed in previous chapters, very many of those who migrated arrived as refugees and did not have their credentials recognized, thus had to either re-train or take low-wage survival work.

Olivia also framed her sense of belonging in terms of home ownership as she stated that this was a marker of her successful integration. Thus, “I’m attached to the country, but umm, as much as I’m fully integrated in this country, I have good job, I see myself as a successful immigrant in this country, I own a house, (I don’t own it, the bank owns it, but I pay the mortgage [both chuckle]) and my kids are growing up, and they make me proud, I feel I have Canadian friends” (Olivia). Here, the success of a new migrant is framed primarily as the ability to purchase a home, and thus enter the ranks of the middle class in the new homeland. Yet, for Olivia, homeownership alone does not express her sense of belonging, as she also points out that her children have had the emotional and social space to grow up in a way that makes her proud

and that she has “Canadian” friends. Both these points indicate that her home is both the physical and economic space of the house, but also the social world that she inhabits and has been able to build new relationships within.

Janvier likewise articulated his claim in terms of home ownership as he stated that “I’m like any Canadian, I’m like any Canadian, I have a house. I have had for over 10 years. I struggle with bills like any other Canadian, the same things as any other Canadian around here.” In this narrative, like in Fidèle’s and Olivia’s, the axis of belonging and being “Canadian” is home ownership and the attendant consumption suggested by struggling with bills. During the process of my research, a number of families that I got to know were in the midst of renovating their homes. Some were doing so in order to increase the market value of their home in the case of a future sale, while others were doing so in order to sell their current home at the highest possible price in order to move up to a home that suited them better. Not only were these families fully enmeshed in the real estate market, but they were also fully invested, both financially and emotionally, in the discourse of perpetual consumption and “moving up”. In a neo-liberal state where financial security is too often a pipe dream, the house becomes more than a home—it becomes the chief investment of middle class families and all their savings are poured into it in the hopes that it will continue to pay dividends. Thus it both represents the hope for future stability and the anxiety that such a future is not possible. This contrast between the instability of living in a capitalist society and the physical security and stability afforded by Canadian political norms and institutions echoes the dialectical relationship between belonging and non-belonging that is foundational to becoming a diaspora. Yet, despite the insecurity that underpins them, the narratives of home ownership are fundamentally narratives of pride as it not an easy feat to become a home owner in the GTA given the price of housing. Even in the suburbs, where these

homes are, their ownership requires years of saving and scrimping since very few from this community had family wealth that they could put towards the purchase and none inherited homes as other, non-racialized members of the middle class sometimes do. Thus, for a Rwandan migrant to attain that measure of respectability given the significant obstacles that were discussed in chapter 5, was a laudable feat, even if the conception of citizenship as consumption is an inherently exclusionary one that places markets above human life.

The working class Rwandans whom I interviewed also insisted upon their claim to belonging in their new homes, but framed it in different terms than their middle-class counterparts. Counter-narratives of belonging focused on individual contributions to collective goods, such as participation in public health initiatives, in the settlement of new migrants, and in public education initiatives. Diane proudly recounted her involvement with a public health project aimed at educating parents. She framed her participation in the project as both her individual wage-labour, making her worthy of belonging by virtue of participating in the labour market, and as her contribution to the general good. In a society that values humans by how much they work and earn, she needs to be employed in order to be perceived as deserving of citizenship rights. Yet, her income does not allow her to consume on the same scale as her middle class counterparts, thus undermining her claim. Nonetheless, by understanding herself as contributing to a greater good, she is able to challenge the equating of citizen with consumer, and define herself as equally deserving. Grace discussed her position as the public face of HIV/AIDS education and her willingness for the organizations that she is involved with to publicize her case in order to combat the stigma and misinformation around these diseases. She specifically tied her labour to her sense of belonging as she explained that this is her way of returning service in exchange for the social support that she lives on. By articulating this as a reciprocal relationship,

she assuaged her own sense of survivor's guilt, as she received the necessary anti-retroviral medications that so many she knew were denied and also had a roof over her head. It was also a way of thinking that staked her claim as a contributing member of society. Christophe recounted his role as an educator about the Rwandan genocide and his individual outreach to new communities. Others spoke of developing charitable campaigns that served the needs of their local communities. In each of these instances, the individual's action was framed as her contribution to the collective good, and indicated the implicit sense of belonging in the new communities that these individuals were fostering and building. Each of these narratives expressed the worthiness of these individuals and their stake in their own homes. Yet, even given this distinct difference in the degree to which one is able to feel a sense of rootedness, the participants emphatically insisted on the GTA being their home.

The sense of belonging that I have described above was also evident in individuals' willingness to criticize public policy and offer their own vision for the future of their communities. Olivia offered a critique of the newcomer settlement programs offered by the province, based on her own experiences with these services:

when I came here, I had access to social services, I had access to umm, Ontario Works, I had a nice apartment, but I was lacking someone who can give me phone call and say how are you today? [...] And my social worker couldn't understand how I behaved the way I was behaving because you're giving me money, but I'm not happy. You know? So that's the thing. Our system is just predesigned, which is fine, and that's why this country has been sustainable for many years, but at the same time as our community landscape is changing, I think we need to be more flexible and adjust ourselves, because what's the point of welcoming them here, if we don't give them a chance to be successful and contribute to this country later on? There's no need, you, you, you are just creating a circle of poverty, and a circle of, of, depressed people (Olivia).

Olivia's critique offers a nuanced understanding of the particular challenges that newcomers face, as well as a simple remedy—"someone who can give me a phone call and say how are you today". She is willing to offer her assessment of these services as she feels that she has a role in

improving public services because she feels a sense of ownership of her community. Admittedly, she is able to speak thus because she was able to gain access to these services, while those who are undocumented would not be able to voice this form of ownership. This sense of ownership of space is also evident in the accounts of many others who likewise offered their critiques of public policies or social attitudes. It denotes a deeper sense of place and a feeling of rootedness as those who were willing to speak thus to me, an outsider to their community are aware that they have a right to these critiques and understand that voicing them is a citizenship right in a democracy where dissent must also be heard. It is also significant because, as so many recounted, in the old Rwanda there was no space for dissent, and, some admitted, the new Rwanda follows this trend.

### *Intimate Connections to the New Homeland*

The cliché “home is where the heart is”, for all its saccharine sweetness, captures an important dimension of the concept of home and how one is able to feel at home. Where one’s friends, lovers, partners, parents, and siblings reside is the place one is most likely to associate with a sense of home. Many participants’ extended families lived in Rwanda, thus their sense of home was often bifurcated as they claimed a space in the GTA, yet longed for the family in Rwanda. Yet, just as often, there were few family members left in Rwanda as the extended family had perished in the genocide, leaving the remainder scattered across Europe, North America, and Africa. Yet, even those whose closest family lived elsewhere expressed intimate ties to the new home. Jean Paul explained his new sense of place thus:

I have a Rwandan friend who is planning on getting married with a Rwandan girl, and they were debating whether they should go back to Rwandan and do the marriage there, the ceremony, and they ended up saying, you know what we’ve got more friends here than in Rwanda, the people we know are the ones we live with—why don’t we just do

that? And I think that's a big point to be made about people's connections to the community where you live, umm, and you feel more like if I have a problem, I don't tend to call a friend in Rwanda—I call a friend here. So, they broaden, they become broader as time goes on (Jean-Paul).

His circle of friends, even as it was largely made up of others who identified as Rwandan, nonetheless existed in the new homeland, tying him to his new community in a very particular way. He sounded surprised when he expressed that he was more likely to call a friend “here”, than in Rwanda, as he had earlier in the interview expressed that he had to “fight with myself to convince me that I belong here—that I am one of you guys” (Jean-Paul). His sense of rootedness had snuck up on him, evidently as it had upon his friends who ultimately decided to hold their wedding in their new community. Indeed, their conclusion that “the people we know are the ones we live with” beautifully echoes the notion that one feels at home where one loves.

Another visible marker of belonging in place, or at home, is the incidence of marriages outside the community. While the majority of those I spoke with who were married had married someone who also identified as Rwandan, a noticeable number of individuals had chosen partners from outside the putative community and these partners then participated in the social life of the Rwandan community. These couples were visible because the partners from outside the community were often white, thus rendering them hyper visible at Rwandan events. Yet, as I got to know some of them, I observed the degree to which they were part of the Rwandan community in the GTA and, conversely, the degree to which their family was part of the broader community in the GTA. These marriages embodied the notion that those who had migrated from Rwanda now had built new homes in the GTA as the very intimate space of their marriages replicated the pluralism of the community in their new homes.



### ***Rwandan Pride in the New Homeland***

A significant marker of belonging among those who identified as Rwandans in the GTA was their ability and willingness to perform their ethnic/national identity in the public spaces of their new home. As discussed in chapter four, the evolution of genocide commemoration ceremonies from private, individualized ceremonies held in homes to larger, publically accessible ceremonies held in public spaces demonstrates the developing sense of connection to the new homeland among this community. Part of the 19<sup>th</sup> commemoration was held in Toronto City Hall, and part of the 20<sup>th</sup> commemoration was held in Queen's Park, the Ontario provincial legislative building. As the organizers stressed at the time, the very fact of holding these events in such highly symbolic public spaces speaks to both the external recognition of this community as one of many that make up the social fabric of the city and the province, as well as the sense, among the community, that it has a valid claim to public symbolic space. This growing confidence and desire to be seen as a Rwandan diaspora by the wider society was expressed in many interviews.

Among the youth of the community, which, understandably, is a group made up of only those who wish to be identified as Rwandese, a few participants discussed their perceptions of their place in Canada and how they perceived the role of their Rwandan nationality/ethnicity. Mathieu, born in Canada, explained that as a boy and adolescent he was always aware of his difference because of both how others perceived him, as a young black man, as well because the traditions and culture practiced in the home differed from what he perceived as dominant practices. He spoke of initially being drawn to a youth hip hop black culture, as discussed in

chapter five, partly as a method of contending with his difference. However, by late adolescence, he developed a “desire to be more connected to my Rwandan people. As much as I appreciated multiculturalism, I had more of a desire to be in touch with the Rwandan community” (Mathieu). He began to actively seek out others who also shared a desire to be connected to the community and together they formed CARY (also discussed in chapter five). CARY served as both an internal space whereby young people who identified with Rwandan identity could meet and socialize, as well as a vehicle for collective and public identification as Rwandan in the GTA. In as little as two years of existence, CARY had at the time of writing already begun to articulate a public face meant for a non-Rwandan audience. Alongside the barbeques hosted in the public parks of Toronto Island, it had also organized a garbage collecting event from a public space. I was unable to attend the event, but the buzz on the listserv indicated that it was well-attended and that many more senior members of the community wrote commendations to the youth for their commitment to public service. Indeed, a few emails were explicitly congratulatory that CARY was showing Canadians how service-oriented Rwandan youth is. There seemed to be a perceived need to demonstrate the virtues of the community, in this case of its youth, to a larger audience of non-Rwandans. But the interesting component of this exchange was the fact that there was a larger audience and that those who were commenting were engaging in a self-aware process of representing themselves as Rwandans.

Natalia, a young woman who had spent most of her life in Canada, also expressed a desire to be connected to the Rwandan community and a need to represent this community to a larger audience:

I feel that, umm, what Canada really, what I love about, well, not Canada as a whole, more Toronto, it's the way it accepts minorities, it accepts other groups, and not only accepts them and tries to mold them into Canadians, it accepts them and tries to reasonably have them share their culture, with other Canadians. That's what I love about

it—they won't basically do that melting pot kind of thing where they want to bring you in and transform you to one of their own, they're going to bring you so you can share your culture and share your values and share your views on life with others (Natalia).

As a fluent English speaker, Natalia did not perceive that she was made to feel different; rather, she seemed to revel in her self-identified difference. She perceived that, in her new home, she was welcome and, in fact, encouraged to share her culture and identity, and she did so eagerly. She spoke of informing her non-Rwandan friends about the genocide and teaching them about Rwandan culture. She also said she was very proud that one of her close non-Rwandan friends had chosen to work on a development project in Rwanda. This friend's choice to engage in development work in Rwanda seemed to affirm Natalia's perception that her culture was prized and valued in the new homeland. Arguably, the neo-colonial Western development projects enacted in the so-called Global South do not affirm the value and worth of the cultures in which they intervene. Yet, to Natalia, who, having being raised in the GTA seems to have appropriated narratives about the presumed neediness of Rwanda, this engagement serves as recognition of her status in the GTA as a representative of her culture.

Very many of those whom I interviewed wished to speak and be heard; they desired visibility as Rwandans. Indeed, a persistent lament was that people in the GTA were unable or unwilling to differentiate them from other black groups, such as the many Caribbean communities, and thus they were denied expression of their unique culture. The desire to not be seen as of Caribbean origin was discussed in chapter four as an appropriation of regional racist narratives, and this dynamic cannot be ignored. Yet, in this lament is also the very clearly articulated desire to be seen and recognized as Rwandans in day to day life. One participant recounted that he attended an event where both the Foreign Minister of Rwanda and the Foreign Minister of Canada were present and that this moment of the meeting of his two emotional

worlds was very significant for him. He had the opportunity to speak to both Ministers and narrated the following: “to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada and Foreign Affairs of Rwanda, I said no one else is here, I feel so loyal to both of you, and that I would want that Canada and Rwanda merge the way they have fused in me and have dual loyalties.” His statement to the representatives of both the states that he identifies with was less an articulation of a real desire for merging the two and more an emotional appeal for both to recognize how deeply connected he is to both states. In this moment, he was expressing a deeply felt patriotic love of the two states that he has claimed as home and that, evidently, he finds welcoming.

The desire to be seen and recognized as belonging to both Rwanda and Canada was also expressed by many participants, although, it must be recognized that not all those who participated in this study felt at home in either place. Yet, those who did wanted to speak of this belonging. Theodore expressed his sense of belonging in his perception that “I can use Rwanda to help Canada, and I can use Canada to help Rwanda. So anyway, I can be a bridge. Whenever I have, people they need help anyway, they need help, it can be spiritual help in Canada, or it can be spiritual material in Rwanda” (Theodore). His representation of himself as a bridge beautifully evokes his perception that he is anchored in both homes. The fact that he perceives that he can “use” the two states to help the other signifies his sense of agency in both cultural/social spaces. He is confident in his place in both homes and thus feels he can reach out to others who may need his help. Olivia also expressed a sense of deep rootedness as she stated that “it feels good to have two homes you can call home, it gives you a wide range of, universal citizenship. You feel that you go to Africa you belong there, you come here, you belong here, it, it gives you that sense of community wide diverse and uhh, inclusion” (Olivia).

Another external signifier of pride and belonging in Canada is the Rwandan attire worn at community events. At all the public events, be they commemorative or celebratory, mostly middle aged women wore beautiful dresses cut from recognizably African cloths and sewn in African styles: bright, joyous silk cut in the Rwandan loose formal gowns called *umushananas*, which are a two piece gown that resembles the Indian sari:



Figure 1: Illustration of Umushanana

Source: Anna Ainsworth



or slim-fitting floor length mermaid dresses cut from brightly patterned cotton, resembling West

African fashions, *kaba and slit* two piece dresses:

Figure 2: Illustration of Kaba and Slit

Source: Anna Ainsworth

or the *wrapper*, which varies in cut, but usually incorporates an elaborately tied turban:



Figure 3: Illustration of Wrapper

Source: Anna Ainsworth

I admired the beauty of these dresses as they stood out among the younger women dressed in contemporary Western fashions, marking a site of contested cultural codes. Attire is a political site as it “touches the body and faces outward toward others”, hence possessing a “dual quality” that Terence Turner has termed the “social skin”, which “invites us to explore both the individual and collective identities that the dressed body enables” (Tranberg Hansen 2013, 2). Indeed, Marie explained that the dresses I had observed were an articulation of Rwandan identity: a statement that “here I am, and I’m part of you” (Marie). This intentional message, worn in public spaces in the GTA, is a clear marker of pride in Rwandan identity, as these dresses are made or purchased in Rwanda on trips and intentionally brought back to Canada to be worn on special occasions, such as weddings, funerals, and other celebrations. They are also worn out of aesthetic pleasure as other women recognize and admire the beauty of these dresses and dress for each other’s appreciation. Indeed, as Marie explained, one would not wear these gowns elsewhere because “if I wear this dress, nobody would appreciate it, you know? Nobody recognizes it anyways, nobody knows it. But if I wear it to [Rwandan] church they’re going to say, ‘wow, beautiful dress’” as they appreciate both the attendant meanings and the pleasing shape of the dress.

The Rwandan or African dress as code, visible for all, was an example of “fashion as political practice” as it was also a contestation of western codes of dress and meaning (Allman 2004, 1). These women were bodily interjecting traditional African attire in the modern space of the GTA, thereby challenging the dichotomy of tradition/modernity, and the attendant assumptions that fashion is “about status, mobility, and rapid change in a Western, capitalist world” while those outside the West, specifically in Africa, are “the people without fashion” as they can only be seen through the lens of ethnographic study of ethnic costumes (Allman 2004,

2-3). Interestingly, these dresses themselves serve as signifiers of cultural and aesthetic exchange within the larger African continent as the *kaba and slit* and wrapper dresses originated in West Africa and have become popularized in other regions of the continent, while the *umushanana* is now increasingly seen in Kenya and Tanzania, having crossed the border from Rwanda (Rugina 2013). These dresses, brighter and more elaborate than their western cousins, stand out in Rwandan celebrations and intentionally draw the eye, in the midst of firmly modern practices of transnational cultural and economic exchanges. They are not remnants of a past discarded by modern forces, but the lively articulations of global intercultural exchanges and expressions. In Canada they are exotic, but, importantly, unlike the niqab or the hijab, read as largely unthreatening, thus an acceptable performance of one's culture.

Yet these dresses were also expressions of an internal political narrative as one young Rwandan woman, watching the parade of bright silks and cottons, scornfully remarked that they were "like a circus". She was expressing both her individual dislike of attire that she hates to wear because it is "awkward" and uncomfortable, as well as her disdain for an older generation that is unwilling to submit to Western acculturation. To her, these dresses were not symbols of pride, but symbols of an outdated ethic and aesthetic that ought to be replaced with modern (read Western) fashion. Yet her comments also expose the degree to which she had appropriated the dichotomy of tradition/modernity and the assumption that only the West possesses and expresses modernity, while the so called 'rest' is hopelessly traditional and bound by its traditions. The women who wore these dresses themselves actively challenged this dichotomy because in their day to day lives, on the streets of the GTA, they are unlikely to wear these dresses—they are more likely to wear Western garb, making them largely indistinguishable from the professional class of women in the city. Also, as Marie pointed out, these dresses are not designed for

Canadian winters, so practical considerations, not a penchant for pre-modern notions, also determine their use.

Publicly performing Rwandaness in Canada is an expression of the desire to be seen and recognized as Rwandans who belong in Canada. The majority of the participants in this study expressed that they had made Canada home and that they felt that they belonged in the new homeland. These statements were often accompanied with a critical evaluation of racialization and marginalization in the new homeland, yet, a homeland it was. However, those who identified as Rwandans in the GTA, while still acknowledging the moments of exclusion, were adamant about their place in the new homeland and expressed this both in the interviews and in their private and public practices. As one participant expressed, having experienced extreme discrimination and exclusion in the remembered homeland, Rwanda, those who have settled in the GTA are more tolerant of what they perceive to be lesser forms of exclusion. Having been denied a home for so long, the chance to feel at home, even contingently, becomes even more important for individual and collective well-being. Thus, those who identify as Rwandans have staked their claim to belonging and have done so proudly and defiantly; they will not be denied a home again, even as they are marginalized and their access to full citizenship is restricted and contingent.

The sense of belonging described in this chapter is, in many ways, the key paradox of this study. The racialization and exclusion that marked the day to day existence of those who identify as Rwandan in the GTA suggests that belonging is not a possibility; yet, as this study has demonstrated, the memory of extreme violence generated a desire for the imagined homeland, even as it compelled those who had settled in the GTA to forge homes. Thus those who claimed belonging in this group simultaneously sought belonging in the homeland by becoming part of



the larger diaspora, and sought belonging by setting down roots in their new homes in the GTA. Thus, to be become a diaspora is to be caught at the interstices of a state power that expels on one end and absorbs on the other. However, even as such powerful forces as states act on individuals, those discussed in this study created their own sense of home and belonging, by living both here and there, and by living in both the time of violence and the present.

## **Chapter Eight**

### **Conclusion**

Rwandans who identified as Rwandan and live outside of Rwanda have been studied primarily as a means to better understand domestic politics in Rwanda (Mamdani 2001; Reyntjens 2004; Prunier 2009), and not as people worthy of analysis because of the significance of own particular lives and experiences. Those who have focused on Rwandans in the Canadian diaspora explicitly have done so to collect their memories of violence (Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre 2014; Montreal Life Stories 2015), but no study has looked at these individuals as an emergent community, embroiled in internal and external contestations about what it means to be part of a diaspora, to be Canadian, and to be Rwandan (or not Rwandan). The present study has sought to turn the analytical lens onto Rwandans who live in the GTA in order to understand how they became a diaspora, that is, people who understand themselves as belonging to a group that has a shared imagined place of origin, resides away from the homeland and sustains close ties with the homeland, even as they came to feel at home in Canada. It offers a glimpse into the multiple discourses that those who identify as Rwandan face in their day to day lives and how they individually and collectively contest narratives of what it means to be Rwandan and Canadian. In conducting this study, I sought to listen, carefully and analytically, to a group of people who have only been heard as victims or perpetrators of unthinkable violence, in order to hear how, carrying the burdens of memory, they have built lives beyond the violence. Those lives, experienced in both Canada/Rwanda and in the dual time of violence/present, embody the dialectical relationship between belonging and non-belonging that constitutes a diaspora.

### *Summary of Findings*

This study offered an analysis of how ethnicity, nation, race, and diaspora are constructed among members of the Rwandan diaspora in the GTA and to challenge the assumption, present in much of the literature on diasporas, that a diaspora is created by movement away from a putative homeland. Indeed, as Axel has argued (2001), I proposed that a diaspora is an entity that is actively called into being and constructed. The modern history of hyper-real violence that is remembered and retold among those who identified as Rwandans in the GTA had become instrumental in the construction of a collective identity and the impetus for belonging in Canada, even as the ways the violence was narrated and remembered became one of the central fractures in the community. Following Alexander (2004), I proposed that violence becomes meaningful as a contingent event constituted as ethnic or national not in the moment it occurs, as Brubaker seems to imply, but when it is recalled and inscribed as meaningful. The practice of remembering the violence as ethnic/national, and commemorating it as such, constitutes the meaning of the event as ethnic/national. The remembered violence becomes constitutive of the new ethno-national entity because, in recalling and retelling the violence, collectively created shared understandings of the trauma are generated, which then had the effect of breaking the pre-existing social order. The imagined community that existed before was dissolved, and in its place a new imagined community was constructed. The new Rwandan state then utilized its High Commission in Ottawa to call into being a diaspora based on principles laid out in a new constitution for the diaspora; through Presidential visits, exchange programs and online connections, it sustained this construct among those who lived in the GTA. Yet, even as the Rwandan state framed this group as desirable largely for remittances, it framed segments as

dangerous, especially when they raised concerns about the state's legitimacy and its violent actions within Rwanda and beyond. Thus, individuals were caught between the desire for the state and a repulsion towards it. As the Rwandan state reached out to the newly forming diaspora, the Canadian state offered an ambivalent welcome as Rwandans were racialized and othered by the policies and discourses of multiculturalism. Even as the Canadian state professed cultural and ethnic inclusion as one its central myths, it explicitly framed new migrants and potentially dangerous and in need of management.

I set out to explore through this case study Rogers Brubaker's assertion that race, ethnicity, and nation are ways of seeing, rather than ways of being. These perspectives on the world, rather than things in the world, shape how individuals interpret their world and how they are interpreted and slotted into pre-determined classifications (Brubaker 2006, 17). To be seen as black, as Rwandans in Canada are, is to be read through the racist lens of the potentially criminal black male body and the oversexualized black female body; it is to be subject to scrutiny and hyper-visibility, while simultaneously neglected and ignored. Ethnicity, in this study, refers largely to the ethnic labels of Hutu and Tutsi which, as nearly all participants insisted, no longer existed. Yet, as I also heard, most categorized their social worlds according to these labels. Fundamentally, it meant that to be Tutsi, as most in the study were, was to be perceived as a perpetual potential victim and thus granted moral and social capital, and to be Hutu was to be seen as a perpetual potential perpetrator and to be subject to discipline and silencing, especially about the violence that has been enacted against Hutus. To see the world through nation was to echo the Rwandan state's mythico-history of the genocide and to actively participate in the nation-building projects carried out in the GTA as part of a national and patriotic duty. It meant accepting the new national cosmology and, significantly, publicly enforcing it.

In investigating how ideas about one's place in the world are constructed, I sought to highlight the agency of those who are framed and constructed—or understand themselves—as Rwandans and to demonstrate how each individual participant in the study negotiated and navigated the discourses that she encountered. Thus, I have proposed that the violence of the genocide is constitutive of the very notion of Rwandaness and that in thinking themselves as Rwandans, or Hutus or Tutsis, the participants of the study invoked memories of the time of violence to make sense of their present. It was impossible to understand oneself as Rwandan without recalling the genocide. Non-Rwandans also imposed a reading of Rwandaness as the product of violence as the genocide is the only thing that other Canadians know about this small East African state. Thus, the violence is recalled both within the community and without and overdetermines the identity. To understand oneself as Rwandan in the GTA was to simultaneously exist in the time of violence and in the present and the toll of this dual temporality was expressed in the trauma that lingered among the community.

Yet, even though the trauma remained and marked individual lives, people of Rwandan descent nonetheless connected to one another and shared conceptions of themselves as a community. Whenever this group gathered as Rwandans, there was an active expression of and engagement with the very category of Rwandan particularly because the inherited national cosmology, generated by the new Rwandan state, was re-written and re-narrated through this engagement. Individuals challenged, contested, and engaged the narratives that had been passed from the top down as they negotiated the “thresholds of meaning” and engaged in the process of cultural production (Bhabha 1990, 4). In these moments the “practical categories, situated actions, cultural idioms, cognitive schemas, discursive frames, organizational routines, institutional forms, political projects and contingent events” (Brubaker 2006, 11) that make up

the idea of nation, ethnicity, and race, were in play and generated the appearance of these categories as things in the world. Yet, even as these were (re)enacted, those who identified as Rwandans engaged in, to borrow from Brubaker, a “‘micropolitics’ of categories, [through] the ways in which they categorize[d], appropriate[d], internalize[d], subvert[ed], evade[d], or transform[ed] the categories that [were] imposed upon them” (2006, 13).

The community dates back to the late 1980s when the first migrants of Rwandan origin settled in the GTA, though the condition of exile from the homeland for many dates as far back as 1959. These well-educated young men, hailing largely from Uganda, formed social bonds based on their shared language and experience of exile. However, this nascent community did not perceive itself as a diaspora until after 2007. As such, it was nearly fifty years after the first migratory wave left modern Rwanda that those study participants who identified as Rwandans living outside of Rwanda came to see themselves as belonging to a larger collective, namely, a diaspora. Individual communities, specifically those in the GTA, had understood themselves to share a cultural and linguistic affinity when they connected with one another, but it was only when the new Rwandan regime implemented an organized and centralized process of naming them and gathering the disparate communities under one umbrella organization that they came to see themselves as being part of a diaspora. This process of coming to see themselves as a diaspora was not an organic, natural outcome of migration, but the product primarily of a state campaign to generate a diaspora in order to attain more remittances and to draw back the expertise among those who had left.

Even as the Rwandan state-sanctioned RDGN created a perception of unity, individuals choose to connect to the organization based on friendships and long-standing interpersonal relationships, rather than an ethno-national affinity. The organization hosted events, chief among

them the genocide commemorations, which served as moments of nation-building and were examples of what Brubaker has termed “contingent events” when groupness, or the appearance of cohesion occurred (2006, 11). As the dead of 1994 were invoked by the state and its branches among the diaspora to create a national narrative and new cosmology (Anderson 2006), absenteeism was one measure of quietly resisting the appropriation of the violence and the silencing of alternate narratives. Thus, in resisting the framing of Tutsis as perpetual and eternal victims and Hutus as perpetual and eternal perpetrators, individuals engaged in what James C. Scott has named “infrapolitics”, or the “the struggle waged daily, by subordinate groups,” yet is “beyond the visible end of the spectrum” (1990, 183). These performances of unity also served to silence those whose trauma did not fit the cosmology that had emerged out of the new Rwandan state. Those who had lost family and friends to the RPF forces, especially after the genocide was ended, could not tell their story and their memories and trauma were silenced.

Groupness was also evident in the formation of CARY, the Rwandan youth organization Toronto branch. While the inaugural gala and events hosted by CARY offered a façade of unified Rwandaness, young people had not connected as Rwandans until the High Commission had organized camps for youth designed to teach them their identity. These camps resulted in the formation of youth organizations in a number of Canadian cities. The young people whom I interviewed had not connected on their own in any significant way before the state mechanism explicitly formed a connection between them and thus generated the new expression of identity among Rwandan youth.

A more evident contestation of centralized state-generated ethno-national identity was the continuing division between those who identified as Tutsi and those who identified as Hutu. The current government adamantly argued for a ‘Rwandan’ identity and denied the existence of the

ethnic Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa identities, even as Tutsi were socially, economically, and politically privileged in the new Rwanda (Mamdani 2001; Reyntjens 2004; Prunier 2009). The state's phrase that "we are all Rwandans" was echoed among those in the community in the GTA. Yet, despite this repetition of official rhetoric, participants explained the many ways in which these identities continued to infuse day to day life. Indeed, some participants refused to use the phrase because they perceived it to conceal the ethnicization of the Rwandan state. Others explained that in the GTA community it was easier to tell who was a Hutu and who was a Tutsi than in Rwanda because of the small size of the community. Even youth who did not have a lived memory of life in Rwanda were taught by their parents to utilize an imagined physiological taxonomy to identify Hutus or Tutsis. Thus, new arrivals to the community were rapidly defined and framed as one or the other and, if they wished to remain part of the community, had to contend with the consequences of this definition. These ostensible differences dictated silences at social gatherings as any mention of contemporary politics and the history of the genocide were intentionally reserved for moments when one was among one's own kind. Both putative groups expressed anxiety about interacting with the other as, unbidden, memories arose and inherited cosmologies redefined social situations. Indeed, some Tutsi community members took it upon themselves to police the boundaries and to call out those whom they perceived to be trying to hide their Hutu identity. Thus, those who identified as Hutus faced surveillance and policing if they chose to interact with the community.

Another fissure in the narrative of unity was the experience of gendered narratives of nation and ethnicity. Migration had exposed men and women to new ideas about gender and a new legal and institutional regime which facilitated women's greater autonomy, resulting in the breakdown of many marriages in the community. This echoed what Manuh (1998) and Creese



(2011) found among other African diaspora communities. This marital discord, a product of contested gendered norms, was often understood as a failure to perform Rwandan culture/ethnicity properly. Young, unmarried women were also subject to scrutiny and surveillance to ensure that they embodied the national/ethnic behavioural codes emphasizing modesty, respectability, reserve, and appropriately moral behaviours. As Burnet found in Rwanda, so too in Canada, women who transgressed these social codes faced ostracization and a challenge to their identity as Rwandan women (Burnet 2012). To avoid this fundamental challenge of their identity and place in the world, Rwandan women in the diaspora had found ways of navigating the terrain of what constituted a “good woman”, while also finding ways to define themselves and live their lives according to their own strictures and needs.

As much as members of the community were subject to internal narratives of meaning, so too were they subject to Canadian-state driven discourses about who belongs in the imagined nation that is Canada. Under the policy/discourse of multiculturalism, Rwandans found the language of inclusion, yet, too often, encountered racialization and marginalization in what Philomena Essed has termed everyday racism (1991). While Will Kymlicka understands this exclusion as failures of multiculturalism, following Sara Ahmed (2007), I proposed that the marginalization that people of colour encounter in multicultural Canada is not an anomaly, but a constitutive aspect of a discourse that posits them as bearers of a sometimes unbearable difference. Their cultures are interpreted as transhistorical and fundamentally anti-modern and framed as antithetical to the progressive state that is ostensibly welcoming them.

Those who participated in this study expressed this very dynamic as central to their day to day lived experience. Yet, they also insisted on their place in the nation and on their belonging. Many expressed “love” for Canada. In doing so, they were expressing a deeply rooted

affective tie, as well as performing their prescribed role as the perpetual outsiders who must continually prove their worth. Indeed, this struggle, waged daily, took a toll on individuals' well-being. Many expressed that they had suffered from depression and anxiety, and that distance from their families further exacerbated their emotional decline. Too many faced the lesser value placed by Canadian state discourses and policies on people who attempted to migrate in the family class, as Peter S. Li has demonstrated (2003). Further, those who wished to have family visit again faced the racist immigration system (Tettey and Puplampu 2005), and were subjected to increased scrutiny because they were racialized as African.

In understanding multiculturalism, the participants expressed a nuanced understanding of this discourse, while filling it with their own hopes and expectations for belonging. Their experiences exposed the degree to which multiculturalism excluded whiteness as whiteness was perceived to be the norm against which people of colour were marked. Those who identified as Rwandans in the GTA were routinely subjected to racialization and reminded of their difference marked in their habits, beliefs, practices, accents, and place of origin, as Agnew has observed with other people of colour (2005; 2007; 2009). To be racialized as black in the GTA was to be read as criminal, immoral, vulgar, loud, and visible. Rwandan men were subjected to covert, nervous glances, followed in stores by security, stopped excessively by police officers, and undermined daily in their workplaces. Young men, perceived as black youth, were subjected to police surveillance and attention and generally presumed to be dangerous, especially in groups. Women were less likely to be assumed to be criminals, but were subject to sexualisation, surveillance, oversight, and disregard. They were routinely neglected in classrooms and workplaces, even as their performance of their sexuality was observed and commented upon.

The racialization that nearly all participants described forced them to develop coping mechanisms. Thus, when individuals were called by the dehumanizing epithet “nigger”, they explained its use as originating in ignorance, rather than attributing it to a systematic, institutionally inscribed practice. Others trained their sons especially to be passive and exceedingly polite in the face of police harassment in order to pass unseen. Others spoke of not “blackening” themselves and thus avoiding the negative repercussions of being seen as black. Yet, all these defense mechanisms had the effect of internalizing the racism by individualizing it. Thus, when a young man was subjected to harassment and violence, he could only blame himself for “blackening” himself, rather than being able to point to a system of institutionalized racism.

Racialization contributed to labour market segregation, often forcing people of colour into low-wage insecure jobs. Due to the linguistic capital of speaking one or both of the official languages, many in the community were able to find employment relatively shortly after arrival, but few found employment commensurate with their previous education and credentials, echoing the findings of Li (2003), Laryea and Hayfron (2005), and Creese (2011). Many resorted to survival work, and those who chose to return to school faced the additional burden of accruing debt and delaying their earning capacity. Yet, even Canadian educational credentials did not ensure full-time employment. Many participants recounted how they were disciplined for their non-regional accents on the job, or outright denied work based on the assumptions made about their accents. As Creese has argued, a “‘refusal to hear’ non-standard accents” is another form of daily domination which denies upward mobility and erases linguistic capital (2011). Thus, racialization had the material effect of denying this community upward mobility and full citizenship rights in their new homes.

Many in the study chose to turn to transnational engagements with the remembered homeland to satisfy their need for belonging and acceptance. Nearly all engaged in the routine transnationalism of connecting with family and friends in Rwanda, others also had developed non-governmental aid organizations that were active in Rwanda, and many participated in events organized and run by the Rwandan state. Perhaps the most salient feature of transnationalism in this community was the degree to which it took place in the virtual world of the internet and generated a new notion of nationhood whereby the nation-state did not have a monopoly on classification and identification.

Yet, transnational engagements with family and friends “back home” did not always work to strengthen ties and connect people in geographically disparate locations. At times, this very transnationalism created expectations that the now Western migrant was affluent and able to help those back home, while he carried the additional burden of being reminded of his economic marginality in the new homeland. Others expressed that their survivor’s guilt prevented them from enjoying the interactions. Likewise, the development of NGOs designed to meet the developmental needs of Rwandans in the homeland was also tied up in notions of guilt and the survivor’s desire to mitigate her own trauma and pain by becoming an active agent.

Meanwhile, the Rwandan state attempted to dominate the transnational engagement of Rwandans in the diaspora through centrally organized networks and by hosting regular Rwanda Days whereby the President traveled to major urban centres in North America and Europe to encourage return and investment in Rwanda. Yet, even as it sought to attract the capital and skills of its diaspora, the state actively framed portions of it as undesirable and threatening to its own fantasies. Those who are thus framed were violently excluded from participating in the edifice of state-organized transnationalism and actively harassed. Indeed, the Rwandan regime stood

accused of orchestrating the murder of so called “dissidents” among the diaspora. Thus, it framed the diaspora as both desirable for the remittances and skills it could bring as well as threatening to its legitimacy and longevity, and this central dynamic of desire/threat formed the basis of the state’s relationship with its diaspora.

Even as those who identified as Rwandans in the GTA remembered the violence that constituted the very category of Rwanda and were subjected to the discourses of nation, ethnicity, and race by the Rwandan and Canadian states, they navigated, negotiated, and daily interpreted these forces to build their homes and new lives. Indeed, very many in the study were emphatic that they had found a new home in the GTA and expressed their sense of belonging in their new homeland. They understood themselves as active citizens and consumers, thereby staking their claim to their neighbourhoods and communities, and making rich lives for themselves and their children.

### *Limitations of the Study*

This study set out to demonstrate how nation, ethnicity, and race are ways of seeing among those who identify as Rwandans in the diaspora, by tracing the processes by which these ideas are generated, transmitted, and sustained, while observing how these same ideas are challenged and questioned. Centrally, it also sought to assert that those who define themselves as Rwandans in the GTA are agents in their own identification. However, by focusing on one relatively small community and utilizing formal interviews with only 31 members of this community, it is a very limited study. While the research was based on participant observation in community events as well, its findings are only a partial snapshot of the political, social and

psychological dynamics at play. The 31 interviews, while in depth, nonetheless were limited in number and future researchers would benefit from speaking to a greater number of individuals in order to attain an even more representative sample and fuller picture. Further, as was discussed in the introduction to this study, perhaps the greatest limitation is the fact that I was only able to interview two individuals who openly identified as Hutus, as the rest of the interviewees either chose not to identify themselves or identified as Tutsis. The fact that the GTA is a largely English-speaking community means that the majority of those who have settled here have come from English-speaking regions like Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. Thus the community is, in fact, majority Tutsi. However, there are many who would identify as Hutus, but whom I was not able to meet, or, if we met, they were not open to being interviewed, and thus their perspectives are not fully incorporated into the study.

Further, by virtue of relying on participants' self-identification as Rwandan, this study did not consider the perceptions of those who have chosen to no longer identify with this ethno-national identity. There are a substantial number of individuals in the GTA who choose not to interact with the community and who choose not to identify as Rwandans. Their perspectives would have been a welcome addition to this study and may have worked as a corrective to moments when I may have unintentionally reified these identities. Yet, to locate them would be a challenge as they have intentionally disassociated themselves from community events and other moments of groupness, which were my routes to finding interview subjects. Despite these limitations, the findings of my study are significant, but must be regarded as tentative and will, hopefully, spark further research.

### *Contributions and Wider Implications*

This study explicitly contributes to the literature on nationalisms, violence and memory, diasporas, and multiculturalism. The original contributions of this study are the following theoretical claims: firstly, building on similar claims made by Jennie Burnet in relation to the new state in Rwanda (2012), I proposed that the new (Rwandan) nation and the new diaspora has been built upon the mythico-history that all Tutsis are perpetual victims and all Hutus are real or potential perpetrators. I argued that this nation-building ideology was very evident among the diaspora community in the GTA as the Rwandan state enforced a singular reading of recent history which erased the memories and trauma of one segment of the community and granted moral and social privilege to the other. Secondly, another key theoretical contribution has been to build on Rogers Brubaker's notion that nation is a contingent event (1994; 2006), by proposing that it is not the event itself that contributes to the idea of the nation, but how the event is remembered, recalled and retold. Thus I proposed that violence becomes ethnically or nationally significant and meaningful by how it is *remembered* and by what meanings are attributed to it. Thus, I argued, the Rwandan diaspora was created upon the foundation of the new mythico-history which offered a centralized account and memory of the terrible violence of the genocide. The process of creating and sustaining a memory of the violence becomes imperative to sustaining the concept of the diaspora. Finally, the third original theoretical contribution of this study has been to propose that becoming a diaspora and feeling at home in the new homeland can occur simultaneously, which counters the assumption of much scholarship on diasporas that becoming a diaspora is produced by alienation from the new nation (Clifford 1995; Bannerji 1997; Ahmed 1999; Scheffer 2003; Agnew 2007; Ricoeur 2010). Thus, to understand oneself as

part of a diaspora does not inherently mean that one does not perceive oneself as belonging in the new homeland.

Perhaps the more significant contributions of this study are empirical, due to it being the first study of the Rwandan diaspora and of how Rwandans living outside Rwanda came to understand themselves as belonging to a Rwandan diaspora community. As I have indicated above, Rwandans in the diaspora have been studied in an effort to understand the horror of genocide and its consequences, but they have not been studied as a diasporic group. This study is the first (the only other study I am aware of is an MA thesis by Wendy Owen in 2010 at the University of Michigan) to investigate the questions of nation, ethnicity, race, and diaspora by looking at this particular group. Thus, this study makes a significant contribution to filling a major gap in the literature about the Rwandan diaspora. Another empirical contribution of this study is to add to the growing body of literature about African migrants in Canada (Manuh 1998; Elabor-Idemudia, 2001; Abdi, 2005; Tettey and Pupilampu 2005, Okeke-Ihejirikak, Spitzer, 2005; Owen 2010; Creese 2011; Naji 2012; Montreal Holocaust Centre 2014). In particular, this study offers a glimpse of this migrant group in the GTA, and the processes of community formation therein. This study follows in the footsteps of those cited in focusing on the perspectives of African migrants, a relatively new experience within the Canadian nation, and on the racialization that they experience, which differs in some respects from other groups that are racialized as black in Canada. Canadian multiculturalism, while ostensibly creating a space of inclusion, serves to frame and define migrants as dangerous and potentially “radical” others who must learn to adapt to the liberal and tolerant values of Canada. Even though, in the contemporary moment African migrants are framed as less threatening than migrants from South Asia and the Middle East, and Muslims in particular, they are still subject to routine exclusions



in their interactions with state institutions. The exclusion and marginalization that Rwandans in the GTA experienced strengthened their desire for a connection with the homeland and created the conditions whereby a diaspora could be created. Thus, in the case of Rwandans in the GTA, the creation of a diaspora needed both a state or state-like institution which generated a mythico-history and a new nationalism, as well as a host state that denied full citizenship and belonging. These states, acting on a disparate group of people who may have shared little in common, created, on one hand, a need and desire for belonging, and on the other, a promise of belonging in the construct of a diaspora. Thus, out of this dialectical relationship the diaspora emerged.

Another significant empirical finding is that even as individuals connected to one another, they did not come to see themselves as a diaspora until the Rwandan state called the diaspora into being in 2007. Prior to this, there was a loosely connected community of individuals who identified as Rwandans in the GTA, but their connections to one another were based on inter-personal ties, not on a collective identity generated by movement away from the homeland. The anxiety and fear of a repetition of violence, fostered and fed by the Rwandan state's narratives, led individuals to perceive the state as necessary for their own protection. Thus, the needs of those who identified as Rwandans in the GTA met the Rwandan state's desire for remittances and they were willing to become participants in the creation of the diaspora. Nonetheless, they did not mutely accept the state's definitions and conditions; rather, many contested and re-interpreted the categories that were imposed upon them. Hence, this study points to the very specific ways in which states constitute a diaspora, and offers a case study that counters the assumption that movement away from the homeland in and of itself generates a diaspora, following Brian Axel's critique of the place of origin thesis (2001). However, the present study also points to the need to examine specific cases of diaspora formation attentive to

the differences as well as the similarities between them, such as the presence or absence of a "home" state and the role of such states in diaspora-making in particular contexts.

This study also contributes to the existing literature on memories of violence, especially the memory of the Holocaust. Specifically, this study builds on Idith Zertal's assertion that the horrific violence of the Holocaust and the existence and experiences of the survivors themselves were erased from public discourse in the first period of the new Israeli state (1998). I have offered another case study of a post-genocide state which has appropriated the violence of genocide as its foundational myth, while also denying and silencing survivors. While two case studies do not form a rule, it is noteworthy that dynamics so similar to those observed by Zertal occurred as part of the nation-building efforts of the Rwandan state. This parallel suggests the need to consider an accounting of horror and genuine care for survivors as unlikely, if not impossible, within the institutional processes of the state alone. When an event like a genocide is reframed as a mythico-history and forms the cosmology of a new nation through the institutional discourses, categories, rituals, and norms of the state, it, perhaps, must be misremembered, at least within the first generation. Perhaps, truly confronting horror and building a new nation are incompatible projects. For to glance into the abyss of genocide is to envision a world where there is no connection, and no hope for the future. It is to face the annihilation of human bonds.

The interdisciplinary approach, blending sociology, anthropology, political science and institutional studies as well as borrowing from psychoanalytical concepts is another contribution to the field of diaspora and nationalism studies. In utilizing a broad range of concepts from many fields, I was able to observe phenomena that would be invisible with a singular lens, such as the consequence of individual trauma on interpersonal relationships, as well as the effects that this has on the ability of elites to generate consensus around the mythico-history and the attribution

of collective guilt. Nonetheless, this sizeable toolkit also enforced intellectual rigour and discipline as it forced me to always bear in mind state structures, for instance, even as I observed and thought through the actions and words of individuals. Thus this multidisciplinary approach serves to enrich the study of diasporas and nations by keeping the state in, but also bringing in culture, language, emotions and ideas—all equally constitutive of reality.

This study also suggests that one of the most fruitful methods of studying nationalism is through in-depth interviews and participant observation to enable us to observe the micro dynamics of identity construction. Macro studies do offer very useful data sets, but are ill devised to observe the deep, multi-layered sediment of identity. For instance, a focus on the micro dynamics has allowed me to observe absenteeism at official commemorations which very subtly challenges the state's mythico-history and appropriation of memory. Had I not been attuned to the quieter details, I would have been led to conclude that the mythico-history has been unquestioningly accepted by the diaspora. Likewise, the focus on the micro allowed me to understand that before 2007 there was no such thing as a diaspora in the GTA, even though people of Rwandan origin were connected to one another and to the state in Rwanda. Only in listening to individual accounts was I able to ferret out that people had been connected through various interpersonal ties, but not as an ethno-national group. The focus on smaller, daily experiences rather than the larger, louder, enactments of nation allowed me to observe when groupness did not occur, and, thus, to conclude, that it is indeed, as Brubaker proposes, intermittent, contingent and unstable (2006).

Thinking through the consequences of the hyper-real violence of the Rwandan genocide had to involve digging beneath the statements of state representatives and community leaders (or ethnopolitical entrepreneurs) about reconciliation, and listening and observing those who live

with the burden of that history. Further, to understand how state discourses and policies affect individuals, it is not enough to merely observe the policy. We must also seek out an understanding of how those whom the policy targets interpret, analyse, engage or evade the policy directives. For instance, in this study I observed that Rwandans in the GTA were well aware of the discourse of multiculturalism, but nonetheless appropriated its language to create spaces of belonging and to position themselves as experts whom the rest of us need to hear.

Finally, this study offers some methodological insight into how to listen to survivors of violence and how to offer them spaces where they can begin the long and difficult process of healing. The Rwandan diaspora in the GTA is unique in its internal dynamics and mythico-history of nation, ethnicity, and race. Yet, it is also very similar to other migrant groups that have emerged out of violent conflict. Since the Holocaust became the subject of public scrutiny, we have been trying to think through what it means to live with and offer welcome to those who have been marred by unthinkable and unimaginable violence. Too often it has been easier to turn away, to allow the survivors to live out their lives within the private hells that their memories evoke. If we are to imagine a truly democratic and pluralistic society, we must find ways to hear and see survivors. That meant respecting if someone wished not to speak of the violence, and listening to those who did wish to speak, even if it had little to do with the question I had posed. That meant observing the non-verbal cues, waiting out silences patiently, and sharing the memory as best I could by attending the annual genocide commemorations, as I have now done for the last 3 years and intend to continue to do. It meant not contesting the narratives of the violence that I heard, even if they echoed exclusionary narratives, and seeking to understand what might motivate someone to think in those terms. Among the many things we must learn from survivors is the horrific cost of violence. The hardest part of conducting this research has

been the necessity of listening carefully to narratives of horrific violence, which is extremely difficult. However, if we are unable to listen and hear, we cannot hope to understand or to share a community with those who have difficult stories to tell.

There were also other moments when I could feel my whole being straining against the strictures of listening. Yet, I had to listen. Otherwise I would have failed in what I had set out to do—to hear what ethnicity, race, and nation mean to this community and how this community understands those constructs. There were moments when I failed to listen well and probably silenced my interlocutor, and that I regret. But when I forced myself to listen, I began to hear stories that I had not expected about simultaneous belonging and non-belonging, challenging my analytical framework which rested on the presumption that to be racialized in the GTA is to be marginalized and excluded. I learned to hear that when my participants spoke of loving Canada, they meant it, even as they were fully aware of being discriminated against in institutional settings and in interpersonal interactions.

The only possible way to conclude is to express my deep gratitude to those who chose to speak, in the hopes of being heard, and who chose to share their narratives. Many of these stories must have been hard to tell, and the cost of telling them was borne out in broken voices and shaking hands. To those who chose not to speak I am also grateful as they welcomed me into their community, shared their time with me, fed me (oh so well), and invited me to live with them, if only for an evening. The welcome I received is the same welcome I would hope for them in the GTA.

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## **Appendix A: Abbreviations and Terms**

APROSOMA (Association pour la Promotion Sociale de la Masse): Political party created by Hutu businessman Joseph Gitera in 1957 which claimed to be a class-based party, but attracted only Hutu membership.

DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo)

FAR (Force Armées Rwandaises): The national army from 1962 till 1994.

GTA (Greater Toronto Area): encompasses Toronto, Etobicoke, Mississauga, Scarborough and North York

Interahamwe : 'Hutu Power' youth wing of the MNRD Habyarimana political party which was responsible for executing the genocide.

MDR (Mouvement Démocratique Rwandaise): Re-invention of PARMEHUTU in 1991, ethnically based and anti-Tutsi political party.

MRND (Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement) :Political party formed by Habyarimana in 1974.

MSM (Mouvement Social Muhutu): Hutu political party created by Grégoire Kayibanda in 1957.

PARMEHUTU (Parti du Mouvement et de l'Emancipation Hutu): new version of MSM by 1959.

PL (Parti Libérale): Centre-right political party formed in 1991.

PSD (Parti Social Démocrate) :Centre-left party formed in 1991, alternative to ethnic-based political discourse.

RCA (Rwandese-Canadian Association)

RCCA (Rwandan Canadian Cultural Association)

RDGN (Rwandan Diaspora Global Network in Toronto)

RPA (Rwandan Patriotic Army): The post 1994 military of Rwanda made of up the military branch of the RPF.

RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front): Initially a rebel movement originating in Uganda in 1987 which fought a civil war with Rwandan forces from 1990-1993, signed a peace deal, then invaded again when the genocide began and chased the Interahamwe out of Rwanda. It subsequently formed the new regime in Rwanda by becoming the ruling political party.

UNAR (Union Nationale Rwandaise): A Tutsi monarchist party created in 1959 that was hostile to the Belgians, but wanted the largely Tutsi monarchy to retain political power.

UNHCR (United Nations High Commission for Refugees)

## Appendix B: Informed Consent From

**Study Name:** Performing Rwandan Identity in the Diaspora: Remembering the green hills in 'cold' Canada

**Researcher:** Anna Ainsworth, Doctoral Candidate,

Graduate Program in Political Science, York University

**Contact:** Email address: .....

**Purpose of the research:** The purpose of this research is to understand what it means to be a Rwandan in the diaspora. It seeks to understand how those who identify as Rwandans living in Toronto understand their own ethnic identity and how that is affected by both the Rwandan state and the Canadian state. This information will be gathered through informal interviews with community members, and observation of their social/civic life. It will then be presented and reported to the community in a meeting organized by the researcher, and at academic conferences and finally in a dissertation.

**What you will be asked to do in the research:** You will be asked to engage in an informal conversation with the researcher during an interview of about 1 hour. If you are willing to do so, there may be a follow-up interview of an additional hour at a later date.

**Risks and discomforts:** While there are no direct risks associated with the interviews and the research, in order to avoid any discomfort, the researcher will allow you to decide what you wish to speak of and will not push topics that cause you to express or exhibit discomfort. Full confidentiality will be maintained and all names and any identifying features will be removed from the final report, unless written consent is granted to use names or identifying features.

**Voluntary participation:** Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence the relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

**Withdrawal from the study:** You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

**Confidentiality:** Confidentiality will be assured in the following way: all data collected will only be accessible to the researcher and the researcher will keep this data in a locked cabinet in her home. In the final report she will remove all names and identifying features, unless she written consent from you to do otherwise. Handwritten notes and audio tapes will be used. After the

conclusion of the study, the information will be kept in the locked location for 15 years at which point it will be offered to the University archives. If the archives do not wish to retain it, it will be destroyed. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

**Questions about the research?** If you have questions about the research project or about your role in the study, please contact the researcher, Anna Ainsworth at email address ....., or the supervisor Dr. Susan Henders at email ..... You may also direct any questions to the graduate program office in Political Science at phone number: .....

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, you may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University,

**Legal rights and signatures:**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, consent to participate in Performing Rwandan Identity in the Diaspora: Remembering the green hills in 'cold' Canada conducted by Anna Ainsworth. I have understood the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator



### **Additional Consent**

I agree to have features that could be used to identify me included in the study. Such information would include my age, gender, profession, time of migration, etc. **It would not include my name or the names of any members of my family.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant

I agree to have photographs taken of me included in the study. **These photographs would not be labelled with my name or the names of my family.**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher

## Appendix C: Interview Questions

- Can you tell me about yourself? (age, occupation, etc.)

### Rwanda

- How long ago did you leave Rwanda?
- What led to your migration?
- Tell me about growing up in Rwanda.
- What do you remember about your childhood in Rwanda?
- Do you have friends/family still there?
- To what extent do you keep in touch with friends/family in Rwanda? How often are you in contact? How do you stay in touch?
- Do you visit?
- Do you plan to return to visit or stay? Why?
- How do you feel about Rwanda? Why?
- What other kinds of connections do you have to Rwanda? (property, investments, community ties, etc.)
- To what extent do you feel that you belong in Rwanda? Why?

### Canada

- Tell me about life in Canada
- When did you arrive in Canada?
- What influenced your choice to settle in Canada?
- What are your impressions of life in Canada?
- Do you have family in Canada?
- How do you feel about Canada? Why?
- Have you experienced discrimination in the workplace, in personal relationships, in your neighbourhood?
- What are your connections to Canada? (property, investments, community ties, etc.)
- To what extent do you feel that you belong in Canada?

### Personal/social life

- Tell me about your social life.
- Whom do you socialize with? In what circumstances?
- To what extent do you interact with other people of Rwandan origin? In what circumstances?
- Where do you interact with each other?
- Do your friends have similar lifestyles to you?

- Do your friends of Rwandan origin feel about Rwanda the way you do? Do you discuss these feelings with them?

#### Self-Identification

- How do you describe yourself?
- Do you describe yourself differently in different circumstances? Why?
- Have you always described yourself in this way?
- If not, what caused you to describe/define yourself differently?
- Do you consider yourself to be part of a community of Rwandans in Canada? What caused you to think of yourself that way?
- How do you define this community?

### Appendix D: List of Interviewees and Interviews

	Pseudonym	Date of first interview	Location of interview	Number of interviews	Estimated total length of interview(s)	Primary consent	Secondary consent
1	Jean-Paul	23/05/2012	Restaurant	1	1.5 hrs.	X	X
2	Janvier	13/06/2012	Cafeteria	1	1 hr.	X	
3	Christophe	30/06/2012	Restaurant	1	1.5 hrs.	X	X
4	Marie	13/08/2012	Coffee shop	2	2 hrs.	X	X
5	Grace	25/08/2012	Church	1	1.5 hrs.	X	X
6	Jean	16/09/2012	Church	1	1 hr.	X	X
7	Seraphine	21/10/2012	Church	1	1 hr.	X	X
8	Theodore	28/10/2012	Church	1	1 hr.	X	
9	André	28/11/2012	Place of employment	1	1 hr.	X	
10	Angelina	20/01/2013	Coffee shop	1	1.5 hrs.	X	X
11	Diane	10/02/2013	Church	2	2 hrs.	X	X
12	Revocata	10/03/2013	Telephone	1	1 hr.	X	X
13	Theodosia	17/02/2013	Church	1	1 hr.	X	
14	Bernard	03/09/2013	Coffee shop	1	1 hr.	X	
15	Patrice	03/23/2013	Coffee shop	1	2 hrs.	X	X
16	Olivia	06/05/2013	car	2	2 hrs.	X	
17	Natalia	07/05/2013	Coffee shop	1	1.5 hrs.	X	X
18	Mathieu	19/07/2013	Coffee shop	1	1.5 hrs.	X	
19	Richard	29/06/2013	Participant's home	2	5 hrs.	X	X
20	Simon	31/07/2013	Participant's home	3	6 hrs.	X	X
21	Jeanne	08/07/2013	Coffee shop	1	1.5 hrs.	X	X
22	Delphine	07/09/2013	Coffee shop	2	2 hrs.	X	
23	Felicién	11/10/2013	Participant's home	1	45 min.	X	
24	Fidele	17/10/2013	Restaurant	1	2 hrs.	X	X
25	Georges	07/11/2013	Coffee shop	1	1 hrs.	X	X
26	Pierre	04/08/2014	Participant's home	1	3 hrs.	X	X
27	Agnes	07/06/2014	Library	1	1 hrs.	X	
28	Connie	13/02/2014	Library	1	1.5hrs.	X	
29	Louise	18/06/2014	Coffee shop	1	1.5 hrs.	X	
30	Vincent	22/06/2014	Restaurant	1	45 min.	X	
31	Anita	03/07/2014	Coffee shop	1	1 hrs.	X	