

Dead white males vs. Rwanda

In a tiny country in central Africa most Americans have never even heard of, people on the wrong side of a tribal divide are being slaughtered by the tens of thousands. The heartfelt cry going up in the United States about Rwanda is: Why are people doing such horrible things? But the wrong question is being asked.



Richard Grenier

Given the violence prevalent in most parts of the globe, and the frequent eruptions of mass slaughter in dozens and dozens of countries, the question to be reflected upon is why the Western world, on anything like this scale, does *not* engage in spontaneous outbursts of light-hearted, indiscriminate slaughter.

Because if you think they're killing people in Washington, D.C., or even Bosnia (which I'm not certain is even part of "the West"), you've never seen Rwanda. Nor adjacent Burundi, another associated African microstate given to these outbursts of mayhem. For a country of only 5 million people, with the same Tutsi-Hutu mix as Rwanda, Burundi, in fact, holds the central-African massacre record of something like 200,000 — more than the population of Little Rock — a score racked up in a few days of uninhibited slaughter in the early 1970s.

This part of central Africa was once inhabited by the Twa, a kind of pygmy, until the invasion of the Hutu, a Bantu people, who massacred the indigenous Twa. Then, in the early 16th century, the Tutsi, a people thought to come from Ethiopia, carried out a whole new invasion, massacring the Hutu — but with moderation, keeping most of them as serfs. The overall population of the Rwanda-Burundi area is still roughly 10 percent Tutsi and 90 percent Hutu.

During the 19th century, German colonists preserved the overlordship of the Tutsi, as did Belgian

colonists during the first half of the 20th. But since independence in the early 1960s, the Tutsi and the Hutu have been having it out, with almost more massacres than one can count — most of them of a genocidal nature which would easily qualify for a Nuremberg Trial if the perpetrators were only white.

Central Africa I single out only because Rwanda seems to be the flavor of the month, and I'm not forgetting that in Bangladesh, Nigeria and Cambodia deaths of this general sort have run to over a million, in East Timor (Indonesia) into

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the hundreds of thousands, and recently in Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Columbia, Sri Lanka, and in several other places into the tens of thousands. Even in Liberia, a small west African country established for freed American slaves under the auspices of the United States, a barely ending three-way civil war has killed 150,000, almost as many dead as in all Yugoslavia, which has 10 times the population. But we hear of no NATO air strikes against bad people in Liberia.

In Russia, a "white" nation, attempts to enter the Western world have been prevented by the people's lack of historical experience of the Renaissance, Reformation, 18th-century Enlightenment or any of the other formative developments that

went to create the Western mind, economy, and social institutions. I say this to make categorical that there's absolutely nothing genetic involved if today certain non-European parts of the world have failed to develop the notions of tolerance, individual liberty, civil rights, equality before the law, democracy and the representative institutions the basis of Western society.

These institutions were long enough in coming even in Europe, where the Thirty Years War and Wars of Religion of the 17th century were particularly harrowing. But how could we expect them miraculously to come into being overnight in Africa, which missed not only the Renaissance and the Enlightenment but everything else that went into that process as well?

The wave of optimism that swept over the enlightened world at the glorious future in store for newly independent states as the great colonial empires disbanded after World War II was, in retrospect, to say the least excessive. If the world slowly and painfully created by the "dead white guys" (so systematically denigrated at our elite universities) were to be set today against the world created by the live Rwanda guys of Africa, it doesn't seem to me that Americans of whatever color would have much difficulty deciding in which world they wanted to live.

My systematic adversaries here are American black studies departments, whose main purpose, as far as I can make out, is to teach American blacks they're descended from Cleopatra and whose accounts of the real Africa verge on comedy. Indeed, our whole modish "multicultural" concept is simply outlandish, as if all Americans with Hungarian names should major in Hungarian Studies where they're taught that Hungary is the be-all the end-all, and all Americans with Norwegian names should major in Norwegian Studies where they're taught the same thing of Norway.

It is the very multicultural system, in fact, which is now reaching such a glorious culmination in Rwanda. The Hutu, in a manner of speaking, all major in Hutu Studies and learn how marvelous it is to be a Hutu. And the Tutsi all major in Tutsi Studies and learn how marvelous it is to be a Tutsi. Unfortunately, neither Rwanda's Hutu Department nor its Tutsi Department teaches anything about equality, tolerance, representative institutions, or respect for the rights of a loyal opposition. In fact, they've no concept whatever of a loyal opposition. This is a concept they've somehow missed. Nor are they likely to discover it any time soon.

If this be Eurocentrism, make the most of it.

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