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Exhibiting Atrocity

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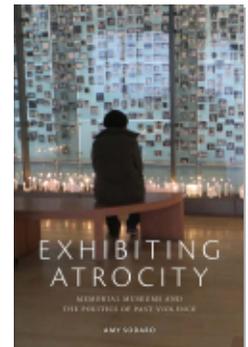
Published by Rutgers University Press

Sodaro, Amy.

Exhibiting Atrocity: Memorial Museums and the Politics of Past Violence.

New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018.

Project MUSE., <https://muse.jhu.edu/>.



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Building a “Lasting Peace”

In April 2004, the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre was dedicated to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the Rwandan genocide. Perched on a hill overlooking the city of Kigali, the center houses a museum with three permanent exhibitions, memorial gardens, the Genocide Archive of Rwanda, and mass graves holding the remains of more than 250,000 genocide victims who were killed in and around the city of Kigali. While the museum is built on a neutral site, chosen for its striking location and its convenience to the capital city rather than its meaning to genocide memory, the Kigali Centre strives to be the center of Rwandan national genocide remembrance. In this country that is not only still deeply wounded by the devastation of the genocide but also furiously putting the past behind it in a flurry of development, the Kigali Centre seeks to be both a solemn, enduring site of commemoration for survivors and families and an active partner in Rwanda’s postgenocide development.

In April 1994, ethnic tensions in Rwanda between the Hutu majority and the Tutsi minority erupted in an extremely lethal genocide that, over approximately a hundred days, left between five hundred thousand and one million Tutsi and moderate Hutu dead. What initially emerged as a primarily socioeconomic distinction between Tutsi as herder and Hutu as farmer was hardened into real ethnic difference under colonization first by Germany and then by Belgium (Des Forges 1999). Rwanda’s colonizers

found a population that was easily divided along lines that followed the prominent racial theories of the day and installed the Tutsi, who were thought to be more aristocratic and closely related to Europeans, into power over the Hutu.¹ For years the Tutsi ruled the Hutu majority and were privileged by their white benefactors, while resentment among the Hutu simmered.

Ethnic tensions erupted with the Hutu “social revolution” in 1959, and in 1962 Rwanda became independent. Hutus swept into power with the backing of the majority of the Rwandan population and their Belgian colonizers, but with their rise to power, the “ethnic” distinction hardened as the Hutu sought to make up for decades of repression under the Tutsi leaders and limited the opportunities for Tutsi to hold positions of power. Periodic violence marked the second half of the twentieth century; pogroms against Tutsi broke out every few years and an estimated seven hundred thousand Tutsi fled the country between 1959 and 1994, becoming exiles in neighboring Tanzania, Uganda, and Congo (then Zaire). A group of Tutsi rebels living in Uganda, the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF), invaded the country in 1990 in a bold and militaristic demand for the right of return and political, social, and economic equality for all the exiled Tutsi. A civil war broke out, which gave the Hutu government the opportunity to start a sweeping propaganda campaign intended to convince the population that their Tutsi friends and neighbors were a threat to their existence. After four years of careful planning, the Hutu extremists found the excuse to commence genocide against the Tutsi when the Hutu president’s plane was shot down over Kigali under mysterious circumstances on April 6, 1994.² For three months, Hutus—extremists and others—hacked their friends and neighbors to death with machetes and the international community did nothing; the genocide ended in July when the RPF took control of the country, and its commander at the time, Paul Kagame, has been the leader of Rwanda since. The extremely bloody genocide has left Rwanda a terrible legacy that the country is still struggling to come to terms with today.

The Kigali Centre is a central part of the effort to come to terms with the genocide. It was created under the leadership of a British antigenocide organization, the Aegis Trust, at the behest of a Rwandan government that was deeply uncertain about how best to memorialize and come to terms with the genocide. Inspired by the UK Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre, which was inspired by Yad Vashem and is today called the National Holocaust Centre and Museum, the Kigali Centre signifies the transnationalism of

the memorial museum form and its spread to diverse cultures and contexts around the world. For the Kigali Centre is unlike many other memorials in Rwanda, which remain raw sites of massacre and murder, where the gruesome evidence of the genocide is displayed, such as bones and bodies, and which serve as spaces of mourning and remembrance for their local communities. Rather, the Kigali Centre—like the memorial museums analyzed in this book and others around the world—actively engages and utilizes memory of the genocide to educate visitors to prevent future genocide, and it ultimately seeks to do this on a national, regional, and international stage.

If indeed, as I have argued, political legitimacy today relies on coming to terms with the past and memorial museums are one of the essential mechanisms for legitimating nations or groups in the eyes of the international community, it is clear why Rwanda would desire and need a memorial museum just ten years after the genocide. It also helps clarify why Rwandans looked to the West to find a commemorative form that would not only remember the genocide but also educate present and future generations and legitimate its nascent democracy within today's politics of regret. However, as I have also argued and as is clearly evident from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) and the House of Terror, politics are an essential factor in the creation of memorial museums; despite its transnational roots, the particular local and national politics of the Kigali Centre cannot be ignored. The Kigali Centre is under the purview of the Rwandan government's National Commission for the Fight against Genocide (CNLG) and is operated by the Aegis Trust, which raises funds for operations and essentially runs the center on behalf of the Rwandan government. It is built on government land, and this public-private partnership means that the government has a strong say in how the Kigali Centre remembers the genocide. In Rwanda, the political use of memory of the genocide has the potential to be very troubling, as many would argue that the current Rwandan government—a dictatorship, by many accounts, with an extremely weak human and civil rights record (Reyntjens 2011)—does not deserve the international political legitimacy that a memorial museum can help to bestow on a regime.

The Kigali Centre seeks to negotiate the difficulty of genocide remembrance in a country in which perpetrators continue to live next door to survivors, justice and reparation have been agonizingly slow, the divisions in society that caused the genocide have not been addressed but simply forced out of sight, and the all-Tutsi government rules with an iron fist to maintain not only the precarious peace but also Kagame's political power. This

political and social context of genocide remembrance in Rwanda compromises the Kigali Centre's ambitious goals of fostering tolerance and reconciliation and working to prevent genocide. Rather, genocide memory in the Kigali Centre, as one of the "official" sites of genocide remembrance, is deeply political and represents the ways in which memory is exploited by the current regime to legitimate its antidemocratic policies and advance its political agenda at the expense of the victims and survivors.

AFTER THE GENOCIDE

While Rwanda still calls to mind images of unspeakable violence and destruction, more than twenty years later that genocidal violence is hardly visible, especially in Kigali. As the Rwandan government works to turn the country around, the fast pace of development means that new buildings, roads, and commercial complexes have obliterated many massacre sites and conceal the devastation of what happened relatively recently (Meierhenrich 2009; 2010). Rwanda today is widely considered to be one of the cleanest, safest, most orderly, and least corrupt nations in Africa. In its zealous effort to leave the past behind and look toward the future under the guise of "national unity,"³ the government has officially "abolished" ethnicity in Rwanda, claiming that there are no Hutus and Tutsis, only Rwandans. This belies the truth of Rwanda's precarious situation and masks what is often an authoritarian, exclusively Tutsi, and fundamentally undemocratic government (Reyntjens 2004). And while the Rwandan government and many in the international community laud the "peaceful" coexistence of former perpetrators and survivors that one sees throughout the country, this coexistence is often borne simply out of sheer economic and geographic necessity, as survival depends on it. Underneath Rwanda's "national unity" simmer divisions and fear much like those erupted in 1994 (Buckley-Zistel 2006; Rettig 2008; Thomson 2011).

Immediately after the genocide, Rwanda experienced massive displacement and chaos. Up to two million Hutus fled the country fearing revenge, most settling in refugee camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); many others were slaughtered by the RPF as they took the country and stopped the genocide. More than one million Rwandans were internally displaced; and more than half a million Tutsis who left the country between 1959 and 1994 returned, called back by the victorious RPF government

(Reyntjens 2004). While trouble brewed in the DRC as the Rwandan *inter-ahamwe*⁴ terrorized the population and thousands of Hutu refugees died in the abhorrent camp conditions, the new Rwandan government set about trying to rebuild a country that was literally in ruins.

Foreign aid poured in, “driven by an acute guilt syndrome after the genocide,” and the West stood firmly behind the victorious RPF and its American-trained leader, Paul Kagame (Reyntjens 2004, 179). Meanwhile, over the last twenty years, the Tutsi government has consolidated power—a fact that became strikingly obvious in August 2010, when Kagame won his second seven-year term with 93 percent of the vote and subsequently changed the constitution to allow him to run for a third seven-year term, which he won with over 98 percent of the vote in August 2017, indicating that he is indeed becoming simply another African strongman. His inner circle has shrunk as former allies and cabinet members-turned-dissidents have fled the country, some meeting suspicious deaths or assassination attempts abroad while Rwanda denies any involvement.⁵ Those who are brave enough to oppose Kagame in Rwanda meet similar violent fates or are imprisoned (Reyntjens 2011).

Ending up on Kagame’s bad side is not difficult; since 1994, in the name of unity and reconciliation, the government has forbidden mention of ethnicity and continues to accuse anyone who opposes or questions their policies of genocide ideology—a very serious accusation. Any questioning of the official story of the 1994 genocide of almost one million Tutsi is deemed genocide denial, a serious crime in Rwanda. Increasingly, any action or speech against the government, especially mention of the RPF’s human rights abuses,⁶ is deemed “divisionism” and subject to punishment. While the international community pours money and aid into “donor darling” Rwanda to support the government’s ambitious development plans,⁷ human and civil rights have come under increased pressure in the purported fight against divisionism and genocide ideology (Reyntjens 2011). There is reason to worry that Rwanda “is experiencing not democracy and reconciliation but dictatorship and exclusion” and that it is strikingly similar politically and socially to pregenocide Rwanda (Reyntjens 2004, 177).

Scholars have noted that the ethnic tensions that are meant to be dissolved by the government’s official policy of unity are actually heightened and exacerbated without an outlet for open discussion about ethnic fissures in Rwanda (Buckley-Zistel 2006; Rettig 2008). Many Tutsis only support the government because they are terrified of another genocide, and many

Hutus deeply resent the government and RPF for their seizure of political control and failure to acknowledge their own human rights abuses; yet neither group can freely speak about their fears (Thomson 2011; Buckley-Zistel 2006). Further, there is the concern that “to stress the absence of ethnic identities has become a means of masking the monopoly by Tutsi of military and political power” and has allowed for the “Tutsization” of the country’s positions of power (Bradol and Guibert, qtd. in Reyntjens 2004, 187). In other words, the government is, in many ways, a “dictatorship in the guise of democracy” but is supported and encouraged by much of the international community as a democratic regime (Reyntjens 2004, 177).

In addition to the troubling antidemocratic tendencies of the Tutsi government, the problem of justice in postgenocide Rwanda has further strained ethnic tensions. With more than one hundred thousand individuals accused of crimes related to genocide, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and Rwanda’s broken judicial system could not possibly hope to bring them all to a fair trial. To attempt to overcome this problem, in 2002 the Rwandan government decided that the vast majority of those accused would be tried in local or provincial *gacaca*.⁸ The *gacaca* operated until May 2012, and more than 1.2 million cases were tried in more than twelve thousand community-based *gacaca*.

Gacaca were traditionally used to resolve disputes at the local level and were intended to mete out restorative, not punitive, justice (Rettig 2008). However, the genocide *gacaca*, in addition to judging guilt and sentencing the accused, were also intended to gather evidence of what happened and to provide a platform for survivors to tell their stories and for the accused to defend themselves. Because the entire community was supposed to be involved—to tell their sides of the story and to accuse or defend—many saw *gacaca* as a tool for reconciliation and truth-telling in addition to delivering justice. However, the process was laden with problems, in particular resistance to participation by individuals and communities (Rettig 2008; Buckley-Zistel 2006; Thomson 2011), and outsiders and Rwandans are increasingly skeptical that they were able to contribute to reconciliation or justice. Many Rwandans increasingly believed that *gacaca* did not uncover the truth and maybe even caused further rifts; there have been claims of “punishment” being dealt to neighbors who denounce neighbors and stories of individuals using the genocide *gacaca* to get back at others for offenses predating the genocide (Waldorf 2006; Rettig 2008). However, the government claims that the *gacaca* were a resounding success and point

to them as further evidence that Rwanda has put the genocide behind it; in the words of Kagame at the closing ceremony, the *gacaca* “challenged every Rwandan into introspection and soul-searching that resulted in truth-telling, national healing, reconciliation and justice. And it worked because Rwandans largely believed in it” (2012).

It is in this complicated environment that the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre was conceived to give voice and acknowledgment to the victims and survivors, to educate future generations against the divisions that sparked the genocide, to preserve the truth of what happened, and to foster reconciliation, forgiveness, and democratic culture. However, as memory of the genocide is often wielded by the government to enforce dictatorial policies and many Rwandans feel that national unity is a myth, the Kigali Centre, as Rwanda’s national memorial, is often compromised in its efforts.

THE KIGALI GENOCIDE MEMORIAL CENTRE

While across the country, the sites of massacres and death were preserved as simple and often crude memorials, with bones or even bodies displayed, often in situ,⁹ in Kigali mayor Theoneste Mutsindashyaka had plans for something different: a national site of genocide remembrance. The Kigali City Council donated the Gisozi site, which has no particular importance vis-à-vis the genocide. This dramatically distinguishes the Gisozi memorial from the other memorial sites in Rwanda, yet calls to mind many Holocaust and other memorial museums around the world, including Yad Vashem, the USHMM, or the UK Holocaust Center. The mayor and Ministry of Culture immediately set about trying to determine what kind of memorial would be appropriate and set their gazes toward the West and to other commemorative precedents—namely, the Holocaust. As they began to conceptualize a Rwandan memorial, they visited Yad Vashem, several Holocaust sites in Europe, and the UHSMM, all of which they considered too large, elaborate, and expensive for Kigali. They also visited the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre in the United Kingdom and there found a much better approximation of what they were looking for.

The Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre was created by brothers James and Stephen Smith who, moved by a visit to Yad Vashem, decided that the United Kingdom needed a similar site of remembrance. They created the center in the mid-1990s to be a place for survivors to tell their stories

and for young generations to learn the history of the Holocaust and the dangers of racism and intolerance that led to the genocide. However, as they were completing the center in the mid-1990s, the genocides in Rwanda and Bosnia were raging, and they had to ask themselves what use a Holocaust center is if it's not actually working to prevent genocide. The brothers set about trying to find a way to use the memory of the Holocaust in a way to more actively prevent genocide and laid the foundation to create the Aegis Trust, a genocide-prevention organization.

In 2000–2001, the Smith brothers and Aegis Trust first visited Rwanda and, in tandem with the Rwandan Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Culture, traveled the country to speak with survivors, visit the sites of the genocide, and initiate collaborations between the Beth Shalom Holocaust Centre or UK Holocaust Centre and Rwandan survivor organizations and government ministries. They were not new to working in Africa and had contributed to the development of the Cape Town Holocaust Centre, which opened in 1999 as the first Holocaust museum in Africa and which has the distinct goal of connecting the racism and intolerance of the Holocaust to South Africa's experience of apartheid.¹⁰ At the Cape Town Holocaust Center, in 2000–2001, they had helped design a traveling exhibit on the Rwandan genocide, called “100 Nights.” Their familiarity with the Rwandan genocide and its remembrance, their experience with the Cape Town Holocaust Centre, and the small scale and focus on survivors of the UK Holocaust Centre, made the Smith brothers and Aegis Trust a natural choice to lead the development of a Rwandan genocide memorial in the eyes of the mayor of Kigali and the Minister of Culture.

Concerned that it was too early to create a memorial and that the memories of the genocide were just too raw, as well as deeply ambivalent about the idea of a Western organization coming into Rwanda and imposing ideas about how to memorialize Rwanda's tragedy, the Smith brothers first turned down the request to design the national memorial. At the same time, from their experiences with survivors in Rwanda, they knew that there was a deep frustration among survivors that they were not being acknowledged and that with this sort of “double abandonment,” violence would inevitably recur (James Smith, personal communication; see also Buckley-Zistel 2006; Meirhenrich 2009). Convinced that memorials serve as an important form of symbolic reparation—cheaper and more accessible, memorials can be a form of acknowledgment of survivors that is more effective than other transitional justice mechanisms like the ICTR, from which many Rwandans are

completely divorced—like the other memory entrepreneurs in this book, the Smiths also believe strongly that memorials can help heal a community as well as educate in the effort to prevent genocide in the future. Wishing to do something for the survivors that would have a meaningful and lasting impact and remind them that the “world remembers,” James and Stephen Smith agreed to hold discussions with the mayor about the memorial.

Mayor Mutsindashyaka described his plan for the memorial: a darkened crypt filled with bones; in the darkness, a soundtrack of screaming, pleading, and machetes falling on their targets that would make the visitor experience that horror of those hundred days. Worried that this was not the proper form of reparation and acknowledgment that the survivors needed, and that it would inadequately educate younger generations about the genocide, the Smith brothers agreed to take control of the project. As part of the agreement, the city of Kigali donated the land and would pay for the maintenance of the building, but Aegis would be responsible for raising money for the museum and education center, as well as the costs of operating the center. With the tenth anniversary fast approaching, throughout 2002–3, the brothers worked to compile a team of experts, survivors, and other stakeholders while also looking to raise money to ensure that the project could move forward in a timely manner.

Money began to trickle in, with the first donation coming from Bill Clinton’s foundation, but it was not until December 2003, just four months before the planned anniversary celebration, that enough funds were secured to complete the project.¹¹ Working day and night, the Smith brothers and a team of fifty workers completed the museum building; installed the exhibition panels, which had been constructed in the United Kingdom; finished the first of the mass graves, burying remains of individuals that had been killed in the city of Kigali; drafted an exhibition narrative written by a Rwandan and translated into Kinyarwanda, English, and French; and planted the memorial rose gardens, finishing the museum and complex in time for a ceremonial opening in April.¹²

The Rwandan government’s look toward the West and, in particular, Holocaust memorialization for commemorative inspiration as well as the rush to complete the memorial point toward the transnational nature of the memorial museum form and the international normative demand for regimes transitioning from violence to democracy to demonstrate that they are actively confronting their past violence.



FIGURE 7. Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre exterior.
Photo by Amy Sodaro.

THE PERMANENT EXHIBIT

The permanent exhibition of the Kigali Centre is housed in a modern-looking yet nondescript building and composed of three parts: “Wasted Lives,” which examines genocide around the world; “Genocide,” which tells the story of the Rwandan genocide; and “Our Future Lost,” a memorial to the children killed in the genocide. The museum experience is book-ended by two films, both of which feature survivors’ testimony about the genocide and the centrality of the Kigali Centre in their lives and memories today. The purpose of the permanent exhibitions is to tell the story of the Rwandan genocide and place it within the broader history of genocide. This contextualization is intended to aid the visitor in understanding how the genocide could have happened and how its legacy shapes Rwanda

today and “to teach visitors about what we can do to prevent future genocides” (Kigali Genocide Memorial “Our Mission” 2017).

The first part of the exhibition, “Wasted Lives,” contextualizes genocide internationally and historically through a chronological description of the major genocides of the twentieth century, including the genocide of the Hereros in today’s Namibia, the Armenian genocide in 1915, the Holocaust, the Cambodian genocide, and genocide in former Yugoslavia. Beginning with the UN definition of genocide, the exhibit attempts to distill the elements that these genocides have in common and to detail the background and history of each. Through the use of text, photographs, and film, the exhibit takes the visitor through the violent twentieth century.

The exhibit is only three small rooms and so cannot address the complexity of each genocide. However, certain themes are emphasized to connect these genocides to what happened in Rwanda, such as the fact that genocide is not the result of a spontaneous hatred but relies on planned and sustained processes of dehumanization, and it reminds the visitor that genocide destroys many more lives than those who are murdered. In addition to giving the history and background, in the description of each genocide, particular attention is paid to the victims, the survivors, and questions of genocide denial.

Because of the amount of information meant to be conveyed in such a limited space, the exhibit has the feel of a miscellany of details about each genocide, and it is not always clear why certain elements, such as the excavations at Treblinka death camp, for example, receive the space and attention they do. In other cases, the basic facts of the genocide remain foggy, such as the section on Cambodia, which never really clarifies who was killing whom and why. Nevertheless, the point of the exhibit is to demonstrate the waste and horror of genocide, which cannot help but come across as the visitor begins to add the numbers of lives lost in the twentieth century. It also reminds the visitor that genocide is not unique to Africa or the “ancient tribal hatreds” in Rwanda, as the international community might like to think (Des Forges 1999), but has occurred in the most advanced countries in the West and results from planned and meticulous policy decisions. The exhibit ends rather uncertainly, however, reflecting on whether genocide can be prevented; pessimistically, it seems to conclude that by the time you can identify genocide as such, it’s too late.

This effort on the part of a national memorial museum to contextualize the Rwandan genocide within the multiple genocides of the extremely

violent twentieth century is novel; such comparisons are usually resisted or, if incorporated into a museum exhibition, perfunctory.¹³ In Rwanda it points toward not only the growing influence of the field of genocide studies on how genocide is rendered in public fora and media but also an opening of memory that might best be described using Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory, or memory as "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative" (2009, 3). In other words, the Kigali Centre's deliberate comparison of the genocide in Rwanda with the Holocaust and other twentieth century genocide implies at least a truce in the "competition of victims" that seemed to dominate late-twentieth-century memory of trauma and atrocity and situates the Rwandan genocide within historical context and in comparison to others, with the Holocaust at the center of the comparison. On the other hand, in Western commemoration of genocide and trauma, Holocaust victims tend to be privileged and at the top of the "hierarchy"—we have seen such discussion play out in the debate over inclusion in the USHMM—and this comparison in Rwanda could be viewed as an acknowledgment of the hierarchy and its maintenance.

After the historical contextualization of "Wasted Lives," the visitor is led to the heart of the permanent exhibit: "Genocide." "Genocide" radiates out from a memorial rotunda, at the center of which is a sculpture by Rwandan artist Laurent Hategekimana that consists of six figures, carved by local craftspeople out of local wood, depicting the three elements of the genocide and the permanent exhibition: "Before," "During," and "After." A stained glass installation "Window of Hope" shines light into the rotunda; designed by Ardyn Halter, son of a survivor of Auschwitz, this other memorial element underlines the museum's deep connections to memorialization and memory of the Holocaust and its effort to place the Rwandan genocide in a continuum of genocide spanning the twentieth century.

Like "Wasted Lives" and following the curatorial and exhibition strategies of memorial museums around the world, "Genocide" uses a combination of text, photographs, film, artifacts, and recorded survivor testimony to tell a narrative history of what happened. It also follows a controlled path that leads the visitor chronologically through the buildup to and aftermath of the genocide. "Before" starts with the history of Rwanda before colonization and depicts a harmonious Rwanda of one people peacefully coexisting. In video footage of traditional Rwandan ceremonies, the exhibit narrative describes a land of eighteen tribes, peacefully intermingled and

intermarried, living as one people. The language is that of unity: “We held elections,” “We did not choose to be colonized” and the point is clear that the white colonizers destroyed this harmony. Under colonization, first at the hands of Germany, then after World War I, Belgium, race science and ethnic classifications enforced by identity cards were introduced into Rwandan society, beginning the dangerous division of the Rwandan people. Following the current government’s explanation of the genocide, the museum’s narrative emphasizes that ethnic division and strife were imposed top-down by the colonists (Reyntjens 2004). The implication is that ethnic division in Rwanda was as foreign as the European colonizers, and so, following this reasoning, Kagame, in abolishing ethnic division in Rwanda today, has returned the country to its more pure, harmonious, and wholesome precolonial state; though of course it’s not possible to “abolish” this kind of entrenched ethnic division.

Placing the blame for the genocide on colonization again calls to mind the notion of multidirectional memory at the heart of which is Rothberg’s argument that the interaction between historical memories, especially those of the Holocaust and of colonization, opens a fruitful and productive space for the recognition of diverse, multicultural memories. In fact, he goes further to argue that Holocaust memory emerged and consolidated during the apex of decolonization and so is deeply infused with anti- and postcolonial rhetoric and understanding (2009, 7). Decolonization, according to Rothberg, allowed memory of the Holocaust to be articulated in a way that it had not been before. This means that while we often view the Holocaust and its memory as at the center of not only memory studies as an academic discipline but also a global political, cultural, and social discourse on memory, it in itself is already in dialogue with alternative memories of colonization, racism, and oppression, and in fact, Holocaust memory allows for the articulation of other memories. Thus not only does the museum utilize the many museological tropes of Holocaust remembrance and display, but the Kigali Centre also directly places the Holocaust as a precedent to what happened in Rwanda, drawing a clear line of comparison between the two genocides. By framing the Rwandan genocide within the context of colonization, the museum implies that the ethnic hatred that led to genocide in Rwanda can be traced directly to the German and Belgian colonial policies. While this suggests precisely the multidirectional, traveling, transcultural movement of memory and its forms that have moved to the forefront of memory studies’ theorizing today, as we shall see in the Kigali Centre, there is a political

purpose to this historical comparison and contextualization that reinforces the goals and ideologies of Kagame's regime.

The exhibit goes on to describe Rwanda's independence of 1959 and the further divisions in society that it wrought. Tracing the rise of genocide ideology in Rwanda postindependence, the exhibit brings the visitor to what it calls the "Path to the Final Solution," drawing explicit parallels to the Holocaust and reminding the visitor of the museum's provenance out of the (Western) tradition of Holocaust memorialization. Here, the exhibit tells of the seven hundred thousand Tutsis exiled from Rwanda between 1959 and 1973; the periodic massacres of those remaining; the RPF's heroic struggle for rule of law and equality; the rise of propaganda like the Ten Hutu Commandments, including such dictates as number four: "Every Hutu should know that every Tutsi is dishonest in business," and number eight: "The Hutu should stop having mercy on the Tutsi"; and the incipient use of radio to spread hatred. "Path to the Final Solution" tells the tale of genocide carefully planned and methodically executed, stressing that "death lists had been pre-prepared [*sic*] in advance" and that genocide had been brewing since before Rwanda gained independence. "Before" brings the visitor to that April night when the president's plane exploded over Kigali, and exiting the first part of the exhibit, the visitor finds herself reading Romeo Dallaire's desperate cables to the UN, before entering the horror of the hundred days.

"During the Genocide" seems to heed most closely to Mayor Mutsindashyaka's initial idea for the memorial of the dark labyrinth of terror, and attempts to convey the absolute horror of the genocide. Terrifying testimony from victims plays in the background, and video screens vividly depict the violence and brutality, panning from shots of bodies lying in the roads or waterways to machete wounds and injuries, to burned villages, churches, and schools. There are display cases filled with machetes, the traditional farming implements still used today, which take on a new meaning when one tries to imagine them cutting down hundreds of thousands of people. There are panels describing the horrors inflicted on women and children and the torture of many Tutsi and moderate Hutu victims before their slaughter; and there is a wall of panels describing some of the most chilling massacres that occurred in the churches of Rwanda where the victims congregated, seeking cover in the house of God, and where—in some cases—their priests and fellow parishioners helped murder them. Ultimately, "During the Genocide" seeks to demonstrate to the visitor the



FIGURE 8. Detail of Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre exhibit on Rwandan genocide.

ZUMA Press, Inc. / Alamy Stock Photo.

extreme violence of the genocide in a deeply emotional and affective way: a million lives lost and scores or even hundreds of thousands wounded physically and psychologically in ways that will haunt them forever; children orphaned; women, children, and the elderly murdered; and the entire infrastructure of Rwanda plunged into a nightmarish chaos.

Leaving this part of the exhibit, the visitor encounters three large panels about resistance to the genocide, using text and photographs to describe the story of a school and church where the Tutsis fought their killers with sticks and stones until finally they were overcome, and another focused on individuals who helped Tutsi and moderate Hutus escape the *genocidaires*. Finally, the visitor comes to three small panels on the silence of the international community throughout the genocide. Subtle and without the indignity and outrage one might expect, the panels neutrally describe the way the world watched the genocide and did nothing.

It is at this point that one realizes that throughout this part of the exhibition, despite the horrors depicted, the graphic details, and the incomprehensible numbers, very little blame has been ascribed at all. Not only are the roles of the international community and the church minimized in the permanent exhibit, but any real collective blame is missing. Of course

the exhibition tells of the *interahamwe*, the Hutu militias that prepared for the genocide for months leading up to it, and it names and describes, including photographs, some of the individual leaders of the genocide, notably Colonel Bagasora, the head of the army; Hassan Ngeze, the journalist who published the Hutu Ten Commandments; and the directors of Radio Mille Collines, which incited the genocide in its hateful and dehumanizing anti-Tutsi propaganda.¹⁴ But on the whole, there is a noticeable lack of blame ascribed to the Hutus—even extremists—or anyone else of Rwanda. Rather, the exhibit depicts a collective victimization of a Rwandan people that were torn apart by colonial forces. This is deliberate; in the effort to make sure that the museum does not threaten the fragile peace and tenuous unity among the Rwandan population, the agency behind the genocide was taken out of the hands of human perpetrators and instead “genocide ideology” is to blame. However, as is very evident today, this concept of genocide ideology can be very easily manipulated for political ends; Kagame often gets rid of his enemies and detractors by accusing them of genocide ideology and any questioning of his policies and government can be deemed genocide ideology. Both in the museum and outside it, in removing human agency and instead blaming genocide on an abstract and malleable concept of ideology, almost anyone who says the wrong thing could potentially be deemed a *genocidaire*.

“After” takes the visitor through the chaos and upheaval immediately following the genocide as millions of refugees fled out of and into the country, plagued by guilt, fear, and confusion. It describes the refugee camps in Congo, where international aid was finally delivered—to those who had perpetrated the genocide—and which quickly became hotbeds for the dissemination of Hutu power ideology as well as deadly diseases like cholera. It also, through heart-wrenching testimony, tells of the survivors’ search for their families and their attempts to rebuild their lives when literally everything had been taken from them. It tells of the multitudes of children orphaned by the genocide and of the long term consequences, such as the alarming rates of HIV/AIDS in the many thousands of women who were raped. It describes the efforts to enact justice through the ICTR and the *gacaca*, while highlighting the impossibility of justice ever being fully meted out, and the irony that prisoners in Arusha awaiting trial have access to AIDS medication, while the women in Rwanda do not. A *gacaca* plays on video—the prisoner uncomfortable in his pink uniform, pleading his side of the story while members of the community speak up with their sides of

the story or sit under the trees, fanning themselves in boredom; the looping footage of this one instance underlines the magnitude of the project. What “After” pointedly does not tell is the massive human rights abuses committed by the RPF under the leadership of Kagame or the ongoing conflict in DRC that has been perpetuated in large part by the Rwandan government through the exploitation of genocide remembrance.

“After the Genocide” ends with a few panels on the need to confront and remember the past, which seem to read as a justification for the memorial center’s existence. It reminds the visitor that though it is painful, it is impossible to forget and necessary to remember the victims as redemption and the events as a warning to the future. It also stresses the center’s priority on education as the way forward and underlines the notion that this is a site of education in addition to commemoration. These self-reflexive panels demonstrate the Kigali Centre’s strict adherence to the international norms and assumptions about the ethical duty to remember: the expressivist ethical imperative that remembering is the correct thing to do and the consequentialist view that memory will help prevent future violence. Thus both the form of memory traveled across national and social borders, from the United States and Europe to Rwanda, and also the ethics of memory, reflecting a global set of expectations and best practices vis-à-vis past political violence.

With this, the visitor leaves the interpretive parts of the exhibit and enters the dimly lit and eerie memorial rooms. The first has a large screen showing survivor testimony, and the walls are covered in photographs. There are family photos, ID cards, candid snapshots—thousands of them. This room echoes the USHMM’s Tower of Faces, and like that and other walls of photographs that are present in each museum described in this book, this common memorial museum trope is intended to restore individuality, humanity, and vitality to those who were killed. In the Kigali Centre, the photos are loosely clipped to wires and are often taken by visitors who know the individual or who are reminded by the photo of a lost loved one. As in other memorial museums, the photographs in the Kigali Centre are evidence of what happened and an effort to restore humanity to those who were killed; yet unlike the photos from the Nazi concentration camps or the Cambodian detention center, Tuol Sleng, which seem distant due to their black-and-white, grainy quality, these photos are in color and feel immediate.



FIGURE 9. Kigali Memorial Centre memorial room of victim photographs.
Photo by Adam Jones, PhD / Global Photo Archive / Flickr.

In the next memorial room, the walls are lined with bones laid out in well-lit display cases. Like other genocide memorials throughout Rwanda, this room displays human remains in the effort to depict the extreme violence of the genocide; however, by placing the bones behind glass in a neat and symmetrical display, the effect is much more sanitized and orderly than the gaping wounds of the other memorials. Long bones methodically line the room with skulls in a row in the center; some have visible fractures, perhaps caused by machetes. There is a display case filled with personal artifacts: shoes, a pipe, keys, a rosary. In the background, the names of the victims are read by a disembodied voice; a few moments in this room again gives the visitor a sense of the scale of the genocide. The final memorial room again projects survivor testimony, and here the walls are hung with clothing from the victims, another trope referencing the other memorials throughout Rwanda, but sanitized and hauntingly beautiful in the Kigali Centre. Together with traditional Rwandan clothing are modern, familiar touches for the western visitor: a Superman sheet, a Cornell University sweatshirt. Again, this memorial room seeks to draw the visitor in and demonstrate that this did not happen in some distant place long ago but to people *just like you*.

The final element of the permanent exhibit is the memorial to the children, which consists of large photographs of Rwandan children accompanied by plaques listing the child's name and age and a few facts about the child: favorite food, favorite sport, best friend, last words, and a short description of how the child was killed ("hacked to death by a machete," for example). The simplicity of the memorial and the unthinkable brutality that it conveys is particularly powerful and affective. Again, the visitor exits through a room of photos, which are there for the taking, if a photograph can be any consolation. This is the most emotionally powerful part of the exhibition and elicits a deeply affective response in the visitor not unlike other genocide memorials such as those in Murambi or Ntarama with their staggering displays of bones and corpses; in this way, it complements the historical and intellectual experience of the exhibit and provides the affective commemorative counterpart to the pedagogical strategies used in the rest of the museum. And this kind of affective remembrance in Rwanda's national memorials is not accidental and can be interpreted as deeply political. As Jens Meirhenrich, who has surveyed hundreds of memorials in Rwanda, writes, "It is . . . difficult to formulate critical questions about the legitimacy of the post-genocidal regime when one is face to face—both

literally and figuratively—with the legacies of the genocidal regime that preceded it. By remembering the past in a very particular, macabre manner, these memorials facilitate a forgetting of the present” (2011, 289).

THE MEMORIAL COMPLEX

Outside of the main building that houses the exhibition, there is a brilliantly blue pool with a memorial sculpture cradling an eternal flame. Surrounding the building, the grounds of the Kigali Centre hold fourteen mass graves,¹⁵ with the remains of almost 259,000 individuals that were killed and hastily buried in shallow graves in and around Kigali. Every year, during the hundred-day mourning period, additional remains are buried, and the center in Gisozi has become Kigali’s graveyard. Next to the mass graves is the wall of names, which reflects the ambitious attempt of the Kigali Centre to collect the names of all who were killed in and around Kigali, which they hope to someday expand to all of Rwanda. The process of collection is arduous, involving door-to-door interviews of people living in and around Kigali, and has severe limitations, as often entire families or even blocks were wiped out, leaving very little memory of who once lived there. Speaking to the difficulty of the task, the wall of names is far from complete; thirty-thousand names had been collected at the time of my visit and only a few thousand engraved on the wall. Next to the mass graves are the “Gardens of Reflection,” a beautiful and peaceful space for quiet contemplation and remembrance and “reflect[ion] on how we all have the personal responsibility to prevent discrimination and mass atrocity” (Kigali Genocide Memorial “Burial Place”).

Reflecting the sustained importance of confronting Rwanda’s violent past, a masterplan for an ambitious expansion, headed by the Aegis Trust, has been drawn up by the British architectural firm John McAslan Architects and Studio Landmarks in Kigali to extensively expand and redevelop the grounds. A Genocide Memorial Amphitheater adjacent to the mass graves was dedicated in 2014, and there are plans to develop the memorial gardens and grounds to include a “Forest of Memory, Stream of Tears and Lake of Reflection” on the south side of the site (Lawson 2014). The mass graves and amphitheater will divide the site into this southern section, focused on remembrance and loss, and a northern section, focused on information about the genocide (Lawson 2014). In the northern

section, the masterplan envisions new buildings for the museum and the educational facilities and archive that currently share a small adjacent building. The complex will include a new Genocide Archive of Rwanda,¹⁶ created by MASS Design Group, the firm focused on “design that heals” that is also designing the new Montgomery, Alabama, lynching memorial. It will also include the Kigali School of Genocide Studies and the recently opened Global Center for Humanity, which is intended to serve as a hub for research and education about genocide and conflict prevention for Africa and the world. In the words of the architect, the masterplan is intended to create “a place of shared memory that counters genocidal ideology,” reflecting even in the architectural plan the political stakes of memory of the genocide (McAslan).

This development of the site points toward the sweeping missions of many memorial museums to be more than just memorial or museum and points to the Kigali Centre’s commitment to peace education, which uses history and memory of the genocide to promote peace and the prevention of future violence. The Rwanda Peace Education Program was launched in December 2013 and is funded by the Swedish International Development Agency and the United Kingdom Department for International Development and seeks to expand on the work the Kigali Centre had been doing to educate school children about the genocide. With this international funding, the Kigali Centre has been able to expand its classroom space and outreach program, which sends teachers and a traveling exhibition around the country. The Kigali Centre has also worked with the Rwandan Ministry of Education to incorporate peace education into the national curriculum. And the ambitions of the Kigali Centre’s peace education program extend beyond Rwanda: Aegis Trust and the Kigali Centre are currently working on peace education initiatives in Central African Republic and South Sudan.

It is evident—from the international roots of the Kigali Centre and its inspiration in Holocaust memorialization, the international partnerships it engages in, the international visits and exchange by the museum staff to Germany, the United States, Israel and Poland, and its international ambitions—that the Kigali Centre is decisively part of what we might call the global “memory regime.” It emerged from and follows transnational trends in commemoration, and it continues to develop within and with these trends; even memory of the Rwandan genocide is framed within the context of other twentieth-century genocide. Elements of the design are recognizable in memorial museums around the world: the wall of names,

the eternal flame, the use of photographs, and the dedicated memorial sculptures and spaces; and the chronological narrative history of the genocide that uses text, images, artifacts, and video footage to support the “full story” echo both the USHMM and the House of Terror and prefigure the Museum of Memory and Human Rights and the 9/11 Museum. As others have noted, the Kigali Centre is a familiar, western-style memorial that many of us have come to expect from memorialization of atrocity (Brandstetter 2010; Caplan 2007). It very much reflects Erll’s notion of “traveling” memory, demonstrating how “modes of conveying knowledge about the past have become globalized” (2011, 13).

THE POLITICS OF RWANDAN GENOCIDE MEMORY

The Kigali Centre’s elaborate plans reflect the current global need to create memorial museums that do more than solemnly remember the past, instead using genocide memory for education and prevention on a national and international scale. However, despite the center’s ambitions, only an estimated 20 percent of the Rwandan population had visited the center in its first five years because it is simply too expensive to get to Kigali. In 2013, the Kigali Genocide Memorial had 65,670 visitors, of whom only 21,834 were Rwandan and 43,836 were international; among those international visitors were UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon; Samantha Power, US ambassador to the UN; Jared Cohen, the CEO of Google; and Angelina Jolie, UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador (Aegis 2013). This begs the question of for whom, precisely, the museum is intended. And although the center has a relatively sophisticated website and the archive is a large and growing online database of information on the genocide, most of the Rwandan population still relies on radio as their main source of information and has no reliable Internet access. There is clearly a disconnect between the local, national, and international ambitions of the Kigali Centre and the reality in Rwanda, though the goals are admirable and the center is doing what it can to advance them.

The tension between this modern Western museum and the desperately poor, rural, and agrarian population for which it is purportedly intended indicates the broader tension in Rwanda between modernization and memory, reconciliation and redress (Meierhenrich 2011). The Kigali Centre, with its “aesthetic minimalism of a global memorial culture” (Brandstetter 2010), may present its extraordinarily tragic story “in a familiar way”

to the western visitor (Caplan 2007) but is at odds with forms and practices of memorialization in the rest of the country, and it belies the ways in which much of the Rwandan population, including many survivors of the genocide, have been abandoned in the name of political and economic modernization. In the effort to propel Rwanda into the twenty-first century, survivors, *lieux de mémoire*, and true confrontation with the causes and results of the genocide have been some of the first victims of Rwanda's development (Meierhenrich 2009; 2011). The shiny, modern Kigali Centre is familiar to the western and international visitors and seems to be appreciated by the Rwandans who do manage to visit it, but has very little or nothing to do with the day-to-day reality for most Rwandans. However, despite the tension and obstacles posed by the uneasy relationship between modernization and memorialization, it is Rwanda's political situation that presents the greatest challenge to center's efforts to translate memory of the genocide into education, peace, and democratic culture.

In any memorial museum, there is both a danger and an inevitability that the museum will serve as an alternative to material reparation, implementation of legal justice, and actual confrontation of the past, becoming instead a symbol onto which a society can project its memory and divest itself of the burden of the past. As James Young writes about the perpetual problem with Holocaust memorialization: "In this age of mass memory production and consumption . . . there seems to be an inverse proportion between the memorialization of the past and its contemplation and study. For once we assign monumental form to memory, we have to some degree divested ourselves of the obligation to remember. In shouldering the memory-work, monuments may relieve viewers of their memory burden" (1993, 5).

Though Rwanda presents a very different context than the late-twentieth-century Holocaust memorialization that Young refers to—in fully reconstructed societies in which there might be a threat that the Holocaust will be forgotten—in Rwanda the danger of allowing the Kigali Centre to replace genuine efforts to deal the past is real. It is a distinct possibility that the center is indeed intended as an alternative to actual confrontation of the present-day reverberations of the past and meaningful acknowledgment and concern for the victims. The government, in its effort to move forward, stifles or simplifies any nuanced discussion of what caused the genocide. It has failed to adequately address even some of the most basic needs of the victims of the genocide, such as housing, land, and livelihood, not to mention its failure to attend to the deep psychological wounds that will haunt

generations. And it has neglected all but the six national memorial sites throughout the country. In some ways, the Kigali Centre appears to be a Band-Aid applied by the government to soothe the international community and its own people, legitimate its standing as a “democratic” nation that has come to terms with its past, and avoid addressing the complexity of pre- and postgenocide Rwanda as well as ethnic conflict in the region.

It is essential to remember that in the case of the Kigali Centre, to prevent violence means something different from what it means at other Holocaust and memorial museums around the world: it means to prevent *the very same* (or directly inversed) violence from occurring again. This is a burden that other memorial museums do not have; for them, to prevent violence is an abstract mandate with room for flexibility. For the Kigali Centre, to prevent genocide means to prevent or hinder the violent genocidal ideology that led to the massacre of almost one million friends, neighbors, and fellow citizens in one hundred days. The fight against genocide ideology has been one of the driving forces behind much of the violent conflict in neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo, where lives continue to be shattered and violence and atrocity seem intractable. And neighboring Burundi has seen an ugly resurgence of violence as the government increasingly cracks down on the “opposition” in ways that eerily echo the beginning of the Rwandan genocide (Human Rights Watch 2016).

This is perhaps why comparisons to the Holocaust and other genocides are prevalent in Rwanda, such as in the Kigali Centre’s “Wasted Lives” exhibit, which is very different from the USHMM and the House of Terror, which resist broad comparison, leaving the institutions a very abstract mandate to prevent.¹⁷ In the Kigali Centre’s comparison of the Rwandan genocide with the Holocaust, there appears to be an effort to demonstrate that the Rwandan genocide was not *sui generis* and that—like the many genocides that preceded it and the many that will likely follow—it was systematically planned and organized, the result of choices made and steps taken that in retrospect are identifiable and could be interrupted. This troubles some critics, though, as it threatens to create “a simplified and moralized view of the genocide as a replay of the Holocaust” that ignores the actual causes of the genocide and current threats to Rwanda’s tenuous peace (Brandstetter 2010). The parallel drawn between the Holocaust and the Rwandan genocide also maintains Rwanda’s position in the international community as a victim; this “strategy of suffering” is potent cover for the government’s authoritarian tendencies and militaristic actions (Meierhenrich 2011). And

while the contextualization of the Rwandan genocide among others is purportedly intended to be about the prevention of future genocide, it is difficult to translate such comparison and knowledge into actual prevention.

The challenge of prevention in the Kigali Centre is enormous, and the attempt in the Kigali Centre is potentially dangerous. As we have seen, the government has imposed a version of the past and the present that often diverges from the known and lived reality of much of the Rwandan population. The genocide, according to both the government and the narrative of the museum, was caused by divisions in Rwandan society forced by colonial rulers, who planted seeds of hatred. This narrative creates a sense of collective victimization that places the blame for the genocide largely on a few “bad apples” and a deadly and pervasive ideology emerging from colonization. Meanwhile the government claims that there is no ethnicity in Rwanda—just one people, reunited after a century of division wrought by the white colonizers. Both of these narratives avoid discussion of ethnic divisions that have plagued the country since well before 1959 and that have not disappeared in the present, but have been forced out of sight. The narratives also obscure the fact that multitudes of Rwandans murdered their neighbors at the command of an overpowering, monoethnic, all-controlling government, which sounds hauntingly similar to the present Kagame regime in Rwanda, especially in light of its actions in the DRC. Rwanda’s genocide memorials are complicit in this instrumentalization of genocide memory: in the words of Sara Guyer, “They justify a repressive government by presenting a spectre of past violence as a permanent future possibility, but they also serve as an instrument of repression. Whatever contestation about their legitimacy they generate, the skulls and bones leave visitors speechless” (2009, 161).

By packaging genocide remembrance in a well-curated, compelling, and sophisticated museum, the genocide itself becomes a moment in time; it is contained and discrete. Not only does the museum potentially bear the burden of memory of—and confrontation with—the genocide, it sets it aside as a distinct event with a beginning, middle, and end and firmly sets its precedents in the Holocaust and other twentieth-century genocide. This narrative erases any urgency or historical connection with what is happening in the region and country today. Kagame won a third term in office in 2017, confirming fears that he would become yet another African strongman and ensuring that his silencing of all opposition will continue for at least the next seven and probably seventeen years.¹⁸

The danger in Rwanda, with a government that has such total control of society and state, is that genocide remembrance in official spaces like the Kigali Centre can be used in a way that advances the government's political and military goals rather than seeking redress for the victims and attempting to learn from the genocide. Claudine Vidal has written about the politicization of genocide commemorations by the regime in Rwanda, commenting that "the ceremonies organized by the regime reveal an inevitable relation of power, first because they capture the silent words of the victims giving them a meaning determined by contemporary goals, and second because they take over the private mourning of the survivors and transform it into a collective mourning in the name of considerations that are not theirs . . . at every commemoration, those in power have instrumentalized the representation of the genocide in the context of the political conflicts at the time" (qtd. in Reyntjens 2008, 201). While the Kigali Centre is not fully under the auspices of the government, it is a public-private partnership, and the government has a strong say in how—and whether—it operates. It is likely that in the acknowledgment and remembrance that it promotes and provides, it has done more good for the Rwandan people than harm. But the past is always remembered according to the dictates of the present, and there is real danger in Rwanda that remembrance of the genocide in the national memorial museum is not about the victims and survivors but about the present political agenda of an increasingly dictatorial regime.

CONCLUSION

At first glance, the Kigali Centre is troubling because it was designed and conceived by a British organization, implying something of a "colonial" memory project foisted on Rwandans—the rampant internationalization of memory. And indeed, it is not at all evident that a museum is how many Rwandans would choose to remember the genocide or that the museum is, in fact, a museum for Rwandans. The museum highlights an uneasy tension in Rwanda between modernization and memorialization and appears to be largely intended for an international audience as a form of legitimating the present regime. But it is the national political forces at play in the museum that are more problematic. The Kigali Centre, rather than self-reflexively facing the past and trying to learn from it, in many ways simply reinforces the government's hegemonic narrative of the genocide.

Rather than a fragmentation of memory and narratives—including those that look critically at the causes and effects of the genocide, as proposed in theories like Olick’s politics of regret, Levy and Sznajder’s cosmopolitan memory, and Rothberg’s multidirectional memory—in the Kigali Centre, genocide memory appears consolidated into the single, dominant version that supports the goals and dogma of the government. This consolidation threatens to usurp for political purposes the memory of those who most need remembrance and acknowledgment and potentially undermines the Kigali Centre’s goals of learning from the past, preventing genocide and human rights abuses in the future, and healing this country that is still deeply wounded. However, remembrance alone in Rwanda is not enough to guarantee a peaceful future. At the moment, the antidemocratic inclinations of the current regime are deeply troubling and indicate that perhaps the genocide is not so far behind Rwanda and that “never again” might be more urgent than ever before.

Like the USHMM and the House of Terror, the Kigali Centre grapples with its own particular politics and local context using this increasingly familiar form of commemoration; and like the other two, it has done more than any other similar memorial or institution to crystallize a particular memory and history of the past. Its politics, however, while not as blatant as the House of Terror, nor as abstract and idealized as the USHMM, are perhaps more troubling because of the very tenuous position of Rwanda in a region that is volatile and a nation that is still struggling with tremendous poverty. The Kigali Centre highlights the difficulties of remembering a past that is still an open wound. Today’s politics of regret grants political legitimation to regimes willing to confront their past through the use of mechanisms like memorial museums; yet in the Kigali Centre, we see how these mechanisms of political regret and confrontation with the past can easily be put to use in the pursuit of present political and militaristic agendas at the expense of the very memory they are meant to confront. And further, despite the politicization of the past in the Kigali Centre and by the Rwandan government, the “regretful” posture toward the past that the Kagame regime has assumed does indeed appear to legitimate his rule that would otherwise not conform to liberal democratic standards. The past that is presented in the Kigali Centre—despite the efforts of the center and the government to say otherwise—is not yet past, and so the goals and efforts of preventing future violence, dictatorship, or genocide that all memorial museums embrace remain to be truly tested in the case of Rwanda.