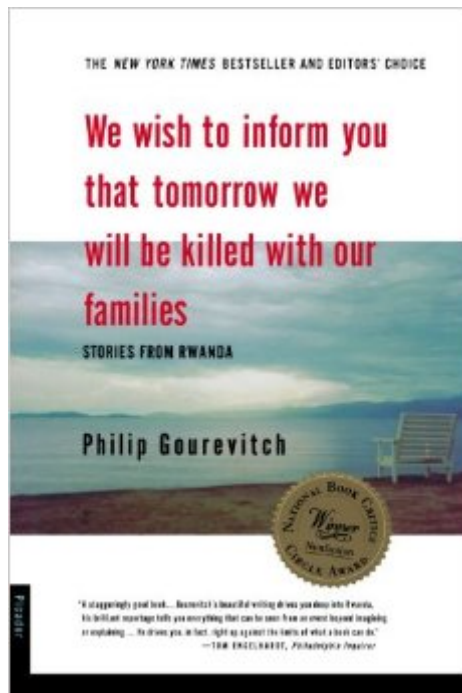


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We Wish To Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families: Stories From Rwanda



Synopsis

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

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Customer Reviews

In early May 1994 I stood on a bridge over the river that forms the border between Rwanda and Tanzania and observed corpses floating down towards Lake Victoria in an unbroken stream. As I write this, two Rwandan women are taking the unprecedented action of suing the United Nations for its failure to intervene in the worst act of genocide since WW2. UN secretary-general Kofi Annan, who played a key role in UN decision-making in 1994, has confessed the UN's "failure" and expressed his own "deep remorse." 800,000 people died, most of them hacked to death with machetes by their neighbours. How this happened, and how the world utterly failed in its self-appointed role to prevent exactly such a holocaust, is the subject of this beautifully written, accessible and compelling book. Gourevitch wants to know WHAT happened, and through interviews with survivors, gives us the clearest and most comprehensive understanding I have yet seen. It is not pretty reading, although Gourevitch's dispassionate and sensitive writing makes it possible to get through material that in coarser hands would be impossible to stomach. He also describes the HOW. For years it was evident to the West - and most particularly to France and Belgium - that Hutu factions were gathering their strength to strike at the Tutsi minority. Every day Hutu radio stations ran violent anti-Tutsi propaganda, in which Tutsis and any moderate Hutus who were not interested in killing them were warned to prepare to die. When the killing began, it was simply the next logical step in a process that had long been underway.

In a transcendent tour de force, Philip Gourevitch takes one of the most horrifying events of the late 20th century, and manages to find the elements of hope and meaning that make this book more than the sum of the body parts it describes as scattered around a church in Nyarubuye, Rwanda. On the surface, "We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families" is a graphic account of the 1994 genocide in which the "Hutu Power" government led its citizens to slaughter 800,000 of their Tutsi neighbors in only 100 days ... while the international community stood by and watched helplessly. In a greater sense, however, this is a story about how people imagine the world to be, and the terrible consequences that follow when they lose their humanity in trying to create such a world. It is about the nature of evil, and the power of forgiveness and justice to reclaim the future without forgetting the past. This is a difficult and painful book to read, but not for the obvious reasons. The atrocities committed by the killers are brought to light in considerable detail, however Gourevitch does this in an almost semi-detached and dispassionate way. His real moral outrage seems to be reserved for the so-called "civilized" countries that could have stopped the genocide, but instead did nothing until it was too late ... and then compounded their foreign

policy sins by aiding the Hutu murderers in refugee camps. There is certainly plenty of blame to go around. Gourevitch provides extensive evidence that there were many warning signs of the impending massacres. He outlines the brief history of ethnic antagonisms that led to the crimes, and explains why the Clinton Administration, the United Nations (including current U.N.

Several reviewers have lambasted this book for a variety of shortcomings: poorly written, poorly edited, he doesn't interview the right types of people, he talks too much about himself. I hope to briefly explain why I don't agree with ANY of these criticisms and hope that people will read this excellent book. Poorly written/edited: I'm a writer/editor myself and the pages of this book flew through my fingers. I was totally absorbed. I found it well written, but if you're worried, I have a feeling the subject matter is so important, you wouldn't even notice if stylistically it wasn't your cup of tea. Sources: He interviews the following types of people: Hutus who killed, Tutsis who were attacked, government officials of many countries, foreign aid workers. Don't believe the people who say he only interviews the power players and leaves out the voice of the common man. The hotel manager's (just a middle class Hutu who did what he thought was right) story is awesome and could make a movie as powerful as Schindler's List. Too self-centered: Yes, Gourevitch brings in his own observations and experiences. I felt they were insightful and interesting. Part of his quest is to see how people deal with the genocide, how they internalize it and incorporate it into their existence. As an American going to Rwanda from New York to learn about this genocide, Gourevitch has an interesting perspective and I'm glad he didn't choose to bury it. One more thing: Several reviews criticized a particular passage where he talks about the "postmodern war" of relativism versus right/wrong. These reviewers misunderstood the passage. He's not talking about the genocide itself, but he's talking about THE WAR OVER THE GENOCIDE.

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