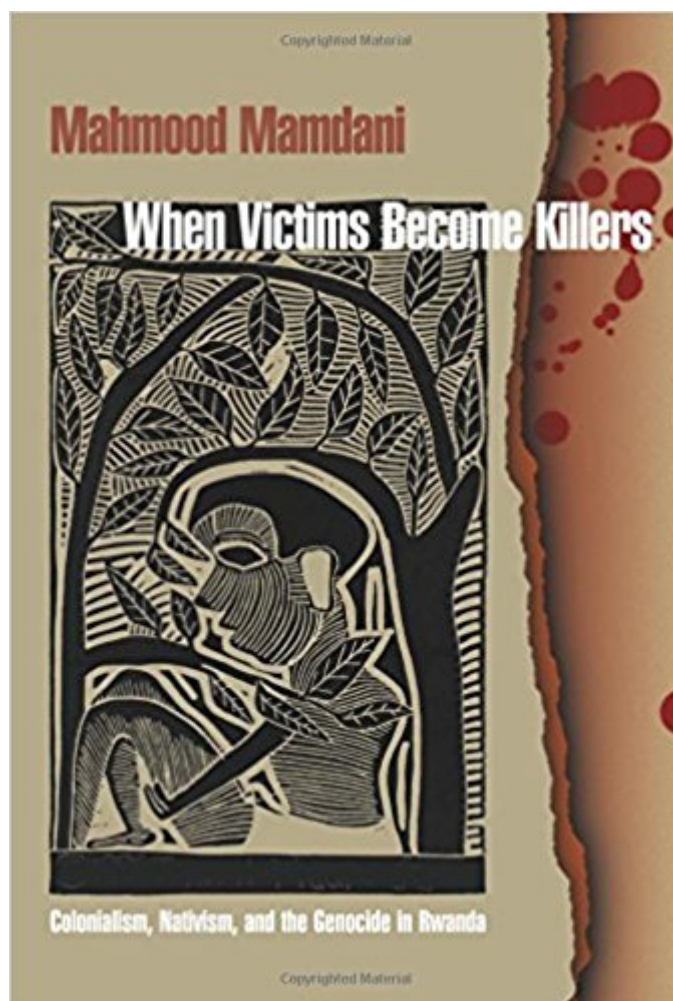


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When Victims Become Killers: Colonialism, Nativism, And The Genocide In Rwanda



Synopsis

"When we captured Kigali, we thought we would face criminals in the state; instead, we faced a criminal population." So a political commissar in the Rwanda Patriotic Front reflected after the 1994 massacre of as many as one million Tutsis in Rwanda. Underlying his statement is the realization that, though ordered by a minority of state functionaries, the slaughter was performed by hundreds of thousands of ordinary citizens, including even judges, human rights activists, and doctors, nurses, priests, friends, and spouses of the victims. Indeed, it is its very popularity that makes the Rwandan genocide so unthinkable. This book makes it thinkable. Rejecting easy explanations of the genocide as a mysterious evil force that was bizarrely unleashed, one of Africa's best-known intellectuals situates the tragedy in its proper context. He coaxes to the surface the historical, geographical, and political forces that made it possible for so many Hutu to turn so brutally on their neighbors. He finds answers in the nature of political identities generated during colonialism, in the failures of the nationalist revolution to transcend these identities, and in regional demographic and political currents that reach well beyond Rwanda. In so doing, Mahmood Mamdani usefully broadens understandings of citizenship and political identity in postcolonial Africa. There have been few attempts to explain the Rwandan horror, and none has succeeded so well as this one. Mamdani's analysis provides a solid foundation for future studies of the massacre. Even more important, his answers point a way out of crisis: a direction for reforming political identity in central Africa and preventing future tragedies.

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Customer Reviews

"The strengths of the book are clear and admirable. First, it provides what might be called an intellectual history of the Hutu-Tutsi division that is invaluable. . . . Anyone from now on who writes on identity in Central Africa--and there will be many--will have to wrestle with the case that Mamdani has made."--Jeffrey Herbst, *Foreign Affairs*

"Mr Mamdani's political settlement is not democracy, which would simply restore the majority Hutus to power, but an acceptance of the Hutu and Tutsi with political, not cultural or class affiliations. He recommends a broad-based constitutional settlement that includes everyone prepared to give up violence whatever their ideology."--*The Economist*

"[Mamdani's] analysis of Rwandese society, in particular the role of the church in the genocide, is fascinating. . . . Mamdani believes that the tens of thousands of killers who wielded the machetes that murdered 800,000 people in three terrible months of 1994 saw themselves as victims who feared losing out in the struggle for power."--Victoria Brittain, *The Guardian*

"Few are better qualified to explain the tensions of post-colonial Africa than Mahmood Mamdani, a Ugandan political scientist with a sharp perspective on the colonially inspired differences between 'subject races'. His Rwandan case-study provides powerful evidence that the Tutsis came to be crushed between colonist and native."--Richard Syge, *The Independent*

"A welcome, powerful, and clear-sighted addition to this literature. . . . When Victims Become Killers represents a great achievement. It is a passionate and strongly argued work, memorable both as scholarship and as a brilliant political polemic."--*Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*

"Nuanced and ground-breaking . . . a book that, unlike any of its kind, holistically encompasses all the underlying factors of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. [It] would be useful to anyone who is interested in not only knowing more about Rwandan history, but also how such a tragedy could occur in the modern era."--*African Studies Quarterly*

"A genuinely original contribution to understanding the Rwandan catastrophe."--*Dissent*

"This book is a must-read. In terms of historical research and analytical depth, When Victims Become Killers is an invaluable academic work. . . . [Mamdani's] arguments are compelling even to those who may wish to disagree with him."--*Monitor (Kampala, Uganda)*

"[A] brilliant study of political identity and violence."--Elisa von Joeden-Forgey, *H-Net Reviews*

"This well written and strongly argued book qualifies Mahmood Mamdani as one of the most articulate, original, and stimulating African social scientists. His interpretation of the Rwandan genocide crisis will cause considerable controversy and will prove a fresh turning point in the process of 'de-inventing' Africa."--Mamadou Diouf

"This is a very impressive piece of work--a scholar's attempt to move beyond the clichés of horror towards a genuine understanding of the

social dynamics which made horror possible. It's a good example of relevant, committed, and passionate scholarship."--Michael Ignatieff "Daring, knowledgeable, and wise, Mahmood Mamdani places the terrible massacres of 1994 in historical, regional, theoretical, and moral perspective. His analysis of Hutu and Tutsi as historically grounded and incessantly changing political identities not only clarifies struggles of the 1990s in Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, and Congo but also helps identify ways of preventing future bloodshed."--Charles Tilly "Mamdani's central argument is coherent, consistent, and compelling, and his account of the Rwandan crisis is riveting from beginning to end. It is also rendered with eloquence, generosity of spirit, and political shrewdness. His uncanny ability to use scholarly methods to cast light on public life is admirable and a model for the rest of us."--Carlos Forment --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Haunting and frightening

Mahmood Mamdani goes on to explain the Rwandan genocide from a much broader context as other studies do. This book explores the logic in interactions and successive exclusion between groups in Rwanda as part of the explanation how the alienation of the tutsis as foreign made the genocide possible.

Recently had to write a massive paper on the Rwandan genocide and this was a fantastic, academic book on the subject. Mamdani who was originally from a neighboring country, knew not only the native language of the Rwandans, but also knew French and English, allowing for his research to be extremely extensive. I recommend this book to anyone who is seeking a well put together prequel to one of the most savage genocides ever conducted.

A great book that is doing justice to the people that were rudely touched by the genocide. History plays a great part in influencing and explaining particular events that happen in the present but many people forget and view the event as inexplicable. Those who forget to ask the 'why' question are always liable to repeat the blunders of history since they never learn from its ugly mistakes. Prof. Mamdani is trying to undo this mistake. Many, especially in the west from their self righteous pedestal, look at the Rwandan genocide and judge. Mamdani goes behind the scenes of history to dig out the 'why' of this ugliest of human ventures. Drawing heavily on Franz Fanon, he casts a wide net covering the whole Great Lakes Region and Colonialism through the cold war, to tell us that the victims of injustice can only be free if they kill the oppressor. To become human they must deny life

to the oppressor. The irony is, to overcome the monster of injustice, you must surpass its monstrosity, leading to the cycle of violence. Americans who read this book will come to understand better the whyness of 9/11; the Europeans will understand Hitler and Africans will grasp the whyness of so many coup d'états, and finally an insight that is long overdue will dawn on us all and we will see the light. We will understand that without justice in the world those who work for peace labor but in vain. A must read book for serious peacemakers.

This new book by Mahmood Mamdani, one of the world's most respected Africa scholars, stands a good chance of replacing Gérard Prunier's "The Rwanda Crisis" as the standard English-language introduction to Rwanda and its genocide. Mamdani's highly-readable account focuses on the political construction of Hutu and Tutsi as racial/ethnic identities, tracing the tale from the pre-colonial era, through Belgium's administration of the country, to the 1959 Revolution and subsequent attempts to develop an overarching sense of Rwandan nationhood. These attempts were cut short by the rise of Hutu Power in the early 1990s, culminating in the horrific outbreak of mass killing in April 1994. The advantage of Mamdani's book is that it offers "history from below," arguing that the racialized hostility between Hutu and Tutsi helps to account for the extraordinary (perhaps unprecedented) degree of popular involvement in the 1994 killing campaign. He also stresses the regional context of the Rwandan civil war and genocide, with separate chapters on Uganda and Congo/Zaire. The book is rich in theoretical insights but never ponderous or pretentious. A "must" for any student of Rwanda or modern African politics more generally (see also Mamdani's award-winning 1996 book "Citizen and Subject," which fleshes out some of the theoretical frameworks used in "When Victims Become Killers").

The Rwandan genocide was a horrible affair of unequal proportions. I have always wondered though how a whole population can commit such horrendous acts against fellow countrymen/women en masse, as was reported. Surely there must've been something that must've been brewing all along; there must've been an underlying "cause". Despeakable it maybe I wanted to know what in Rwanda's history could've given rise to this. I have read Phillip Gourevitch's "We Wish to Inform You That Tomorrow We Will be Killed With Our Families: Stories from Rwanda", although a good book, is mostly a narrative and I was still left with the unfinished business of why? why? why?. This book filled the void for me. With a historical background of precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial sociopolitical Rwanda, the author provides an amazingly rich analysis of the Rwandan state leading to what happened in 1994. It has given me the picture I needed to see, to

begin to address the issues of why did this awful thing took place. It's a must read to anyone interested in Rwanda and what went on there.

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