

THE SPIRAL

OF INJUSTICE

**WORDS HAVE
WEIGHT**



Wassmuth

**CENTER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS**

Home of the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial

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SPIRAL OF INJUSTICE

"the other"

LANGUAGE

AVOIDANCE

DISCRIMINATION

VIOLENCE

ELIMINATION

Language

targeting "the other" through language, word choice, connotation, and imagery (name calling, ridicule, telling jokes, belittling, accepting and promoting stereotyping, etc.)

Avoidance

excluding "the other" through conscious or unconscious treatment that denies participation, limits and/or restricts access (social avoidance, scapegoating, portrayal and non-portrayal of marginalized communities)

Discrimination

denying and disadvantaging "the other" through direct and non-direct acts based on class, race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, or religious preference (employment and/or educational opportunities, workplace and housing)

Violence

intimidating or harming "the other" through physical acts (threats, assault, desecration, stalking, harassment, arson, murder, terrorism)

Elimination

eradicating "the other" through deliberate and/or systemic destruction of life and /or liberty (CULTURAL: customs and traditions, language, music, art, history, science, political participation; BEHAVIORAL: segregation, isolation, relocation, resettlement, removal; PHYSICAL: murder, genocide)

"The Other"

an individual who is perceived by the group as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way; often targeted because of association with a group based on class, race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, or religious preference

THE SPIRAL OF INJUSTICE

Inscribed in the stone of the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial, Mahatma Gandhi reminds us to “Make injustice visible.” Models used to illustrate a pattern or progression of injustice – making it visible - assist in educating for and about social justice.

The **Spiral of Injustice** is a model created by the Wassmuth Center for Human Rights to illustrate the devolution of humanity whether discussing the Holocaust, other genocides, or contemporary acts of injustice. The model suggests that the “stages” of injustice (language, avoidance, discrimination, violence and elimination) are in motion and employed as weapons targeting “the other.”

“The other” is defined as an individual who is perceived by the group as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way; often targeted because of association with a group based on class, race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ability, nationality or religious preference.

Truly About Us

D a n H a u m s c h i l d

THE SPIRAL OF INJUSTICE IS A REMARKABLE VISUAL AID FOR understanding how human communities shift from civility, descending with shorter intervals toward greater violence. The interconnectivity of each layer is highlighted clearly in this publication, thanks to the contributions of authors who are political scientists, educators and human rights practitioners.

Throughout this collection of case studies, we can discern that “othering”—the use of divisive and often dehumanizing language—happens at every layer of injustice. Moreover, this booklet demonstrates that language functions in similar ways across divergent societies insofar as it has the ubiquitous power to propel radicalization to its most extreme horizon.

The way we use language is pivotal to the success and failure of justice; it functions like the ‘coefficient of friction’ for the entire system. When it is used with the intention of bringing truth into the light, language resists the downward pull of injustice; when deployed for the purpose of “othering,” however, it acts as an accelerant, transforming a precipitous spiral into a deadly descent.

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As one reads this booklet, it will be easy to identify the destructive effect of abhorrent language within these varied historical events that happened long ago and far away. But let us not be quick to “other” those who have “othered.” It is worth keeping in mind that “othering” is so effective because it covers its tracks with rose petals and perfume.

To really make dehumanization operational, to transform hateful language into violent action, one must also lionize one’s own agenda. After studying this booklet, we can adopt the greatest intention to vanquish hateful language, but what often deafens us to the sound of these violent words is the heroic song that we play for ourselves. It is often difficult to know when we are spouting vitriol, mostly because we tend to see ourselves in a positive light, and we are adept at finding ways to believe in the valor of whatever motivates us. Indeed, in every case addressed in this reader, one finds indications that those who committed crimes were doing so on behalf of what they believed to be good. We can admit, moreover, that righteousness is not a problem unique to authoritarian societies, nor to those thrust into a power vacuum, nor to social groups beset by insecurity; it is a problem for all societies that promote a strident sense of self.

So, we should challenge ourselves to use this publication as a multi-sided mirror. We must ask ourselves whether we might be susceptible to a contorted and valorized Hippocratic oath (11) as witnessed in Turkey. Amidst rising nationalism, can we recognize our own pride in upholding an ‘obligation’ to promote ‘the better and stronger’ (16) in likeness to *Mein Kampf* or to ‘defend our civilization’ (29) as they did at Srebrenica? Is there, hidden in our own language, a longing that mirrors the Khmer Rouge, who wanted a society free of ‘ideological rot’ (24)? Have we not all,

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at one point or another, been enticed by the ‘salvation’ (35) of doing ‘good work’ (34) as they were in Rwanda?

Certainly, this booklet sheds light on the ways that others have “othered.” Now, our challenge is to recognize that these examples are truly about us, as members of a kindred human community.



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The Crime Without a Name

Ben Harris

ARMENIAN APOSTOLIC PRIEST GRIGORIS BALAKIAN WAS arrested and deported from Constantinople to Der Zor in the Syrian desert. Along the way, he asked Captain Shukri, his Turkish captor, about reports of the massacres of Armenians. After the captain's detailed explanation of his role in the killings, Balakian asked, "How did you have this many thousands of innocent women, girls, and children massacred without feeling any remorse or guilt...?" In a stunning reply, Captain Shukri responded by stating he felt no guilt as he carried out orders given to him by "my Prophet, and my caliph" and had successfully "*paklayalum*" [cleansed] Armenians from the empire (Fallodon). Balakian's testimony suggests that Ottoman Turks had found language to justify their actions toward Armenians who had long been demonized in Turkish society and were now described as a "mortal threat" that stood in the direct path of a Turkish Fatherland (Melson).

Armenians were the first nationality to adopt Christianity as a state religion in 301 CE. Their Christian kingdom had existed until successive

conquests by Persians, Macedonians, Byzantines and, most importantly, the Turks who founded the Ottoman Empire. Under Ottoman rule, non-Muslims were broken into *millets*, or religious communities, that were allowed to practice their faith as before conquest. Nevertheless, Armenians occupied a subordinate place and were viewed as *ghiaurs* (infidels) which, particularly at a local level, meant that they were often thought to have less human worth than Muslims. Armenians were also subjected to Ottoman laws that often treated them unfairly. Armenian families paid higher taxes to the government and local officials. They lacked a political voice in court and could not serve in the military, though they had to pay an exemption tax (Davison).

Additionally, Turks stereotyped Armenians as wealthy merchants who were educated, upwardly mobile, and had a penchant for wearing expensive jewelry and European clothing. These stereotypes inculcated suspicion and hatred toward Armenians by their Muslim neighbors. A German traveler in the Ottoman Empire wrote, “the main reason is the commercial talent of the Armenian race. The Armenians are born merchants. Their skills and craftiness in all trades are superior.” Such a stereotype helps to explain why many local Turks plundered any remaining possessions of their Armenian neighbors and failed to speak out when the entire population of Armenians was forcefully removed from the vilayets [administrative districts] (Astourian).

The long-term denigration of Armenians through language and law helped Turks explain away their actions, and Armenians became easy scapegoats when the Ottoman Empire was under attack (real or perceived). When Sultan Abdul Hamid II came to power in 1876, the empire had experienced nearly half a century of dissolution, despite the

nineteenth century Tanzimat Reforms aimed at creating unity throughout the empire. Russia, Turkey's longtime enemy, fought to dismember the Ottoman Empire in the Russo-Turkish War and later lent support to Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia, which all sought independence from the Ottoman Empire. With the help of the Great European Powers (Britain, France, and Russia), the Ottoman Empire lost 85 percent of its European lands between 1829 and 1878. While Armenians did not agitate for national independence, their geographical location in eastern Anatolia and across the Russian border was unfortunate. Sultan Hamid labeled Armenians as a "disloyal millet, [and] seceding nationalists" and they were commonly blamed for the empire's losses. Echoing the sultan's suspicions, one Ottoman official raised alarm saying, "The Armenians are in league with the enemy. They will launch an uprising in Istanbul, kill off the Ittihadist [government] leaders and will succeed in opening up the straits [of the Dardanelles]" (Dadrian). Fear of internal Armenian rebellion resulted in widespread deportations of Armenian men, women, and children to camps prepared in the Syrian desert as well as mass killings throughout the empire. Such brutality stemmed from the devaluation of a minority culture that had been deemed "the other."

Sultan Hamid's disturbing responses toward perceived threats from Armenian *ghiaurs* provided a prescription for later rulers regarding the so-called "Armenian Question." In 1908 liberal reformers calling themselves *Yeni Osmanlilar* (Young Turks) successfully engineered a political coup against Hamid II. The Young Turks had grown tired of the autocratic rule of the sultans and put in place a constitutional government. Armenians were cautiously optimistic and initially celebrated the Young Turk revolution. However, they soon found out that reforms were built around intense nationalism of Talaat Bey, Enver Pasha, and Jemal Bey,

three rising officials of the ruling Committee of the Union and Progress (CUP) who believed Pan-Turkism was the panacea to the centrifugal forces destroying the empire. As historian Robert Melson noted, CUP nationalists believed “Armenians had to be destroyed not because they were carriers of an evil seed, or because they threatened to control the world, or because their destruction would bring on a thousand-year racial utopia, but because they were identified as an alien nationality, living in the heartland of Turkey and creating an obstacle to the formation of the expanded Turkish state” (Melson).

Quickly Pan-Turkism as a political ideology paved the way for propaganda that portrayed Armenians as not just *dhimmi* but as racially inferior. Decades before the social Darwinist language of the Nazis in the 1930s, CUP officials throughout Turkey began to speak of Armenians as “internal tumors” and “parasites” on the social order (Mackeen). A Turkish doctor Mehmed Reshid justified his role in killing Armenians when he asked, “Was it not the duty of the doctor to kill the microbes?” (Suny 295). The end result was greater destruction to the Armenian people and what American ambassador to the Ottoman Empire Henry Morgenthau concluded was “race murder” (Power 6).

If language was used by successive rulers of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey to denigrate and dehumanize Armenians and ultimately justify the massacre of over one million human beings, it can also be used as a powerful force for moral change and justice. In 1939, Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew who had fled the Nazis and was living in the United States, coined the word *genocide*, and the term was subsequently adopted by the United Nations. By giving a name to the “crime without a name,” Lemkin was hopeful that an international legal framework would be

adopted to prosecute those who violate humanity's ultimate crime, and the international community would be compelled to act.



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Purification of the Body Politic

Brendan Bell-Taylor

“THE SPIDER THAT SLOWLY SUCKS THE PEOPLE’S BLOOD... THE parasite in the body of other peoples, the eternal leech” (Patterson). Terms and phrases in Nazi Germany were used to place “the other” lower in the hierarchy of humanity. “The other” consisted of Gypsies, homosexuals, Poles, political dissidents, people with disabilities, criminals, and the most targeted scapegoats, the Jews. Hitler used the term *Untermenschen* or subhuman. “The subhuman is a biological creature, crafted by nature, which has hands, legs, eyes and mouth, even the semblance of a brain. Nevertheless, this terrible creature is only a partial human being” (“Der Untermensch” “The Subhuman”).

A false hierarchy of value is detailed in David Livingstone’s *Less than Human*. He states that there is God at the top and inert matter at the bottom, with everything else arranged in between. Those who espouse this theory place non-human creatures or subhuman at a lower position than themselves on the chain (Smith). An excerpt from the famous publication of Nazi propaganda “Der Untermensch” reads:

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However, alongside of mankind dwells the subhuman. This subhuman hates all that is created by man. This subhuman has always hated man, and always secretly sought to bring about his downfall, first like a thief, and then like a brazen killer. The subhuman is united with his peers. Like beasts among beasts, never knowing peace or calm. The subhuman thrives in chaos and darkness, he is frightened by the light. These subhuman creatures dwell in the cesspools, and swamps, preferring a hell on earth, to the light of the sun. But in these swamps and cesspools the subhuman has found its leader – The Eternal Jew! The Jew understands the desires and needs of his fellow creature. The Jews endeavors to corrupt and manipulate this horror of inhumanity until they are rallied towards a common goal in the destruction of true man.

This process of dehumanization shows the hierarchical structure about which Livingstone speaks. “It’s wrong to kill a person, but permissible to exterminate a rat” (Smith).

Following WWI, Germany was forced to sign the Treaty of Versailles requiring the country to give up land, reduce military size, and pay large sums of money in reparations. This was bound to collapse an already unstable economy, but it also established a feeling of betrayal that devolved into fears of poverty across Germany.

Hitler attempted a government coup in 1923 and received a nine-month jail sentence for treason, yet gained enormous popularity for his action. During his imprisonment, Hitler wrote *Mein Kampf*, the book that gave Nazis a call to action. In his book Hitler states:

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...it [Nazi philosophy] by no means believes in an equality of races, but along with their difference it recognizes their higher or lesser value and feels itself obligated to promote the victory of the better and stronger, and demand the subordination of the inferior and weaker in accordance with the eternal will that dominates this universe.

In 1929, the Great Depression crushed the German economy. To restore morale, Hitler echoed promises of making Germany great again, encouraging strong support through patriotism to unify the country. Without any foreign aid, Hitler gathered a base of supporters young and old.

“The fist comes down” was an adopted motto in Germany’s leading newspaper in February of 1933 to explain the cracking down on crime. German leadership was fighting for law and order, decency, discipline and morality - a “purification of the body politic.” During the Nuremberg rally in 1935, Hitler declared three laws that led to the language of “the other.” “Abrechnung mit den Juden” - it was time for the Germans to settle accounts with the Jews. The laws included the following: marriages and extramarital relations between Jews and non-Jews were forbidden; Jews were not allowed to employ non-Jews who were under 45 years old; and Jews were forbidden from flying the Reich or national flag. Germans were required to carry the “Ahnenpass” or ancestor passport, an identification card that demonstrated one’s Aryan race lineage, dating back four generations.

Supporters believed Hitler was a powerful mass communicator. Some even stated that his propaganda made them feel righteous, and joining in on his rallies and marches gave them the feeling of being undefeatable. His

speeches were calm, collected, and to the point, but as they progressed, he ramped up his intensity and often ended screaming.

Hitler saw Jews as the “the other.” This meant that Jews were opponents, revolutionaries, saboteurs, spies, and “partisans” in the homeland. He asked Nazi leaders to address this by “bring[ing] it up again and again and again, unceasingly.” Likewise, “Every emotional aversion, however slight, must be exploited ruthlessly.” For example, when some Jews called for a boycott of German goods following a hike in violence by Nazis, Hitler responded by publicly calling on Germans to boycott all Jewish businesses. He stated, “Germans, defend yourselves against Jewish atrocity propaganda.” As a result, many businesses went bankrupt. War was declared against the Jewish race in Hitler’s speech to the Reichstag on January 30, 1939. He stated, “If the world of international financial Jewry, both in and outside of Europe, should succeed in plunging the nations into another world war, the result will not be the Bolshevization of the world and thus a victory for Judaism. The result will be the extermination of the Jewish race in Europe” (Mommsen).

Though “the other” had already been experiencing oppression and violence, the mass murders of the Holocaust required cooperation and coordination through all government agencies. The Final Solution or Endlösung was the code name for the systematic, deliberate, and physical annihilation of European Jews. This was finalized at the Wannsee Conference in January of 1942. Hitler was not in attendance at this meeting, but it was emphasized that they needed Jewish occupied spaces for the German people, and it was time to kill these “useless eaters” and lives unworthy of life.



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Destroy the Enemy Within Your Own Person

Jason Taylor

Feudalist and capitalists are the bloodsuckers of our nation.
(Angkar slogan)

SIT WITH SON BENEATH A TREE ON A BREEZY AFTERNOON AS HE tells me about growing up in the aftermath of the Cambodian genocide.

“The stories of the Khmer Rouge were the bedtime stories my parents told me when I was five or six. I would fall asleep thinking about the horror of their experience.”

On April 17, 1975, the Communist forces of the Khmer Rouge, led by Pol Pot, entered the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh, marking the end of the civil war between Maoist rebels and the ruling right-wing government and the beginning of a dark reign that would result in the extermination of an estimated two million people -- perhaps a quarter of Cambodia's total population -- in less than four years. The Khmer Rouge sought to

establish a classless agrarian society that completely rejected free market capitalism. To do this they used language to tear the social fabric binding the country together and systematically turned the Cambodian people against each other.

The new people bring nothing but stomachs full of shit, and bladders bursting with urine. (Angkar slogan)

They began by forcing urban dwellers to flee the cities and take up residence in isolated villages among rural supporters of the Khmer Rouge. Displaced Cambodians became known as “April 17 people” or “new people”-- terms that identified them as capitalists, outsiders, and targets of suspicion and prejudice.

The village settlements were work and indoctrination camps where people spent long days in the fields and evenings attending education meetings where they chanted the slogans of the Angkar, or “the Organization,” which was the name of the faceless leadership of the Khmer Rouge. Few Cambodians knew the identities of the Angkar members, but all were made to swear loyalty to the movement and report anyone seen as ideologically impure.

The slogans of the Angkar resembled a familiar Cambodian rhetorical form. For generations Cambodians used pithy and humorous sayings to emphasize cultural values and priorities. The Angkar slogans mimicked these sayings in a sly co-option of oral tradition. In this way, the slogans were a sinister irony; they used a practice that historically reinforced social bonds to instead sow division and mistrust. For villagers who lacked exposure to the outside world, the slogans reinforced existing prejudices and introduced new ones. For the newcomers from towns and cities, they

were senseless propaganda with a clear message. Newcomers were alone. They were inferior. They should be afraid.

Secretly observe the slightest deeds and gestures of everyone around you! (Angkar slogan)

The Angkar's use of language had the intended effect. Villagers became informants and newcomers turned inward, fearing that to speak out -- even to each other -- would invite scrutiny.

“The language of the Khmer Rouge brainwashed children,” Son remembers. “It built hatred in the mind and heart. It was the weapon used for elimination. Husbands and wives feared speaking openly to each other. Relations between parents and children severed, all for fear of being overheard.”

Those who boil rice in secret or in private are enemies.
(Angkar slogan)

The Angkar began using slogans to eliminate April 17 people. They started by rooting out and murdering former government bureaucrats and other established members of the former regime. They gradually expanded their targets to include any new person who struggled to adjust to the austere conditions in the camps, where people lived on meagre food rations and lacked access to basic medical care. The combination of backbreaking labor, a starvation diet, and sickness drove many to take desperate measures to survive. People who pilfered food were punished or killed. The treasonous act of stealing a bowl of rice to keep a child alive was seen as proof that one was an enemy and a target for elimination.

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Monks are tapeworms gnawing out the bowels of society.

(Angkar slogan)

The Angkar used slogans to destroy religious traditions, seeing those too as a threat to the collectivist state they were creating. Buddhist monks and Cham Muslims were forced to renounce their traditions. Many were murdered.

Let us violently attack and scatter Vietnamese vermin!

(Angkar slogan)

The slogans divided society along ethnic lines. Cambodians with Vietnamese ancestry were the prime targets, as neighboring Vietnam was viewed as a hostile regime. The Chinese minority was also targeted. The Angkar even had slogans suggesting that ethnic Cambodians who harbored Vietnamese sympathies were deserving of elimination. By chanting that some had a “Vietnamese head and a Cambodian body,” the Angkar instilled fear of an unseen enemy and gave license to kill people by simply suggesting they possessed a Vietnamese soul.

If you wish to destroy the enemy, you must destroy the enemy within your own person! (Angkar slogan)

As the Angkar ran out of targets based on economic, religious, and ethnic identities, they implored people to stamp out individual doubts, which were a form of ideological rot to be eradicated through confession and re-education. “Do not harbor private thoughts,” one slogan commanded, which reveals a final step in the destruction of a society: the death of the individual.

The Khmer Rouge collapsed as the spiral of paranoia eventually consumed even the most stalwart Angkar loyalists. The society founded on progressive elimination could not survive, but the consequences of the three years, eight months, and twenty days of the Angkar reign are chilling. The regime passed not a single law; however, using the language of division, dehumanization, and violence, they murdered millions. In their ruthless quest for a pure agrarian society, the Khmer Rouge achieved nothing and destroyed almost everything.

The bedtime stories of Son's childhood were, in a way, a continuation of the oral tradition that the Angkar slogans exploited. I ask if he tells those same bedtime stories to his own children.

“No,” Son replies. “The stories have stopped. The trauma is held by the older generations. We want to move on. The memories have a weight. Our history has taken too much already.”



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No One Group Is Immune

Mark Iverson

IN THE GREEK LANGUAGE *GENOS* MEANS KIND, RACE, OR TRIBE, while *cide* is defined as the killing of. Therefore, the deliberate killing of ethnic, racial, religious, or political groups -- and the list continues to expand -- constitutes genocide. Tragically, intervention early in a genocide rarely occurs. This is due, in part, to the use of strategically crafted propaganda weaponized by the perpetrators of genocide and distributed through overtly biased and factually misleading media. Deceptive propaganda often distorts the line between the factual and the fictional.

From 1992 to 1995, in the small multicultural nation of Bosnia, Bosnian Serb nationalists manufactured openly racist propaganda that engendered ignorance, stoked fear, and generated animosity among peoples who, for generations, had lived peacefully together. By manipulating history, Serb propagandists defined Bosnian Muslims as inherently dangerous, manipulative, and incompatible with Orthodox Serbian civilization. As Bosnia descended into war, the international community accepted another strain of Serbian propaganda, namely that the Serbian and Bosnian Serb invasion of multicultural Bosnia constituted a civil war based upon ancient

enmities. As a result, western nations refused to decisively intervene in possibly another military quagmire similar to Vietnam, Somalia, or Northern Ireland. And still, after three years of systematic carnage, the leadership of the international community maintained the belief that the Bosnian War was a civil war of ancient hatreds. Consequently, in Srebrenica, a small town in Eastern Bosnia near Serbia's western border, approximately eight thousand Bosnian Muslim men and boys were brutally exterminated by the Bosnian Serb Army.

Prior to the shift to nationalist extremism, multicultural cohesion and community existed between the disparate ethnic groups within Bosnia preceding the 1990s. This began to change as crisis overtook the Yugoslavian economy during the late 1980s. The ex-Communist-turned-Serbian-nationalist, Slobodan Milošević, took power as the president of Serbia in 1989, relying on rhetoric of fear and Serbian victimization to achieve power. The Serbs, he stressed, once again faced threats from unidentified sources. Before a massive crowd of ethnic Serb nationalists on June 28, 1989, Milošević proclaimed, "After six centuries, we are again engaged in battles and quarrels; they are not armed battles, but this cannot be excluded yet" (Malcom, 1996, 213). Bosnian Serb President Radovan Karadžić adopted Milošević's paranoid rhetoric during the early 1990s, adding specifically the identity of the supposed threat, the Bosnian Muslims. In the city of Banja Luka, in Northwestern Bosnia, one Muslim woman described the new and threatening environment asserting, "I couldn't recognize Serbs I'd been friends with for years; they suddenly spoke of feeling threatened, saying we couldn't go on living in the same communities. Some claimed Muslims should leave Banja Luka" (Ritner and Roth, 2012, 47).

As armed conflict approached Bosnia in 1991 and early 1992, Karadžić, via airwaves, television sets, and before large crowds, filled Bosnian Serb heads full of intensely prejudiced propaganda claiming, “Muslims can’t live with others; they will overwhelm you with their birthrate and other tricks. We cannot allow that to happen” (Traynor, *The Guardian*, October 27, 2009). Attempting to legitimize his rhetoric, Karadžić’s used the pseudo-scientific views of former University of Sarajevo biology professor Biljana Plavsić, also a leader of the newly formed Bosnian Republika Srpska. Of Bosnian Muslims, Plavsić claimed:

It was genetically deformed material that embraced Islam. And now, of course, with each successive generation it simply becomes concentrated. It gets worse and worse. It simply expresses itself and dictates their style of thinking, which is rooted in their genes. And through the centuries, the genes degraded further (Shatzmiller, 2002, 58).

Bosnian Serb communities paid close attention to their leaders as they continued to warn of the coming, but as of yet unsubstantiated threat, of the violent Bosnian Muslim. Slowly, Bosnia’s Serbs claimed they felt licensed to preemptively act in order to defend their civilization.

Within Bosnia, discriminatory practices increased. Bosnian Muslim men were barred from work and routinely arrested or harassed by Bosnian Serbs. Amid this atmosphere, Radovan Karadžić formulated a plan he now felt sure would be accepted. He outlined the new policy before the Bosnian Serb leadership, declaring “one-third of Muslims will be killed, one-third will be converted to the orthodox religion and a third will leave on their own” (ICTY Case No. IT-95-5-5/18-1, July 11, 2013). As the war began in March 1992 and then intensified, the plan unfolded. Concentration camps

such as Omarska and Manjača formed. In these prisons, Bosnian Muslim and Croat men endured starvation, torture, and murder. Ultranationalist paramilitary units from “neighboring Serbia and aided by local Serbs” formed with names like Arkan’s Tigers, the Yellow Ants, and the Serbian Guard (Gutman, 1993, 158). At the hands of the Bosnian Serb Army and many paramilitaries, Bosnian Muslim women endured systematic rape. And though women of every ethnicity suffered rape, it was the Bosnian Serbs who applied organized campaigns of sexual assault as a strategy. Serbian forces surrounded and isolated many Bosnian Muslim population centers prior to methodically slaughtering and expelling communities that had existed for thousands of years. The propaganda of Milošević, Karadžić, and their supporters made the violence unleashed upon the Bosnian Muslim people possible. Verbal onslaughts degraded the humanity of Bosnia’s Muslim population, labeling an entire people as “other,” and “inferior.” Bosnian Serbs, freed from the guilt of murder and infected with fear, reframed the killing of Muslims as justified, a preventive act of defense.

From 1993 until 1995, in and around the small town of Srebrenica, communities of all ethnicities experienced brutal violence at the hands of regular and paramilitary forces representing Bosnian Muslim, Croat, and Serb ethnic groups and nationalities. The difference between the perpetrators of violence, however, came down to policy. The violence perpetrated by Bosnian Serb and Serbian forces was systematic, a larger strategy of “ethnic cleansing” and genocide, whereas the violence committed by the other factions, horrible though it was, did not involve the complete erasure of a specific population. Srebrenica had been in a state of siege since 1993. It had also been a base of operations for Bosnian paramilitary forces responsible for several massacres of local Bosnian Serb

villages. The craving for retribution in reprisal for these killings was a very real and vindictive emotion fueling the Bosnian Serb Army advance toward Srebrenica. Ratko Mladić, the supreme commander of Bosnian Serb forces, echoed the anger felt throughout his army in 1995, just before the killing of the Muslim male inhabitants of the town, avowing this as the “opportunity for the Serbs to avenge themselves on the Turks” (Traynor, *The Guardian*, October 27, 2009). Shortly thereafter, Mladić’s threatening language became reality.

Throughout the surrounding countryside burial pits had been dug, transport vehicles collected, and locations selected as execution sites. The Muslim population of Srebrenica had fled in advance of Ratko Mladić’s army to a former battery factory in Potočari, a village approximately six miles to the northwest. They believed the United Nations would protect them. Instead, they were surrounded, separated, expelled, or executed. Upon entering Potočari, to pacify the crowd, Mladić told his captives, “No one will harm you!” (Judah, 1997, 240). The reality turned out to be quite different.

A member of a Serb execution squad testified as to what happened at one of the many execution sites. He spoke of a group of Muslim men brought by bus to the site, then killed in groups of ten. He described the reaction of the second group waiting to be executed, relating how they begged, “Don’t kill us! Our families in Austria will send you money!” He testified to the Serb reaction. “Brano [the unit commander] and his mates...hit the Muslims with iron bars. When they knocked one out, they got the others to carry him to the execution place.” He finished, recounting how “Brano decided to use a machine gun...the bursts of fire wounded rather than killing straight off. The wounded begged us to finish them off. So Stanko

Sovanović...came and fired a bullet in their heads with his revolver...he boasted that he used up 700 bullets” (Judah, 1997, 241). Eight thousand plus Muslim men suffered less-than-human treatment at the hands of murderers who viewed them as such.

As sure as bullets took the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians over the course of the Bosnian War, so too did words. Without the hate-filled mutterings of Serbian and Bosnian Serb politicians, quasi-academics, and generals, ethnic Serbs would not have killed their Muslim countrymen. Srebrenica would not have been a stain against European progressive ideals. Yet people of all nationalities, ethnicities, races, religions, politics, and sexual orientation can use cruel words, practice discrimination, commit violence, and perpetrate horrendous crimes under the guise of righteousness. Manipulated words have often been strung together to codify the ignorant, fearful and, as a result, hateful into a cohesive mob capable of great maliciousness, even genocide. No one group is immune.



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Whip the Hutu or We Will Whip You

Sara Fry and Steve Utych

The graves are not yet quite full. Who is going to do the good work and help us to fill them completely? (Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines Broadcast)

BEGINNING ON APRIL 7, 1994, THE COUNTRY OF RWANDA WAS ripped apart by genocide. Fomented by extremist Hutus, who represented the largest ethnic group in the country, the United Nations (Rwanda: A Brief History of the Country) estimates that upwards of 800,000 people were brutally murdered and 150,000-250,000 women raped. Most of the victims were ethnic minority Tutsis.

Prior to the start of the genocide, hate speech, delivered over the radio, “created a social climate that legitimized tribal hatred eliminating any social sanctions preventing genocide” (Donohue, William A.). Donohue posited that language was intentionally used to build up Hutu’s social identity and demean the so-called enemy Tutsis (Donohue 13). Early on, language choices on the broadcasts were made to classify the Tutsis as

different, dishonest, and dangerous; they were causing problems for the country. Early language choices also offered “the Hutu group as the voice of salvation” (23).

Radio broadcasts by extremist Hutus continued during the genocide. Dehumanizing language, or language that refers to human beings as animals, vermin, or disease, was a critical tool that extremist Hutus used to justify genocide of the Tutsis. The Hutus labeled Tutsis as “cockroaches needing to be exterminated” (23). Calling to Hutus to help fill the graves, phrases like “When you kill the rat do not let the pregnant one escape” (Dowden) were used to further incite violence and brutality. Dehumanizing language works through a cognitive process that denies uniquely human traits – such as critical thinking and the ability to feel emotions like suffering – to groups that are dehumanized (Haslam). When groups are dehumanized, they are assigned lower levels of worth than other human beings, which excludes these groups from standard moral considerations (Bandura).

Dehumanization serves to decrease our positive emotions, and increase our negative emotions, towards groups who are dehumanized (Costello and Hodson). Taken together, this reveals that dehumanization is a powerful tool for individuals interested in achieving vicious and morally reprehensible goals. This tactic was not lost on the Hutus, who used their dehumanization of the Tutsis as a vehicle for genocide. Once the brutality began, it quickly spiraled further downward. Broadcasters on one radio station even identified potential targets and offered instructions on where to find them (Smith). Two executives from the radio station were later convicted for their role in the genocide, receiving 35-year and life sentences. The brutal murders and rapes occurred within 100 days.

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The dead of Rwanda accumulated at nearly three times the rate of the Jewish dead during the Holocaust. It was the most efficient mass killing since the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Gourevitch).

The tensions that led to the genocide began far earlier than the 1990s. The acts of exploitation, degradation, and racism that undergirded colonialist policies left deep scars across the continents affected by imperialism. Such was – and is – the case in Rwanda.

At the risk of over-simplifying the differences between Hutus and Tutsi, the distinction was economic rather than ethnic. Gourevitch (56) explained that historically Tutsis tended livestock while Hutus farmed crops. As cattle were more valuable than crops, the names denoted a class distinction, yet there had been fluidity between the groups with intermarriage and collaboration.

With colonialization, first by Germany then Belgium, came the exacerbation of the differences. Europeans elevated Tutsis to positions of power and fabricated ways in which they were superior to Hutus – i.e. narrower and longer noses (Gourevitch 56). Colonizing powers used dehumanizing terms like “coarse” and “bestial” to describe the Hutus, and “an elderly Tutsi recalled the Belgian colonial order ... with the words ‘You whip the Hutu or we will whip you.’” (Gourevitch 57). Beauchamp explained the lasting result:

German and Belgian rule made the dividing lines between the groups sharper. This “divide and conquer” strategy meant supporting the Tutsi monarchy and requiring that

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all local chiefs be Tutsis, turning the Tutsis into symbols of colonial rule for the Hutu majority (Beauchamp).

In the dark shadow of colonialism, Rwanda gained independence in 1962, ushering in the opportunity for majority rule for the Hutus and loss of Tutsi privileges (*Rwanda: A Brief History of the Country*). Dehumanizing language was already a familiar ploy to exacerbate division between these groups.

Fast forward to the months before the genocide, and by the middle of 1993 the Hutus were the largest ethnic group while the Tutsis made up about 9% of the population (Donohue 20). By the end of 1993, extremist Hutus began honing in on the Tutsis as the source of Rwanda's problems. They described their government as powerless to solve the problems because the moderate Hutu government attempted to work with the Tutsis. Day after day, the radio hosts vilified Tutsis by referring to them as "Inkotanyi" - a slur - and fomented mistrust and suspicion, connecting them to political killings and conspiracies. After six months of broadcasting, this powerful language had established the Tutsis as the dangerous criminals behind the problems and the solution lay in their eradication (Donohue 20-23).

This strategy is not new for perpetrators of mass political violence and genocide. During World War II, dehumanization was a tactic frequently used in Nazi propaganda against Jewish individuals - Jewish people were not simply blamed for the problems of Germany, but they were consistently portrayed as pests and vermin (Russell). The American government produced propaganda dehumanizing the Japanese people as apes or other animals, creating a moral justification for the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (Dower). Dehumanization frequently leads to a

moral justification for actions citizens typically find reprehensible because these groups of people are seen as sub-human (Bandura).

The airing of radio broadcasts in Rwanda did not cause the genocide alone, but they fostered a social space where the systematic killing was made possible. The radio hosts created identities robbed of their humanity and their rights to exist. There are opportunities for intervention before “verbal aggression gives way to physical” (Donohue), especially if upstanders recognize how dehumanizing language patterns serve as an “early warning system that begins to signal the beginning of a genocidal spiral” (Donohue 13).

One message seems clear from the myriad of analysis of the tragedy of the Rwandan genocide: there were warning signs in the dehumanizing language patterns. With early intervention, it could possibly have been stopped. Or, in the words of General Romeo Dallaire, who commanded the United Nations peacekeeping efforts during the genocide:

Simply jamming [the] broadcasts and replacing them with messages of peace and reconciliation would have had a significant impact on the course of events (Smith par. 8).

Dehumanization is not the relic of decades-old conflicts but remains a pervasive force in social and political life. Racialized dehumanization occurs against African Americans in the United States criminal justice system (Goff et al.) and towards racial and ethnic out-groups (especially ethnic Arabs) in multiple countries (Kteily et al.). Dehumanization is not confined simply to race and ethnicity, as partisans in the United States view members of the other party as less human than members of their

own party (Cassese). Dehumanization influences how we see the world, in situations both large and small.

Dehumanizing rhetoric is also a frequent tactic in the current debates on immigration. Donald Trump refers to the U.S. / Mexico border as an “open wound” (Trump) and frequently uses dehumanizing language in his rhetoric to advocate for increased border security. This dehumanization leads to negative emotional responses towards immigrants and predicts more restrictive immigration attitudes in citizens, regardless of their political ideology (Utych).

Dehumanization is a favored tactic of genocidal regimes, such as the extremist Hutus during the Rwandan genocide, but has also occurred throughout history, even in less extreme cases. By creating moral exclusion of dehumanized groups, dehumanization encourages individuals to prefer exclusionary and punitive policies towards these groups. While this can begin on a smaller scale, such as policies restricting migration, as we saw in Rwanda it can lead to mass killings of entire groups of human beings. Dehumanization is a powerful and destructive tool, and one that citizens should take care to recognize and reject to prevent future atrocities.



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Words Have Weight

Dan Prinzing

Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.

AM NOT SURE WHEN I FIRST HEARD THAT, BUT THE LITTLE DITTY seems to have been embroidered to my childhood. Words did hurt – and they had weight. Written or spoken, carefully crafted or passionately scribbled, the words thrown around can move us, scar us, or inspire us.

Three decades after one of the most compelling human rights crises, Hitler ordered “to send to death mercilessly and without compassion, men, women and children of Polish derivation and language. Only thus shall we gain the living space which we need. Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians.”

His words had weight and over six million Jews were murdered.

“To keep you is no gain, to lose you is no loss.” Repeated by the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia, the words had weight and an estimated 21 to 24 percent of Cambodia’s 1975 population was eliminated.

THE SPIRAL OF INJUSTICE

The Spiral of Injustice begins with words - language that is used to dehumanize “the other” by denying those defining characteristics of “the same” - reason, dignity, love, pride, heroism, nobility, and ultimately any entitlement to human rights. Whether “the other” is a racial or a religious group, a sexual minority or a nation, it is vulnerable for exploitation, oppression and indeed genocide by denying its essential humanity.

Dear Kitty ... No one is spared. The sick, the elderly, children, babies and pregnant women – all are marched to their death. I get frightened myself when I think of close friends who are now at the mercy of the cruelest monsters ever to stalk the earth. And all because they're Jews. - Anne M. Frank, November 19, 1942

Etched in the stone of the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial in Boise, Anne's diary entry is a stark reminder of what can happen when we fail to interrupt the Spiral of Injustice.

Throughout the Memorial the power of words is showcased. As Canadian-born author Manly Palmer Hall recognized, “Words are potent weapons for all causes, good or bad.” The quotes in the Memorial were selected to actively engage us to think, to talk with one another, and to respond to the human rights issues we face in our community, our country and our world.

In one, Ronald Reagan posited that “Like the genocide of the Armenians before it, and the genocide of the Cambodians which followed it, the lessons of the Holocaust must never be forgotten.”

Many of the featured quotes – the very words uttered – bear witness to the lessons that can be learned.

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In his 1965 published *Between Parent and Child*, Israeli-born child psychologist and therapist Haim Ginott wrote:

Dear Teacher: I am a survivor of a concentration camp. My eyes saw what no person should witness: Gas chambers built by learned engineers. Children poisoned by educated physicians. Infants killed by trained nurses. Women and babies shot and killed by high school and college graduates. So, I am suspicious of education. My request is: Help your students to become human. Your efforts must never produce learned monsters, skilled psychopaths, or educated Eichmanns. Reading, writing, and arithmetic are only important if they serve to **make our children more humane.**

From his own experiences as a prisoner in Auschwitz, a Nazi death camp, Elie Wiesel wrote in *Night*, “I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. **We must always take sides.** Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.”

Ginott and Wiesel shape important questions. What is our social responsibility? Is it our duty to be upstanders when we hear words that demean or marginalize members of our community?

American journalist and commentator Judith Miller also suggested, “We must remind ourselves that the Holocaust was not six million. **It was one, plus one, plus one ...**” That too is an important lesson; we must recognize “the other” with a face and a voice – a real person. As referenced in the

Memorial, Anne Frank was one, her sister Margot was one, their mother Edith was one ... Our social responsibility – our duty – impacts real lives.

At the age of 82, Rahela “Rose” Horn Beal became a docent in the Memorial. Rose had been born in Berlin, Germany, and grew up in Frankfurt. For six years she lived under Hitler’s increasingly repressive rule until she, her mother, and two younger brothers immigrated to the United States in 1939. Rose’s admonition was direct: “Never again is obsolete. **Never again is now.**”

As long as we allow words to live unchecked, we allow them to bear down on the vulnerable among us.

Perhaps, another quote by Confucius should be added to those etched in the stone of the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial: “Without knowing the force of words, it is impossible to know more.”

Words have weight.



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THE SPIRAL OF INJUSTICE



The Wassmuth Center for Human Rights is the builder and home of the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial in Boise, Idaho.

Located within the Memorial, the statue of “The Other” offers an artistic representation of the Spiral of Injustice. The stages of injustice are debossed in English, Spanish, Chinese, Arabic and Hebrew and embossed in Braille.

The statue was designed by Boise metal-artist Ken McCall.

Featured on the statue’s base:

“Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Amos

Recognized as the educational arm of the Idaho Anne Frank Human Rights Memorial, the Wassmuth Center for Human Rights provides programs and resources designed to bring the Memorial's message into classrooms and communities.

We envision an inclusive society where Idahoans take responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights; where everyone is valued and treated with equal dignity and respect; and where everyone's human rights are a lived reality.

We believe that the way to realize this vision is to engage and educate fellow Idahoans to dismantle the complex, intersecting dynamics and conditions that foster and perpetuate systematic discrimination.

Our mission is to “promote respect for human dignity and diversity through education and to foster individual responsibility to work for peace and justice.”

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