

25th Remembering the Genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda

1. Introduction

25 years after the Genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda, remembering is still a fundamental cognitive process, which is involved in virtually all other important cognitive functions, such as reasoning, perception, problem solving, and speech. Memory is a central component of the mind. The “ideology of memory says that human beings exist to remember. Each generation of humans exists in order to transmit memories of the previous generation to the next generation.

We not only pay a debt of honor to those who suffered in the past says Miroslav Volf, but we also seek to protect the innocent in the future. Not to remember would be to fail the obligation of justice, either toward victims of past or victims of future. To keep memories alive we tell stories, study, write history, erect monuments, and celebrate anniversaries.

2. Family transmission of memory

In the process of remembering all society must pay attention to all minors’ details of what happened and done for educating the coming generations. When memory is used constructively, memorialization processes and history work can allow different generations to understand the conflict and to mediate between the past, and the present. Societies pass on memories of previous atrocities through intergenerational dialogue, education, and memorials. Intergenerational dialogue cannot be supported only by what is taught and discussed at school. A crucial arena for transmitting historical memories from one generation to another is the family (Memorialization, Historiography and History)

What are we talking and discussing in our Rwandan families? Especial attention must be given to the young generations within our families. Many scholars in different domains, “psychiatrists, historians, educators, and human rights activists seem to agree that separating the past from the present, and understanding the past as the past, is a key achievement for any society. The particular attentiveness to memory is important to any society which wants to live a sustainable peace, and the “ultimate objective of history will be to give meaning to past events and to inscribe them in the passage of time. Understanding the past in remembering what happened is one way for preventing

or limiting tragedies which can reappear, it also raise the consciousness of the of the people to potential risks.

3. Special remembering of victims

Why should we remember the victims of the Genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda? Remembering is a moral duty. Barbara Misztal notes that; remembering is a duty to keep alive the memory of suffering by the persistent pursuit of an ethical response, of the painful history.

For the genocide against Tutsi in Rwanda, we owe a debt to all the victims. And the tiniest way of paying our debt is to tell and retell what happened to them during the Genocide in 1994. The most elementary compensation that we may offer to them is to give them a voice that was denied to them. It is a human duty to commemorate in remembering because; memory should be openly transmitted, and not kept secret. Families are bound together by memory, and people should study their roots. A nation cut off from its collective memory is lost. That is why tragedy, suffering, victory and achievement should all be publicly commemorated.

4. Transform past suffering into creative action

Professor Gerrieter Haar affirms that reconciling memories is an important program to end conflict, prevent new hatred, and open up a future of peace. To succeed in such reconciliation, there is a need for creating a history of memory as Carla De Ycaza, suggests that after a mass atrocity, for addressing trauma of victims it is necessary to create a history of memory. The French sociologist Alfred Grosser says that the transmission of memory often serves to preserve knowledge of past sufferings. He adds that “the memory and acknowledgment of others’ suffering also constitutes an element of peace. The main goal or task of remembering is perhaps also the obligation to transform past suffering into creative action.

For Guillermo Kerber, the right of knowing is not only the individual right which has all victims to know what happened as right to the truth. The right to know is also a collective right which takes origin in history for avoiding future violations to be reproduced.

Also Paul Ricoeur notes that the duty of memory is a duty of not forgetting. Ana Lucia Araujo, professor of history at Howard University in Washington, adds the concept of reconciliation insaying that the duty of memory is one of the requirements for reconciliation. Past events are very often

repressed, but they emerge into consciousness and become part of the present in order to achieve forgiveness and reconciliation. We have to keep memory by retelling and reinterpretation so that it remains relevant to the current age.

5. Rescuing Rwandans from traumatic memory

To be driven in life by a painful historical memory has complex consequences, expressly when people have lived through traumatic events as slavery, and devastating religious wars. Because of the lack of healing memory from victims and perpetrators, some people from both sides will never feel secured with their past history. They will prefer to forget or to escape it. In this way the trauma appears and it is transmitted through generations because trauma emerges when there is an historical silence of the past. It means when there is no coherence of the fundamental historical interrelationship of past, present, and future. Historians have the duty to break the silence surrounding the past history of Rwanda without neglecting its traumatic elements.

Historical memory is an important orientation for the present and for the future. It helps to construct the identity of a nation through the past historical events. It helps also to recover from painful events, tragedies and genocides. The historical memory must through storytelling, testimony, and exchange of experiences. It must not be just a modest narration of what happened in the past, but it must be also a deep thinking on conduct and the signification of what the people crossed in painful past history for setting out the future as a project of social, community and personal reconstruction, said Edgar Gutierrez.

6. Conclusion

Remembering the Genocide against the Tutsi has become a community effort; a series of events are held that contribute for building unity and reconciliation for all Rwandans. It is not a time only for tears and remembering atrocities, but also a time to support one another and commit to a brighter future of Rwanda.

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