

# Ghosts of Rwanda

## Interview: Joyce Leader

Frontline, September 30, 2003

**She was second-in-command at the U.S. embassy in Kigali. In this interview, she talks about the political background to the genocide and America's effort to support the Arusha peace accord. She also recounts her experience during the first 48 hours of the killing before being evacuated. And she talks about the lessons of Rwanda, in particular, the embassy's failure to see or understand the signs of what was coming. "I think the formation of the militia was something we knew about, but we just never got out and tried to really track it down. We went on what we gathered from other people without any firsthand information. When we would confront people in positions of authority, which we did, they would of course deny that any such militarization was going on." This interview was conducted on Sept. 30, 2003.**

**... When you talk about Rwanda, is it easy to talk about? ... What emotions does it bring up? ...**

There were people standing on either side of the road watching us leave and it's my recollection that I saw some instruments like machetes in their hands. I remember thinking they're just waiting for us to get out before they go on about their gruesome business.

The one thing that's hard for me is that many of the people that I worked closely with were killed. And if they weren't killed, then many of them have gone into exile, even though they were Hutu. They were people who were working for change. In that regard, they were regarded as traitors to the Hutu cause, so a lot of them are struggling outside the country.

**How long were you in Rwanda?**

Almost three years – more like two and a half, because we had to leave early and precipitously.

**So when did you first go there?**

I went in August 1991. I had been there a couple of times before that, in my role as a Peace Corps associate director in Zaire. I actually had volunteers who were stationed in Rwanda that I would go to visit. That was back in the early, late 1970s. Then also I had gone a couple of times for a conference to see the refugee situation, when there were refugees coming from Burundi into Rwanda. I was sent from Geneva ... and I had seen a refugee situation from both sides, Burundi and Rwanda, at that time. That was about 1988, 1989.

**What was the quality of the situation there then?**

At the time, when I first arrived in Rwanda, the political parties had just been allowed to start forming. Since they had been anticipating this, they had quite a head of steam already. There were at least four parties already forming besides the president's National Revolutionary Movement for Development (MRND). There was a lot of anticipation of a new political process that would bring different people into the process, mostly Hutus, because that was the majority of the country. ...

A prime minister was appointed shortly after I arrived in September. He was charged with forming a multi-party government, and so there was a lot of activity around their effort to [do that]. The first one was formed in the end of December, and didn't really have the newly formed parties involved, so there was a lot of protest over that. Eventually in March of

the following year and April of the following year, the president did name an opposition leader as prime minister, rather than somebody from his own party.

At that point, they finally did form a balanced multi-party government, half from the president's party and half from the opposition party. So there was a lot of political activity around democratization. The embassy, particularly the ambassador, was working with the party leaders to help them strengthen their parties and to gain some experience in negotiating skills and so forth. . . .

### **What was the situation with the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) ?**

It was a year since they had invaded in October 1990 and the war was simmering, but at the border between Uganda and Rwanda, [a] considerable distance outside of Kigali. While there would be reports of what was going on at the front and there would be injured people being brought back, it wasn't really viewed as a part of this democratization process. It was happening, it was going on, but it was in the background, and it wasn't really impacting heavily on the people in Kigali. Yes, there were displaced people; yes, there was a humanitarian effort to assist these people. The International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) and some non-governmental organizations were working with these people to provide the [displaced people] with the necessary food and shelter.

But there's no television in Rwanda, so people didn't see what was going on. The radio reporters rarely went to the front. So it was not something that was in the front of everybody's thinking at that time.

### **The Tutsi minority— . . . What was going on politically with them? Were they generally a part of the democratization process, or not ?**

[The people who] I call "internal Tutsis" were a part of the democratization process, but somewhat marginally. There was one political party that most of those who were active in the democratization [process] had

joined, the Liberal Party. So they were more or less involved with one of the political parties.

They also eventually formed a human rights organization that was run primarily by the Tutsi, a couple of human rights organizations that were monitoring and investigating what was going on in this area. So they were active, but not in the front. It was more or less a process among the Hutu to bring more Hutu into the political process, and to open it up to more than the president's party.

### **So how did that Hutu democratization process turn into what eventually became a peace process with the U.N. involved ?**

Well, I should mention that the U.N. and the Organization of African Unity (OAU) were involved all along in trying to broker some sort of a negotiated settlement for the war. This was going on, and the foreign ministry was involved. The people who were leading that effort in the foreign ministry, however, were very much hard-line people. So there wasn't very good communication between them and the Rwandan Patriotic Front, the RPF.

. . . So while these organizations – the OAU, U.N., international community [such as] France, Belgium – were pushing for negotiations between the parties, it didn't really turn into a viable peace process until after the president appointed the opposition prime minister and an opposition leader became the foreign minister.

So here we had now people who were looking at things a little bit differently from the way the president and his people had been looking at things. They were able to see some openings that they were able to go through to reach the RPF and to begin to start talking about a negotiated peace process. That began in May.

The United States did play, in my view, an instrumental role in getting that off square one and getting that process moving, when Assistant Secretary [of State for Africa] Herman Cohen came out to Uganda and to Rwanda. He talked with the political leaders of Uganda who were backing the RPF, and then to

RPF leaders. [He] came to Kigali, and he was able to assure the opposition leaders who were at the foreign ministry and the prime minister that the RPF was ready to start talking about the situation and to move forward into peace process.

It was quickly thereafter that the Arusha negotiations began. The first was a ceasefire, [and it] took two days to negotiate. In August, they came together again, and were able to come up with a protocol that listed the principles that they would base their government on. When the discussion turned to the distribution of power, how the power would be divided up among the parties – that’s where it got into some real rough sailing.

### What do you mean ?

Well, it was much more difficult for the parties to come to an agreement on how the power should be distributed in a 20-person cabinet in a 70-person national assembly. Part of the problem was that the negotiators were there – RPF on the one side, and the government team on the other side. Now the RPF was very united and had one perspective. The government team on the other side spanned the spectrum from hard-liners, the president’s party, [and] moderate opposition people, all the way through to the Tutsis for a minister of labor and social affairs who ... was a Tutsi. He did want change in the country, and tended to have views that were somewhat similar to the RPF.

So they had to work within the total spectrum of the Rwandan society on the government side and try to forge some sort of common position, which often was not easy. So there was a lot of debate back and forth, even within the government team and back in Kigali, about what kind of distribution of power ought to be put forward.

### You mentioned Cohen’s visit. Why was the U.S. government engaged with this issue ?

Cohen was engaged because conflict resolution was one of the tenants of – and the hallmark of – his tenure as assistant secretary. He was looking at various

conflicts around the continent of Africa and looking at ways to push them towards a peaceful resolution. At the time, I don’t think that the interest in Rwanda went much higher in the administration than assistant secretary level. So while he was interested, it wasn’t necessarily of concern to people higher than he was. ...

He went there in early 1992, [and] there was a change in administration in 1993 and a new assistant secretary of state. Even though there was a change in political parties in the United States, there was consistency in terms of conflict resolution as being a high priority in Africa.

### [In the] summer of 1993, when the U.N. was getting engaged in talks with them– When you were talking to security in Washington, were you telling them that this is Rwanda, a place that the peace process might [be worthy of] the U.S. getting involved ?

I had spent most of the spring before the summer of 1993 at the peace talks. I had been pushing quite hard all along for there to be early involvement of the United Nations, because there would need to be the international monitoring in place very quickly after the peace accord was signed. It was signed in August 1993, and the U.N. was not ready to make a commitment until after the peace accord was signed. I think this is pretty well standard procedure; it usually takes several months after a peace accord is signed for the U.N. to actually get on the ground. Quite frankly, this happened very quickly in Rwanda, given the fact that they didn’t start until after the peace accord was signed.

Now what were we telling Washington? We were very encouraged by the peace accord and the president putting his signature to the peace accord. The embassy was of the view that a lot of the violence that was going on in the country [was] random violence. We were of the view that this could be brought under control, if the peace process could be carried [out], concluded and then implemented.

But I think that we were also aware, and telling

Washington, that there were some difficult hurdles ahead, some very important challenges. The militia of the political party of the president, the Interahamwe, was becoming stronger. The political parties were fragmenting by 1993. The peace accord had been written in such a way that power was equally distributed to the RPF and the president's party, with the opposition party holding the balance in the middle.

... What happened was then that they started to fragment in order. Because some of the hardliners saw that they weren't getting anything out of the peace accord, [and] they were going to lose control of the political process through the peace accord, they turned to the political actors and started to try to manipulate them into a realignment of the parties, so that they could control the political process.

So the parties were fragmented and becoming more so; they weren't able to select participants for the new government or the new national assembly. There were differences internally in the parties. So that was one problem. The militia were another problem.

The continuing random violence, explosions, bombs, attacks – all of these things were going on. It was a very tenuous process. I think we realized that. I guess one mark of that was the fact that there were absolutely no celebrations in Kigali whatsoever to mark the signing of the peace accord. The prime minister eventually declared a day of holiday for that occasion. But people never came into the streets; there was never any celebration. People were very skeptical that it could work, and there was a lot of nervousness and a lot of tension. I think we were communicating this back to Washington. We wanted to help make it work, but we realized that there were a lot of hurdles along the way

**But you believe the best way to make it work was just to keep...**

I think we were very much committed to that, to actually implementing the peace agreement, and that would help to bring into the fold all of the actors on the political scene in Rwanda.

Of course we were mistaken, and the spoilers, the people who launched the genocide— There was no pro-

vision in the peace accord for those hardline Hutu. There were no guarantees that their security would be taken care of, that they would continue to have a role in the society. I think that there was a lot of fear on their part that we weren't really addressing through the peace process.

We knew that they were getting cut out, but again, we thought if the president would come along, then he would bring these others along, and that getting them into [the] peace [process] and into the implementation of the peace accord would be the best way to contain the violence and to be able to launch a more equitable society inside Rwanda. ...

**Were you getting instructions from Washington about the scope of a U.N. peacekeeping force that would gain support from the U.S. government?**

I don't remember specific instruction, but I do know that the general tenor in Washington was not favorable to large peacekeeping operations. This was even before the incident in Somalia, where the 18 Americans were killed. So there was already a bit of antagonism toward the idea of getting very involved in the peacekeeping force or having a very large force in Rwanda

**Were you saying to Washington and the ambassador, "Look, this is important here, we need U.N. peacekeepers on the ground, we should support this?"**

We were definitely saying to Washington that a peacekeeping operation needed to be supported in order to make the peace accord work, [and] that this was an imperative. We were definitely advocating that. ...

**... How big was the embassy [in Rwanda], and how big was the local staff? What was their mood [in] early 1994?**

... At the embassy, we had a diverse staff of nationals. We had both Tutsis and Hutu. We tried to get them to work together as a team, rather than trying to look at them as one ethnicity or another. Frankly, I don't know the ethnicity of all of the people who worked for us. But I think there had been tensions growing for quite some time. It didn't start in early 1994. Even a year before, in December 1992, there was a tremendous amount of nervousness and concern and, quite honestly, fear among the Tutsi.  
...

In that December, I remember hearing from some of [the Tutsis] that they would gather their families together at night, and while the women would sleep, the men would take turns standing watch. They were quite fearful that something might happen. The president had, in November, called the peace accord ... a mere scrap of paper. Leon Mugesera, a party operative for the president's party, had talked about getting rid of the Tutsi by sending them back to Ethiopia where he supposed they came from, via the Nyabarongo River, which flows from Rwanda north toward Ethiopia.

So there was palpable fear among people. In December 1992 there were ... massacres around Christmas time, [and also] in early January and in late January. After the peace process, the negotiators had signed the power-sharing agreement, which did not please the president or his party or the hard-line Coalition for Defense of the Republic (CDR) party.

So there was, even a year before, a lot of fear. That's why I guess nobody was really excited by the signing of the peace accord – because they just didn't have confidence that it was going to end the violence that they had been experiencing or bring peace.

**Would you say that ... Tutsi friends and colleagues expressed that fear?**

If we talked about it, we would try to encourage them to have confidence in the peace process, which is what we were supporting. But Rwandans don't display their feelings very readily, and so it was being kept inside. People were going about their daily routines as best they could, and it just wasn't something that people talked freely about.

**Some of the national staff were coming to work exhausted from being up all night.**

... As we got closer to the signing of the peace accord, there were none of these mini-massacres. There was a bit of hiatus in the violence between the time when the RPF broke the cease-fire and attacked in February 1993 until after the peace accord was signed. When the peacekeepers came on the scene, there hadn't been much violence between those times. But I think there was a great deal of fear.

There was a very large demonstration in early January 1994. It happened on the day that the ambassador was presenting his credentials to President Habyarimana. We had to go through some of the demonstrators in a car to reach our destination, the location for the ceremony.

It was very violent with the Interahamwe, and they were conducting this demonstration very close to the location of the RPF troops who had, in accordance with the peace accord, brought 600 fighters into the city. They were staying in a certain place, and this demonstration was, we later learned, intended to provoke them, and to try to create some sort of a reason for them to return to fighting. Fortunately, they held their ground, and they didn't take the bait at that particular point in time.

But there was a lot of nervousness. Things just kept getting worse all that early 1994, with the assassination of one of the leading politicians in mid-February and a massacre taking place right inside Kigali. A lot of Tutsis were killed during that period of time in Kigali, when the peacekeeping force was there; but they couldn't move into the neighborhoods where the

killing was happening, because their rules of engagement would only allow them to fight if they were shot at, only allowed them to return fire if they took fire. And of course the killers weren't aiming at them. . . .

**What do you think was actually going on? Were they random killings, or were they organized by extremist Hutus who felt threatened by the peace process?**

In the massacre that happened inside Kigali in February, the people who were being killed were random victims. The killers may have targeted neighborhoods where there was a concentration of Tutsis, but I don't think at that time they were targeting specific individuals. There were some people that I was in contact with, Hutus even, who were afraid, and they were taking their families to safety. They thought that maybe they might become victims under cover of all of this other killing. So they were taking precautions. But I think it was primarily random at that point. . . .

**Can you tell me about the [events leading up to the] prime minister [being killed]?**

I think it was very difficult for those of us who were at the embassy . . . to imagine the magnitude of the kind of reaction that did eventually come. When people told us there could be some killing, or there could be something being planned, I don't think we had any sense of the magnitude that maybe they had in mind, let alone what actually eventually occurred. We couldn't conceive of anything that horrendous. People tried to tell us and tried to help us understand, but maybe we just didn't get it. It was just very hard to conceive of something so awful actually being meticulously planned and carried out. . . .

About a year before the actual shooting down of the plane and the beginning of the genocide, I was in conversation with somebody who happened to be a military person. At the time, there were rumors going around about a potential coup. So we were talking about these rumors. I frankly didn't quite understand

where a coup would come from, or why there would be a coup when the president was so firmly in charge. I think he was trying to explain a little bit or to give his analysis of the situation, to say that, "Well, maybe it would come from the right wing, and that Habyarimana would be eased out of the picture."

At that time, I didn't see where those right-wing hard-line Hutu would get the military support. But that was a part of our ignorance about the composition of the military and its various factions.

**So in January, February 1994, you heard these things in the background. Of course, you were aware of the radio, but you believed that even though it was a tenuous situation, the best way through it was to stick to the peace process. Describe the thinking going on.**

Well, the situation was deteriorating; the security was deteriorating; the society was becoming more and more polarized. One of the embassies had always been supporting the moderates, and we were hoping that the moderates would be able to prevail against any of the extremes, and implementing the peace accord would bring some institutional structure to the situation and allow the moderates to come into the forefront.

The problem was that, throughout the year of 1993, people who were in the middle were becoming more and more afraid of supporting inclusion of the Hutus in the government. The power sharing and the political decision-making, they were moving more and more towards the president's party and to what I would call "Hutu solidarity." It was like, "If you aren't with us, then you're against us." There was just a gradual swelling of the ranks of what became called "Hutu power."

On the other end was the RPF, leaving very few moderates in the middle. So it became very hard to support the compromise position, the middle-of-the-road position, because there wasn't much left there.

There never was a very strong moderate leader, which was also a part of the problem with some of our analysis.

But I think that we were committed to the peace process, and we were committed to democratization, and wanted to see those through to the end. Part of the problem maybe was that we were so focused on these issues that we were unable to judge accurately the intensity of the rejection by those who were the spoilers, and who became [those who carried out the genocide]. . .

### **What else could you have done? Pull the U.N. troops out? . . .**

No, I don't think we were in a position to advocate any such drastic action as that. As the situation advanced, the need for some sort of a neutral international force – which is what the peacekeeping forces were – the need was greater than ever, because the tinderbox was very fragile at that time. So I think that it was even more important that the international community remained involved

### **From being involved with General Dallaire from the early days, you knew that if things did go off, that the force really wasn't that substantial. Did you worry about that?**

Well, I was aware that, number one, he didn't have as many troops as he really wanted, even though I think he had reached the 2,500, which was the peak for the force that he was allocated. I knew that there were problems with funding, and he didn't have all of his equipment. So there were a lot of problems making the force as effective as it could be or as it should have been. I just don't think we envisioned any kind of a blow-up that was as big as what came. . . .

### **So on April 6, where were you when the plane went down? What happened?**

When the plane crashed on April 6th, I was hosting a dinner in my house with the UNHCR, the High Commissioner for Refugees, representative. I had a

visitor from our embassy in Nairobi, who was the regional refugee coordinator. She had come to look at the situation of the Burundi refugees who had recently come into Rwanda after the assassination of their first elected Hutu president, and also explore with some of the RPF folks issues about the return of the refugees to Rwanda.

. . . We were having a business dinner and heard this muffled, loud sound quite far away, and didn't really know what it was. It sounded like an explosion – rocket fire or mortar fire of some sort. So it wasn't immediately evident or obvious to us what it was. About a half-hour later, the ambassador called my house to tell me that the plane with the president had gone down, and that the Burundi president was in the plane as well.

At that point it wasn't known what the status of the president was, but it was assumed that he was probably dead. . . . An hour or so later, we did get confirmation, through I think the Belgian peacekeeping force, that the president had, in fact, died in the crash – that everybody on the plane, in fact, had died in the crash.

### **Given the time you'd spent in that country, and you knew how fragile things were, what was running through your mind when you heard that?**

Well, again, maybe I was naive, but I really did not expect it to set off the reaction that it did. I don't mean to suggest that what happened was a reaction only to the plane downing. I think the plane became a trigger for those who already had a plan. If it hadn't been the plane, it would have been something else. But in this case, it was a provocation that allowed them to set in motion a plan that was on the drawing board, and I didn't envision that that was going to happen.

I got a good night's sleep, the last one for several days, actually. But I woke up very early the next morning to gunfire, and quickly learned from friends and contacts who were calling me that there was systematic killing of Tutsis already going on, [and] that some key people in the government had been killed or

taken away from their families. A lot of people were already going into hiding. A lot of people were very scared. . . .

### **Did you venture outside ?**

I did not venture outside, because I could hear shooting very close to my house. I had the impression that there were roadblocks around my house and that it wouldn't be very successful if I tried to go anywhere or leave the house.

### **And [you] lived next to the prime minister ?**

Next door to the prime minister, yes. . . .

### **What happened then ?**

Well, that morning [at] about 8 :00 in the morning, she called, and asked if she could come and hide in my house.

### **The prime minister ?**

The prime minister. I didn't give it very much thought and I said, "Yes," but then when the Ghanaian peacekeeper who was guarding her – he must have put a ladder up on her side of the fence and he came up above the– He raised his head above the fence and there were shots fired just then. I realized that where he was, was visible from the road, and I said [to him], "I think we'd better abort this effort. The people outside have seen this and this will not be safety for her, so I think you better look somewhere else." He said, "No, no, that's friendly fire." I said, "No, no, that's not friendly fire. Please do not bring the prime minister over that wall. I do not think it would be safe for her here." An hour later, my guard came to tell me that there were people at the gate, trying to break it down.

. . . I said, "Well, since I really don't have anything to hide, I might as well let them come in." Again, probably a very bad call. But they were going to get in anyway, so I thought probably better not to have them too angry by the time they accomplished

that. And I told [them] that the prime minister wasn't there.

### **They came looking for the prime minister ?**

They came looking for the prime minister.

### **Were they army, or militia, or [who] ?**

Well, they had black berets, and I honestly was not clear about who all these people were. I thought that was the presidential guard that had the black berets. It wasn't the Interahamwe, but I thought it was the presidential guard. . . .

They came in and they looked all through the house. They went up in the ceiling. At one point, they fired a shot which came closer than I realized to me. But eventually, the man who crawled into the ceiling came up to me and said that, "There's nobody there." I said, "Well, that's what I told you in the first place. Now would you like to tell your officer who's in charge so that you can all leave, please?"

In the process, they had discovered my pantry door was locked. My Tutsi gardener had locked himself in there, and they were determined that they were going to find out who was in there. So unfortunately he had to come out, and he did get roughed up, but he did survive and they eventually went on their way.

They also were very upset by my American guest from Nairobi, the refugee coordinator who was a black American, and they were convinced that [he was] a Tutsi. It took some effort and some time to convince them that this person was American and an American diplomat, but they finally left her alone. It was a very frightening, very frightening moment. . . .

They were really on a rampage. They were very, very upset. I was probably lucky that they came so early in the day, because at least they weren't drunk yet. . . .

### **Why was the shot fired ? Do you know ?**

My telephone rang, and I picked it up and started to talk to somebody. They told me to put it down, and in the process, one of the guys fired a shot.



### **At you ?**

Well, it was close. Killed my refrigerator. But they finally left, and another half-hour later, we actually heard a scream and a shot, and realized that it was the prime minister who had been found and killed. ...

### **But you assumed that, after they left your house, they went next door and looked for her ?**

They went looking for her. I actually had somebody telephone me from another embassy who had one of their nationals living behind the prime minister. She called to tell me that there were military moving towards her house through her colleague's yard. I think they found her in a U.N. compound still yet another house over.

### **The Belgian peacekeepers who were sent to protect her – they were next door in her house ?**

No, they never made it to her house. They were intercepted and taken to a military camp nearby, which is where they were killed. But I didn't know it at the time. ...

### **What was going though your mind ?**

We had to be very concerned about the security of the American community. We were still able to talk by telephone, and we were checking on the people in the community. We were getting reports of what had happened in their neighborhoods overnight. There seemed to be some fighting within the military. ...

Some of the people on another hill felt that they were kind of caught in the middle, and they thought it was probably time to go. So we were trying to keep in touch with the American community, again, not only in Kigali, not only our members of the embassy, [but also] the aid mission itself with the NGO workers, with missionaries. ...

It was terrible, because we were hearing from all kinds of people. I mean, even some of the foreign

service nationals who worked for us would call and tell what was happening around their house, and it wasn't nice – it was very bad – a lot of violence, a lot of killing. They knew that people were being killed. They didn't know whether they were going to be next, and people were trying to take precautions and trying to figure out strategies to avoid being killed. It's a terrible kind of 24 [to] 48 hours to go through.

At that point, I guess I was communicating also with Washington. By the second morning, the ambassador's telephone went out, so I was more or less having to be the conduit. A lot of our people in the embassy had lost their power. So they had no lights ; they had no electricity ; they had no way to recharge their radios. So we had to go to a very limited contact with other people.

We were, on the one hand, strategizing as to what we needed to do in Kigali and in the rest of the country to keep our people safe ; at the same time, trying to communicate to Washington what was going on and helping them in their decision-making about what the next steps were. They were working diplomatically on the diplomatic piece of it as well as on the evacuation piece of it.

Certainly Ambassador Rawson was making plans. He did get on a high-frequency radio that went to Kenya, and then was relayed back, so he was able to talk with Assistant Secretary of State Moose who, at that time, was pretty isolated himself. He had a whole compound of people. But I do remember, after getting to the embassy and sleeping one night there, looking myself in the mirror the next morning, saying, "I wonder whether you're going to get through the day."

Well, we really didn't know what was coming. But that was the day that we took the last two convoys out by road. We had been in touch with the French and the Belgians about coordinating our departure with theirs, but they had their people to take care of. So their airplanes were going to be consumed with dealing with their people, so we decided we just had to go on our own [and] find out own way. ...

**When the decision was made to evacuate the Americans, what [were] your feelings?**

Well, as much as I knew that keeping [an] international presence there was important in terms of trying to stem the violence, I was also concerned that the community leave, because we already had the killing of the Tutsis. We already had the killing of the moderate Hutus. By the time that we were ordered to evacuate, it was also clear that the war was going to begin again, and could be happening right in Kigali.

The RPF troops were, according to our sources, starting to move down from the north toward Kigali. So while the first two kinds of killing weren't going to be targeted at us, the war resumption could easily catch any of us in a crossfire, and there was just no way we could escape. So it seemed that the prudent thing to do was to get out of the situation before it deteriorated to that extent.

But we had to acknowledge that it was not necessarily the best thing for stopping the killing. In fact, that was what this Rwandan who was from the military, who had announced to me that he was the liaison to the U.S., said. I was saying, "You know we want to get you safe passage," and he said, "We want you to stay here. We need your presence here." He was arguing for us to stay. ...

**Why?**

To keep an international presence; to keep international eyes watching what was happening, so that people couldn't continue this killing with impunity. It would be noticed; it would be watched; it would be brought to the attention of the international community. ...

**When you were at the embassy, and you were getting ready to leave—**

It was very difficult to leave, knowing and having heard from some of our Rwandan employees what was happening at their houses. Yes, of course, it was very hard to leave, knowing that they were in danger and that they were frightened and they didn't have any

way out. But I think, at that point, we didn't have much choice. ...

**Which convoy were you on?**

The last one. ...

**If you had had some [Tutsis in your vehicle] what do you think might have happened?**

I think they probably would have been taken out. I think it would have been very dangerous for them. ... As we drove out of Kigali, we had to go down a long drive down a long hill, and there were people standing on either side of the road watching us leave. It's my recollection that I saw some instruments like machetes in their hands. I remember thinking [that] they're just waiting for us to get out of here before they go on about their gruesome business.

It's horrible. I mean, you know that people that you're leaving behind – some will be killed. These are people that we've worked with, we've worked for, we've worked on behalf of, and that some were friends. But we had to do it. ...

[We knew that] once there was nothing to stop [the Interahamwe], they just kept on going, as horrible as that may sound. They just kept on killing ... until finally the RPF stopped them. ...

**As a human, how did you reconcile what happened there?**

It was evil. But the hard-line Hutus were living in a certain logic in which this kind of activity made sense to them. It's not morally right or morally just. There's absolutely no explanation for taking this kind of a remedy for the problem that they were facing, namely the loss of power. But it's something that [is] hard to explain. They really believed that this was something that they had to do if they were going to continue to operate in Rwanda and live the kind of lives that they had been used to.

But, yes, it makes you lose faith in humankind. The religious people were involved. The killings were

happening in the churches. The church leaders were betraying the people who came to them for solace and safety. It's not easy to regain your faith in humankind after seeing how absolutely perverted and depraved some people can become.

### **What lessons as a diplomat do you draw from this ?**

There's a number of lessons that we might learn from this situation that could be applied in other circumstances. One – which I don't think we had a lot of control over by the time I got there, but which the international community was actually beginning to address it – is just the whole issue of refugees and the idea that the people who fought their way back into Rwanda were the children of people who had been expelled 35 years earlier. They had been raised in refugee camps and really didn't see a future for themselves in that circumstance, and really had this vision that they had to go home. . . .

So I think that's a lesson for us in many refugee situations that do linger, where people are in refugee camp situations for a long time. The Palestinians, of course, come to mind. But there are other situations that really need to be addressed, where people have been for 10, 15 years in these kinds of circumstances.

I think there's some other lessons for us as diplomats. As I mentioned earlier, we were very concerned about and consumed by the process of democratization and the peace negotiations. We were a very small embassy; we didn't have very much people power, and so we did what we could to support the initiatives that we thought we could manage.

We probably should have done more to address the issue of– Well, we followed human rights very closely, but maybe there was more that we could have done when we wanted to raise it at the Human Rights Commission. There were already too many other issues on the agenda for that one to be taken up well. So probably becoming more involved with calling the Rwandans to account for their human rights abuses would have been one thing.

Also, I think that the formation of the militia was something that we knew about [and] we had rumors about, but we just never got out and tried to really

track it down. We went on what we gathered from other people without being able to really get any first hand information about it. When we would confront people in positions of authority – which we did – they would of course deny that any such militarization of the youth groups was going on : no training, no gendarmeries involved and so forth. But we probably should have been more attentive to that.

We could also have been more attentive to the aggressive nature of the radio. I think it really became hate radio a little bit more into the genocide. But they were already naming human rights activists and indicating that these were bad people, and that they were Tutsi lovers and therefore they were the enemy. Again, how do you address it? We tried to engage some of the people in the government on it and they would say, "It's a private radio station. This is a democracy. What can we do?" But I think we need to develop strategies for those kinds of things.

So basically I guess what I'm saying is, while we were trying to move forward on some positive elements, we needed to take more time to be attentive – to look for ways to address things that were more on the negative side which were escalating in their severity, and in their ability to actually jeopardize the kinds of things that we were trying to accomplish on the democracy and the peace process. . . .

### **Personally, do you feel like you did all you could ?**

Of course I regret that we weren't able to do more. The Arusha peace accord was a revolutionary document in that it was really going to turn the power structure in Rwanda on its head. Maybe we should have known that that was going too far. But as I said before, both sides were trying to preserve their own security, and the RPF certainly felt that it had to demand that kind of participation so that it would be able to maintain its own security.

It was an unbalanced security situation, because there was no security for the Hutus, who quite frankly always said that they always felt themselves to be inferior. They would say, "The Tutsis are better than we are; the Tutsis are smarter than we are; the Tutsis are brighter than we are." They had a very serious in-

feriority complex that nobody was really taking into consideration in trying to work out some sort of a mutually acceptable arrangement. It wasn't mutually acceptable; there were those who were rejecting it.

So could we have done better? In hindsight, I think probably we could have done better. But at the time,

we really thought that we were promoting something that was desired by the people, and that if it were implemented, it could contain some of this negativism [and] the rejectionists and the spoilers, and help get them to buy into the process of building a more equitable Rwanda.