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The Rwandan Genocide, 1994: Special Edition



This little boy stands holding a machete, a ‘sign of the times’ in Rwanda during the genocide of May – July 1994. Courtesy: *Time Magazine*, July 25, 1994: p24

The Wollongong Times

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“The Tutsi were collaborators for the Belgian colonists. They stole our Hutu land, they whipped us. Now, they have come back, these Tutsi rebels. They are cockroaches. They are murderers. Rwanda is our Hutu land. We are the majority. They are a minority of traitors and invaders. We will squash the infestation. We will wipe out the RPF rebels. This is RTL, Hutu Power Radio. Stay Alert. Watch your neighbours”

A sample of the hate radio that was used by the Rwandan Government to promote the genocide. Quote taken from the movie *Hotel Rwanda*.

The Wollongong Times

21st October 2005

Opinion

Genocide in Rwanda

Nearly 50 years after the UN was established in a bid to avoid a repeat of the Holocaust during WWII, almost one million people are brutally killed in Rwanda. Adam Zuchetti comments on the media's role in humans' darkest capability: genocide¹.

It was like any other day in the small Central African country. The sun was shining as it always does: bright and hot.² But it was the beginning of what would become one of the biggest single human-induced losses of life since WWII.

The 6th May 1994 marked the beginning of a three month long genocide in Rwanda, which claimed the lives of over 800,000 (mostly Tutsi³) people, after the assassination of the Rwandan President when his plane was shot down⁴ while flying to Tanzania to sign a peace agreement with the Tutsi rebel group, RPF (Rwandan Patriotic Front). It was the

¹ Definitions of genocide vary. While it is agreed that it is the mass killing of a group in an attempt to wipe out that group, Kurt Jonassohn points out that even the U.N.'s definition leaves room for interpretation. He points out that "the U.N. Convention...limits the term *genocide* to 'acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group'. Other groups –social, political, economic – do not qualify as victims of genocide because they were omitted from that definition" ("What Is Genocide" in *Genocide Watch*, ed. by Helen Fein, 1992. Yale University Press: London. p18). He states his own revised definition as "genocide is a form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator" (p.19).

² Rwanda lies close to the equator, with warm-hot temperatures all year round

³ The Tutsi people were the target of the genocide. Their attackers were the Rwandan majority Hutu group. Many moderate Hutus who disagreed with the killings and attempted to protect Tutsis were also slaughtered

⁴ It was never found out who was really responsible for the President's death, although the RPF was deemed responsible by the Rwandan Government

excuse the Rwandan Government was waiting for to promote their attempt to wipe out the Tutsi race.

While most people know that there was a genocide in Rwanda in 1994, not many seem to know the details that led up to those events, or the atrocities that were committed.⁵ Why is this, you may ask? Partly that Africa has long been considered a place of unimportance, where its famine, its poverty and basically its people can be, and are, ignored. Africa in general is resource-poor, and hence deemed ‘unimportant’ to our capitalist, Western governments.

What hasn’t been realised, though, is that the media also played quite a significant role. Put simply, there was no media coverage of the genocide! Ok, that goes too far. There was at least some coverage. But what coverage there was, was scarce. A simple flip through news journals of the time highlights this.⁶

The media justified its lack of coverage under reasons of safety: it simply wasn’t a safe place for journalists to be. When have journalists *ever* let the issue of safety get in the way of a story? With all the large media organisations there are in the world, having significant resources, financial assets and political connections able to provide security guards, armoured vehicles etc, covering an event regarding the attempted extermination of a human racial group should really be front page news⁷. But the reports simply weren’t there. The major role of the media is educating the general public. The public know very little of the outside world apart from what they see in the media.⁸ So how can we know

⁵ Even Dr Anthony Ashbolt, senior lecturer in the School of History and Politics and lecturer of the subject *POL225: Politics and the Media* at the University of Wollongong, when interviewed, admitted to being limited in his knowledge of the events in Rwanda

⁶ Most articles appearing in *Time Magazine* between mid-April and July were news briefs. Only a small handful were feature articles, and most of these were not cover stories.

⁷ Refer to interview with Dr Anthony Ashbolt, who provided the opinion that the media had enough resources to adequately protect journalists reporting on the genocide

⁸ Walter K. Ezell argues that “for human rights advocates and other concerned people, newspaper reports may be the first indication that a war, famine, or ethnic conflict is genocidal”. He continues by saying “newspaper accounts of genocide can alert activists and authorities in a position to do something about the atrocities” (“Newspaper Responses to Reports of Atrocities” in *Genocide Watch*, ed. by Helen Fein, 1992. Yale University Press: London. p88).

of, and help prevent, treacherous events such as this from happening if the media devotes such little coverage to it⁹?

Another thing to note is that many of the world's leading politicians, academics and commentators, including the media, didn't know when the term 'genocide' was applicable¹⁰ to the events in Rwanda. In the early stages, before the official start of the genocide, the conflict was described as "tribal slaughter"¹¹. The "G-word" only came into use towards the very end of the massacre. If the media (and top politicians and Government officials) aren't competent in calling a genocide, 'genocide', how on earth is your everyday person living in the suburbs with their 2.4 kids going to determine the seriousness of the situation?

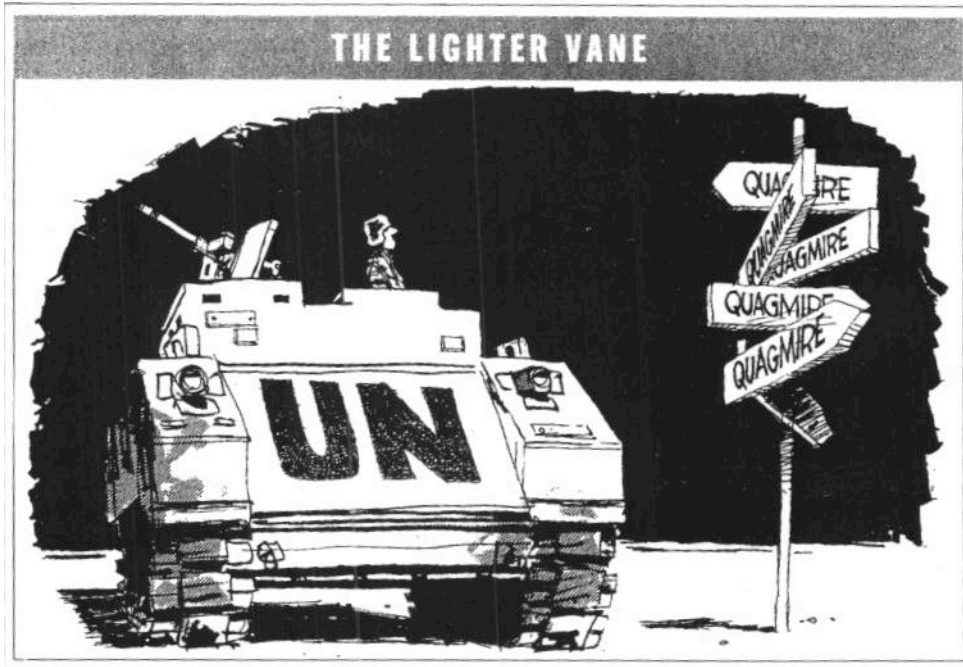
The media simply can't deny the influence it has in public and political spheres. It is quite ironical to note that its influential power was so prominent and skilfully used internally in Rwanda to promote the attacks on the Tutsi people. 'Hate radio' propaganda was rife in the lead up to, and during, the killings. Indeed, the government used national radio to preach hatred amongst Hutus against their Tutsi neighbours, which proved to be a powerful weapon. Hate radio even suggested that only Hutu dictatorship could prevent the return of Tutsi political dominance and oppression¹². The majority of Hutus, particularly the poor and uneducated, had their thoughts and emotions controlled for them by their government through the media.

⁹ Dr Anthony Ashbolt, during the interview, outlined how the media was a key player in pressuring the Australian Federal Government to intervene in the East Timor massacre, by flooding the market with pictures and articles, in turn swaying public opinion. Thus the media can assist in ending or even preventing atrocities such as the Rwandan genocide

¹⁰ Samuel Totten points out that "indeed, many journalists...are often hesitant - most often early on, but sometimes well into the killing period - to designate a situation 'genocidal'". ("To Deem or Not To Deem 'It' Genocide: A Double-Edged Sword" in *The Genocidal Temptation: Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Rwanda, and Beyond*, ed. by Robert S. Frey, 2004. University Press of America: Lanham, Maryland. p42).

¹¹ The inference being that the conflict was barbaric and primitive, not a well-orchestrated and planned mass murder. See *Time Magazine*, April 18, 1994

¹² These ideas were made by real-life Hutu perpetrators of the genocide in Rwanda, ashamedly admitting the influence the propaganda had on them. See documentary *The Killers*



This cartoon highlights President Bill Clinton's reason of 'not wanting to be involved in an African quagmire' for not intervening in the Rwandan genocide. Courtesy: *Time Magazine*.

While there were many factors, and many people and organisations, which led to the genocide, there is simply no denying that the media also played its part. Journalists are all too quick to step on toes and get into violent situations to sell papers: Iraq is a perfect example of that! So surely the deaths of nearly a million people, in a century when genocide occurred almost as often as natural disasters¹³, are a troublesome and newsworthy event. Unless, it seems, it happens in a small Central African country on a day like any other.

¹³ It has been noted by some academics that genocide was such a common occurrence during the 20th Century, it is now often labelled "the century of genocide". (See Samuel Totten "To Deem or Not To Deem 'It' Genocide: A Double-Edged Sword" in *The Genocidal Temptation: Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Rwanda, and Beyond*, ed. by Robert S. Frey, 2004. University Press of America: Lanham, Maryland. p42).

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Letters to the Editor

The Media's Massacre

What an outrage! How is it that the media is to blame for everything - a public scapegoat. There were journalists being abused and labelled 'murderers' following the death of Princess Diana. Now Adam Zuchetti ("Genocide in Rwanda", *The Wollongong Times*, 15 October 2005) is virtually labelling the Rwandan genocide 'the media's massacre'. Yes, the genocide was a terrible tragedy, and should never have been allowed to happen. But surely it is the perpetrators themselves who should take the blame, and perhaps the UN and international governments for choosing not to intervene. This was a political genocide at all levels. Criticise only those who deserve to be criticised!

Peter Catcher North Adler¹⁴

It seems we, in the post-modern world, fail to realise the important role the media has in our society. In the past few years we have hotly debated the issue of TV violence and the effect it has on our children. So it seems only logical that the media, vamped up in its tone and its use of propaganda, can easily be the cause of genocide. We all need to learn that the old saying "don't believe everything you hear" is probably more relevant now than it ever has been.

Martha Berthstrom Applegate¹⁵

¹⁴ Peter Catcher takes a strongly defensive position of the media, ignoring the issues of censorship of material and media coverage, as mentioned in the opinion piece "Genocide in Rwanda"

¹⁵ Martha Berthstrom draws on recent studies and public debate about the effects of television violence on children's behaviour, and drawing comparisons with the hate radio used in Rwanda

I would have to say I sit on the fence on this issue. Having seen the movie “Hotel Rwanda”, I have an appreciation for the power that the hate radio used at the time of the killings must have had on many of the country’s poor, uneducated and impressionable people. Having said that, putting the genocide into its historical context shows that tensions had been rising in Rwanda for many years, and would likely have eventually boiled over in such catastrophic ways regardless. Why not spend less time arguing about who is to blame, and help the Rwandan people to recover and improve their future prospects?!

Kim Spearworth Blyth¹⁶

¹⁶ Kim Spearworth refers to the film *Hotel Rwanda* (see Reference list) as her reference point of understanding the Rwandan genocide, but thinks that since the genocide was now more than ten years ago, attention should be diverted from placing blame to aiding survivors and restoring peace between the Hutu and Tutsi people

The Wollongong Times

23rd October 2005

Dialogue

This dialogue is between the two co-researchers of this project, and a mutual friend - a fellow university student - who knew only the basics of the Rwandan genocide and its historical context. Her name has been changed for privacy reasons.

Chanel Stewart– What made you decide to investigate the media’s involvement in the Rwandan Genocide?

Adam Zuchetti– It was all Sally’s idea!! I really wasn’t sure about doing it because I thought that there were better examples of violence in the media. And we thought that peace is barely even covered. It’s sad but there is simply more media coverage of violence than there is of peace!

Alex Cousins – Yeah. But I thought that the Rwandan genocide was a really confronting and controversial issue which not many people seem to know about and does not seem to be well researched. As I expected it turned out to be very challenging and required extensive archival and investigative research.

Chanel – So what archives did you use, because the library at uni is fairly limited in its resources?

Adam– Yeah I know! We decided to use the Fisher library at Sydney Uni because it has a much broader archival catalogue. Sally spent a few weekends at my place so that we could spend as much time thoroughly investigating what media source was the best.

Alex– The first time we did a lot of research on the net, just getting background information, found a few documentaries about it and even watched the film *Hotel Rwanda*¹⁷ that just came out. It really helped us to understand the genocide, because it was a true story, and the real life main character actually worked as a consultant on the film. It was really good to see a factual, personal account of what happened.

Adam – It was especially interesting since the main character was a Hutu and his wife a Tutsi. We were able to see not only the interaction between the two groups, but also the fact that not all Hutus were involved in or agreed with the killings, despite the fact that the media was over-generalizing and presenting it that way.

Chanel –Did you watch any other films?

Adam - Yeah, we got two from the library. The first one we saw was the ‘Arusha Tapes’ which looked into the current United Nations Trials of the people responsible for the genocide. And the other doco was called ‘The Killers’, which was a BBC production looking back on what happened.

Alex– This was really interesting because it was shot by a journalist who tried to get into Rwanda during the genocide. Unfortunately the BBC wouldn’t let him show his footage, so he compiled a film after the genocide with lots of the confronting footage he had taken. What also is really interesting is how it was only in 2001 that this film was released to the public! I’m sure that this must have had something to do with media corporations and their political agendas.

Chanel –Yeah, the media is too mixed up in politics. They often withhold information so as not to go against the Government.

¹⁷ Hotel Rwanda is a true story about a Rwandan Hutu hotel manager, Paul Rusesabagina, who sheltered more than 1,200 refugees at the height of the killings

Adam– Exactly. At the time of the genocide, Bill Clinton was President¹⁸, and he said he didn’t want to get involved in “an African quagmire”, so obviously the media largely stuck to this as well.

Alex – Although the films gave us some great background information, we needed to gather more information to properly analyze it. We especially wanted a print medium so we could look through the archives and see how it was documented over time.

Adam - We agreed that the “Time” magazine archives would be best. It is a well known source and it is considered a reliable and respected form of media.

Alex – It was so great. We looked up where the archives were and discovered there were wall to wall archives that dated back to the 18th Century. All of the Time magazines were set out in years so we grabbed all of 1994 and some of early 1995 and spent hours sifting through. This really let us see how the media introduced the genocide and then mapped it out for people.

Adam – Yeah it was interesting that only in hindsight did they refer to it as “genocide.” Rather than using the G-word, they talked about it as mass killings and civil war, and early on, it was even described as “tribal conflict”¹⁹. How primitive does that sound?! Also, most of the pictures were of UN peace camps and refugee groups outside of the country; there was very little footage of the genocide or the victims²⁰.

Chanel – And you’re saying that’s a bad thing?! I don’t want to see really graphic footage of dead bodies!

¹⁸ Bill Clinton was President of the U.S. at the time the Rwandan genocide occurred. The comment about an “African quagmire” was referred to in *The Killers*, and also cartoons and articles in *Time Magazine*

¹⁹ Time Magazine very gradually used stronger language to describe the killings, from “Tribal slaughter” on April 18, 1994, to “Rwandan War” on May 30, and eventually to “genocide”.

²⁰ *The Killers* reporter Fergal Keane stated that the BBC censored some footage that he had taken in Rwanda of the genocide, to protect its viewers from violent and distressing images

Adam– Yeah but that’s your *choice*. The thing is the media didn’t really provide a choice of whether you could see those images or not, they just basically censored it for you!

Alex –I think this was one reason as to why no one knew about the genocide. The media has such an influential power over its audiences. If they had published the information and footage that they received in the first few days of the genocide, then I think that the Western nations would have been shamed into doing something.

Chanel – So who is to blame then?

Alex – Well that’s a really tough one!! I think that all the people who knew about the genocide - the UN, the Western governments and the media all share in the blame. The UN blames the media for not being there, but Western governments and the media blame the UN for not protecting its journalists and personnel. I don’t think we will ever come to a conclusion about who is responsible.

Chanel – That sounds really complicated!

Alex –Yeah it is! When we interviewed Anthony Ashbolt here at uni, he basically said the same thing! He said it was a very complicated and politicized issue, with no one really acknowledging their own part in not preventing the genocide.

Adam –Everyone seems content to blame each other! There were a few journalists who acknowledged there wasn’t enough media coverage of the events in Rwanda, such as the BBC guy who did “The Killers”, but they were few and far between.

Chanel –Who did you say this guy is that you interviewed here at uni?

Adam –Dr Anthony Ashbolt. He is a professor in politics and the media. He was really good to interview, gave us a lot more material than we thought he would, and he even gave us a few other media websites and magazines that covered the genocide!

Chanel – Oh ok. Isn't there a lecturer that specializes in the Rwandan genocide, or even genocide in general that you could have interviewed?

Alex – Yeah, James found out that a lecturer at Sydney Uni²¹ specializes in it. She has actually just come back from a research trip to Rwanda. Also, it was kind of disappointing for us because when I looked on her website, it showed that she had just conducted a major seminar on the Rwandan genocide with a few other people who specialize in it. It was held on the 12th of September and we found out only a few days later!!!

Chanel – She would have been perfect! Ok so you missed the seminar, but how come you didn't interview her instead? She might even have been able to give you transcripts of the seminar or something!

Adam – Oh we tried! She has a few messages on her answering machine and in her email that she never responded to! We even went in to her office during her stated consultation hours to see her but she wasn't there! It was a real shame; we were both bitterly disappointed about that! At the very least if she wasn't interested or didn't really have the time, she could have let us know! I mean, we even tried sending her just a couple of key questions so she could see we weren't trying to take up a huge amount of time, but we didn't hear anything back at all!

Alex – This seemed to be a pattern with all of the people that we tried to contact. I emailed people from the UN and a whole bunch of other organizations with only a few simple questions, and only one of them replied. Although it was nice to receive that reply, it only sent me a link to another web page!! This was really disappointing as we just needed a few different opinions from experts dealing with genocide and Rwanda.

²¹ Dr Wendy Lambourne is the Lecturer and Coordinator for Postgraduate Peace and Conflict Studies, in the Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney

Adam –One good email we did get back was from the UNHCR, the refugee organization, who sent some information on the genocide. It provided some information from the UN's point of view and had a different perspective than the media sources.

Chanel – But you did get that interview with Anthony. Did that make up for all the rejection?

Alex – Yes, definitely! He was fantastic to interview! Although he was not an expert in the Rwandan genocide, he had extensive knowledge and opinions surrounding the UN and the media and their treatment of genocide. It was also good because we got an academic opinion, and he definitely wasn't afraid to voice his thoughts on the matter. This was fantastic because it provided another dimension to our research.

Adam –Especially because you cant find any media comments or criticisms in the media itself, and also reliable academic opinions. But although it was suggested in class that we send copies of our opinion pieces to the person we interviewed to gauge their reactions to it, we decided not to send ours to Anthony since he is an academic at uni. We didn't want it to look like we were cheating or getting interference from another lecturer.

Chanel - Yeah that's a good point. Well I read them, and I really liked both your opinion pieces. I noticed that you both wrote the piece from the present time. Is there a reason why you didn't do it from the time of the genocide or straight after?

Adam – Yes, actually. How very perceptive of you! We both decided early on that writing it in 1994 from the time of the genocide would have been really difficult, for two reasons. Firstly, the fact that the media didn't refer to it as genocide at the time, it wasn't until later in the year, pretty much after the killings had taken place. But more importantly there really wasn't enough knowledge and information available at the time.

Especially since last year there has been an influx of media coverage²² about what happened.

Alex – Yeah the benefit of hindsight is so great, especially in this case. So we didn't want to shoot ourselves in the foot by disregarding all this information that has come out since.

Chanel – Did you leave stuff out that you had wanted to put in? Because the word limit you used was pretty restrictive!

Alex – Yeah we really struggled with the word limit, especially with our opinion pieces. We had so much brilliant information and had a really hard time not leaving things out. I personally had to simply footnote the information about the hate radio within Rwanda even though I really wanted to say more about it. This constraint meant that some really important and heavily researched information had to be left out, which was really disappointing. The topic of the media in relation to Rwanda is so huge – and it is difficult to create a solid argument on the impact of the media outside, whilst also bringing in the media on the inside.

Adam – I also had trouble with the word limit. The letters to the editor weren't too hard, but the limit on the opinion piece was quite difficult to stick to. We just had so much good information that it was hard to decide what to use, what to footnote and what to leave out altogether. I really didn't have enough space to use a lot of sources and particularly a lot of Anthony's comments, which was a pity 'cos he made some really good points. I mean I did make a couple of references, but not as many as I would have liked. It's hard to make a persuasive argument in such a short amount of words!

Alex – But overall we've really enjoyed doing it. We've spent so much time together, I think James' flat mate must be sick of the sight of me! But seriously, this topic has been really interesting to learn about. I have learnt so much and have developed a real opinion

²² Films such as *Hotel Rwanda*, and documentaries such as *The Killers* were released in 2004, and many *Time* Magazine articles, for example, were published weeks and months after the genocide

on something which I previously did not know much about. I am now very conscious about how the media approaches such issues as genocide and the fact that we really don't realize a lot about what is going on in the world of 'war and peace.'

Adam - Yeah, the media has such a significant amount of power and influence, it's easy to forget! I think we've really learned that the media can get it wrong, that it can make mistakes and that things going on in various parts of the world are often given less coverage than others.

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23rd October 2005

Afterthought

Monologue: Reflections of the Author

The Rwandan genocide was a terrible event in human history that should really never have occurred. I must confess to previously knowing very little of the atrocities that occurred there, and the large number of lives that were lost. This investigative research project has truly opened my eyes - to the Rwandan genocide itself; to the cultural and political factors that can contribute to genocide; to international politics and the processes, and downfalls, of the United Nations; and to the enormous influence that the mass media has had over the world's population, particularly since the late 1900's.



This picture shows a child who survived the genocide huddled against the body of its mother, just one example of the thousands who survived the massacre but lost many family and friends. Courtesy: *Time Magazine*, May 16, 1994: p27

We owe it to all the victims and survivors of genocide to not let these acts go unnoticed. We need to continue looking back on genocides of the past, to educate ourselves in the circumstances that lead to such extremism and to learn from those mistakes, so that we may have a chance to prevent similar events from happening in the future.

The Wollongong Times

23rd October 2005

References

While it is not standard practice to include a reference list when using the footnote system, a reference list has been provided here since many sources were not directly quoted or used in this report, but were still invaluable in terms of background information.

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- The Killers* [video recording]. "Panorama" (TV Program), BBC: London, 2004
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-The United Nations Refugee Agency

www.unhcr.org

-The Australian Association for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

www.australiaforunhcr.org.au

-“The Rwandan Genocide and its aftermath”

<http://www.unhcr.ch/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/publ/opendoc.pdf?tbl=PUBL&id=3ebf9bb60>

Interviews

-Dr Anthony Ashbolt

Senior Lecturer, School of History and Politics, Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong

Media archives

-*Time* Magazine. All editions from January 3, 1994 to December 26, 1994. Focus on editions dated April 18, 1994 to August 8, 1994.

Appendix 1.

Interview transcript:

Interview with Dr Anthony Ashbolt

Interviewers: Adam Zuchetti and Alex Cousins

Interview Date: Tuesday, 18th October, 2005 1.45pm

Interview Transcript: Dr. Anthony Ashbolt

Alex Cousins: So could you start by telling us a little about what you do know about the Rwandan genocide, and reasons behind it?

Dr Anthony Ashbolt: What I do know about it...I just know the obvious facts that everyone knows, and the clashes between, what was it, the Tutsis and the Hutus, and the fact that it was under-reported at the time, and the kind of sporadic media interest that's been there ever since. But it's not a case study I have really investigated closely, so I wouldn't even pretend to be an expert. But one of those things I suppose that highlights the glaring inadequacy of the contemporary mass media, and that is their focus on the sensational and recordable events that would seem to relate much more to Western society. There is a kind of a, particularly with regard to Africa, except the south of Africa, or southern Africa, there's a kind of...something we don't hear reported so we don't hear about, except the case about Niger and so on, and I just noticed on the New York Times today there's a big article about Niger being the poorest country in the world, why has it come to this and so on. In terms of the reasons for the divisions between the tribes in Rwanda, I haven't really investigated the historical reasons for that, so I wouldn't even pretend to...

Adam Zuchetti: That's fine. Do you think the media plays a role in genocide generally?

Anthony: That's a funny way of putting it: does the media play a role in genocide. Well...do you mean do they report on it, do they...

Adam: both reporting on it and using it to promote genocide; like in the Rwandan example, they used hate radio and propaganda to promote the genocide itself, for example...

Anthony: Oh I see...

Adam: So there were more people engaging in it...

Alex: But also outside as well; so does that promote genocide because they're not getting in and stopping it, do you know what I mean?

Anthony: The fact that they're not holding those groups accountable, in a sense they're allowing genocide to occur...yeah. With the caveat that we...I mean this clearly was a case of, of something like genocide. The term can be thrown around a little bit too loosely. I remember the journalist, John Pilger, sort of referring to a massacre in Australia, of Australian Aborigines, which over a hundred were killed, or something like that, but he sort of said this was genocide on a massive scale. But what would genocide on a minor scale be...so I have a certain...that said, do the media promote genocide, do they allow it to happen? I think it needs to be said, as I've said throughout the subject [POL225: Politics and the Media, which Sally is currently undertaking] that they haven't

done enough monitoring of the killing, that for example that has gone on in Iraq, and I wouldn't want to use the term genocide in that regard, you know, 'cos it's not a case of genocide, but it is...there have been systematic killings, and they haven't been reported on adequately. To the extent that the media ignored Rwanda, as did much of the West, full stop, then it's not helping, put it that way, and you could argue that it's assisting the process whereby this sort of thing can occur, because it's not holding governments or people or whatever you want to refer to accountable.

Alex: Well do you believe that the UN acted appropriately, and did it use all its resources, and...

Anthony: It's really hard to sort of judge the degree to which UN intervention should have been undertaken much earlier than it was, and much more directly than it was. It really is a tough one, and I wouldn't want to pass judgment, precisely because it's not my field of expertise, that Rwandan case at any rate. Certainly a lot of people that I have read, journalists in the field and so on, have argued that it was [inaudible word] in that regard, so there's certainly an argument for that, but I'm not qualified to speak authoritatively on it.

Adam: We believe from our research that the media had some, at least some, graphic footage of massacres, parts of the genocide, however it didn't show it or make prime time news. Why do you think that the media did censor the massacre?

Anthony: It's a bit like...I mean there are two possible reasons. One is that there is a reluctance to, at times, show certain graphic footage in particular. But the major reason, as far as I can work out, is that Rwanda's just out there, it's not going to be of interest to anyone. It's the under-reporting of Africa in the Western media which has been documented, well documented, over many years. It's just not a subject that is of interest. And partly it can be because the resources aren't as rich in certain Middle Eastern nations, for example. So it can be to do that. I mean what is Rwanda rich in, I can't think of anything.

Adam: Having said that, do you think if they had presented all, especially all graphic, details it could have prevented further killings, and helped to end the genocide?

Anthony: Well, the parallel I would use is East Timor. If the media, along with the Australian people, hadn't have been applying a lot pressure on Government, there was a lot of good reporting coming out of East Timor, we would never have intervened, and never have gotten the international community to intervene. That's where the media can play a very direct role in assisting a sort of humanitarian intervention, which that was, and which was needed in Rwanda. So yes it could have made a much more aggressive role in that regard.

Alex: Well do you think it is ironic that the media had such a powerful influence within the country in promoting public opinion, and outside, nothing.

Anthony: Yeah, I know nothing about the role of the media within the country, and what you were saying earlier was useful; they were using radio, mainly, to whip up hatred, and so on. That's interesting, and it is kind of an irony they were using techniques of communication and we weren't in the same way. Or weren't using enough. I mean, you could find news about Rwanda, but probably more if you were regularly getting into the foreign press rather than...

Adam: ...it takes a lot of digging to actually...

Anthony: Yeah

Adam: ...whereas something like Iraq is so prominent because...

Anthony: Yeah, yeah

Adam: The media has blamed Western institutions, such as the UN, for not intervening and not helping to stop the massacre. But, from what we've discussed, it could have played a role itself in helping to prevent the genocide. What do you think about this? Is it right for them to criticise Western institutions but to distance themselves...?

Anthony: Well, it depends. You've got to look very carefully at who is doing the criticising. Now, is it the media generally, or is it the [Rupert] Murdoch press. You'll notice the Murdoch press is *always* very critical of the UN. Why? Because it's the defender of US interests, and the UN sometimes tries to block US interests. So...is it the whole media that's critical of the UN, or just certain sections of it? Certainly within the Australian context at any rate, it is the Murdoch press that's always critical. And yeah, I would argue in that context it's hypocritical, because the Murdoch press didn't do enough coverage itself of the issue. And it just likes to use the UN as a whipping board, whenever it can.

Alex: Do you think the media has owned up to its actions, though, of avoiding covering the genocide, and referring to it as being genocide??

Anthony: Well, if my memory serves me correctly, I mean we have had *60 Minutes* cover it; we have had *4 Corners*; you know we have had various news outlets covering it or dealing with it in one way or another, the *Sunday* program I think also. So I would say at a guess, yes, the media has, belatedly, come to the fore.

Alex: Do you think they still somewhat blame the UN, as being: "we couldn't get in to report it; we couldn't because you didn't protect us"?

Anthony: Oh I see. Yeah I hadn't thought of that particular angle. Again...having a UN force as a protective agent hasn't helped some of the brave journalists in the past. I mean, people have gone in there, yeah. Well, I mean there's an obvious example in 1975 in Timor, where five journalists were killed. Journalists can have the capability...journalists can get into places unprotected, they can report. It can be very dangerous! I heard Robert Fiske on the radio the other day, basically saying he has to, every time he goes to Iraq, he

has to say “is it worth it?”, you know, “I’m risking my life every time I set foot outside the Palestine Hotel”, and he said “there’s going to come a point where I just say ‘no, I can’t, it’s too much of a mess, I’m not going to risk my life again’”. But up ‘til now he’s doing so, and other journalists have done so. I don’t think they can, sort of, talk about the protective cover of the UN, when it’s...they’ve got access...those associated to wealthier organisations, have access to planes, they can get it and get out etc etc. No, no, that to me seems like a little bit of an excuse.

Alex: Yeah, so maybe if the Western nations were...their media companies were helping to show...

Anthony: Well News Corporation, for example, or the publishers of The New York Times or the publishers of the Washington Post could have called armed security guards. Yeah.

Adam: With what you were saying before, about Murdoch press: do you strongly think that political ties can limit the amount of coverage, and that involvement between, say Murdoch and Bill Clinton, saying that he didn’t want to be involved in an African quagmire, prevented the media from involving themselves in the genocide, reporting it more??

Anthony: Yeah, it’s a difficult toss up, isn’t it. I think that might be, that could be a factor, but it’s the, it’s more the fact that there’s a certain amnesia about Africa, except for Southern Africa, in the press, that means it’s not on the radar in the first place. So it’s difficult, it’s something that’s really gotta be placed on the radar before you get it reported in a regular way. And when statistics about...I mean these statistics were in fact on the Drama show on the ABC on Sunday night, written by Richard Curtis, about deaths from worldwide poverty, I don’t know whether you saw it...”the girl in the café”...it’s Richard Curtis and “Four Weddings and a Funeral” sort of, gone to a slightly serious mode...and one of the characters recounting the number of infant mortalities, the rate of mortality in Africa and things like that, blah blah blah. And once you know those statistics, then the deaths from terrorist actions pale almost into insignificance, *including* September the 11th, which is not to say that they are insignificant. But are they reported? No. And again, it’s not something that’s on the radar. You might get the occasional shock horror article about poverty in Africa, but it’s just, not much, no.

Alex: What role do you think the media has played in reconciliation in Rwanda...?

Anthony: Well, they’ve reported on it, but I don’t know how or if it helped in reconciliation. What is the current state of Rwandan politics? I’m not really up to it.

Alex: Well that’s the thing...

Anthony: We don’t get it reported very much, do we.

Alex and Adam: Yeah.

Anthony: I don't know, I haven't heard the word reconciliation used in the context of Rwanda; but within South Africa, of course, there's the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. I don't think there's any such thing in Rwanda, unless I'm mistaken?

Alex: Well, yeah. As far as we're aware, the only reconciliation taking place is the fact that they're finally having the trials for the perpetrators...

Anthony: Ok. Right.

Alex: Also, do you think that this sort of thing, where the media is not reporting on genocide, claiming that something is genocide when it's not? Like in the case of Iraq, Sudan, Kosovo...do you think it's happening right under our noses? Like, do we know...are we being told there's genocide when there's not, and vice versa?

Anthony: Oh, look...I think there are strong arguments in relation to Kosovo, for example, that the media...well it's not a media beat-up. Was it genocide? I'm just...I think that that term was thrown around far too loosely in order to put the blame on Milosevic, and basically saying, you know...so you got a bogie man, and we know the politics very well with regard to other situations, but you can...it is clear that...well, I mean the characterisation of the Serbs by the Western media was, you know, could almost be labeled racist in a sense: 'they're the guilty ones, and everyone else are the victims'; whereas the actual history is much much much more complex than that, and there's guilt on all sides, in fact. But, but the whole use of the term genocide, in that context, put the blame onto one people and one figure in the end.

Alex: So those people need to...

Anthony: Well who's not blameless? But it is an example of the media maybe having a possibility of using the term genocide in order to deflect attention from historical complexities.

Alex: So that they don't themselves get blamed for ignoring the issue or...

Anthony: Oh that might be part of the reason, but, I mean, it's not as if...I'm not saying for a moment that things weren't going on, but the way in which it was reported was very much focused on the Serbs being the guilty party, end of story, when the reality is slightly more complex than that. There's certainly guilt there, but...and I would argue Milosevic should be up against a World Crimes Tribunal, but I can point to so many other instances in the world where the same should be true of other leaders, and the media haven't taken so much of a role there, if they've played any role whatsoever. The obvious example being Pinochet in Chile...which is the other September the 11th, of course, because he was...his government was destroyed and he was assassinated on September the 11th, 1973.

Alex: I suppose, in some respects, education is important. Like the journalists themselves, from these media corporations, should be going into Africa, and having them educate on historical and cultural issues...

Anthony: Yeah, yeah, well it would be nice if they did. You see examples of this happening all over the place where...I don't how many times, for example, I heard Fran Kelly make appalling mistakes when she was the ABC reporter based in London, because she obviously hadn't schooled herself well enough on British politics. Now usually if, the ones who are going to Russia or whatever, usually they do get schooled, but I think there's kind of an assumption that people know about British politics and so on, so there's not...there's very often not enough training for those who are just sort of dumped in a situation and don't know the history and background of the place. That's why I have argued for a long time in terms of...are either of you BCM [Bachelor of Communications] students?

Alex: Yeah, I am.

Anthony: Right. I argued for a long time for the inclusion of politics. I also argued for the inclusion of history in a BCM degree, but it looks like this is going to be solved by journalism becoming a bit more of an undergraduate degree here, and Steven [one of the senior lecturers at UOW] is very keen to have history and politics involved in that. But, yeah, it seems to be that too many journalists live in an historical vacuum, and they just don't know enough about what they're meant to be writing about. So that is a problem.

Alex: Yeah

Adam: So having said that, do you believe that people today are generally aware of genocide? I mean, we rely so much on the media for education about things like that, especially because we haven't had genocide here in Australia, we rely on foreign examples to get our knowledge about it. Do you think that people know about it, or is it just some distant thing that not thought about and not well known at all??

Anthony: Well, again we have to be careful about saying we haven't had genocide in Australia. I mean, arguably we have, in terms of the killing of the Aboriginal people. But it's...I would be reluctant, nonetheless, to use that word, so I wouldn't say we *haven't* had genocide, but because there was something very systematic and mindful about the killing of Aborigines in the 19th Century through the 20th Century. Even the stolen generation pinpoints a kind of genocide, and then there is of course the cultural genocide, which is important as well. Now if you were to say, well genocide literally means the killing of a whole people, then clearly there wasn't genocide in Nazi Germany, because not all Jews were killed, some escaped. But it doesn't, you know...we're talking about relativities and scales. And I think you can arguably use the term genocide in the Australian context. But I'm getting away from what the question was, which was...

Adam: Do you think people are generally aware of it...?

Anthony: No, I don't think...I mean even now more than ever before...well not more than ever before, but I think there is less knowledge now, and this is partly a result of the culture wars, and the history wars, and the bleedings of someone like Wing Shuttle who gets up and says "there weren't any Aborigines killed" and so on, you know, and I've proven it because the documents don't exist, and stuff like that, because that gets into the debate. There was a time, even goes back to when Malcolm Fraser was Prime Minister of Australia, when there was a kind of consensus about reconciliation, Aboriginal politics, the need for apologies etc etc. That's disappeared, I think, so there's not an understanding amongst the Australian people at large of the realities of Australian politics and Australian history. And the knowledge that might be there of genocide overseas would be very superficial. And part of the problem is when the media do cover it, as in a *60 Minutes* program or something or other, it tends to be done in a sensationalised way. And the problem with that, is that it desensitises us in the end to violence, and it becomes just another – particularly on commercial television – just another program.

Alex: So what do you believe, then, that the media should be doing to inform people about issues such as genocide?

Anthony: Hmmm. Well, certainly not sitting on material that they have. I mean you referred earlier to them having a lot of footage of material...even if it is ghastly, some of it deserves to be run in order to bring a focus and to help build the sort of pressure that went on within Australia in relation to East Timor, for example. There was no way our Government would have reacted without that pressure, and a lot of it came from the media, and even *The Australian* played a reasonably big role in that regard. And there was a lot of pressure from the Australian public as well. Now, it is very difficult to create...I mean, speaking from within the Australian situation, having to create a widespread public, sort of, anger over something that's happening in Rwanda: whether it's more likely for something like to be created in somewhere like the States, is a possibility; and the States does have the power to intervene in that regard. But I mean I think what Clinton said about not wanting to get involved in a...a problem in Africa, is...there is a point there, it's not just heartlessness...I mean America's dragged itself here, there and everywhere: where it's not wanted, where it is wanted, or anywhere. But, yeah I mean, there's a strong tradition in American politics of a kind of an isolationism that Clinton was partly reflecting in that regard. I don't think we should always expect too much of the media anyway, because there are other things going on. The media is part of a network of power relationships and it can't solve everything. It can apply pressure at particular points, and maybe it could, within the American context, have applied enough pressure to get the UN moving, that's possible, but I wouldn't say definitely the case.

Alex: Ok, so do you believe the media is a tool for promoting both war and peace?

Anthony: The example of Iraq shows it's a tool for promoting war. Can it be a tool for promoting peace? Yes; when the media started to reflect critically upon Vietnam from about 1968 on, it became part of the armoury of the...it became part of the, sort of, the process that led eventually towards peace in Vietnam. It was supportive of the peace movement to various degrees, it wasn't just, you know, showing long-haired students out

on the streets, but everyone was out on the streets. But that's at the very time when everyone really was out on the street, I mean all sorts of people, including the elite...the elite turned against the Vietnam war, and then the media started raising questions about it, but it took the elite to turn against it. So, where the elite goes, the media go; and so if the elite suddenly gets worried about what's going in Iraq, then America will be...the pressure will be on, the media'll turn, and say "time to get out". But right now, it's using the exact language of those in power, which is, you know, we can't cut and run, we have responsibilities there...I mean maybe we shouldn't have gone in there, but we gotta stay there. But every opinion poll conducted in Iraq has shown that they want the Americans out. The Iraqi people who voted in the Constitution – they might welcome that Saddam Hussein is gone, but they do want America as an occupying force out.

Adam: Talking about war and peace, do you think the media is more interested in covering war than it is in peace, because covering war sells more papers?

Anthony: Mmm. Sure, sure, it's part of the sensationalism. And some of the best journalism has been war-reporting, there's no doubt about that. How much...I've got it here somewhere...John Pilger's collection *Tell Me No Lies*...is a collection of distinguished journalists, a lot of these people were involved in one level or another in war reporting. Well, war's dramatic; it's in an age of television, the footage is...spectacular, shall we say. And it's...it costs lives obviously...but it's invariably going to get more media attention than peace, but I wouldn't hold, I wouldn't blame the media for that, it's just the way it is. It's one of those things, one of those events if you like, that lends itself towards a certain form of journalism. Although, in the past, we've had more critical journalism; when you get to the stage of embedded journalism, it's the journalist alongside the invading troops, for example, which is not journalism at all. I think I've shown a documentary to my students where one of the American journalists interviewed pointed out that what was going on in Iraq was demography, not journalism: they were simply recycling what they were being told by military authorities.

Alex: Do you think now, ten years since the genocide, that the influx of images and news articles circulating are now beneficial in highlighting and informing what's happened in Rwanda and also helping to prevent future genocide?

Anthony: Well, that latter point's the really important one, in as much that it helps prevent, then it is important. I'd be guessing about this, but I'd think the problem with the lack of media attention is precisely that history can repeat itself endlessly and endlessly and endlessly. History does still repeat itself endlessly and endlessly anyway. But with media attention, you might get situations like that avoided; you might get much more Western, and particularly say UN interest, in intervening in circumstances like that, were it to happen again. The point about...I can't stress enough the fact that if you look at where the US intervenes, and that includes in the old Yugoslavia, these are critical regions for international power and resource distribution as well. And that's what Rwanda's a nothing in. If it had huge oil reserves...

Alex: Well, do you think, finally, that the media and the UN have learned from their mistakes made in Rwanda, for not calling it genocide when it was...?

Adam: ...mistakes of not covering things when they had the power to do so...?

Anthony: Did the media learn from its mistakes? I think Iraq highlights they don't. I think the media played a pretty unforgivable role in America and Australia at any rate, not so much in Britain because you've got an independent voice like *The Independent* and *The Guardian*; the other newspapers were pretty bad. I, along with a number of historians, every major historian of the Vietnam war that I know of, has drawn comparisons between what happened in Vietnam and what happened in Iraq, I mean these are valid comparisons, the key historians are doing it, and I would draw those comparison: history is repeating itself again, and where was the media?. Did the media learn from their mistakes? No, they go on and sell more papers, by replaying those mistakes.

Adam and Alex: Thank you very much!