

# GENOCIDE AND ELIMINATIONISM

A study guide to accompany  
the film *Worse Than War*



FACING  
HISTORY  
AND  
OURSELVES

A FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES STUDY GUIDE

# GENOCIDE AND ELIMINATIONISM

A study guide to accompany  
the film *Worse Than War*

Developed in collaboration with Daniel Jonah Goldhagen



Facing History and Ourselves is an international educational and professional development organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote the development of a more humane and informed citizenry. By studying the historical development of the Holocaust and other examples of genocide, students make the essential connection between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives. For more information about Facing History and Ourselves, please visit our website at [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org).

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# ABOUT FACING HISTORY AND OURSELVES

**F**acing History and Ourselves is a nonprofit educational organization whose mission is to engage students of diverse backgrounds in an examination of racism, prejudice, and antisemitism in order to promote a more humane and informed citizenry. As the name Facing History and Ourselves implies, the organization helps teachers and their students make the essential connections between history and the moral choices they confront in their own lives, and offers a framework and a vocabulary for analyzing the meaning and responsibility of citizenship and the tools to recognize bigotry and indifference in their own worlds. Through a rigorous examination of the failure of democracy in Germany during the 1920s and '30s and the steps leading to the Holocaust, along with other examples of hatred, collective violence, and genocide in the past century, Facing History and Ourselves provides educators with tools for teaching history and ethics, and for helping their students learn to combat prejudice with compassion, indifference with participation, myth and misinformation with knowledge.

Believing that no classroom exists in isolation, Facing History and Ourselves offers programs and materials to a broad audience of students, parents, teachers, civic leaders, and all of those who play a role in the education of young people. Through significant higher education partnerships, Facing History and Ourselves also reaches and impacts teachers before they enter their classrooms.

By studying the choices that led to critical episodes in history, students learn how issues of identity and membership, ethics and judgment have meaning today and in the future. Facing History and Ourselves' resource books provide a meticulously researched yet flexible structure for examining complex events and ideas. Educators can select appropriate readings and draw on additional resources available online or from our comprehensive lending library.

Our foundational resource book, *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior*, embodies a sequence of study that begins with identity—first individual identity and then group and national identities, with their definitions of membership. From there the program examines the failure of democracy in Germany and the steps leading to the Holocaust—the most documented case of twentieth-century indifference, de-humanization, hatred, racism, antisemitism, and mass murder. It goes on to explore difficult questions of judgment, memory, and legacy, and the necessity for responsible participation to prevent injustice. Facing History and Ourselves then returns to the theme of civic participation to examine stories of individuals, groups, and nations who have worked to build just and inclusive communities and whose stories illuminate the courage, compassion, and political will that are needed to protect democracy today and in generations to come. Other examples in which civic dilemmas test democracy, such as the Armenian Genocide and the US civil rights movement, expand and deepen the connection between history and the choices we face today and in the future.

Facing History and Ourselves has offices or resource centers in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom as well as in-depth partnerships in Rwanda, South Africa, and Northern Ireland. Facing History and Ourselves' outreach is global, with educators trained in more than 80 countries and delivery of our resources through a website accessed worldwide with online content delivery, a program for international fellows, and a set of NGO partnerships. By convening conferences of scholars, theologians, educators, and journalists, Facing History and Ourselves' materials are kept timely, relevant, and responsive to salient issues of global citizenship in the twenty-first century.

For more than 30 years, Facing History and Ourselves has challenged students and educators to connect the complexities of the past to the moral and ethical issues of today. They explore democratic values and consider what it means to exercise one's rights and responsibilities in the service of a more humane and compassionate world. They become aware that "little things are big"—seemingly minor decisions can have a major impact and change the course of history.

For more about Facing History and Ourselves, visit our website at [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org).

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### Primary writer: Dan Eshet

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## ABOUT THE FILM

*How and why do genocides start? Why do the perpetrators kill? Why has intervention rarely occurred in a timely manner?* These and other thought-provoking questions are explored in the documentary film *Worse Than War*, based on Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's book of the same title. In this cinematic and evocative film, Goldhagen speaks with victims, perpetrators, witnesses, politicians, diplomats, and journalists, all with the purpose of explaining and understanding the critical features of genocide and how it can finally be stopped.

In Rwanda, perpetrators of genocide speak candidly about their participation in mass murders, and Minister of Justice Tharcisse Karugarama discusses the perpetrators' willingness, the world's failure, and how we can prevent other countries from suffering the same fate. In Guatemala, Goldhagen explores the concept of "overkill" with the country's leading forensic pathologist, and in an extraordinary interview, he confronts former president José Efraín Ríos Montt, the person in power during the genocide of Maya in the early 1980s. In Bosnia, Goldhagen attends the annual commemoration of the massacre at Srebrenica, the worst mass killing in Europe since World War II, and has a candid discussion with the nation's president, Haris Silajdžić, about his efforts to convince world leaders to intervene when it became apparent that "ethnic cleansing" was under way. And in Ukraine, Goldhagen returns with his father Erich (a Holocaust scholar) to the town where Erich was nearly killed during the Holocaust.

This film seeks to have a galvanizing effect on the public and to have an impact on our political leaders and their future actions in the face of genocide, eliminationism, and mass killing.



# SUGGESTIONS FOR USING THIS GUIDE

Facing History and Ourselves' guide to Daniel Jonah Goldhagen and Mike DeWitt's film *Worse Than War* is designed to help you explore with your students the complex issues highlighted in the film. Teachers and other readers are welcome to read Goldhagen's book by the same name, but you will not need to do so in order to use the guide.

The seven chapters of the guide each center on a specific question or issue. Each section of the guide is organized around a particular film excerpt. We have included time codes for the corresponding DVD chapters below. DVDs are available for loan from the Facing History lending library. The film is also streaming online at [www.pbs.org/worsethanwar](http://www.pbs.org/worsethanwar) with the same chapters as listed below. Please note that the time codes for the online version of the film are about 30 seconds behind the time codes provided below.

As with any film, it is important that you preview each section before using it in class. While we have selected excerpts that we believe will encourage thoughtful exploration of the subject of genocide and eliminationism, each community, school, teacher, and classroom has its own standards for viewing graphic content.

## GUIDE CHAPTERS AND CORRESPONDING FILM EXCERPTS (DVD):

### **Preview**

01:00–08:36

Use the DVD chapter titled *Introduction*, starting at time code 1:00, and continue through the first half of the next chapter, titled *Genocide: A Choice*. End when the narrator says "a father, a mother, a daughter, a son."

### **What Is the Role of Leaders in Genocide?**

34:23–50:56

Use the DVD chapter titled *A Leader's Decision* and end when Alisa Muratčauš says "horrible."

### **Why Do Killers Kill? Genocide and Human Behavior**

08:38–14:35

Use the DVD chapter titled *Genocide: A Choice*, starting halfway through at time code 08:38, and end when Goldhagen is shown typing on his laptop on an airplane.

### **Why Does the International Community Fail to Intervene and Stop Genocide When it Happens?**

59:11–01:10:42

Use the DVD chapter titled *Learning From History* and end on an external shot of the United Nations building.

### **Impunity in Guatemala and Elsewhere**

01:27:48–01:34:34

Use the DVD chapter titled *Impunity*, ending at the phrase “I think we can.”

### **How Can We Change the Choices Genocidal Leaders Make?**

01:34:34–01:40:05

Use the DVD chapter titled *Impunity*, beginning with the caption “New York City,” and continue through the next chapter titled, *Back to the Drawing Board*, ending with the caption “Czernowitz, Ukraine.”

### **Stopping Genocide: What Moves Us to Act?**

01:40:05–01:46:12

Use the DVD chapter *Impunity*, beginning with the caption “Czernowitz, Ukraine” and ending with the end of the film.

Following each film excerpt, we provide a list of “connections” that may help you direct your students to the essential issues in the excerpt. There is no need or expectation that users will go through the entire set of questions (or even the entire guide). Rather, once you settle on the issues you want to explore, you may select the questions that can best direct your classroom discussion. In a few cases, we also provide documents or “readings” that expand on themes from the excerpt. They, too, are followed by “connections.”





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# PREFACE

BY ADAM STROM, DIRECTOR OF CONTENT, INNOVATION AND RESEARCH

In Mike DeWitt's film *Worse Than War*, genocide scholar Daniel Jonah Goldhagen explores humanity's cruel side. Viewers of the film—young and old, scholars and students—find themselves taken aback as they watch perpetrators and victims of brutal assaults on human lives try to explain not just what happened but why it happened. Indeed, the first time I watched the film, I turned off the television. But I knew I had to return; I had to listen and do my best to try to understand how human beings could do such things to each other. In fact, this is one of the key challenges in studying genocide and eliminationism: having the courage and strength to face history. Facing history, we know, is essential if we are ever to prevent genocide. These acts, Goldhagen reminds us, are not rare or isolated; in fact, he tells us, "All told, in our time [the last 100 years], there have been more than 100 million innocent victims of genocide—more than all the combat deaths in all the wars fought during that time everywhere in the world."

In the film and the guide, we explore many of the pressing questions that come with that acknowledgment. *What are genocide and elimination? What is the role of leaders in genocide? Why do killers kill? Why does the international community so often stand by? Why do so many leaders of genocide go unpunished? How can genocide be prevented?* What is unique about this film is that Goldhagen investigates these questions across the world, from Bosnia to Guatemala and from Cambodia to Germany and Rwanda. Together these stories remind us that genocide is not simply the problem of one people and one place. Like so many of today's challenges, genocide and elimination are global problems and should be global concerns.

In these few pages, we hope to deepen our study of the roots, causes, and prevention of genocide and eliminationism, but we also know that there are other questions to explore and other ideas to consider. Goldhagen considers many of those issues in the book *Worse Than War*, on which this film was based. Facing History and Ourselves explores those issues in its core resource book, *Facing History and Ourselves: Holocaust and Human Behavior*, and in its more than 50 publications. Go to [www.facinghistory.org/publications](http://www.facinghistory.org/publications) to see a complete list.

Facing History and Ourselves knows that no film and no study guide, no matter how brilliant, can stop genocide. For us, prevention begins with education: working with teachers, deepening their knowledge of both content and methodology, and then helping to translate the work of scholars for their classrooms. Through a rigorous investigation of the events that led to the Holocaust and examples of genocide and mass violence, students in a Facing History class learn to combat prejudice with compassion, indifference with participation, and myth and misinformation with knowledge. These are the foundations of a just society. To learn more about Facing History's professional development and the way its program staff works with teachers around the world, visit [www.facinghistory.org](http://www.facinghistory.org) and follow us on Twitter and Facebook. Our work is based on the belief that we are all lifelong learners. Part of adult development requires thinking and rethinking, and remaining in dialogue with other learners and ideas. We hope that this film and study guide can be helpful tools for individuals and community groups as they consider the challenges of genocide and what Goldhagen calls eliminationism, as well as what it would require to take seriously the challenge of prevention.

# INTRODUCTION

BY DANIEL JONAH GOLDHAGEN

I was delighted when Margot Stern Strom contacted me about collaborating with Facing History and Ourselves to produce a study guide for the classroom based on my work on genocide. I was delighted not only because of Facing History's unrivaled position as the premier educational organization dedicated to the issues on which I have worked, but also because I share with Facing History the view that bringing such material to students is essential. Doing so in a manner that at once educates and opens up the topics for exploration, discussion, and even disagreement promotes awareness and understanding of important themes—themes that are critical to students' development as informed members of their local, national, and world communities, ready to act on the duties we have toward one another.

When I told Margot that I was making a documentary film for PBS that would be grounded in the book *Worse Than War*, we quickly agreed that the study guide would focus on the film, as it presents this content in the medium most accessible and usable in the classroom. After extensive planning, work, and fruitful collaboration, the guide you have here has, I hope, justified this conclusion.

As the author of the book, the film's writer (together with the director, Mike DeWitt), and an onscreen presence in the film—and now a collaborator with Facing History in producing this study guide—I have written, or helped to write and produce, three different kinds of guides to understanding eliminationism and genocide. My role in each one has been different.

As author of the book, I was researching and writing by myself, in the manner I alone thought best. For the film, though it is grounded in my book and my perspective and is therefore an authored piece, I worked with a team of specialists—most critically the director—to take the essential perspectives and conclusions from the book and transform them to suit a visual medium, augmenting them with onsite material and, of course, introducing the faces and voices of people who perpetrated, were victimized by, and struggled to stop eliminationist violence. For the study guide, I collaborated fully with a team of educators at Facing History to present these essential themes—this time not only from my perspective but in a way designed to elicit the perspectives of teachers and students. The guide is intended not merely to teach what I have learned, as was my aim with the book and with the film, but to get students and teachers to use that as a starting point to teach themselves and each other about complex themes relevant to understanding and stopping eliminationism.

In the book, the film, and the study guide, I was attentive always to the four discrete though related tasks of description, explanation, judgment, and policy making (or presenting solutions). These are hard to keep distinct, but it is critical to do so if we want to understand what we are doing and what conclusions are appropriate at a given time, whether while researching, reading, writing, discussing (and debating), proposing courses of action, or even acting. If I have one overriding hope beyond those specifically relevant to eliminationism, it is that in exploring and discussing these themes, students will become aware of the kind of discussion they are engaging

in at a given point—whether it is about figuring out what happened (description), understanding why something happened (explanation), considering how to think about the morality of or responsibility for certain actions or inactions (judgment), or exploring what we are able to do to save people’s lives and the wisdom of such actions, given their real-world contexts (policy making). It is my experience that because discussions of eliminationism and genocide press us acutely to address each of these questions, and because students and others become very invested in and impassioned about the issues, a consideration of one of these questions will often be met with a response (or objection) concerned with another of the questions. To understand and work to prevent eliminationism, we must be vigilant also about how we think and talk about it.

In the book, the film, and the study guide, I was also mindful of the need to organize the exploration of eliminationism and genocide according to its major themes: defining what eliminationism and genocide are, investigating how such assaults begin, explaining why and how they are implemented, investigating why they end and why the world does so little to stop them, and, based on all we have learned about them, proposing how we can devise policies that will reduce the incidence of killing in the future. The purpose of this thematic organization is to keep the focus on understanding these salient issues rather than on the history or details of one or another genocide—and to do so in a manner that challenges us to draw the best general conclusions we can and to be mindful of the specific features that differentiate one eliminationist assault from another.

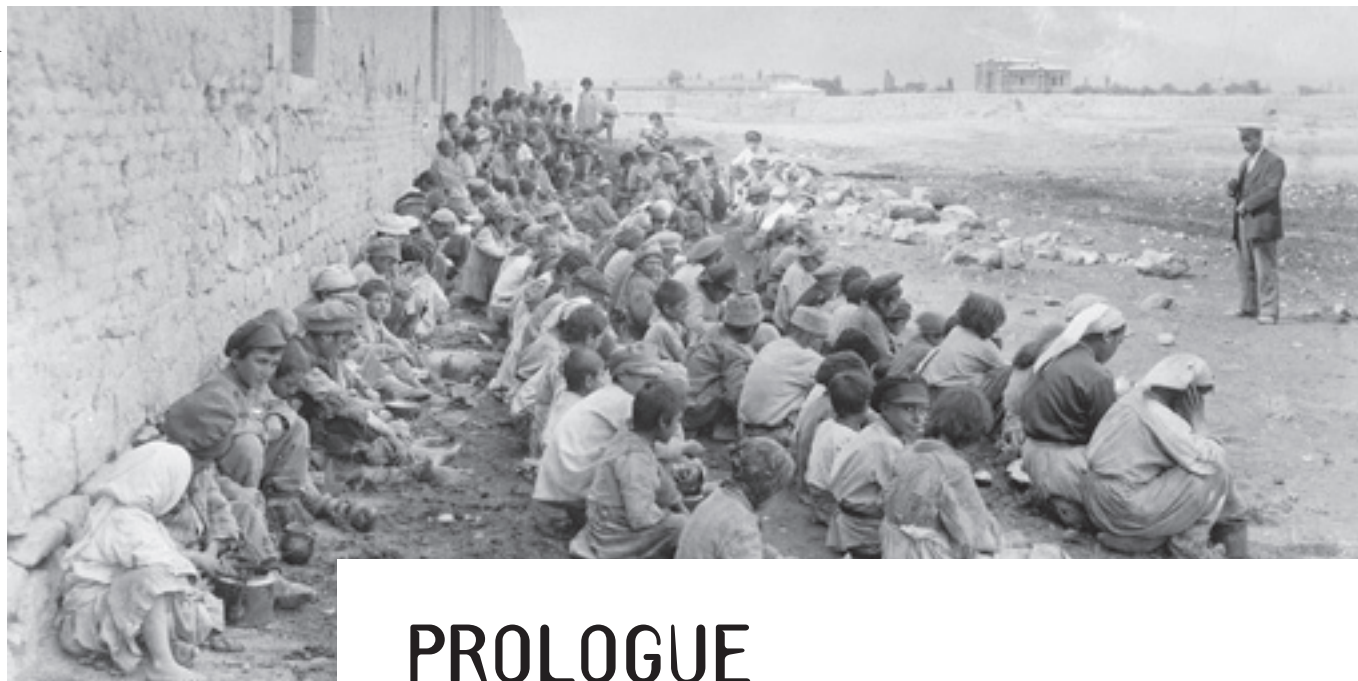
In the book, the film, and the study guide, I was also deeply concerned that I, along with the reader, viewer, and student, should not lose sight of the human beings involved. Our subject matter consists of horrors that people inflict on one another, and if we want to understand what the perpetrators do, we need to know as much as possible about how they see the world, how they understand the targeted people, and how they view or justify the eliminations—all of which contribute to creating a motive to act in one way or another.

The critical analytical issue in assessing the motives and choices of the perpetrators is whether they believe that eliminating their victims is the right or wrong thing to do. If they think that it is the right thing to do, our explanatory task is to uncover or determine as best we can what has brought them to this view, and whether they have held such a view for years or have come to it very recently. This entails an analysis that focuses on their beliefs, prejudices, upbringing, education, and culture, and how each of those factors operated. Because the question is: Why do the perpetrators inwardly and willingly assent to the deed? If, however, they think that eliminating the targeted people is wrong and yet contribute to it anyway, our explanatory task is different: it is to uncover or determine as best we can what has made these people act in a manner which they, in their minds and hearts, disapprove of or maybe even abhor. This entails a different kind of analysis that includes a focus on various forms of coercion and pressure. The question in this case is: What would make people who disapprove of the deed do it anyway? The analytical starting point, and the issue we must always keep in mind and be willing to confront and plumb, is what people from the group or groups that are assaulting others think of those they target and of the politics of eliminating them.

For this and other reasons, we must not lose sight of the human beings involved, by recognizing and remembering at all times that they are individuals. We must not lose this focus, because the urgent task of saving people's lives requires mobilizing the empathy of students here and elsewhere, and of people the world over, who can then pressure political leaders to devise and implement policies that will prevent, stop, and end eliminationism. The more we can identify with the victims, the more we and our political leaders will feel in our hearts and bones—and therefore keep at the forefront of our minds—the need to prevent more people from being victimized. The more we and our political leaders understand the perpetrators, also, as human beings deciding to act inhumanely, the more we will see that by changing potential perpetrators' thinking about the desirability of acting this way, we can influence them to find other, nonviolent ways to address their perceived social and political problems and conflicts.

It is with these most humanistic of intentions—the aims of education, of stirring independent and critical thought, of exciting empathy, of saving the lives of human beings—that I have undertaken these related projects of book, film, and study guide.

My hope is that with this guide, we can help teachers and students alike generate these intentions in themselves and others.



**Armenian refugee children wait for their daily ration of food from relief workers in 1920. Beginning in 1915, Turks deported, placed in concentration camps, and killed ethnic Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, resulting in more than one million deaths by 1923.**

## PROLOGUE

**A**t the core of the film *Worse Than War* is a chilling fact: “All told, in our time [the last 100 years], there have been more than 100 million innocent victims of genocide—more than all the combat deaths in all the wars fought during that time everywhere in the world. Based on the human toll alone, genocide and mass slaughter are worse problems plaguing humanity than war.” In order to understand and confront this unsettling truth, genocide expert and author Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, the film’s narrator, proposes that we study a series of probing questions: Why do the perpetrators of genocide engage in mass atrocities? What is the role of leaders in instigating and in carrying out those assaults on defenseless victims? Why do the international community and the United Nations do so little to stop—let alone prevent—such outbursts of violence? And, most importantly, what can be done to prevent future genocides?

With these questions in mind, Goldhagen set out to interview perpetrators of genocide, survivors, and political leaders. The interviews, together with the answers to these questions, form the film’s backbone. In his book *Worse Than War*, Goldhagen recounts an interview with Esperance Nyirarugira, a survivor of genocide and sexual violence, whose parents, six brothers, and other relatives were all “cut into pieces with a machete”<sup>1</sup> by their neighbors in Rwanda.\* Goldhagen asked her about the people who did these unspeakable things to her and her family:

**Q:** Why would they do that to your family and to others?

**A:** I really don’t know. That one who killed my father was a good friend of his, very close friend. My dad had given him a cow. I really don’t understand.

\* Widespread sexual violence accompanies almost every war and genocide. For example, the United Nations Development Fund for Women estimated that as many as 60,000 rapes were committed during the war in Bosnia, and up to half a million women were raped in Rwanda. Very few of the people who committed those rapes were ever caught and convicted. See UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, “Facts & Figures on VAW,” [http://www.unifem.org/gender\\_issues/violence\\_against\\_women/facts\\_figures.php?page=7](http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/violence_against_women/facts_figures.php?page=7) (accessed June 10, 2011). But, the *Los Angeles Times* reports, “there has been a profound change in the way sexual violence is regarded in international law . . . . In 1998, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda declared rape an act of genocide, committed in that case with the purpose of destroying the Tutsi ethnic group. And a decade later, the U.N. Security Council adopted a resolution recognizing rape as a ‘tactic of warfare’ that is a crime against humanity.” See “Rape: It’s a War Crime,” *Los Angeles Times* online, August 13, 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/aug/13/opinion/ed-rape13> (accessed May 11, 2011).



**Q:** Did anybody force them to do it?

**A:** No. They killed us saying that we were Tutsi.

**Q:** Did you hear them say other things that would tell us anything about what they thought of Tutsi or why they were doing it?

**A:** They were saying that Tutsi are dangerous, that they are snakes, they should be all killed, they should be exterminated.

**Q:** And did many people say this?

**A:** Yes, very many people were saying that.

**Q:** How is it that they were one day living together and friends, and then—how did it change?

**A:** I really don't know. They changed like animals; we were living together, marrying each other, and people had kids together.<sup>2</sup>

Nyirarugira's friend, Concessa Kayiraba, who is also a survivor of genocide and sexual violence, talked to Goldhagen about the changes in their Hutu neighbors during the genocide:

People you had given cows [to] are the ones who came and killed you. People who had married in both families killed their grandchildren. There are so many Hutu women in this area who took their children to hide them at their parents' and they were killed by their brothers. . . . During the genocide, people had changed. They had become like animals. They did not have any mercy for anyone. . . . Based on what I saw, Hutu thought of Tutsi as animals. They did not have the value of a human being. . . . Hutu thought of Tutsi as animals, because they were even calling them snakes. They were saying that when you want to kill snakes, you hit them on the head. They said a lot of things. But they thought of us like animals . . . dangerous ones. They called us snakes most of the time because a snake is a very dangerous animal and poisonous.<sup>3</sup>

Faced with this human capacity for believing such things about other people and for acting so cruelly, many of us struggle to grasp the full horrors of mass killing. Its sheer magnitude can easily overwhelm, leading to psychic numbing or paralysis. But, in the end, this film is about the deaths of actual women, men, and children who were murdered, often with extreme cruelty, for no other reason than simply for being who they were—Armenians, Bosnian Muslims, "impure" Cambodians, Jews, Maya, or Tutsi. It is also about what we, as humans, can do to prevent such atrocities from occurring. Goldhagen, referring to the various survivors and witnesses appearing in the film, asks us to imagine ourselves in their places: "What must it feel like for a 10-year-old boy to contemplate his own imminent, violent death? Or a 16-year-old girl? Or a 19-year-old man? What must it feel like to be imprisoned in a rape camp? Or to watch helplessly as members of your own family are killed . . . or as your people are decimated . . . ? What must it have been like to be one of the men of Srebrenica who were herded into [a] warehouse, or for the others who were forced at gunpoint into nearby fields to be executed? We can't stand by anymore. People are dying every day."

## CONNECTIONS:

1. What questions do the survivors of the Rwandan genocide struggle with in their interviews? What questions did these interviews leave you with?
2. Genocide and mass killings are events that fall outside our ordinary experience, and because of that, they pose a big challenge for people who try to understand them. Sometimes, the sheer scope of the violence can leave one overwhelmed to the point of paralysis. What other things make these events difficult to comprehend?
3. Many people believe that it is impossible to fully understand genocide. Some suggest that those who try to analyze every aspect of this event run the risk of trivializing the violence and its emotional impact. What strategies can we employ to break down the phenomenon of mass killing and make it more accessible to ordinary people? What might draw you to care about the victims of mass killings? What is necessary for people to move from passively witnessing these events as bystanders to actively seeking ways to stop them?
4. What do we need to know about genocide and its associated cruelties if we hope to be able to prevent it?

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1 Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009), 351.

2 Goldhagen, *Worse Than War*, 352.

3 Goldhagen, *Worse Than War*, 353.



**When this German concentration camp in Nordhausen, Germany, was liberated on April 12, 1945, US soldiers encountered the horrific sight of thousands of unburied bodies.**

## PREVIEW

*Genocides happen in every corner of the world, to every type of people. . . . Based on the human toll alone, genocide and mass slaughter are worse problems plaguing humanity than war.*

— Daniel Jonah Goldhagen

### DVD excerpt: 01:00–08:36

Available for streaming  
at [www.pbs.org/  
worsethanwar](http://www.pbs.org/worsethanwar)

Note that streaming  
version is roughly  
30 seconds behind  
the DVD timecode.

**T**his excerpt provides an introduction to Daniel Jonah Goldhagen and Mike DeWitt's film *Worse Than War* and highlights one of the film's central themes: the persistence of genocide in the modern world. The excerpt includes references to Goldhagen's 1996 book *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, which, like *Worse Than War*, seeks "to dispel the many myths that . . . prevent us from doing something effective to stop [genocide]." Goldhagen leads the viewers through images taken from genocides in Turkey (1915–1918, 1922–1923), German-controlled Europe (1939–1945), Japanese-controlled Asia (1937–1945), Cambodia (1975–1979), Guatemala (1981–1983), Bosnia (1992–1995), Rwanda (1994), Congo (1996–present), and Darfur (2003–present). He then goes on to discuss the difference between war and genocide: Goldhagen explains that "all told, in [the 20th century alone], there have been more than 100 million innocent victims of genocide—more than all the combat deaths in all the wars fought during that time everywhere in the world. Based on the human toll alone," he concludes, "genocide and mass slaughter are worse problems plaguing humanity than war." Finally, Goldhagen asserts that genocide is not inevitable and that, with the right approach, it can be prevented.

The excerpt also introduces the audience to Erich Goldhagen, Daniel's father, who provides additional commentary throughout the film. Erich Goldhagen is a Holocaust survivor and a pioneering scholar of genocide.

## CONNECTIONS:

1. In the film excerpt, Goldhagen argues that there is nothing inevitable about genocide because genocide “boils down to a series of **choices**: leaders **choose** to initiate the killing. Ordinary people make a **conscious choice** to participate . . . and those with power to prevent or stop it **choose** to do nothing.”

What does it mean for an event to be “inevitable”?  
What point is Goldhagen trying to make when he insists that a person makes a “conscious choice” to participate in genocide?

2. What can we learn by studying genocide? Can studying genocide help us prevent it?

3. Goldhagen says that it is important to ask difficult questions about genocide, even if we sometimes dread hearing the answers. What thoughts and emotions do you have as you face learning about, and wrestling with, these horrors that are “worse than war”?
4. What terms and ideas made the biggest impression on you? What other episodes of mass killing or genocide do you know about?
5. The title of the film is *Worse Than War*. What are the differences between genocide and war? Why does Goldhagen think that genocide is “worse than war”?



# DEFINING THE PROBLEM

After discovering that there was no law criminalizing the murderous actions of a state against its own people, Raphael Lemkin devoted his life to creating such a law. In 1944, Lemkin first used the term *genocide*; later this term was used by the United Nations in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948).

## RAPHAEL LEMKIN AND THE TERM *GENOCIDE*

**W**hat is genocide? The term *genocide* is a historically recent one, and its definition has been the topic of many scholarly debates. It was coined by the jurist Raphael Lemkin. As a law school student in 1921, he began to study the Turks' 1915 campaign to rid the Ottoman Empire of its Armenian population. Distraught by the deliberate mass killing of Armenians, he found out that there was no law that criminalized the actions of a state against its own people. After Lemkin—a Jew—escaped Nazi-occupied Poland in 1940, he devoted his life to creating such a law.\* In 1944, Lemkin first used the term *genocide* to describe this crime:

By “genocide” we mean the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group. This new word, coined by the author to denote an old practice in its modern development, is made from the ancient Greek word *genos* (race, tribe) and the Latin *cide* (killing) . . . . Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups.<sup>1</sup>

\* For an extensive discussion of Lemkin and his lifelong struggle to outlaw mass killing, see *Totally Unofficial: Raphael Lemkin and the Genocide Convention* (Brookline: Facing History National Foundation, Inc., 2008).

After the Holocaust, Lemkin's term *genocide* was used by the United Nations when it set out to create the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948). Article II of the Genocide Convention defines genocide as

"acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

## CONNECTIONS:

1. There are many words to describe deliberate large-scale killing: mass murder or mass killing, massacre, annihilation, extermination, bloodbath, butchery, slaughter, and other terms in foreign languages (*Massenmord* in German and *Shoah* in Hebrew, for example). Does it matter that an event or phenomenon has a name? And does it matter what that name is? Can having language to describe a crime such as mass killing help to prevent that crime?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the definition of genocide from the Genocide Convention and the definition of genocide in Lemkin's excerpt above? What kinds of groups are included in the two definitions? Are there groups you would add to the list?
3. What actions other than mass killing constitute genocide, according to Lemkin and the Genocide Convention?
4. Why does the Genocide Convention's definition focus on the **intent** to destroy a group? Why does it specify that even the intention to destroy part of a group is genocide? How do you prove intent?
5. Should a state that destroys a group without intending to do so (e.g., by neglecting to alleviate starvation or famine) be accused of genocide?

## DANIEL JONAH GOLDHAGEN AND THE TERM *ELIMINATIONISM*

Goldhagen argues that the Genocide Convention's definition is too narrow and that it should include political groups along with ethnic, national, religious, and racial groups. This would help include the millions of people persecuted by communist Chinese government and the Soviet government as victims of genocide. It would also prevent mass murderers from evading the charge of genocide by claiming that they are not targeting one of the categories defined by the convention, but are merely engaged in a political conflict. Goldhagen also sees genocide as one aspect of a larger phenomenon that needs to be recognized. He has coined a new term, *eliminationism*, to define this phenomenon, which includes mass killing as well as the related acts that perpetrators use to get rid of unwanted or hated groups of people. The five principal eliminationist tools are:





**Sudanese women in the Silea village in West Darfur, Sudan, on February 28, 2008, await food and other aid following an intensification of the genocidal (or eliminationist) assault in the area. By 2010 the Sudanese government and its forces had, directly and indirectly, killed more than 300,000 Darfuris, expelled more than 2.5 million people, and tortured and raped the victims on a vast scale.**

**Forced transformation**, such as forced religious conversion: destroying a group's essential and defining political, social, or cultural identities;

**Extreme repression**: reducing, with violence or its threat, a group's ability to inflict real or imagined harm upon others;

**Expulsion**, often called deportation: removing people more thoroughly, by driving them beyond a country's borders, or from one region of a country to another, or by forcing them into concentration camps;

**Prevention of reproduction**: diminishing a group's normal biological reproduction by preventing its members from becoming pregnant or giving birth, or by systematically raping the women so they bear children not "purely" of their group;

**Extermination**: the most final eliminationist act, as it is not interim or piecemeal.

Goldhagen argues that the laws criminalizing genocide and the international community's response to such crimes are deficient: the international community should respond to all instances of eliminationism, and not only to those assaults that are of sufficient size and scope to reach the threshold of what is conventionally or legally considered "genocide." He believes to prevent mass killing and elimination, the international community must take action long before the actual eliminationist assaults began by putting effective deterrents in place and by forcefully responding to all the measures that lead up to eliminationist onslaughts.<sup>3</sup>

## CONNECTIONS:

1. Why do you think Goldhagen sought to expand the definition of genocide? Do you think that this and other definitions can promote the prevention of genocide? Aside from legal definitions, what else is needed to stop genocide?
2. What acts constitute the crime of eliminationism, according to Goldhagen? In what ways is his new definition similar to and different from the definition from the Genocide Convention?
3. Do all acts of discrimination and segregation (including racial policies such as apartheid or segregation) lead to "eliminationism"?

<sup>1</sup> Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), 79.

<sup>2</sup> "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide" (1948), Prevent Genocide International website, <http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/convention/text.htm> (accessed July 6, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity* (United States: PublicAffairs, 2009), 17–18.





Pol Pot, leader of the Khmer Rouge, directs a march of the rebel group in 1979. Under the regime of the Khmer Rouge (1975–1979), an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians were killed.

**DVD excerpt:  
34:23–50:56**

Available for streaming  
at [www.pbs.org/  
worsethanwar](http://www.pbs.org/worsethanwar)

Note that streaming  
version is roughly  
30 seconds behind  
the DVD timecode.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF LEADERS IN GENOCIDE?

**T**his film excerpt focuses on the role of leaders in mobilizing and initiating genocidal attacks. The film excerpt and the connection questions in this section begin with a focus on Cambodia, a country in Southeast Asia, where between 1975 and 1979 a communist dictatorship known as the Khmer Rouge killed 1.7 million people—20 percent of Cambodia’s entire population.

Following a discussion of the role of Pol Pot in the Cambodian genocide, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen cites a series of other episodes of mass killing and asserts that “genocide is always the decision of one leader or a small group of leaders.” Using examples from the Holocaust and the Armenian Genocide, he explains that genocide is the result of a **calculated political act** rather than a spontaneous eruption of hateful feelings. His father and mentor, Erich Goldhagen—a Holocaust survivor and scholar—offers a chilling picture of a world ruled by Hitler. The excerpt contains footage of Goldhagen at an old Berlin train station. Metal plaques on the tracks with destination names, dates, and numbers memorialize those sent to German death camps during World War II.

The film continues with images from the Rwandan and Bosnian genocides and with an analysis of the means that leaders use to mobilize their people for mass killing. Among other things, the film discusses how leaders start genocides, their motivation for doing so, and the ways in which they inflame historical prejudices to incite violence. Finally, this clip introduces the use of the media as a means of intensifying prejudices and producing fear in order to mobilize people to participate in mass killings. Among the included media are radio sounds from Radio Mille Collines, which was used extensively in Rwanda to dehumanize the Tutsi people, to mobilize Hutu to murder the Tutsi—including, sometimes, their neighbors—and to coordinate the killings.

## CONNECTIONS:

1. What are your thoughts about the film excerpt you watched?
2. What are some of the common characteristics of the genocides the film presents?
3. In the film, the president of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Haris Silajdžić, says:

*Slobodan Milošević thought at that time that he could—because of the overwhelming military power—make some territorial gains in Croatia and Bosnia. So he attacked. The fulfilling of their mission was to make a greater Serbia . . . In order to make greater Serbia, you had to exterminate people in your way.\**

- i. What, according to Silajdžić, were Milošević's goals in the early 1990s? How did he plan to achieve them?
  - ii. What are some of the conditions that are necessary for such a plan (including genocide) to be carried out?
4. Silajdžić also argues:

*Genocide is always politics. Of course there are political goals. Those political goals can be reached in different ways . . . Some people think that exterminating a group of people would help their goals, so that's why they do it.*

What is "politics" in this case? What do you think Silajdžić means when he argues that "genocide is always politics"? What might be the political goals of genocide?

5. Talking about the genocide in Bosnia, Silajdžić says:  
*These things are done in cold blood. This is a design, this is a plan, this is a calculation of course. This is not a reaction to something. This unfortunately here is a planned genocide, as is any other genocide. Because it's not possible to kill a big number of people without prior preparation. Mental preparation, intellectual preparation, military preparation.*

Goldhagen makes a similar point in the film when he discusses German leaders' meticulous planning, at the 1942 Wannsee Conference, of the elimination of the Jews. "These typewritten minutes," he says, "document the meeting and list—country by country—the 11 million Jews they planned to kill."

Does the fact that genocide is carefully planned ahead of time and ordered by political authorities reduce the role and importance in such crimes of ordinary people's own beliefs and prejudices? Or does it just mean that there are many aspects to eliminationist assaults, each of which is important or necessary if the assaults are to take place?

6. The film excerpt portrays the central role of political leaders in genocide.
  - i. What roles do leaders play in genocide?
  - ii. What else is required for genocide to be carried out?
  - iii. Goldhagen argues that there is "nothing spontaneous about genocide." What does he mean by this statement? What evidence does the film present to support it?
  - iv. How do you think leaders prepare a society for genocide? What needs to happen? Who needs to be involved?
  - v. Does the role of leaders in planning genocidal programs absolve of responsibility for their actions those who carry out the plans?
7. What does Goldhagen mean when he says that in genocide, "it is the *will*—and not the *way*—that is critical"?

Bosnian Serb wartime political leader Radovan Karadžić, right, and his general Ratko Mladić, left, in Serbia on April 15, 1995. Karadžić and Mladić both stand accused of genocide against Bosnian Muslims. After years as fugitives, Karadžić was arrested in 2008 and Mladić in 2011.



AP Photo/Sava Radovanovic

\* Slobodan Milošević was the president of Serbia during the war with Croatia (1992–1995), the genocide in Bosnia (1992–1995), and the eliminationist assault in Kosovo (1999). He incited Serbs all over the former Yugoslavia to attack non-Serbs and supported the Bosnian Serbs in their eliminationist campaign against their Muslim neighbors. This campaign (also known as "ethnic cleansing") ended only after the Serbs murdered tens of thousands of Bosnian Muslims and forced many more to leave their homes and country. Milošević was arrested in 2001 and was sent to The Hague to stand trial for war crimes and crimes against humanity. He died in prison of heart complications before the trial was concluded. The trials of other mass murderers are still under way.

## CONNECTIONS CONTINUED:

8. The film discusses the language used by the perpetrators in the Rwandan genocide to describe their victims. They called the Tutsi, among other things, “cockroaches” and “snakes.”

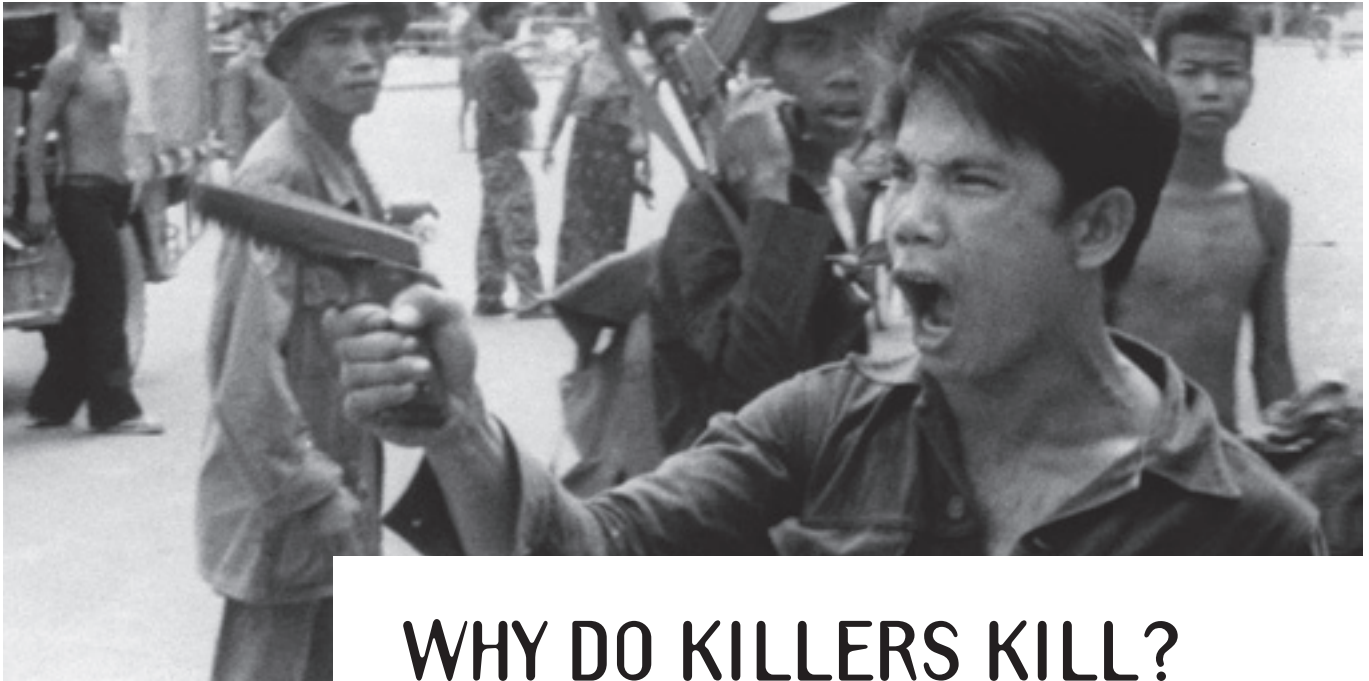
How do words and images shape how people think and act? Can images and ideas from the media influence people to hate and kill? To what extent does hateful language create new hatred, and to what extent does it reinforce existing hatreds?

9. In the film, Goldhagen argues that in Rwanda and Bosnia, local leaders “did what *all* genocidal leaders do. They tapped into the prejudices and beliefs that people *already* held.”
- According to the clip, what is the relationship between eliminationist assaults and prejudice or hatred? Do you think that people could start slaughtering others, including children and infants, by the tens of thousands if there is no preexisting animosity on the part of the people toward the victims?
  - What factors move a group from a state of prejudice and hostile attitudes toward another group to the point of killing that other group?
  - In all genocides, there are people who choose not to participate in the atrocities. What might be some of the factors that influence their choice?

10. In his interview in the film, Silajdžić says:

*In Bosnia there was deliberately a paranoid culture created prior to the war—about five or six, seven years. There was a propaganda of the Serbs being threatened by everybody else. And I know people who, because of this propaganda, good people . . . genuinely believed they were somehow threatened. So they [had] to attack in order to defend themselves.*

- What tools do leaders use to galvanize their people around their causes and mobilize them to participate in genocidal campaigns? What are some of the means that governments use to transmit and incite hatred?
  - What is propaganda? What, if anything, distinguishes it from all the ordinary things that governments or people say about other peoples that may or may not be true? What distinguishes propaganda from, say, scientific essays or documentary films on similar topics?
11. Propaganda is often used to stereotype, degrade, and humiliate other people (for more information on this topic, see the next section). Hutu leaders called the Tutsi “cockroaches” and “snakes”; the Nazis called the Jews “vermin,” “devils,” and “subhumans,” also depicting other peoples as less than human. This process is often called dehumanization. How would you define dehumanization? How does this process serve leaders of genocidal campaigns?



A Khmer Rouge soldier orders Phnom Penh residents out of their shops on April 17, 1975. Once the rebel group took control of the country, soldiers marched millions of urban residents to communal farming camps.

## WHY DO KILLERS KILL? GENOCIDE AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR

### DVD excerpt: 08:38–14:35

Available for streaming  
at [www.pbs.org/  
worsethanwar](http://www.pbs.org/worsethanwar)

Note that streaming  
version is roughly  
30 seconds behind  
the DVD timecode.

In the film, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen suggests that genocides and eliminations are (1) planned and (2) initiated by political leaders, who then (3) mobilize and organize the perpetrators. Without this context, ordinary people would never be in a position to carry out eliminationist (or genocidal) assaults. But, he argues, equally important are the perpetrators' choices and decisions before and during genocide. This section centers on the question, Why do killers kill? In other words, what motivates people to murder defenseless strangers, neighbors, women, and even children as part of a genocide or eliminationist assault?

The excerpt begins with a short introduction to the crisis in Darfur, suggesting that genocide is an ongoing problem. It then moves to Rwanda, where Goldhagen interviews Esperance Nyirugira, a rape victim whose family was brutally murdered right before her eyes. Rwanda is a small country, the size of Vermont, located in the heart of central Africa. There, during roughly 100 days between April and July 1994, members of the Hutu ethnic group killed some 800,000 members of another ethnic group, the Tutsi. The killings ended only when the Tutsi rebel army (the Rwandan Patriotic Front) defeated the Hutu military in July 1994.

To answer the main question in this section (Why do killers kill?), Goldhagen also interviews Augustin Bazimaziki, Elie Ngarambe, and other Hutu perpetrators. These testimonies are at the center of this section's exploration. In order to highlight how perpetrators discuss and explain their actions, a passage from the book *Worse Than War* is also included. In this excerpt from the book, Goldhagen argues that the perpetrators kill their victims because they believe that their victims deserve to die. He argues that leaders can draw up plans to destroy other groups all they want, but without the consent and active participation of many of their people, such plans will remain on paper.



## CONNECTIONS:

1. Take a moment to write down lines or phrases from the film that stood out for you. Compare your impressions with those of your classmates.
2. At the beginning of the excerpt, Esperance Nyirarugira says that “[t]he one who killed my father was a good friend of his. My dad had even given him a cow. I really don’t understand how things changed.” What factors might have changed people’s minds about how to treat other people in their society—sometimes including their neighbors or even their friends?
3. In a key moment in this film excerpt, Goldhagen asks: How could people “approach other people who are begging for their lives, and screaming in pain,” and cruelly kill them? Elie Ngarambe, who participated in the killing in Rwanda, explains: “It’s a very tough question to answer. Because they have the same flesh like yours.” What kind of information might help answer this question?
4. The film excerpt you watched explores the question, Do perpetrators act willingly? After watching the clip, does it seem to you—as it does to Goldhagen—that the perpetrators believed their victims deserved to die? Do you think they believed that it was right to kill these people in 1994? What statements or actions make you think one way or another?
5. Does the fact that genocide is often carefully planned ahead of time reduce an individual’s responsibility for what he or she does during the killings? Explain your position.
6. In the film excerpt, Elie Ngarambe describes the cruelty with which he and other perpetrators killed their victims in Rwanda. Goldhagen comments on Elie Ngarambe’s testimony, saying that “[c]ruelty is at the heart of the genocide. The killers don’t just eradicate the targeted people,” but brutalize, beat, torture, mock, and degrade them in ways that are unnecessary for the task of killing them. What does such cruelty, which is almost never ordered from above, teach us about the perpetrators’ motivation? In what ways can it be a reflection of perpetrators’ conviction in the necessity of their action? What else might explain their cruelty?

7. Pancrace Hakizamungili, another Hutu perpetrator, explains that during a mass killing, “you obey freely.” What do you make of this statement? Goldhagen argues that Hakizamungili’s words could serve as a motto for “our age’s willing executioners, whether ordinary Germans, ordinary Serbs, or ordinary Hutu.”<sup>1</sup> What do you think Goldhagen means?

8. Elie Ngarambe, mentioned above, explains his and other perpetrators’ state of mind this way:

*When we look back and think about it, it is beyond our ability to understand. I cannot find a way to explain that, but the only answer I can get is that it was like a cloud, something like darkness. I can call it ignorance. But it was not ignorance. It was cruelty we worked with, with my fellow criminals in Rwanda.\**

What do you make of Ngarambe’s statement that the killing he participated in was “beyond our ability to understand”? What is the significance of his statement that he and fellow perpetrators “worked with cruelty”? Does this idea of being in a cloud, or in darkness, support or counter the idea that people acted willingly? And what kind of darkness was it—a darkness of prejudice and ideology? A darkness of hysteria? A darkness of fear?

9. In all genocides, there are people who choose not to participate in the atrocities. What might be some of the factors that influence their choice?
10. In the excerpt you watched, Ngarambe also says that the killers “did not know that the [Tutsi] were human beings, because if they had thought about that they wouldn’t have killed them. Let me also include myself as someone who accepted it: I wouldn’t have accepted that they [the Tutsi] are human beings.”

How are the killers’ views of their victims significant in an effort to understand why these people killed those victims? Why they tortured them? Why they raped them? What is the significance of such views in understanding the perpetrators’ willingness to participate in genocide and eliminationism?

\* The quotation was slightly condensed in the film for flow.

# READING 1: GOLDHAGEN'S ANALYSIS OF WHY KILLERS KILL

**D**aniel Jonah Goldhagen makes the point that analyzing the motivations of perpetrators is very important to any understanding of mass killing or “eliminationist assaults.” Discussing the thought processes of different perpetrators, Goldhagen rules out as explanation for their motives the specific characteristics and structure of the genocidal state. He argues that the nature of such states, their dictatorial governments, their hierarchical structures, and the norms prevailing within them may encourage some individuals to harm certain groups of people, at times playing some role, certainly for the reluctant, in leading perpetrators to participate in the killing. In most cases, however, these factors “have not been the perpetrators’ prime movers, and could not have been, given their actual conduct.” In the following excerpt from the book *Worse Than War*, Goldhagen analyzes perpetrators’ accounts of their motives:

Sometimes when killers speak frankly, they, in a jumble, adduce a host of factors and circumstances that composed the mass-murderous complex of their actions. But when doing so, there is an assumption, explicit or clearly implicit, of underlying consent to the deed, born of their shared conception of the targeted peoples as noxious or threatening, [as] deserving their fate. Some Rwandan perpetrators speak in such a logically incoherent but psychologically plausible muddle. At one moment they discuss how they got drunk on their greed for looting. At another moment they mention that the Interahamwe—dedicated executioners—would not permit them to take a day off or would reproach them for not killing an acquaintance, or would fine them for not going into the bush to kill (hardly a plausible burden as it was easily paid from their looting’s proceeds), or would threaten them with death for not killing. At yet another moment the same perpetrators openly state that they and their comrades and all Hutu hated the Tutsi, thought the Tutsi were not

human beings but snakes, cockroaches, and vermin who wanted to enslave all Hutu, so they believed it imperative to free their country of the Tutsi scourge, so they “cut them.” Elie Ngarambe . . . also speaks in such a vein, asserting among other things that he was coerced, as were other Hutu, but then, when trying to convey . . . the character of the genocide and the various facets of what really happened, says and indicates in many ways that he and ordinary Hutu, perpetrators and bystanders alike, hated the Tutsi, thought them not to be human beings, wanted to destroy them, and pursued or supported these goals with amazing and cruel vigor. When asked, “Were most Hutu happy to get rid of the Tutsi in one way or another, even if they themselves didn’t want to do the killing?” he replies, “They felt like they should be eliminated and wiped out,” explaining that Hutu shared

**Elie Ngarambe, a Hutu perpetrator, explains that “it was cruelty that we worked with, with my fellow criminals in Rwanda.” Goldhagen identifies cruelty to be at the heart of genocide.**



Courtesy of JTN Productions

the government's "bad ideology," which told them to "start from a small child, continue with a pregnant woman, kill her with her husband, her in-laws, and all her families, eliminate them all, eat their things; after you finish everything take their land, take their cars. Think of how long they have been fighting against us." Ngarambe is emphatic. "They [the Hutu] wanted to eliminate all of them [the Tutsi]. They did not want to see anyone surviving." . . .

The complex interactive effects of various influences upon some perpetrators, and yet their willingness and conviction in the rightness of the principle of eliminating the targeted people and of the killing itself that are the foundation of the perpetrators' deeds . . . are captured also by others. Pancrace Hakizamungili discourses in a jumble about having no choice, having hesitations including those born of what will happen should they fail . . . and about his and the other Hutu's hatred for the Tutsi, their enthusiasm in going on the hunt, and their relief at finally ridding themselves of the Tutsi. And so, from Pancrace's mouth come words that could serve as a motto for our age's willing executioners, whether ordinary Germans, ordinary Serbs, or ordinary Hutu: "you obey freely."<sup>2</sup>

## CONNECTIONS:

1. What are the different explanations, according to Goldhagen, that perpetrators provide for their actions?
2. In explaining their motivations, many perpetrators talk about being coerced, drunk, or greedy. But Elie Ngarambe, who participated in the killing of Tutsi during the Rwandan genocide, tells Goldhagen that, in the end, "They [the Hutu] wanted to eliminate all of them [the Tutsi]. They did not want to see anyone surviving." What do this and similar statements Goldhagen provides suggest regarding the motivation of such killers?
3. In the testimonies Goldhagen heard from perpetrators, there was "an assumption, explicit or clearly implicit, of underlying consent to the deed, born of their shared conception of the targeted peoples as noxious or threatening, [as] deserving their fate." What do you think he is arguing in making this statement? What evidence does one need in order to determine killers' underlying assumptions?
4. Scholars propose factors other than free choice that explain, in whole or in part, why ordinary people participate in mass killing. Among those are the ideas that (a) the perpetrators were coerced, (b) they were subjected to intense social-psychological pressure to conform to what others were doing, and (c) they were merely being obedient to authority.
  - i. The argument about obedience has been made by social psychologists Herbert Kelman and V. Lee Hamilton in their book *Crimes of Obedience*:  
*The greater the perceived legitimacy of the authority, the higher the probability that group members will obey. . . . Psychologically, once a demand is seen as legitimate, the*

*person acts as if he were in a non-choice situation. . . . He has transferred control of his own actions over to the authority holder . . . . [In such a situation people will] rarely reflect on the social definition and the wider context of the situation in which they find themselves. They tend to react "mindlessly" . . . .<sup>3</sup>*

What, in **your** opinion, might be some other factors that would explain, in whole or in part, the perpetrators' actions?

- ii. Goldhagen rejects the idea that the bureaucratic, militarized, totalitarian, or hierarchical nature of a state can provide an explanation for the motives of these killers. Goldhagen doubts that a genocidal leader can get people to act against their deepest moral values (if indeed the people disapprove of the genocidal slaughter):

*No man, [no] Hitler, no matter how powerful he is, can move people against their hopes and desires. Hitler, as powerful a figure as he was, as charismatic as he was, could never have accomplished this had there not been tens of thousands, indeed hundreds of thousands of ordinary Germans who were willing to help him.<sup>4</sup>*

How would you evaluate the freedom the killers had in making the decision to participate in genocide? Do you think that they slaughtered people, including children, by the hundreds or thousands mindlessly? Do you think that individual choices are enough to explain people's actions once the leaders set genocide in motion? What else would you like to know about the perpetrators' decision-making processes?



## READING 2: WORDS AND VIOLENCE

### A. PROPAGANDA

Propaganda is a form of communication that is intended not only to prove a point but also to influence people's attitudes and feelings regarding what is politically desirable. In contrast with scholarly or scientific works, which are held to standards of research, impartiality, and objectivity, propaganda is biased, selective in the facts it chooses to present, and often makes false claims.

In the context of genocide and eliminationist assault, propaganda is often used by one group to degrade and humiliate another, and to make that other group a target of violence (in extreme cases, it can even be considered a form of warfare). In Rwanda, Hutu leaders called the Tutsi "cockroaches" and "snakes." For their part, the Nazis called the Jews "vermin," "parasites," "devils," "subhuman," and "pests," depicting their enemies as less than human. Both Hutu and Nazi leaders used propaganda to **dehumanize** their perceived and imagined enemies and portray them as an imminent, often mortal danger (which, in part, contributed to their **demonization**). In the film, Goldhagen asks Esperance Nyirarugira whether she had heard anti-Tutsi propaganda. She responds: "Yes, people were saying it . . . You could pass some people and they shout at you, saying, 'look at that cockroach,' 'look at that snake.' All those kind of names . . ."

### CONNECTIONS:

1. What does the term *dehumanization* mean? What is demonization? What is the difference between the two? How do people become dehumanized or demonized?
2. How does propaganda work? What are its goals? How can you distinguish between scholarly materials and propaganda?
3. Does propaganda create new views or does it reinforce or intensify preexisting prejudices?

### B. EVERYDAY LANGUAGE

In his book *Worse Than War*, Goldhagen moves beyond the idea of propaganda to argue that everyday language also contributes to preparations for the killing of one group by another. Specifically, he argues that history shows how "easily the perpetrators, and the wider population from which they came, understand what's being done and why" during genocide.<sup>5</sup> Goldhagen says that this is most likely because the views that the political leaders were communicating to their peoples were ones that tapped into existing prejudices.

Goldhagen argues that the use of everyday language shapes people's thinking, informs their worldview, and even directs their actions: "Language," he says, "is the principal medium for preparing people to support or perpetrate mass murder." Having been exposed to violent and hateful language, a population exposed to this kind of language finds what's about to unfold—i.e., the mass killing of unprotected people—

comprehensible and, very often, even desirable. Specifically, labels and stereotypes can evoke fear-inspiring images that deprecate groups. Language can easily be used to make those who share these views fear or want to eliminate such groups. It also associates values and norms with things like skin color, ethnicity, and economic status. For example, the word *black* generally refers to a dark color or a person belonging to a dark-skinned group. But it also carries an array of negative connotations (e.g., “the future looks black,” “Black Friday,” “black humor”). Language organizes the social and political world and assigns values and importance to different groups (e.g., Group X is superior by virtue of being light-skinned, patriotic, or hard-working; Group Y is inferior or dangerous by virtue of its backward culture, disloyalty, or race).

Everyday language, therefore, is often not neutral. It is woven into the fabric of daily life, embedded in a nation’s politics, history, and literature. There it is repeated, shaped, and infused with meaning—which, more often than not, reflects the interests of the socioeconomic, political, and cultural elites (or dominant groups) that shape it. And in turn, language plays an active role in empowering some groups and marginalizing others.

## CONNECTIONS:

1. What words in the excerpt you watched reflect the power of language? What words incite emotions? How do you think they do that?
2. In what ways do you think language may be involved in driving people to commit acts of violence against others?
3. What might the relationship be between a government’s dissemination of messages of prejudice and hate toward a group, often called propaganda, and the perception of that group that already exists among that country’s people?
4. Where do you see the effects of language on people’s attitudes in your community?
5. How can changing the way we speak about things change our attitudes?

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1 Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009), 393.

2 Goldhagen, *Worse Than War*, 391–393.

3 Herbert C. Kelman and V. Lee Hamilton, *Crimes of Obedience: Toward a Social Psychology of Authority and Responsibility* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 77, 90.

4 Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, interview with Richard Heffner, *The Open Mind* (TV program), July 9, 1996 (available at <http://www.thirteen.org/openmind/foreign-affairs/hitlers-willing-executioners-part-i/563/>).

5 Goldhagen, *Worse Than War*, 309.



Members of the Armenian community march in London in 2005, protesting against the Turkish government's denial of the Armenian Genocide.

**DVD excerpt:  
59:11–01:10:42**

Available for streaming  
at [www.pbs.org/  
worsethanwar](http://www.pbs.org/worsethanwar)

Note that streaming  
version is roughly  
30 seconds behind  
the DVD timecode.

## WHY DOES THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FAIL TO INTERVENE AND STOP GENOCIDE WHEN IT HAPPENS?

**T**his section's film excerpt investigates the actions of state leaders who had the power to stop genocide. The question it addresses is why such leaders have failed to act even when they knew that killing was taking place on a massive scale.

The film excerpt begins with the question of why genocide continues to occur even though the phrase “never again” has resounded innumerable times since the end of World War II. The discussion then shifts to the international failure to stop the Turks' systematic mass elimination and extermination of Armenians during World War I. The film excerpt focuses on the Turkish government's denial of this genocide and the fact that the United States has failed to formally recognize it as a genocide.

This film excerpt also depicts the crisis and genocide in the region of Darfur in western Sudan. Sudan's president, Omar al-Bashir, whose Islamic Arab dictatorship controls northern Sudan, was conducting a long and bloody eliminationist assault against the predominantly black and Christian southern Sudan. The campaign, which was also designed to bring this oil-rich region under al-Bashir's control, ended in 2005. Al-Bashir and his forces killed as many as two million people and expelled millions more from their homes and regions. In the film, Goldhagen explains that the impunity with which the Sudanese government was allowed to conduct the war against the south led to the genocide in Darfur. In 2003, the Sudanese government began systematic attacks in Darfur, using as a pretext for its action the small incident of a raid by two armed groups of Darfuris on a Sudanese military installation (the raid was protesting years of



This UN convoy evacuated foreign nationals from Rwanda on April 11, 1994. Emmanuel Gatari—a Tutsi and survivor of the genocide—remembers watching the UN forces leaving Tutsi at the mercy of Hutu killers.

economic and political discrimination). By 2010, the Sudanese government and its forces had, directly and indirectly, contributed to the deaths of more than 300,000 Darfuris, expelled more than 2.5 million people, and tortured and raped victims on a vast scale.

An interview with Madeleine Albright, the US ambassador to the United Nations at the time of the genocide in Rwanda (1994), raises questions about the failure of international diplomacy in the 1990s. Specifically, the interview examines the failure of the United States to do anything to stop the Rwandan Hutu's genocidal killing of Tutsi. The film excerpt also

examines and questions the role of the United Nations during the genocide. It probes what Goldhagen sees as UN paralysis and overemphasis on **national sovereignty**. The film takes issue with the definition of the term *national sovereignty* as "the state's right for immunity from other countries intervening in its internal affairs." According to Goldhagen, this definition stands in the way of effective intervention during genocide.

The reactions of outside states to a genocide or eliminationist assault can be broken into those actions carried out before, during, and after the killings. This section focuses on reactions during and after genocide, addressing several of Goldhagen's ideas for early detection and response to imminent genocidal threats.

## CONNECTIONS:

1. List some of your impressions from the film excerpt you just watched. What are your reactions?
2. What does the phrase "never again" mean in this context? What does Goldhagen mean when he says that this has become a "hollow phrase"?
3. The film makes the point that time and again, the international community has failed to protect victims of genocide. What is the "international community"? What are its moral obligations toward victims of genocide? Why do you think it fails to protect them?
4. What is impunity? In what ways can putting an end to impunity contribute to the struggle against the recurrence of genocide?
5. We often hear about the lessons of this or that genocide. Those who speak of these lessons refer to the things we have learned over the years about how to prevent or stop genocide. However, it is well documented that mass murderers also take notice of and learn from previous eliminationist assaults. What, according to the film, have they learned?
6. In the film, Goldhagen questions whether the United Nations will ever stop genocides. Time and again, he asserts, "the UN has let down" victims of genocide. In 1948, the UN adopted an anti-genocide convention. But this international agreement was "never invoked to prevent the death of a single person."
  - i. What, according to the film, could be the reasons for the United Nations' inaction? Why do you think the anti-genocide convention was never invoked for intervention?
  - ii. What do you think this failure tells us about the document? Do you think that this failure is a reflection of the document's flaws or of shortcomings of the states and leaders who are charged with its implementation? How would you make it more effective?
  - iii. What else is needed for an effective response to genocide?

## CONNECTIONS CONTINUED:

7. In the film excerpt, Albright, the US ambassador to the United Nations at the time of the genocide in Rwanda (1994), addresses the inaction of the United States and the United Nations. Albright argues that the government was flooded with other issues:

*The problem is that world leaders, or leaders generally, are distracted. . . . There's no way to describe to someone that has never been in the US government—or any government—how many things are happening every hour and how many things require attention and require will and require resources. . . . [T]his is an issue that weighs very heavy on all our hearts. We were at the same time dealing with Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, [a] few other things that were going on . . . and I think that people did not fully understand all the Hutu-Tutsi rivalry and the internal things that were building up. That, I think, was something that had not been paid enough attention to . . . [I]t is much easier ex post facto to say we knew these kinds of things were going on, but at the time I was ambassador at the United Nations, and I can tell you that the information was not there!*

- i. How does Albright account for the inaction of the United States? How would you evaluate her account in light of the facts the film presents?
  - ii. If Albright is right and governments are often distracted, what mechanism can increase the likelihood that a government pays attention to a crisis and takes action?
8. The UN response to the beginning of the killing in Rwanda was to pull out most of its troops. In the film, Emmanuel Gatari, who survived the genocide, describes the horrors he and other Tutsi faced when they realized that UN forces were leaving: “Tutsi from all the surrounding communities, all of them, came [to the UN post]. The peacekeepers were right there, and the killing squad was down there in those surroundings. . . . We ran in front of [the UN] trucks to block their way. But they just shot into the air, everyone ran off in different directions, and they left. They left us in broad daylight.”
- i. How would you interpret the decision of the UN to withdraw its forces during the genocide in Rwanda?
  - ii. What do you think the pullout says about the UN? Are the Rwandans’ condemnations of the UN just?
9. Sovereignty is a principle of international relations that has governed states’ relations with one another. In 1648, during a period when sovereigns or monarchs were absolute rulers who had all the rights, their subjects (the people they ruled)

had none. Since then, this principle has been included in many agreements between international powers. Agreements have ensured that states’ rulers or sovereigns respect the right of each state to rule subjects within its domain without outside interference. The reality of such agreements often meant that subjects under rule were at their sovereign’s mercy. Indeed, during the last 100 years, many governments that have conducted eliminationist or genocidal assaults on their countries’ peoples shielded themselves behind this principle. They claimed that what they did internally was nobody’s business. In almost all cases, the international community has respected these states’ claims of sovereignty and has taken no action to stay the executioners’ hands.

- i. What are the valuable aspects of the notion of sovereignty? What kinds of protections does it give nations?
  - ii. What are the dangers of sovereignty, according to the film excerpt? Why do you think Goldhagen argues that we cannot expect the UN, which is designed to protect **state sovereignty**, to also protect **people** from their own governments?
  - iii. How would **you** change the concept of sovereignty to make its application more effective and just?
10. In the film excerpt, the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, Francis M. Deng, proposes the following: “I don’t see sovereignty negatively, as a concept of barricading yourself against the world while your people are suffering. . . . I see [sovereignty] as a positive concept of the state discharging its responsibilities towards its own citizens, providing them with protection and assistance. And if for lack of capacity you cannot do it, call on the international community to come and help you do what is your responsibility in the first place.”
- i. What are the differences between Deng’s idea of sovereignty and the ones generally accepted by the international community?
  - ii. What are the points upon which Goldhagen and Deng agree? In what ways do they disagree?
  - iii. What does Deng mean when he says that sovereignty ought to be “a positive concept”?
  - iv. What additional responsibilities does Deng’s definition assign to national governments? To the international community?

## CONNECTIONS CONTINUED:

- v. How could we redefine the rights and responsibilities of states toward their citizens to correct the flaws Goldhagen discusses in the understanding of sovereignty? What are the responsibilities of (1) outside states and (2) the international community toward people who are at risk of being targeted for mass murder, expulsions, systematic rape, or incarceration in concentration camps?
- 11.** During World War I, the Turks expelled a large number of people—the majority of them Armenians—from their homes. They drove these people into the desert, starved them, and exposed them to attacks, sexual violence, and murder. According to the International Association of Genocide Scholars, the Turks perpetrated a genocide of up to 1.5 million Armenians (and other minorities).
- In the aftermath of genocide, a government faces the option of acknowledging its responsibility or denying it. After World War II, the Germans acknowledged their responsibility for the Holocaust, prosecuted leading perpetrators, and adopted measures to compensate surviving Jews for some of their material losses. However, despite overwhelming evidence, the Turkish government refuses to acknowledge the genocide. Other governments, including that of the United States, refuse to call the Turks' planned and systematic mass murder of Armenians "genocide."
- i. Why do you think some governments acknowledge their responsibility while others deny it? What's at stake?
  - ii. Why do Armenians and others around the world demand that the genocide be officially recognized? Why does it matter after so many years?
- 12.** How might use of the term *genocide* contribute to the deliverance of justice? To the prevention of other genocides? To the healing of a people? What could be the effects of the stories and accounts that victims tell? Are there ways to write a history of a genocide that can be harmful to a nation that tries to move past the ethnic conflicts that tore it apart?





These bones are remains excavated from mass graves in Guatemala. During Ríos Montt's dictatorship (1982–1983), in “scorched earth” campaigns, the military destroyed hundreds of villages and murdered tens of thousands of Maya.

**DVD excerpt:**  
**01:27:48–01:34:34**

Available for streaming  
at [www.pbs.org/  
worsethanwar](http://www.pbs.org/worsethanwar)

Note that streaming  
version is roughly  
30 seconds behind  
the DVD timecode.

## IMPUNITY IN GUATEMALA AND ELSEWHERE

**T**his film excerpt focuses on José Efraín Ríos Montt, who led a military coup in Guatemala in 1982. Ríos Montt's dictatorship was marked by an eliminationist campaign against groups of citizens that his government labeled communist “guerilla forces” and other “enemies of the state.”\* Almost all the victims were, however, neither communists nor guerillas.

The majority of those that Ríos Montt targeted were poor indigenous Mayan farmers whom he believed to be racially inferior and inherently subversive. During Ríos Montt's dictatorship (1982 to 1983), in “scorched earth” campaigns, the military destroyed hundreds of villages and exterminated tens of thousands of Maya. Many more became refugees in their own country. All told, a staggering 200,000 people perished during years of governmental assaults on Guatemala's indigenous population. The United Nations-backed Commission for Historical Clarification concluded that “agents of the State of Guatemala, within the framework of counterinsurgency operations carried out between 1981 and 1983, committed acts of genocide against groups of Mayan people.” Without naming Ríos Montt explicitly, the commission pointed out that the “President of the Republic, as Commander in Chief of the Army and Minister of Defence,” bore direct responsibility for these atrocities.<sup>1</sup>

The film excerpt begins with Goldhagen introducing the concept of impunity, or the failure to hold perpetrators of genocides and eliminationism accountable for their actions. Goldhagen states that “the perpetrators of elimination almost always act with total impunity.” To illustrate this failure, the film discusses the genocidal and eliminationist campaigns of José Efraín Ríos Montt. “At the time this killer committed his crimes,” Goldhagen adds, “he believed he would get away with murder. So

\* “Guerilla forces” are small, mobile, and irregular military units that operate by carrying out ambushes, raids, and strikes designed to sabotage the operation of a military that the guerilla fighters view as oppressive. *Guerilla* means “little war” in Spanish.





On January 14, 2008, Guatemala's former dictator José Efraín Ríos Montt is sworn in as a member of congress. Ríos Montt has enjoyed impunity for years; as an elected official, he is protected from prosecution.

far, he's been proven right." Indeed, Ríos Montt has escaped punishment for his deeds. After his dictatorial presidency, he remained a general in the military. Since the 1990s, he has served multiple terms as a member of Guatemala's congress and as the congress's president. In 2003, he ran (unsuccessfully) for the post of Guatemala's president. As a member of Guatemala's congress, Ríos Montt is immune from criminal prosecution.

In the film, with the help of Otilia Lux de Coti, a Mayan member of congress and one of the authors of the Commission for Historical Clarification report,

Goldhagen gains access to Guatemala's congress building and is subsequently able to confront Ríos Montt in its halls. During the impromptu interview, Goldhagen asks Ríos Montt if he is responsible for the genocide in Guatemala. Ríos Montt's evasive and combative response ends with his suggestion that Goldhagen should "accuse him in a court of law."

The segment ends with Goldhagen's statement that "all this comes down to a choice." The choice Ríos Montt made over 25 years ago was "to murder and expel hundreds of thousands of his country's people" because it served his political goals and because he knew he could get away with it. Goldhagen suggests that with different policies, we can change the calculations of genocidal leaders and force them to make different decisions.

## CONNECTIONS:

Below is an excerpt from Goldhagen's discussion with Ríos Montt.

**DANIEL JONAH GOLDHAGEN:** . . . Was there a genocide in Guatemala, and were you responsible? . . .

**JOSÉ EFRAÍN RÍOS MONTT** (to translator): You will translate for me? *En primer lugar, en los acuerdos de naciones unidas y los códigos legales, normales, está establecido el concepto de genocidio.*

**TRANSLATOR:** Okay: the UN laws and the international codes have a concept for genocide.

**RÍOS MONTT:** *Está establecido en que consiste el genocidio.*

**TRANSLATOR:** It's clearly defined.

**RÍOS MONTT:** *Al terminar una etnia . . .*

**TRANSLATOR:** When you're going to eliminate an ethnical group . . .

**RÍOS MONTT:** *Terminar una religión . . .*

**TRANSLATOR:** When you're going to eliminate a religious group . . .

**RÍOS MONTT:** *Un grupo específico . . .*

**TRANSLATOR:** Or a specific group of people.

**RÍOS MONTT:** *Y alguna otra ocurrencia . . . la question es eliminar algo que se opone a una norma.*

**TRANSLATOR:** The definition clearly states it's eliminating something.

**GOLDHAGEN** (clarifying): The definition states eliminating "in whole or in part an ethnic group," which the Mayan people were.

**TRANSLATOR:** [Translates.]

**RÍOS MONTT:** *Sí.*

**TRANSLATOR:** He agrees with you.

**GOLDHAGEN:** So were you responsible for this?

**RÍOS MONTT:** *Si yo fuera responsable, estaría preso.*

**TRANSLATOR:** He would be in jail if he was responsible for that. . . .

## CONNECTIONS CONTINUED:

**GOLDHAGEN:** Do you accept the Historical Commission's finding that 200,000 indigenous Maya were killed while you were president, by your military?

**RÍOS MONTT:** *Que lleve las pruebas y que me acuse ante cualquier tribunal.*

**TRANSLATOR:** He says that you should take proof and accuse him in a court of law.

1. What is your reaction to the scene in which Goldhagen confronts Ríos Montt? What do you imagine you would be feeling or thinking if you were talking to Ríos Montt in Guatemala's congress building?
2. Does Ríos Montt believe that genocide took place in Guatemala? Goldhagen corrects Ríos Montt's definition of genocide (you may review the definition in the first chapter of this guide). In what ways does Ríos Montt distort that definition in the interview? What explanation does Ríos Montt provide for his innocence? On what grounds does he base his defense?
3. What do Ríos Montt's tone and body language suggest?
4. Goldhagen says that Ríos Montt "considered his political goals, weighed his options, decided he could get away with it, and made a calculated decision to murder and expel hundreds of thousands of his country's people." Later, Goldhagen argues that leaders who kill their people "are rational calculators of risk and benefits." Goldhagen then asks, "Can we get future leaders to make a different decision?" He believes that we can change their "cost-benefit calculus." What do you think about this? In what ways can the price of mass killing be raised to make it more unlikely to occur?
5. In the case of the Guatemalan eliminationist assault on Maya, members of the international community did not simply turn a blind eye: some actively supported the military regime that carried out genocide. Briefly research the role of Western countries in the conflict. Based on your findings, what was the West's political interest in supporting Ríos Montt's regime? How might this contribute to the impunity Ríos Montt has enjoyed over the years? What other factors might have contributed to this impunity?
6. What are the challenges to disabling or limiting impunity? After years of struggle to hold Guatemalan military and government officials accountable, survivors, activists, and lawyers turned to Spain to seek justice. According to Kate Doyle (who appears in the film), in 1999, this group filed criminal charges of terrorism, genocide, and systematic torture against senior Guatemalan officials (including Ríos Montt) in the Spanish National Court (the court claimed "universal jurisdiction" over this case, drawing on the idea that some crimes, including genocide, can be prosecuted anywhere in the world). In 2006, Guatemalan courts accepted the jurisdiction of the Spanish National Court and arrested two Guatemalan generals. However, on December 12, 2007, the Guatemalan Constitutional Court ruled that Spain did not have jurisdiction in the case, and it released the two accused. In other words, the Constitutional Court claimed that only Guatemalan courts could try these individuals.<sup>2</sup>
  - i. How does the concept of state sovereignty in international affairs enable impunity? Why is it regarded as an obstacle to justice?
  - ii. Who should have jurisdiction over cases of genocide and eliminationism? If countries are incapable of prosecuting those responsible for perpetrating these crimes within their borders or are unwilling to do so, should other countries or the International Criminal Court prosecute them? Who should judge those accused of genocide?
7. It has now been nearly 30 years since Ríos Montt's reign. Should there ever be a "statute of limitations" on mass murder? Do you believe that "the passage of time in no way diminishes the guilt of the perpetrator" (as some have argued in the case of German perpetrators of the Holocaust who are now facing charges in their 80s and 90s)?<sup>3</sup>
8. What is immunity? How does or can it stand in the way of ending impunity? Consider the fact that Ríos Montt enjoys immunity from prosecution as a member of Guatemala's congress. Are there crimes that should not be protected by legal and diplomatic immunity? Why?

1 "Memory of Silence: Report of the Commission for Historical Clarification—Conclusions and Recommendations," <http://shr.aaas.org/guatemala/ceh/report/english/conc2.html> (accessed May 7, 2011).

2 Kate Doyle, "The Guatemala Genocide Case: The *Audiencia Nacional*, Spain," The National Security Archive website of The George Washington University, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/guatemala/genocide/round1.htm> (accessed March 9, 2011).

3 David Crossland, "Germany's Last Nazi War Crimes Trial? 86-Year-Old SS Killer Faces Murder Charges," Spiegel Online International, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,547216,00.html> (accessed July 7, 2011).



US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and former UN Chief and Kenya crisis mediator Kofi Annan hold a press conference in Nairobi on February 18, 2008. Goldhagen asserts that this timely diplomatic intervention aided in averting further genocidal (or eliminationist) violence in Kenya.

**DVD excerpt:**  
**01:34:34–01:40:05**

Available for streaming  
at [www.pbs.org/  
worsethanwar](http://www.pbs.org/worsethanwar)

Note that streaming  
version is roughly  
30 seconds behind  
the DVD timecode.

## HOW CAN WE CHANGE THE CHOICES GENOCIDAL LEADERS MAKE?

**T**his section's film excerpt presents Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's ideas about the prevention of genocide and explores the differences between prevention and intervention. It begins with a conversation between Goldhagen and Susan Weinberg, the publisher of *Worse Than War*, about the possibility of preventing genocide. Goldhagen discusses different forms of intervention, including timely diplomatic intervention (as in Kenya) and military intervention (as in Bosnia), arguing that each, depending on the situation, may be effective. In the case of Bosnia, he explains, though military intervention was not timely, it did demonstrate how "relatively little force can achieve extraordinary results."

Earlier in the film, Goldhagen shows that leaders' calculated political choices are crucial factors in the initiation of genocide. In this segment, he builds on that analysis, suggesting that the best way to prevent eliminationism and genocide is to change the cost-benefit calculations that leaders make. Goldhagen explains, "Genocides are political, and they are initiated by a few leaders whose cost-benefit calculations can be changed." Political leaders initiate genocide knowing that "the international community is unlikely to interfere with their deadly plans," and that the possibility of being tried and convicted in international courts is small. These courts, Goldhagen argues, are often slow and ineffective; as he points out, they do not even have the capacity to arrest the indicted perpetrators.

In exploring the potential options, Goldhagen asks Tharcisse Karugarama, Rwanda's minister of justice, if a new international orientation toward intervention in genocide is necessary. Karugarama replies, "Genocide never happens as a surprise . . . the signs are usually available and apparent. And so there should be a debate at the UN Security Council . . . to say under which circumstances intervention would be deemed

**NATO airstrikes target a Bosnian Serb ammunition depot east of Sarajevo on August 30, 1995. In the case of Bosnia, military intervention was not timely, but it did—according to Goldhagen—demonstrate how “relatively little force can achieve extraordinary results,” because it brought an end to the Serbs’ genocidal (or eliminationist) assault on Bosniaks.**



AP Photo/Oleg Stepanovic

necessary.” Karugarama points out, specifically, that we need to go back to the drawing board. Goldhagen agrees. He says that we need to establish an “international watchdog organization” made up of democratic nations that will enforce a “zero-tolerance policy on genocide and eliminationism.” Essentially, this would mean that each of the members of the organization would have the “right to intervene individually or collectively to stop campaigns of elimination.” But he also argues that we need to devise an effective system of **prevention** rather than simply focusing on intervening after the eliminationist assaults and the killing have already begun—at which point it is already too late.

“In order to prevent genocide,” he continues, “the international community needs to show political leaders that the *cost* to them of expelling and killing people will far outweigh the benefits.” Accordingly, Goldhagen proposes a bounty program aimed at political leaders who perpetrate genocide, similar to the US bounty program for hunting down terrorists, Rewards for Justice (which has been in existence for decades under both Democratic and Republican presidents).

The excerpt then cuts to a conversation between Goldhagen and Haris Silajdžić, president of Bosnia and Herzegovina, about whether such a bounty program would have stopped Slobodan Milošević from perpetrating genocide in Bosnia. Silajdžić thinks it would have worked, given that Milošević “counted [on] powerful friends, and most of all [on] the de facto situation on the ground, knowing that the international community is in love with the status quo.” The excerpt concludes with Karugarama’s reflections on preventive measures:

If people knew that at the end of the day they’ll be the losers, they’d never invest in a losing enterprise.

Because genocide, as you correctly pointed out, is a political enterprise, it’s a political game. But again, it’s a power play, it’s wealth, it’s everything. So if people involved knew at the end of the day they’d be the losers, they would not play the game. That’s for sure.

## CONNECTIONS:

1. In the excerpt you watched, Susan Weinberg, the publisher of *Worse Than War*, argues that activists, journalists, and others have protested genocides and demanded action from leaders for years. Yet, she says, “the leaders of the world haven’t listened.” Goldhagen responds that genocidal leaders “are not crazy”; rather, they are “rational calculators of costs and benefits.” What evidence do we have that helps us decide the extent to which this argument is true? If Goldhagen is right, what are the implications of this perspective?
2. Goldhagen adds that genocides are political events (that is, they serve political goals that benefit a leader or a group of leaders). He argues, “They are initiated by a few leaders whose cost-benefit calculations can be changed.” What are some of the factors that can affect such calculations? What international actions (or lack thereof) might encourage leaders to unleash and implement genocidal campaigns, according to Goldhagen? What actions could deter leaders from initiating eliminationist and mass-murderous assaults?



## CONNECTIONS CONTINUED:

3. Goldhagen argues that the international courts “do some good, but they are unbearably slow and ineffective.” What could a more effective international court system do to affect the decisions of leaders who might otherwise pursue eliminationist policies?
4. Goldhagen explains that the “institutions we rely on to combat genocide don’t work.” However, he suggests that there is proof that some forms of action and intervention can be effective. What suggestions does he make? What are some reasons to think that genocide can be prevented? What evidence do we have that it can be prevented?
5. Based on the statement by Rwanda’s justice minister, Tharcisse Karugarama, that “genocide never happens as a surprise,” what do you think are the signs that should trigger international reaction? As you think about it, remember Goldhagen’s definition of eliminationism. Which eliminationist actions should trigger an international response? What should that response be?
6. Research the goals of the UN and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which is an alliance of democratic countries.
  - i. How do you explain the failure of these two organizations to live up to all of their promises?
  - ii. What factors can help these organizations move from rhetoric to action?
7. What would be the advantages of establishing a democratic “watchdog” organization, like the one Goldhagen proposes in the film, for preventing genocide? What suggests that this new organization might succeed where the UN has failed? What could make us think that the new organization would intervene to stop genocide, unlike the UN or NATO?
8. In 2001, the United Nations commissioned a report that attempted to redefine national sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> In the report, commissioners sought a broader definition of the term, one that includes not only a state’s right to conduct its internal affairs without intervention but also its “responsibility to protect” its citizens (the report is often referred to as “R2P”). What could such responsibility mean? To what extent does the international community have an obligation, moral or otherwise, to intervene when a state fails to protect its citizens (for instance, when it kills them)?
9. Prevention differs from intervention, which differs from punishment. What is the role of each, and at what genocidal or eliminationist stage (before, during, or after) should they be used? Which, if any, should we focus on? Why?
10. What are various means of prevention and intervention, and when might each be used?
11. How can diplomacy serve as a method of both intervention and prevention? In what cases might it be more beneficial to initiate a diplomatic approach versus a forceful one, and vice versa?
12. According to Goldhagen, a bounty program could be one method used to demonstrate to leaders that the cost of committing genocide would far outweigh the benefits. The international community could declare “the leaders of countries that commit genocide to be outlaws,” permitting them to be “hunted down until they either give themselves up or until they’re killed.” Debate the merit of Goldhagen’s proposal. In what ways might a bounty program deter leaders?
13. Goldhagen argues that the current situation or “status quo,” which is mainly one of nonintervention, is disastrous. How should this be weighed against the potential costs of acting to stop genocide and eliminationism?
14. How often would an anti-genocide system of prevention, intervention, and punishment have to work for it to be justified? For it to be effective?
15. How can the cost-benefit model be applied not only to political leaders but also to those supporting them and those on whom they rely in order to stay in power? How can we increase the costs to leaders who support and participate in genocide and eliminationism?

<sup>1</sup> “The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty,” Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun, eds. (Ottawa: International Development Research Center, 2001).



Erich Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, and Moishe Kotler (from left to right) stand before the mass grave of Jews of Chernivtsi, where Erich Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen's father, would have likely been interred had he not narrowly escaped death outside his home when he was 10 years old.

**DVD excerpt:**  
01:40:05–01:46:12

Available for streaming  
at [www.pbs.org/  
worsethanwar](http://www.pbs.org/worsethanwar)

Note that streaming  
version is roughly  
30 seconds behind  
the DVD timecode.

## STOPPING GENOCIDE: WHAT MOVES US TO ACT?

**A**fter the full extent of the Holocaust became known, many people vowed not to let states slaughter their citizens on a vast scale. Yet, as *Worse Than War* makes clear, genocide and eliminationism have continued. This short section explores the question, What might move people to act in order to prevent or stop mass killing and other forms of eliminationism? In the narration, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen suggests that the “key to getting us to act is to identify with the victims.” He explains that if we could see the victims as members of our own families, we would feel the urgency to demand that our political leaders act to protect the innocent. Ultimately, he argues, our political leaders are the ones who can take decisive measures to end mass murder and elimination. The film excerpt presents the story of Erich Goldhagen, Goldhagen’s father, who barely escaped being murdered outside his home when he was 10 years old. The excerpt also presents horrific footage of an armed Serbian unit massacring Bosnian Muslims of Srebrenica in 1995. This excerpt concludes the film.

### CONNECTIONS:

1. Why do you think that the filmmaker, Mike DeWitt, chose to include Erich Goldhagen and his story in the film? What do you think this and other personal stories add to a study of genocide and eliminationism? Have you ever heard survivors of genocide speak? What was the effect on you?
2. In the film, Daniel Jonah Goldhagen says that the “key to getting us to act is to identify with the victims.” How does he

think this could occur? Did you see anything in this film—or in your other studies of genocide—that allowed you to empathize or really identify with victims?

3. What is empathy? What is the difference between sympathy and empathy? What might cause us to feel empathy toward victims of eliminationism and genocide?

## CONNECTIONS CONTINUED:

4. What does it take to move people from empathy to action? After all, today, with satellites, cell phones, and activists and journalists willing and able to publicize eliminationist assaults, we know almost instantaneously that these acts are being perpetrated. How can we get people to respond appropriately to stop them?
5. Social scientists have studied what makes people care about the problems of others. They discovered that people are more likely to donate money to an individual who is in trouble than to hundreds of suffering victims.\* Why do you think this is the case? What can be done to highlight the individuality of each victim?
6. Some people believe that one of the challenges that individuals, groups, and nations face in responding to genocide and eliminationism is that the problems seem so overwhelming and difficult that people feel paralyzed. What framework or suggestion does Goldhagen offer to respond to the dual challenges of making it seem possible to do something effective?
7. The film concludes with footage from the massacre of Srebrenica. Why do you think the filmmakers chose to include this scene? What message are they conveying by using it at the end of the film? How might the makers of the film hope that the footage will impact the viewer?
8. What do you think it takes for individual people, often thousands of miles from the victims of eliminationist assaults, to include those victims in their circle of moral and actual responsibility?
9. What ideas, images, and questions are you taking away from your study of the film *Worse Than War*? What do you think the filmmakers, Mike DeWitt and Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, wanted the audience to take away?
10. If you were asked to share three central things about genocide and eliminationism that everyone should know, what would they be?
11. Why does Goldhagen focus on presidents and prime ministers at the end of the film?
12. How can we get our political leaders to act?
13. After eliminationist assaults have ended, particularly when the perpetrating regime has been deposed or the people of a country or group have come to recognize the horrors that their countrymen have perpetrated, what kinds of reckoning are necessary or desirable? Publicizing the truth? Writing accurate histories? Making, watching, and analyzing films such as this one? Forcing perpetrators to apologize? Establishing truth commissions? Holding trials? Initiating other processes of reconciliation?

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\* For more information about this issue, see Facing History and Ourselves, *Teaching "Reporter": A Study Guide Created to Accompany the Film "Reporter"* (Brookline: Facing History and Ourselves National Foundation, Inc., 2010), 17–19.



# MAPS

## THREATS AND CAMPAIGNS OF GENOCIDE/ ELIMINATIONISM IN REGIONS OF AFRICA



### RWANDA

In April 1994, after years of conflict in the region, the plane of the Hutu president of Rwanda, Juvénal Habyarimana was shot down. Hutu extremists, who had been planning for a genocidal campaign, seized control of the government and blamed Tutsis for the president's death. Between April and July, Hutu extremists murdered as many as 800,000 Tutsi and many Hutus. The killing stopped only when the Rwandan Patriotic Army, composed mainly of Tutsi, defeated the Hutu extremist regime.

### SUDAN

In 2003, in retaliation for an attack on two military installations, the Sudanese government began a systematic campaign to destroy the people of the western region of Sudan and their livelihood. Experts estimate that by 2005 the Sudanese government and its forces had contributed to the death of more than 300,000 Darfuris and to the rape, torture, and displacement of more than 2.5 million people. Prior to this assault in Darfur, President Omar al-Bashir had been involved in an even larger eliminationist onslaught against the predominantly black and Christian Southern Sudan. During this assault, which lasted two decades, ending in 2005, al-Bashir's government expelled millions and killed as many as two million people. In 2010, al-Bashir became the first sitting head of state to be indicted for genocide by the International Criminal Court. After years of struggle, South Sudan became an independent state in 2011.

### KENYA

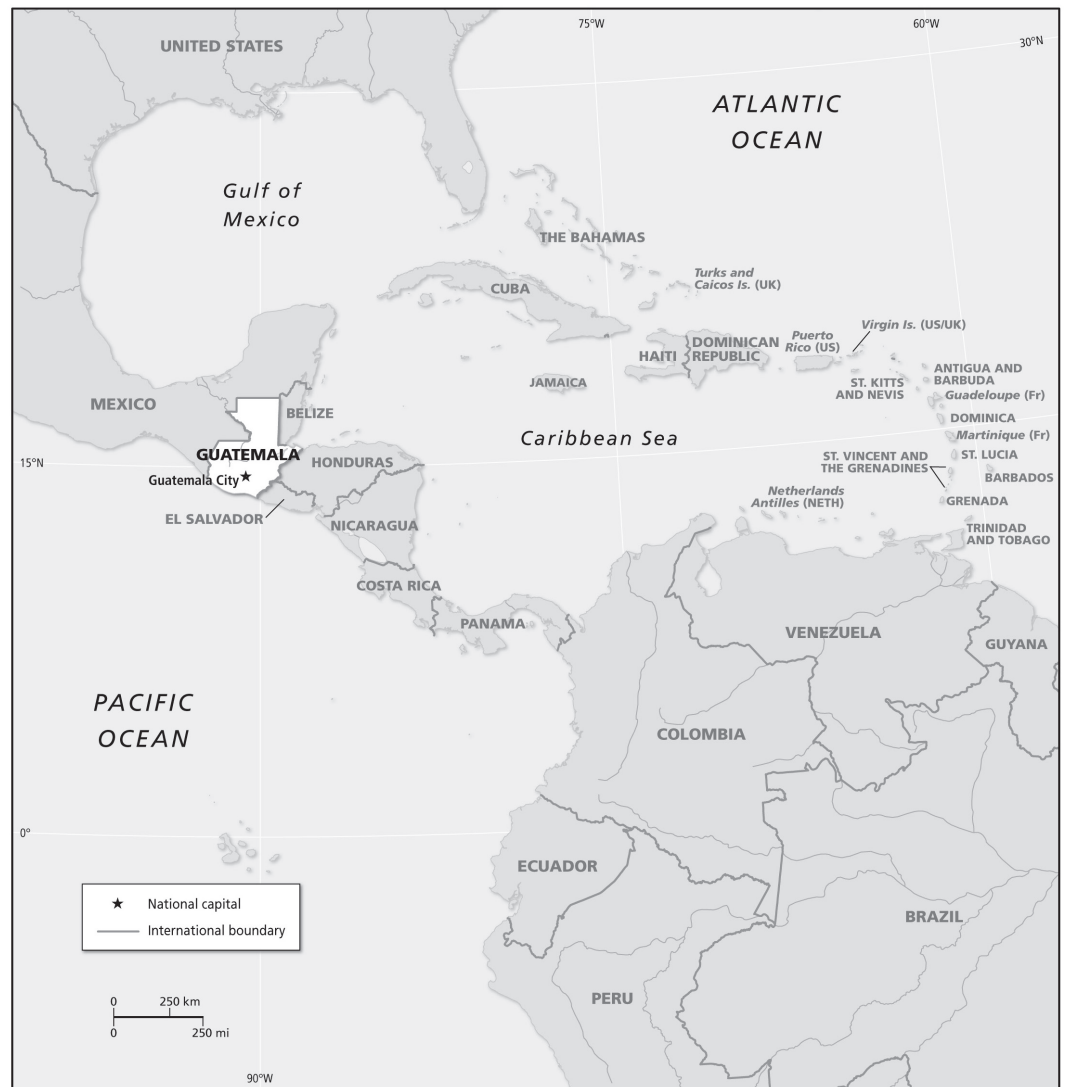
In 2008, the timely international intervention from United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan and other African and Western leaders halted an eliminationist assault in Kenya and led to a diplomatic solution to what could have easily escalated into a genocide for that country.

## CAMBODIAN GENOCIDE/ELIMINATIONISM (1974–1979)



After a quick revolution in 1974, the Khmer Rouge seized power in Cambodia and began to expel to the countryside hundreds of thousands of professionals, intellectuals, members of ethnic minorities, and those suspected of connections with the former government or with the West. As many as 1.7 million of them died. The killings were carried out in agrarian camps (commonly known as the “killing fields”) and in prisons and interrogation centers around the country. The genocide ended in 1979 after Vietnam invaded Cambodia, pushed the Khmer Rouge into the backcountry, and took control of the government.

## GENOCIDE/ELIMINATIONISM IN GUATEMALA (1982–1983)



On March 23, 1982, the sixth successful military coup since 1960 instated José Efraín Ríos Montt as president of the Republic of Guatemala and as head of the national army. During his reign, an estimated 70,000 people were killed under the pretext that they were insurgents. In reality, Montt and other Guatemalan leaders conducted an indiscriminate campaign against the Guatemalan indigenous Maya, razing their homes and destroying their crops and livelihood. Hundreds of thousands were displaced amidst widespread violence, rape, and torture. Ríos Montt's forces were responsible for more than a third of the total deaths of some 200,000 people who were killed by the Guatemalan government between 1960 and 1996.

## GENOCIDE, ETHNIC CLEANSING, AND ELIMINATIONISM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA (1992–1995)



After Yugoslavia began to unravel in the late 1980s, the Serb leader Slobodan Milošević went on the offensive in an attempt to keep its republics together and to unite the Serb communities in the region as part of a “Greater Serbia.” When Bosnia and Herzegovina defied Milošević and seceded in 1992, Bosnian Serb leaders began a military campaign to clear all the Muslim communities that stood in the way of this vision of a “Greater Serbia.” With ample Serbian help, Bosnian Serb paramilitary and military units forcibly removed the majority of the Muslim population, raped tens of thousands of women, and interned or killed everybody they deemed a threat. The violence reached its tragic peak in the summer of 1995 in Srebrenica, where Serbs massacred over 8,000 Muslim men. After three years of indecisive actions, NATO forces finally began an aerial bombing campaign that halted the violence. All told, the Serbs were responsible for the deaths of as many as 100,000 Bosnians.

## PERSECUTION, GENOCIDE, AND ELIMINATION OF JEWS (1933–1945)



Over half of the world's Jewish population, approximately 9.5 million Jews, lived in Europe prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. When the Nazi party took over Germany in 1933, its leaders began an ideological war against the Jews. Based on antisemitic and racist policies, the Nazi state set out to create a pure "Aryan" society and to solve what it called "the Jewish Problem" by eliminating world Jewry. From 1933 to 1939, persecution, segregation, and violence drove the majority of German Jews to seek emigration or take illegal flight. By 1942, Germany had conquered territory throughout Europe and established an organized system of mass murder. Together with the help of collaborators in occupied territories and Axis countries—and often with their enthusiastic support—the Germans deported Jews from all over Europe to ghettos, concentration camps, death camps, and extermination sites. As part of the German occupation of Europe, many other Jews were killed by German mobile murder units and by the local population. Under the context of a total war, the Nazis and their collaborators murdered over six million Jews and millions of others during the Holocaust. When Germany collapsed in 1945, European Jewry had been reduced to one-third its pre-war size.



# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The purpose of the list below is to offer teachers and other readers additional information and background on the main topics covered by the film and the guide.

## GENOCIDE STUDIES

Gellately, Robert and Ben Kiernan, eds. *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. *Worse Than War: Genocide, Eliminationism, and the Ongoing Assault on Humanity*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2009.

Hochschild, Adam. *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror, and Heroism in Colonial Africa*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998.

Kiernan, Ben. *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007.

Power, Samantha. *"A Problem from Hell": America and the Age of Genocide*. New York: Basic Books, 2002.

Totten, Samuel, William S. Parsons, and Israel W. Charny, eds. *Genocide in the Twentieth Century: Critical Essays and Eyewitness Accounts*. New York: Garland, 1995.

Weitz, Eric D. *A Century of Genocide: Utopias of Race and Nation*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003.

## THE BOSNIAN GENOCIDE

Anzulovic, Branimir. *Heavenly Serbia: From Myth to Genocide*. New York: New York University Press, 1999.

Gutman, Roy. *A Witness to Genocide: The 1993 Pulitzer Prize–Winning Dispatches on the "Ethnic Cleansing" of Bosnia*. New York: Macmillan, 1993.

Job, Cvijeto. *Yugoslavia's Ruin: The Bloody Lessons of Nationalism, A Patriot's Warning*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

Sell, Louis. *Slobodan Milosevic and the Destruction of Yugoslavia*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002.

## THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Akçam, Taner. *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006.

Balakian, Peter. *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response*. New York: HarperCollins, 2003.

Dadrian, Vahakn N. *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus*, 3rd rev. ed. Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1997.

Hovannisian, Richard G., ed., *The Armenian Genocide: History, Politics, Ethics*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992.

## THE CAMBODIAN GENOCIDE

DePaul, Kim, ed. *Children of Cambodia's Killing Fields: Memoirs by Survivors*. Compiled by Dith Pran. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997.

Kiernan, Ben. *The Pol Pot Regime: Race, Power, and Genocide in Cambodia Under the Khmer Rouge, 1975–79*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996.

Ponchaud, François. *Cambodia: Year Zero*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1977.

## GENOCIDE IN DARFUR

Bashir, Halima, and Damien Lewis. *Tears of the Desert: A Memoir of Survival in Darfur*. New York: One World/Ballantine, 2009.

Cheadle, Don, and John Prendergast. *Not on Our Watch: The Mission to End Genocide in Darfur and Beyond*. New York: Hyperion, 2007.

Hamilton, Rebecca. *Fighting for Darfur: Public Action and the Struggle to Stop Genocide*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Prunier, Gérard. *Darfur: A 21st Century Genocide*, 3rd ed. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.

Totten, Samuel, and Eric Markusen, eds. *Genocide in Darfur: Investigating the Atrocities in the Sudan*. New York: Routledge, 2006.



## THE HOLOCAUST

Bauer, Yehuda, and Nili Keren. *A History of the Holocaust*, rev. ed. New York: Franklin Watts, 2001.

Botwinick, Rita S. *A History of the Holocaust: From Ideology to Annihilation*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996.

Friedländer, Saul. *Nazi Germany and the Jews, Vol. 1: The Years of Persecution 1933–1939*. New York: HarperCollins, 1997.

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Goldhagen, Daniel Jonah. *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996.

Rees, Laurence. *Auschwitz: A New History*. New York: PublicAffairs, 2005.

## GENOCIDE IN GUATEMALA

Higonnet, Etelle, ed. *Quiet Genocide: Guatemala 1981–1983*. Translated by Marcie Mersky. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2009.

Nelson, Diane M. *A Finger in the Wound: Body Politics in Quincentennial Guatemala*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999.

Sanford, Victoria. *Buried Secrets: Truth and Human Rights in Guatemala*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

Wilson, Richard. *Maya Resurgence in Guatemala: Q'eqchi' Experiences*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.

## RWANDAN GENOCIDE

Dallaire, Roméo. *Shake Hands with the Devil: The Failure of Humanity in Rwanda*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2004.

Gourevitch, Philip. *We Wish to Inform You that Tomorrow We Will Be Killed with Our Families*. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1998.

Hatzfeld, Jean. *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak*. New York: Picador, 2005.

Keane, Fergal. *Season of Blood: A Rwandan Journey*. New York: Viking, 1995.



*Worse than War offers a unique opportunity for educators to introduce to students the complexities of the genocides of the past 100 years in one remarkable film. These materials have become a permanent part of the curriculum in my Facing History and Ourselves class.*

—Susan M. Harvey, educator, Littleton High School, MA

*The Worse than War materials raise the level of students' thinking about decision making and activism. Students learn that seeing others inside our universe of obligation is not enough; we must learn to see ourselves as part of another person's universe of experience.*

—Maura Siano, educator, Arlington High School, MA



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