



***MAKING CONNECTIONS***  
***OCTOBER 2006***  
***RWANDA***

*How long could I remain traumatized? I have eight children, six boys and two girls. If I dwelt on death, it would mean the death of my children as well. I had to wake up and get to work for their well being and survival.... I also wanted to earn the confidence of other women. In this culture, being a widow has a negative connotation. They ask you why you are alone. It upset me, but I didn't want to depend on a man. I wanted to affirm myself, to show that a widow can be productive and gain the respect of others. Solidarity among women has been a great advantage. Berthe Mukamusoni, Rwandan Legislator*

Over a one-hundred day period in 1994, Rwandans massacred other Rwandans, some 800,000 of them. In houses, in the streets, even in churches, Tutsi and moderate Hutu Rwandans were macheted, machine-gunned, or beaten to death. Children, women, elderly—no one was spared if found. Indeed women were particularly targeted even before the killing began. Among the earliest signs of the impending horror was a media campaign slandering Tutsi women. Over half a million women and girls were raped, often tortured or mutilated, sometimes intentionally infected with HIV/AIDS. Between 2000-5000 children were born to raped women. Half a million others became orphans. A million people lost their homes; millions more ran for their lives only to face more horror as refugees in ill-prepared displacement camps elsewhere. All this while the world stood by....

The horror of Rwanda is a double-horror, at least. What happened—the genocide—is horrific. So is the abandonment of Rwanda by the “civilized” world. Until too late, western nations, media, and the UN explained the situation as “tribal hatred.” They refused to call it “genocide”—that would have meant a responsibility to act. So they left “the tribes” to it. In the wake of the debacle and death in Somalia a year earlier, it was safer, easier, and cheaper for the United States and the United Nations to look away—even when government and UN officials had been given advance warning by sources inside Rwanda.

Tribal hatred is only part of the explanation for Rwanda. Long back, Hutu farmers and Tutsi cattle herders had their differences. These were exacerbated and politicized by European colonizers and racist stereotyping. (The Tutsi seemed “more civilized” because lighter and thus were favored.) Fear and hatred were fueled further by the impact of western economic policies and market fluctuations on Rwanda and by the manipulation of western nations with political and economic interests there. When exploiting Rwanda resulted in genocide, ignoring Rwanda became policy. And racist

stereotyping once again reinforced the policy: “tribal hatred.” Rwanda’s genocide is the entire “civilized” world’s shame.

Still “waking up” from that horror are thousands of women like Berthe. You’ll “meet” some of them at the end of this edition of *MC* in our Litany for Rwandan Women. They are like Berthe and yet not. These women too know they have to “wake up.” They want independence and self-sufficiency like Berthe. They too must provide for their children. And many of them, like Berthe, want to help rebuild not only their own lives but also the lives of other women and the life of Rwanda. It isn’t Berthe’s courage they lack nor her strength or her dignity. You’ll recognize those qualities in them. But Berthe is educated. She relied on her knowledge and ability and the confidence these gave her in a situation where women who could had to step into leadership quickly. Before the genocide, Berthe was a wife, mother, and school manager. Today, she is a mother, a legislator, and a leader of women. The Rwandan population after the genocide was 70% female. Still, 34% of households are headed by women. 28,000 by girls under 18. It was hard enough for Berthe. Just imagine... but we can’t.

Women for Women International is helping women awaken in a program that opens their eyes to their own strengths, offers the basic assistance they need to begin to rise, and provides training so that they can move on their own. Or rather, as Berthe emphasizes, in the company of other women. As Hutu and Tutsi women work side by side to revive their lives and their country, the world is waking up to their resilience, dignity, courage, and something even more remarkable—their ability to forgive each other. I hope they can forgive us too.

### ***Focus: Women’s Empowerment in Rwanda***

In 2004, WFWI issued a report on the progress of women’s empowerment in Rwanda. Its findings are echoed by those of other non-governmental agencies and journalists. Everyone is marveling at the speed with which Rwandan society is catching up to and even surpassing many developed nations in its legal provisions for women. Polygamy is now illegal. Women have the right to inheritance and can independently or jointly own property. Male and female children are equal in the site of the law. And rape is a capital crime.

It’s no coincidence that the legal status of Rwandan women improved dramatically as women stepped into political leadership after the genocide. Rwanda now has the largest percentage of women in its legislature of any nation (49%). Moreover, these women leaders acted to secure women’s political leadership by making it mandatory in the new Constitution that 30% of the seats in government go to women. Before 1994, women occupied about 5% of those positions. They developed a pyramid system of leadership and representation so that women at every level of society might have a voice and so that women can move up in leadership positions from the grassroots.

Prior to 1994, the ratio of boys to girls in school was 9 to 1. Today, it is almost equal. Women make up almost 50% of the college student population whereas before it was less than 6%. Prior to 1992, women could not open a bank account without their husbands’ permission. They couldn’t belong to profit-making organizations. Now their rights to control their own finances are secured by law. A number of micro-credit programs help many women start or grow their own businesses. By necessity women

took on work after the genocide that they would not have been permitted to do before. And they keep doing it.

In some respects, Rwanda's women did not just take on leadership because they had to. They seized the opportunity to make sure that the new Rwanda would be a radically different society for women—that they wouldn't go back. But despite the gains, there is still a long way to go. Indeed many of the gains are abstract. The legal rights for women, for example, are difficult to enforce, especially in rural areas. And 95% of the population is rural. As in all countries, Rwandans are finding that even with tough laws against violence for women, it still happens all-too-frequently and women are reluctant to report it. Rwanda is a very poor country. 61% of women live below the poverty line. 52% of women still are illiterate. And attitude can undo everything—aid workers and women leaders often point to the persistence of old norms, behaviors, and expectations for women—even among women themselves. For example, an alarming number of girls still don't attend school regularly, often kept home to help by their overworked mothers. (One program has tried to encourage school attendance by offering women free cooking oil—which can be expensive for most Rwandans—if they send their daughters to school.) Many women living in poverty, just trying to get by day to day, don't understand prioritizing abstract women's rights or education. But even men resistant to change begin to change their minds when they see the reality of families thriving because of women who have received awareness and economic training and support. The WFWI report emphasizes that relief from poverty, education, gender-awareness training for women and men, enforcement of women's rights in law, and women's leadership—all are connected and one won't make much difference without the others for Rwanda's women.

Women at the grassroots level express some frustration with women leaders at the top. They say they see them less. They fear the distance that is already apparent in the prospects for women in urban and rural areas. They wonder if they will be left behind. Women at the top express the stress and fatigue of being overworked and overwhelmed. Many rose so fast that they haven't had the preparation they need to carry on their work as well as they need to. (The necessity to learn English—important for government and business affairs—is one thing many cite.) Yet women can express their frustration to each other, speak to their desire to be heard and to participate, admit to their shortcomings—talk to each other honestly. They can wake up—before it's too late. Out of necessity, out of forgiveness, out of horror—Rwandan women may be waking up the world to another way to run a country. That will depend a lot on how committed those who abandoned them before are to standing by them now.

### ***Books and Films***

The beauty, horror, and hope of Rwanda have inspired a number of fine films and books in recent years. You might remember *Gorillas in the Mist* (1988) starring Sigourney Weaver as the ethnologist Dian Fossey. More recently, *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) poignantly portrays heroism amidst the horror, telling the story of hotel manager Paul Rusesabagina, who saved the lives of over a thousand Tutsi refugees. *Sometimes in April* (2005) is a fictional account of a Hutu-Tutsi family during the genocide. If you subscribe to HBO, check to see if the documentary *God Sleeps in Rwanda*, which focuses on women survivors and the work of WFWI, appears on the schedule in the future (It played for several weeks in late summer.) The PBS series *Frontline* produced two very informative

documentaries on Rwanda from which I've drawn here. See the resource list for links to their websites.

Most of the women writing in Rwanda do so in French, but several English memoirs have appeared since the genocide. Two explore the difficult religious issues it raises. Meg Guillebaud is an Anglican priest and third-generation missionary to Rwanda who struggles with the silence of the Church at critical points in the events that led to the genocide in *Rwanda: the Land that God Forgot* (Kregel/Monarch, 2002). Immaculee Ilibagiza, who lost her entire family, writes about how her faith sustained her as she and seven other women hid in a pastor's bathroom for 91 days in *Left to Tell* (Hay House, 2006).

Louis Mushkikwabo was a translator in Washington when word came that her family had been killed. In *Rwanda Means Universe* (St. Martin's, 2006) she reconstructs her family's story and uncovers roots of the hatred that led to 1994. Marie Beatrice Umutesi reminds that there were many victims who were not Tutsi in *Surviving the Slaughter* (University of Wisconsin, 2000), the story of her experience in a refugee camp in Zaire and her struggle keep alive several orphaned children.

In 1949, Rosamund Halsey Carr was swept off her feet by a dashing explorer she would marry and follow to Rwanda. Fifty years later, after a rich life there, she told her story to her niece in *Land of a Thousand Hills: My Life in Rwanda* (Wheeler, 1999). The Kirkus Review puts it well: "A quiet and elegant beauty of a memoir, with a dignity that is at once antique and enviable." Forced to evacuate with other foreign nationals during the genocide, she knew she would return; but she did not know to what. As she put it, "I can only surmise that God didn't feel I was ready to have children until I was 82 years old. Then he sent me forty (orphans) at once." In *I Walk over a Thousand Hills with You*, Hanna Jansen, an adoptive mother, gives a fictional account based on the story of her Rwandan daughter, the only survivor in her birth family. Jansen's book, translated from German, is intended for teenage readers.

Two books deal with women's reactions to the genocide in Rwanda in the larger context of the genocidal wars that have taken place in recent history. *The Bone Woman* is the memoir of forensic expert Clea Koff, who at age 23 was sent to Rwanda to recover the bodies of victims. Her evidence became the foundation for the genocide trials. And, our book of the month recommendation, written by WFWI's founder, pays tribute the women survivors of war in Rwanda, DRC, Bosnia, Afghanistan, and elsewhere. The stories of women, along with dozens of compelling photographs, more than make the case for thinking of war not as "a computer-generated missile striking a digital map" but in terms of its human costs. I was inspired by the book to compose a litany for use in this month's chapter meetings. The litany uses the words of Zainab, author Alice Walker (who wrote the preface to the book), and Rwandan women survivors. You'll want to see their photographs and read more about their stories in the book. Zainab Salbi, *The Other Side of War: Women's Stories of Survival and Hope* (National Geographic, 2006).

All the books and dvds are available from amazon.com. If you order, please consider doing so through the DFW website so that we receive a percentage of the sale. Go to <http://diningforwomen.org/getinvolved.html> and click on the amazon.com icon.

## ***Socially Responsible Shopping***

### **Peace Baskets**

For almost a thousand years, the women of Rwanda have used a technique passed

from mother to daughter to create a unique, conical-shaped basket with a zig-zag stripe pattern from the natural fibers available to them. Used for many things and often given as wedding gifts, the basket has become a national symbol and appears on the official Rwandan seal.

The traditional zig-zag pattern represents two women walking together, stopping to talk with others, and continuing on their way. But that story has taken on even more meaning since the genocide. Women who lost everything else still had their weaving skills. Working together in weaving cooperatives, women of Hutu, Tutsi and other tribes now walk a new path together, the path of peace. The “peace basket” industry in Rwanda has become a major source of income for women and a symbol at home and internationally of peace and Rwanda’s rebirth. FWFI teaches the weaving skills in its training program so that more women are able to join the cooperatives. Peace baskets in a variety of sizes—from a foot high or over to tiny ones intended for Christmas ornaments—are available through several fair trade sources online.

It’s not one of our usual sources for socially responsible shopping, but we applaud the efforts of Macy’s Department Stores in The Rwanda Path of Peace Project. In coordination with UNIFEM (United Nations Development Fund for Women), Macy’s markets a collection of baskets and other woven items made by Rwandan women. Sales provide a sustainable income to over 2500 rural women, many of whom are widows of the genocide. You can see The 2006 Collection online, read stories about the weavers, see photos of the weaving process (fascinating!), and, of course, shop. They’re gorgeous! (REALLY GOOD wedding presents.) You can also see the baskets in some Atlanta, Chicago, and New York stores.

### **Premium Coffee**

While basket-making is a tradition long held dear by Rwandans, coffee-production has been viewed with ambivalence. The Belgians began the coffee industry there, profiting from the exploitation of Rwandan labor. Rwandans have long associated coffee with this painful history and generally do not drink it themselves. However, Rwanda has near-perfect conditions for growing coffee and prior to the genocide, coffee had been its main export crop. The fall-off of the coffee market in the early nineties (which helped precipitate the violence), followed by the genocide, doomed the industry.

But in recent years development organizations have been investing in the rebirth of Rwanda’s coffee industry. This time, many of those involved are taking the well being of Rwanda’s people into consideration. And, they are aiming to produce one of the world’s finest cups, tapping into the growing specialty coffee market.

Prior to the genocide, most Rwandan coffee was “C-grade.” The big canned-coffee firms pay about \$1 a pound for C-grade. Higher-grade coffees bring \$1.50 or more. Thanks to development and training of projects such as the Partnership for Enhancing Agriculture in Rwanda through Linkages (PEARL), premium Rwandan beans can fetch \$3.50 a pound. Last year, high-end beans sold-out with roasters begging for more. Rwandan coffee is the new hottest thing in the gourmet coffee market.

PEARL and other initiatives focus on developing farmer cooperatives and small associated businesses (such as coffee washers) to be able to sell to high end roasters who observe fair trade practices and who will pay top dollar for the extremely fine beans. Since 2001, PEARL has assisted 15,000 cooperative members. 20% of the farmers in these cooperatives are widows or orphans of the genocide. What do the high prices that

beans can command from top roasters mean for Rwanda farmers? Anywhere from doubling to over tripling their income per pound.

So coffee, once associated with Rwanda's exploitation, is proving to be a promising part of Rwanda's recovery. The government hopes to make all coffee produced in Rwandan specialty coffee by 2008 and still bring production back up to levels prior to the genocide. I haven't had it yet, but coffee connoisseurs report that premium Rwandan coffee is the best you'll find—sweet, sometimes bright and citrusy or full-bodied with berry and chocolate overtones, depending on the style of the coffee artisans.

[www.landofathousandhillscoffee.com](http://www.landofathousandhillscoffee.com)

[www.thousandhillscoffee.com](http://www.thousandhillscoffee.com)

[www.oneworldprojects.com](http://www.oneworldprojects.com)

<http://www1.macys.com/campaign/rwanda/index.jsp>

Note: Allegro (Whole Foods), Starbucks, and Green Mountain Roasters also carry Rwandan coffee, although it isn't stocked in every store and may have to be specially ordered. Please make sure that whenever you order coffee or peace baskets that they come from sources that practice fair trade.

## ***Dining with Women***

Subsistence farm families, people who live by growing just enough to feed themselves (and maybe a little more to sell if they're lucky), make up 90% of Rwanda's population. The genocide was devastating for crop production, for both cash crop operations and small subsistence farms. Decreasing soil fertility, a difficult climate for growing many important crops, and increasing population add to Rwanda's agricultural challenges. Food insecurity and chronic malnutrition haunt Rwanda as surely as the horrors of the genocide. There are hopeful signs for some cash-crop farms where fair-trade and ecologically-sensitive practices are implemented (read about coffee above). And with the training and aid of groups like WFWI, many women who labor as farmers (and most do) are improving their chances of providing enough food for their families.

Staples of the Rwandan diet include natives such as plantains, sorghum, red palm oil, and yams. The plantain is a cousin of the banana, but somewhat larger and much firmer. It is more starchy than sweet and is used much like a potato would be here—boiled, mashed, or even as fried chips. Sorghum is a cereal grain and is the basis of a popular alcoholic drink. (In our litany, you'll meet Violette, who is successfully developing a sorghum brewing business). Palm Oil is important not only as a cooking medium but also for its nutritional content. Yams, which are white and "hairy" and can weigh up to 100 pounds, are not sweet potatoes, which come from a different plant family entirely. Yams are tubers, like potatoes; sweet potatoes are not. (There is no true yam in North America, only the confusing use of the word for sweet potato. Sweet potatoes, by the way, come in a range of colors from white to deep orange.)

Some of the most important foods in Rwanda, however, are imports. Bananas (from south Asia) are food, cooking vessels, and even serving dishes. Foods are often wrapped in banana leaves for steaming or roasting. The leaf also makes a handy "plate." Banana beer rivals sorghum beer and is reported to be quite strong. The Americas have provided Rwanda with several now essential ingredients: corn, peppers, peanuts, pumpkins, tomatoes, pineapples, cassava, and sweet potatoes.

Cassava is very important in Rwandan cuisine. It is a very starchy root that is easily grown in Rwanda and that can be stored for long periods of time in the ground where it's grown. Initially, it appears that Rwandans ate only the leaves. The Portuguese introduced them to the root as a food and taught them the complex process of making cassava into a flour that is now a staple. It is the basis of a porridge that is perhaps the most popular starch dish in Rwanda. Cassava elsewhere (and most often here) is called manioc, yucca or tapioca. While providing some essential nutrients, cassava isn't as nutritious as some other starches and it also has the drawback of containing traces of a cyanide-related compound. (Thus, it must be fully cooked or carefully processed before consumption.) This compound depletes iodine in the human body and thus goiter is a health problem, especially among women of childbearing age who depend on cassava for daily sustenance.

Nutritious sweet potatoes rival cassava as a favorite starch. Rwandans don't limit their use to the root. As with pumpkins and other squashes as well as cassava, they eat the leaves. Pumpkins also provide seeds from which a thickening agent for stews and sauces is made. Other common foods include taro (another root vegetable), onions, peas and beans, melons, and avocados. Meat-eating is limited in Rwanda by our standards. Chicken and beef are available and rabbit is inexpensive. Cattle-raising is a precarious and costly business in Rwanda, but cattle are prized by Rwandan farmers. Food scholar Fran Osseo-Assare reports that even though a meat-based meal (such as our menu below) is a "once-in-awhile" occasion in Rwanda, most cooks would try to use a small amount of meat as flavoring in a main dish (or substitute peanuts).

Rwandan cooking is pretty basic and bland compared to spicier cuisines elsewhere in Africa. Ms. Osseo-Assare says that central Africans in general do like to balance sweet and bitter components in a dish, offsetting them with neutral starches such as cassava or plantain. An American woman married to a Hutu man, who lived in Rwanda for a number of years, reports that there was little seasoning other than salt and pepper in most Rwandan dishes. Yet she enjoyed the variety of foods, many familiar to her from the American table, and would often "spice them up a bit" with herbs from her garden. Her real problem came when she returned home: "When we came back to the States because of the war in Rwanda, it was difficult to adjust to American food. I had lots of problems with water retention because of the preservatives in food here. The doctor said my body wasn't used to them and couldn't handle them. One wonders about the diet of Americans!"

Our "menu" this month features an easy, make-ahead Rwandan Beef Stew with a sweet potato accompaniment. The stew incorporates many common Rwandan foods. When I first read the recipe, which is from Ms. Osseo-Assare's book, I wondered if it was "typical." So I contacted her. She shared with me that this recipe is Rwandan but came from a white Kenyan woman's cookbook. When she asked a Rwandan friend about it, the friend agreed that it is essentially "Rwandan" but "fancier-up." Her Rwandan friend would not use sage, nor would she bother to mash the sweet potatoes with butter. She'd simply boil them whole, peel them, and serve them in chunks. Actually, she would prefer to eat the stew with cassava-meal porridge.

Rwandans generally have one-pot meals with a starch, but I've made suggestions based on ingredients common in Rwanda for items to round out an American-style meal.

## Menu

Appetizers: Roasted peanuts, Terra Chips (which contain common Rwandan ingredients taro, sweet potato, and cassava—also called yucca), and avocado dip

Main Dish: Rwandan Beef Stew with Mashed Sweet Potatoes or Cassava (recipes below)

Side Vegetable: Leafy Greens or Green Beans would be appropriate

Dessert: Mixed fruit bowl of pineapple, banana, and melon. Or, tapioca pudding. Or, a traditional dish from the African American South inspired by one of Rwanda's favorite foods, Sweet Potato Pie (recipe below).

## Rwandan Beef Stew with Mashed Sweet Potatoes

*Adapted from Fran Osseo-Asare, Food Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa (Greenwood Press, 2006)*

Serves 4-6. Easily doubled in a large dutch oven or covered stewpot, but may require longer cooking time.

1 lb stewing beef cubed (see note below)

1 onion, chopped

3 T vegetable oil

2 green (not ripe) plantains or 3 very green bananas (see note below)

juice of a lemon (a couple of Tbs)

1/3 c tomato sauce (I use Muir Glenn)

1/4 t ground sage or five or so fresh sage leaves, optional

1 c water

1 t salt

1/4 t red pepper flakes (gives nice spice but not too much heat) or to taste

1 c pre-cooked green beans, optional

NOTE: I used a boneless chuck roast and cut in approximately 1/2" cubes, trimming the visible fat. Buying a chuck roast rather than pre-cut stew beef has two advantages: it's cheaper and it's usually more flavorful and tender.

Plantains are slightly trickier to peel than bananas because they are much firmer. To peel a plantain, cut off both ends and then cut around the center of the plantain through the skin but not into the flesh. Then make a long cut through the skin the length of the plantain. At the intersection of the cuts at the center, use a knife tip to pry loose the skin to get started peeling. Remove any fibrous strings as well as the peel. If you must use bananas, add them halfway through cooking.

Peel the plantain and cut into pieces the same size as the meat. Toss them with enough lemon juice to coat them lightly. Heat half the oil in a dutch oven or large pot (with a lid) and cook the onion in it until golden. Remove the onion, leaving as much oil as possible. Add the remaining oil and when it's hot, add the beef, turning it occasionally to brown it on all sides. You will probably need to do this in batches, removing pieces as they brown and adding more—don't crowd the pan or the beef will not brown properly. When all the meat is browned, add it all back to the pot along with the onion. Add the plantains and cook for five minutes. Plantains are very starchy and as the starch releases it tends to stick; so you'll need to stir as you cook here. Then add all the other ingredients and mix well, scraping up any browned bits or stuck particles on the bottom of the pot. Bring to a boil. Lower the heat to maintain a simmer, cover the pot and cook until the meat is



tender, stirring it just occasionally. Check at 30 and 45 minutes, but it may take as long as an hour depending on the size of the meat cubes. When cooked, plantains remain somewhat firm (more like potato cubes than bananas). During the last five minutes or so of cooking, add the green beans if you like. Serve with either mashed sweet potatoes or cassava (see below). This recipe recommended sweet potatoes and I can attest that they are very good with the stew. Make this one or two days ahead—it improves over a day or two in the fridge. (You can add the pre-cooked beans when you reheat the stew in order to retain their vivid green. The beans should be cooked through however, not crunchy.)

### Mashed Sweet Potatoes

4 medium sweet potatoes, unpeeled

3 T butter, room temperature

You can do this two ways. First way: Preheat oven to 425. Rub sweet potatoes with a little oil and prick in several places with a fork or knife. Place on a foil-lined cookie sheet and bake for approximately one hour until tender when pierced with a knife. Allow to cool enough to handle and then peel. Mash with butter and a little salt to taste (or better, blend with a mixer or in food processor for a smoother puree).

Second way: Boil the whole unpeeled sweet potatoes in salted water until tender. Drain and proceed as directed above.

Rwandans eat a lot of sweet potatoes, but they'd also be likely to eat this stew with cassava (yucca—we'll discuss this staple food in *MC*). It usually can be found at major foodstores and in Hispanic or African markets. If you'd like to try it, there's an easy recipe for Mashed Yucca with Garlic at

[http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/recipes/recipe/0,,FOOD\\_9936\\_27898,00.html](http://www.foodnetwork.com/food/recipes/recipe/0,,FOOD_9936_27898,00.html)

### Sweet Potato Pie

*Adapted from Mrs. Wilkes' Boardinghouse Cookbook*

1 c brown sugar

1 t cinnamon

1/4 t ground cloves

1/4 t ground nutmeg

1/4 t salt

2 eggs

1 2/3 c evaporated milk

1 1/2 c boiled, peeled sweet potatoes, beaten smooth with a mixer (or use canned sweet potato puree—not “pie filling”—without sugar)

1 10” pie crust (recipe below or use pre-made in a pinch)

Preheat oven to 425. Combine the sugar and spices. Beat eggs with the milk. Add sugar mixture to the egg mixture and then add the sweet potatoes. Mix until smooth. Pour into a saucepan and heat until the pie filling almost boils. Pour into the unbaked crust. Bake 15 minutes, reduce heat to 350 and bake another 15-20 minutes until a knife inserted in the middle of the pie comes out clean. Allow to cool at least to warm room temp before attempting to slice. Serve with whipped cream.

Pie Crust

2 1/2 c all purpose flour

1 t salt

1/2 c shortening (better: good lard if you can find it), chilled

1/2 c butter, cold

5 T cold water, approximately

Cut butter and shortening in small pieces. In a food processor (or bowl), mix flour and salt. Add shortening and butter in small pieces. Pulse several times in the food processor until the consistency of coarse meal or chopped nuts (or combine with flour using a fork or pastry blender to same consistency). Add water 1 T at a time, pulsing briefly, until dough just comes together. Place on plastic wrap and push the dough together into a disk-shape. Cover with plastic and chill until needed. Roll out and fit into a 10" pie pan or well-seasoned cast-iron skillet. Chill until ready to add filling.

### **Resources:**

<http://www.globalissues.org/Geopolitics/Africa/Rwanda.asp>

<http://www.womenwagingpeace.net/content/articles/Rwanda%20full%20case%20study.pdf>

<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/1602/context/cover/>

<http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm?aid=290>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/evil/>

<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/>

[http://www.transfairusa.org/content/about/n\\_060806.php](http://www.transfairusa.org/content/about/n_060806.php)

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/2744415.stm>

<http://www.time.com/time/globalbusiness/printout/0,8816,1096485,00.html>

<http://www.cp-pc.ca/english/rwanda/eating.html>

<http://congocookbook.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=992>

<http://www.cet.edu/ete/modules/mgorilla/mgcrops.html>

Fran Osseo-Asare, *Food Culture in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Greenwood Press, 2006)

Zainab Salbi, *The Other Side of War: Women's Stories of Survival and Hope* (National Geographic, 2006)

Rakiya Omaar and Rachel Ibreck, principal researchers, "Women Taking a Lead: Progress toward

Empowerment and Gender Equity in Rwanda" (Women for Women International Briefing Paper), Sept. 2004

## ***At the Woman's Table***

### **A Litany for Rwandan Women and All Women**

This litany is based on the words of Rwandan women survivors, WFWI founder Zainab Salbi, and author Alice Walker in *The Other Side of War: Women Stories of Survival and Hope* and on the Women for Women International website.

The litany calls for 17 voices, although a smaller group could double-up on parts. Alice and Zainab speak several times and most others only once or twice. There are a couple of times where all the voices speak together. The "ALL" could include everyone in attendance. "Readers 1-3" should use their own names where instructed. The title is taken from Alice Walker's preface. As it implies, you might perform this sitting around table (if you have one big enough) or in a circle.

It's a good idea for each person to look over her part briefly before the performance. Though it might make "perfect," there's really no need for the group to practice—this is fairly straightforward. It should take between 12-15 minutes to perform.

### **Alice:**

What is happening

In Africa  
(and elsewhere)  
is because  
the men  
did not listen  
to the women  
& the women  
did not listen  
to the women  
either  
& because  
the people did not listen  
to each other  
& because  
nobody listened  
to the children  
&  
the poets

I am Alice, a poet.

**Zainab:** War is not a computer-generated missile striking a digital map. War is the color of earth as it explodes in our faces, the sound of a child pleading, the smell of smoke and fear. Women survivors of war are not the image portrayed on the television screen, but the glue that holds families and countries together. Perhaps by understanding women, and the other side of war, we will have more humility in our discussions of wars. Perhaps it is time to listen to women's side of history. I am Zainab, a peacemaker.

**Reader I:** Who can imagine 800,000 people being hacked to death with machetes in the span of four months? I am (your own name), a witness.

**Beata:** When the conflict started, it made no sense to any of us. We did not consider each other as enemies. We were intermarried. We lived the same life.... They hacked my ribs with a machete and left me to die. That night I slept in my blood, the blood of my children, and of my husband. I am Beata, a widow.

**Reader 2:** Who can truly grasp the horror of 500,000 women and girls being raped? I am (your own name), a witness.

**Beatrice:** I remember machetes flying around right and left as they cut people. I woke up many hours later to see that I was still alive. On top of me were the bodies of my seven children. I am Beatrice, who survived.

**Zainab:** Beatrice ran from the church where her children were massacred, only to be captured, raped, hacked with a machete, and left for dead.

**Reader 3:** What has happened to a world that ignores them? I am (your own name), a witness.

**Rosine:** There were sixty-two of us; they took and threw (us) into a lake. Only three people survived. Those three people were me and my two girls. When they threw us in the lake, we were dropped on the side in shallow water. I managed to get out of the water and run with the children to hide in the bushes. I am Rosine, a mother.

**Zainab:** Jemince survived the genocide with her nine-month old baby strapped to her back.

**Jemince:** We did not know why we were brought to the church to be slaughtered. People were falling all over me. I was soaked in blood. There were dead bodies and blood everywhere. But my little boy did not cry. It was as if he knew keeping silent meant his life. For certain if he had cried they would have looked for the noise, and they would have killed us.

I am Jemince, a mother.

**Reader 1:** A century ago, 90 percent of war casualties were male soldiers. Today, an estimated 90 percent of casualties are civilians, and 75 percent of these are women and children.

**Alice:** Will our disbelief, confusion, and fear only be activated toward change when we hear the sound of killers at our own door?

**Zainab:** If we are to understand war fully, we need to understand not only what happens on the front lines, but what happens on the back lines as well, where women are in charge of keeping life going.

**Beata:** Thinking about those images, meditating on my problems, at times, I find it difficult to sleep at night. The images come to me often. I am living in the same house, surviving and coping.

**Reader 2:** When a man is injured in war, he is a hero. But when a woman is raped or mutilated because of rape, she is more likely hidden, an object of shame.

**Zainab:** Today Beatrice lives in a two-room hut built with the help of other women survivors. Beatrice bore the child that resulted from the rape and has adopted five more orphaned children.

**Reader 3:** Women are more likely to be displaced as a result of war, more likely to be sole providers for children and the elderly, more likely to die of disease.

**Jemince:** Those of us who adopted orphans did so with little or no means to care for ourselves and our own surviving children. But we had no choice. There were too many children left orphaned. It was not possible to sit on the side and do nothing.

**Marie Claire:** I was alone when I found out... I was devastated and angry, angry that this could happen to me. I could not believe that it was me. I have never been with another man except for my husband; I could not understand how I could be sick with this virus. Surviving the genocide, I did not believe that living with HIV/AIDS would be my fate. He is dying. We are dying. I worry about dying before my little girl Bobette. I also worry about her dying before me. I am Marie Claire, living with AIDS.

**Zainab:** Francine was 21 and pregnant during the genocide. A refugee for two years in Congo, she learned upon return to Rwanda that her husband was dead. She was struggling on her own to raise an orphaned girl along with her own daughter before finding out about Women for Women.

**Francine:** We had nothing, we were very poor. I had no resource to care for them, to feed them, and to send them to school. I knew that I was poor but I didn't know what to do about my poverty. I am Francine. Now I know.

**Rosine:** I search for help anywhere and everywhere. Our situation was desperate. I was disgusted with myself and suicidal.

**Zainab:** She went on for the sake of her daughters.

**Reader I:** How can the world live without war? Someone must know.

**Alice:** We, having been nearly destroyed, can use what we learned from our destruction to start the world again.

**Zainab:** Beatrice chose to live. She has empowered a family and helped restore a community.

**Marie Claire:** If I am angry I will be paralyzed. There is no time for me to be angry. There is too much to do.

**Reader 1:** We will never forget what war has taught us. Never again will we be resigned to illiteracy, weakness, and powerlessness, forced to let selfish men, whether fathers, brothers, lovers, husbands or friends lead us into ever darkening ignorance and servitude.

**Rosine:** By sharing my experience with other women, I have come to feel better about myself. My late husband's uncle wanted to marry me. I did not want to marry him. Had I not had the means to support myself and my children or the self-confidence to stand up, I would have probably married him out of pressure. And this would have brought me a life of misery.

**Beata:** I had lost appreciation for life and myself. I wanted to die. I didn't want to take any medicine. I felt no joy. Now through the program, things are different. I value myself.

**Reader 2:** We have had enough. We insist on acquiring knowledge for ourselves and for our daughters, having learned the hardest ways possible that ignorance and peace cannot coexist.

**Dorothy:** I want to make sure that my children continue with their education, for I was not able to continue with mine and I think education is the salvation of the poor. I am Dorothy. I care for my mother and children.

**Francine:** I am always looking for ways to increase my knowledge and to improve my life. I am not bitter. I am hopeful for myself, my community, and my country. My life is a testimony to that optimism.

**Zainab:** Today Francine is president of a local cooperative.

**Reader 3:** We have learned all we need to know of leadership that insults, marginalizes, and ignores us.

**Cecile:** Now I participate in meeting with our nation's most important people like journalists, mayors. I even participated in a senators' meeting once. After attending a meeting outside my village, I came back and organized my fellow villagemates' meeting. I am Cecile. I am a leader.

**Solange:** I want the women of Rwanda, from the rural poor to the urban elite, to be independent, to be educated. I want them to be peacemakers. I am Solange, a member of the Rwandan parliament.

**Reader 1:** As Alice says...

**ALL:** To change the world for the better, to make it safe for the feminine, which is to make it safe for everyone, women must work together.

**Alice:** Out of the deep feminine values of caring, compassion, and courage, we bring whatever we have to the common table of woman. There we meet our sisters. They have brought what they have as well.

**Christine:** A letter to my dearest Catherine, my sponsor: How are you doing? Here in Rwanda we are also fine. Now we are in the rainy season. It's cold in the nights, and we are growing many vegetables now. Thank you for your picture. Myself, I have five children. My oldest is 18 years old, and he is studying mechanics, the second one is in secondary school. He is 14 years and is very bright. The others are in primary school and my last one is in kindergarten. I have managed to put them in school with your help. I really would like to hear from you and am so glad to have met you. We thank you for the love you've shown us. Love, Christine.

**Francine:** My relationship with my sponsor Michelle has opened a new world for me. I have talked to my sponsor about Rwanda, my husband, my evolution with the program. My sponsor has also talked to me about her life. That relationship has contributed to changing some of my perceptions in life.

**Zainab:** Afraid to move, to cry, to even breathe, Violette and her two children lay on the floor of a church for an entire week pretending to be dead...

**Liz:** Her husband was killed. She and her children were on brink of death and fought for their lives. She was able to save her family and rise above the carnage. She has been able to forgive the individual who killed her husband. I can't imagine how she can do that. Somehow she is able to get past that and forgive. I told her, "You've got to be a bigger person than I am because I can't imagine having my husband senselessly killed and getting past that." I'm Liz, Violette's sponsor.

**Zainab:** Liz pledged to provide \$27 a month for one year to support Violette's training and education as well as give a cash allowance to help her pay for food, school fees and clothing. As the year progressed, Violette flourished. She has become a local businesswoman and a leader in her community.

**Liz:** I am just amazed by all that she has accomplished and thrilled for her and her children. She was able to rise above the circumstances that life dealt her.

**Zainab:** Using money that Liz sent, Violette expanded her fledgling operation of harvesting sorghum into a full-fledged business of making sorghum-based drinks. Violette also has a considerable bean harvest. From her bean harvest alone, she makes nearly \$1800, nearly seven times the average Rwandan income. Violette has been able to hire local laborers, often other women, to work the fields and help her manage her business. Violette was awarded a bank loan to bring water to her business and to her community.

**Liz:** I think about her all the time, in fact on a daily basis. I just had my second girl, and between her and my two year-old toddler, it just seems like a lot. I sometimes feel overwhelmed and there is too much to handle. But then I think of Violette and women like her. What I have to go through is so little to handle in comparison. She has provided me with tremendous perspective that you can't get from just reading an article or watching a news story. Just to know a woman with the kind of the strength that Violette has has given me a perspective that I would not otherwise gain.

**Zainab:** She has become the president of a local women's crafts cooperative that is made up of graduates of her rights awareness training group. Together they make and sell traditional Rwandan baskets that have become symbols of peace. Hutu, Tutsi and Twa women sit side by side to weave "peace baskets."

**Violette:** This program has changed my life. My mind has been opened.

**Zainab:** The poet Rumi said, “Between the worlds of right-doing and wrong-doing, there is a field; I will meet you there.” In today’s world there is a field between the worlds of war and peace, and women are meeting there.

**Alice:** And so may it be.

**All:** And so may it be.