

Movie analysis of hotel rwanda

Business



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BUSTER**

Hotel Rwanda, released in December of 2004, is based on the true story on the life of Paul Rusesabagina, a hotel manager of Hotel des Mille Collines, who saved the lives of 1,268 people in the face of genocide.

This movie is based on the true events of the Rwandan Genocide in 1994 that occurred in Kigali, the capital and largest city of Rwanda in Africa. It touches upon when the Hutu extremists of Rwanda initiated an act of genocide on thousands of the minority group, Tutsis. This movie was directed/written by Terry George and Keir Pearson.

Major cast include Don Cheadle (Paul Rusesabagina), Sophie Okonedo (Tatiana), Joaquin Phoenix (Jack), and Nick Nolte (Colonel Oliver of the UN). Other cast members include Fana Mokoena (General Bizimungu of Kigali Police), Hakeem Kae-Kazim (Georges Rutaganda, leader of Interhamwe militia), and Jean Reno (Mr.

Tillens, President of Sabena Airlines in Belgium). The movie's main location of filming was done in Kigali, Rwanda, and Johannesburg, South Africa. Tensions between the Hutu and Tutsi groups are what lead to the war, and eventual genocide, in Rwanda.

Paul and his family witness killings in the neighborhood. Although his wife is Tutsi, and himself Hutu, Paul carries protection with people of influence, bribing them with money and alcohol, seeking to maintain sufficient influence to keep his family safe. When the war erupts and a Rwandan Army officer threatens Paul and his neighbors, Paul barely negotiates their safety, and is forced to the decision of bringing everyone to the hotel.

More refugees come to the hotel from the overburdened United Nations camp, the Red Cross, and orphanages from all over the country.

Paul must divert the Hutu soldiers, care for the refugees, be a source of strength to his family, and maintain the appearance of a functioning luxury hotel as the situation becomes more dangerous. The UN Peacekeeping forces, led by Canadian Colonel Oliver (Nolte), are unable to take assertive action against the Interahamwe since they are forbidden to intervene in the genocide. The foreign nationals are evacuated, but the Rwandans are left behind. When the UN forces attempt to evacuate a group of refugees, including Paul's family, they are ambushed and must turn back.

In a last-ditch effort to save the refugees, Paul pleads with the Rwandan Army General, Augustin Bizimungu (Mokoena) for assistance. However, when Paul's bribes no longer work, he blackmails the General with threats of being tried as a war criminal. Soon after, the family and the hotel refugees are finally able to leave the besieged hotel in a UN convoy. They travel through retreating masses of refugees and militia to reach safety behind Tutsi rebel lines. From the beginning, it is clearly displayed that there are more than two sides of the story, with various groups representing each side.

The Tutsis are the ones accused in the killing of the Kigali president after his offer of an agreement of peace, and just want peace between both parties. The Hutu are attempting to kill off any person that is Tutsis. They believe that the Tutsis killed the president because they want to keep the power that was left in their hands when the Belgium left Kigali. There is also the UN peacekeepers and other foreign armies (French, Italian etc...), referred in the

movie as 'the West'. One is trying to help the Rwandans stay alive, while the other is stay out of the issue.

In the movie, Hutu extremist views' are specified through the character of George Rutaganda. They reference the Tutsis as 'cockroaches', and how the Hutu must rise up and get rid of any Tutsis, along with any of the next generation. As said in the movie by Rutaganda, "Hutu, we must get rid of these cockroaches that are infecting our country". Most of this encouragement comes from Georges Rutaganda, the leader of the Interhamwe militia, who speaks to the Hutu extremists through the radio, which is the only way you see the Hutu people communicate with one another throughout the whole film.

Although communication is solely this, the mission of the Hutu is successfully showed.

In contrast, while the mission is known, as mentioned before, all communication is through the radio, with no actual physical meetings. This was weird to me, sending the message that decisions were not made by the group as a whole, but rather militia taking orders from one leader (Rutaganda). Also it gave off the feeling of spontaneity, although the movie showed that many Hutu were angry since power was given to the Tutsis, and not only when the Kigali president was killed.

On the other end, the Tutsis are constantly running searching for protection from the Hutu, trying not to be killed. Those on their side are Rusesabagina, Colonel Oliver, and Mr. Tillens, through their own actions, respectively.

Multiple times throughout the film, it shows how the Tutsis cannot even stay in their own homes and once they cannot show identity cards stating their status as Hutu, they are beaten, homes burnt to the ground, and most roads to leave are blocked off. Rusesabagina obviously uses the hotel as a refugee camp, and Colonel Oliver fights through the whole movie to get the influence of the West to stop the genocide, for he cannot himself. Mr. Tillens does what he can to keep off the Hutu extremists away from the hotel by keeping contact with the French, who supply the Hutu armies. Before watching, the reviews portrayed Rusesabagina as ‘a clear hero for the Rwandans’.

This was evident while seeing the movie. Obviously, Paul shelters thousands of Tutsi people in the hotel, doing everything he can to keep the Hutu away. In the first few scenes of the movie, this same determination is not seen. Paul makes it clear that he does everything only to protect his family.

As he tells his wife when she tells him to call his people to help the neighbors being attacked, “I give the powerful guests of the hotel everything, so that in return, they will protect my family when troubling times come.

They are our neighbors, not family.” As the attacks get worse, this mindset changes as a threat to kill a group of Tutsis in front of him is presented. Toward the beginning of the movie, after the attacks begin in Paul’s neighborhood, a large group of other Tutsis neighbors are hiding in the Rusesabagina home. Hutu armies come to kill all the ‘cockroaches’ in his home, including his wife and kids.

At first, Paul offers bribes of money and alcohol to save only his family, but later offers almost triple the amount of money for the whole group, including

expensive jewels. This is only one of the first scenes that Paul bribes armies to avoid the killing of those he is protecting.

With the character of Rusesabagina, the filmmaker portrayed him as a humble man, with no inconsistencies in any of his actions. This goes along with the purpose of the film, which was to show the actions of a hero, who saved thousands from genocide. The main antagonists of the film would be the Hutu.

They could be considered villains not only for their hate for Tutsis, but for the ruthless killing of close to a million. The directors, did just enough in every scene to remind the ones watching that this group of people did not want anything to do with the Tutsis. Another antagonist in the film, in my opinion, was the foreign armies (Belgium, French and Italian).

In the first attempt to remove the Tutsis from Kigali, it was believed that all these armies were coming to the aid of the people. When they actually arrived, it was then explained by Colonel Oliver, that they would only be helping evacuate the Americans and those from ‘ the West’.

This scene gives them the portrayal of a villain, because as Colonel Oliver says in a following scene to Paul, “ You are considered dirt to them Paul, you are not even Black, you are an African”. This line was very compelling for me because it showed a type of ranking between other races, as compared with the Africans, with all of them showing superiority over them. The same scene also showed how people who may see what was going on in Kigali would not take action, like the conversation between Paul and Jack.

Jack has just filmed footage of a group of people being beaten and even chopped up with machetes.

Paul says to him, “ How could they not intervene, after seeing such brutality? ” Jack doesn’t have the same faith, replying, “ When people see this, they will say “ Oh, how horrible” and go on eating dinner. ” It was after these scenes that Paul realizes that believing he was one of them, and everything he has done (adapting to their ways, conforming to every need and want), was for nothing. After this scene, it is said many times, especially by Rusesabagina, that they were on their own, and everyone had abandoned them.

If this were true, then they would not even have the UN peacekeepers, who were consistent allies.

This was the only contradiction I found with the antagonists. If someone only watched the first few scenes of the movie, it could be misinterpreted that Paul had many influences aiding him through the end of the genocide (or in this case, the movie). His main allies in the movie were Colonel Oliver, Mr. Tillens in Belgium, and General Bizumungu. Of these allies, it was perceived that the General was only helping because he was constantly being bribed, and not out of kindness.

With Colonel Oliver, he always came back to Paul once he knew of any opportunities to get the people out of Kigali. At first, I assumed that the UN was against the people of Kigali, because they were given orders to not attempt to stop the genocide, or in the words of Oliver, “ We are peacekeepers, not peacemakers”. This is where the audience can think that

everyone has abandoned them. This assumption was put away once the UN peacekeepers go through multiple attempts, and are eventually successful; at getting everyone pass Tutsi rebel lines, even after the Hutu showed that they killed some of Oliver's men.

Mr. Tillens, the president of Sabena Airlines, was only present in a few parts, but his was visibly one of Paul's most powerful influences and had a big impact on their survival.

In another scene where the hotel is under attack by Hutu extremists, Paul is given ten minutes to come downstairs and provide a list of all the 'cockroaches' staying in the hotel. In this time, he sneaks away to call Tillens. As they are talking, this is when a vulnerable side of Rusesabagina is seen.

When asked if there is anything that can be done, it is the first time that Paul mentions any doubt in surviving the genocide, but stating, " I do not know what you can do, because I am positive that it is too late, they have already arrived, and I am sure we are going to die. " When Tillens says to buy him time, that he will get in contact with the French, who supply the Hutu, Paul is doubtful of his words.

As Paul is outside negotiating with the armies, who are threatening to kill everyone, they are given orders (in French, but are obvious) to back off and leave the hotel, along with everyone in it.

With the General, he is always talking with Paul in the first part of the movie of just how much the Kigali police have got him protected, but this is while Paul is still able to send him off with the best cigars from Cuba and Africa's finest scotch. In a scene when Paul asks the General for help, but has no

bribe, he is quick to say, “ No more police, no more protection”. Paul begs for his help, insisting that these are troubling times, and they all need to stick together. The General answers Paul with a stern, “ How are you going to help me Paul? The General briefly helps once Paul threatened him with the idea that everyone believed he was a war criminal involved in the massacres. This is why it was necessary to show all sides, because if they were not, it would be perceived in the movie that no one tried to help the Tutsis survive the genocide, and that they were truly on their own.

Many reviews said that the movie did not properly exhibit the actual events of the Rwandan Genocide, but after watching the film, I have to disagree. While watching certain scenes, it really made the tears fall in remembering that the movie is not fictional.

It made you feel as if you were there, and put your emotions into each scene, while hitting you with the harsh realization that the event actually occurred. There was an equal stability between showing tidbits of the genocide, but also of how a single man became a hero by saving thousands. Overall, it left the message of how this should have never happened and gave moments as to how it could have been avoided.

As one reviewer says, “ The Rwandan Genocide is one of the most horrific events of this time, and unfortunately, the most unknown”, but this movie gives audience a respectable summary that shall leave us knowledgeable.