

# Holocaust as the result of colonial racism in left to tell



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

History and individual testament as narrated in the novel *Left to Tell*, authored by Immaculée Ilibagiza clearly defines the trajectory of holocaust as springing up as a natural consequence of an established racism. In its embryonic stages, the story unfolds under a climate of almost inbuilt prejudice. The colonial history of Rwanda engrains tribalism and polarizes both indigenous ethnicities, Hutu and Tutsi, to the point of bitter and endemic intolerance. Later in life, Immaculée understands that “ the German colonists and the Belgian ones that followed, converted Rwanda’s existing social structure ... into a discriminatory, race-based class system” (Ilibagiza 14). For Rwanda, the formal introduction of colonialism in The Conference of Brussels 1890 has been instrumental in dividing territory and people to initiate rule and consolidate power. Unsurprisingly, Germany imperiously instills values of ethnic superiority in Rwanda to establish a colonial administration of government, alienating Hutus and Tutsis in the process. Historic documents such as Adolf Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* or *My Struggle* (1923) and Jacob Graf’s *Heredity and Racial Biology for Students* (1935) legitimise social darwinism, a so-called natural order of ethnic supremacy, specifically advantaging Aryan Germans, while denigrating and purging out ‘ inferior classes.’ These ill-conceived ideologies give birth to World War I, World War II and a series of civil wars climaxing in the Rwandan Genocide in April 1994. In Europe, as dogma on racial superiority forms the base of the Jewish holocaust, so in Rwanda, doctrines of an ethnic hierarchy create the groundwork for the Rwandan genocide. Immaculée relates that “ the Belgians favored the minority Tutsi aristocracy and promoted its status as the ruling class” (Ilibagiza 14). In both holocausts, individual and collective

trauma and mass desolation result. In both regions, estrangement and fiery antagonism between ethnicities forge deep cleavages between Jew and German in Europe and Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda. Both examples prove that social ostracism through negative labeling, propaganda and legal segregation often provoke violent skirmishes that culminate in civil wars and widespread bloodbaths. Steered by the divide and rule policy, colonialism traditionally transplants and embeds racism in both German and Rwandan cultures. These seeds sprout, blossom and bear fruit during the holocausts as brother take up arms against brother.

The divide and rule policy dictate the system of government since the turn of the 19th century that strengthens colonial rule and embeds racism in Rwandan culture. Immaculée's parents can recall the civil wars of 1959 and 1973, grim precursors to the 1994 genocide. In these wars, the opposing tribes fight one another, exile one another and almost extinguish one another. In these coups d'état, power transfers occur, so that more opportunities, rights and benefits may be enjoyed at the expense of harmony. Sadly, efforts striving at a balance of power prove futile. Generally, division and discrimination advantage some and disadvantage many.

As competition in the survival of the fittest rages, administrative measures to identify and discriminate are implemented in both countries, ultimately leading to denying minorities the right to freedom and life. In Hitler's Germany (1933-1945), Jews are subjected to wearing yellow badges of identification and relegated to the ghettos. These emblems effectively stigmatize Jews as they are shamed and shunned - evidencing a

systematized segregation. Similarly, Immaculée, her parents and several  
<https://assignbuster.com/holocaust-as-the-result-of-colonial-racism-in-left-to-tell/>

Tutsi citizens of Rwanda are forced to carry identification cards betraying their tribe, issued to disadvantage them. "The ethnic identity cards the Hutu government adopted from the days of Belgian rule made the discrimination more blatant, and much easier" (Ilibagiza 15). In time of civil unrest, armed gunmen compel them to display these cards as a condition for survival.

As segregation becomes entrenched in German society, the government primarily classifies and targets Jewish, Slavic, African and other 'inferior' ethnicities, while privileging Aryans. Consequently in a few years, the holocaust against minorities flares up as their enemies decide to 'purge' the land of weak undesirables. Several young Jews in Germany undergoing the WWII Holocaust (1939-1945) encounter an experience in which they are labelled and shunned even in the classroom.

Likewise, even in the classroom, Immaculée's teacher demands her to reveal her ethnicity for the roll call. This incident in her childhood gives her a rude awakening to the reality of ethnic distinctions. Her consequent separation from her classmates compounds in her mind the significance of racial identity and its divisive effect. She discovers later that the "weekly roll calls served a sinister purpose: to segregate Tutsi children as part of a master plan of discrimination known as the "ethnic balance" (Ilibagiza 18). This savage situation points to the fact that racial discrimination and ethnic division are indoctrinated characteristics, rather than a quality innate in children.

Government-run media also unashamedly propagates hate-speech as the majority regimes support racism and render inevitable the prospect of an

ethnic cleansing in both Germany and Rwanda. Hitler understands the efficiency of controlled journalism as he monopolizes his hold on television, radio, and newspapers, employing them as tools of influence. German media houses blare poisonous information that stimulate strife among citizens thirsty for more opportunity and power. In parallel, Hutu announcers misuse the media to broadcast prejudice as the ethnic minorities are slandered as “Tutsi snakes and cockroaches.” Immaculée hears “ little more than a radical hate machine spewing out anti-Tutsi venom ... always some disembodied, malevolent voice calling for ‘ Hutu Power’” (Ilibagiza 37). Indeed, the public airwaves only worsen the racial divide as announcers and callers spew prejudice and stoke hatred to such a point that Immaculée is forbidden to listen to the radio, both at home and at school.

Perceived unequal opportunity end up fueling the people for genocide. In Rwanda, Immaculée and the Tutsi minority are seriously challenged in their education and career pursuits owing to government’s attempt to strike an ‘ ethnic balance.’ “ The Hutu president who seized power in the 1973 coup proclaimed that the government must balance the number of ... placements” (Ilibagiza 18). Her father affirms that it is harder for a Tutsi to achieve success than for the Hutu in a Rwanda redolent with resentment and institutionalized racial bias. Keen competition for scholarships and select coveted positions kindle a sense of injustice on both sides of the fence as both tribes are enmeshed in political stratagems to rival and exclude one another. The undeniable outcome, the holocaust, imperils liberty and life.

In addition to social violence, aggression aggravates already frail race

relations and therefore kindles the brewing holocaust in both Germany and  
<https://assignbuster.com/holocaust-as-the-result-of-colonial-racism-in-left-to-tell/>

Rwanda. In Rwanda, urban crime and gang warfare spiral out of control, afflicting the country like a pestilent storm, as tyranny and chaos precipitate ruin. Strange accounts of murders in nearby provinces unnerve the citizens as they realize that more and more a day of reckoning is fast approaching. Interahamwe, untouchable by both government and police, wield machetes while checking identity cards in several regions and terrorize a largely subdued, intimidated population. Finally, the conflict intensifies as the Tutsi-based Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) Army clashes with the Hutu-controlled Interahamwe (government soldiers) on several demarcation points.

Nevertheless, within the sacred precincts of the home, Immaculée's parents and several moderate Rwandans encourage tolerance, ethnic equality and mutual respect. Although both Tutsis and moderate Hutus are slain during the genocide, Immaculée grows to accept these principles. Her nurturing and religious faith invest her with the sterling values to navigate through the personal and political upheavals. She states that "everyone was welcome in our home, regardless of race, religion or tribe. To my parents, being Hutu or Tutsi had nothing to do with the kind of person you were" (Ilibagiza 15). This conservative mindset delays the genocidal storm. She reminisces that her parents were not prejudiced; rather, they believed that evil drove people to do evil things regardless of tribe or race. In the past, many Rwandans endorse these virtues, intermarry and get along well; however, the tide turns. When racial propaganda goes viral, their fragile unity totally evaporates and an apocalypse arises.