

In the first place, I had to realize that I was Hutu. All Rwandans share the same language and culture, and there is no specific region that is identified with an ethnic group, no "Hutuland" or "Tutsiland." The colonial authorities, in order to simplify things, tried to differentiate between three ethnic groups.... The Tutsi are tall, slender, and have refined features. The Hutu are of medium build with negroid features. The Twa are small and have pygmoid features. In reality, these are just generalizations. There are short Tutsi and tall Hutu and Twa. . . At the time of the Tutsi genocide in 1994, Hutu with refined features were killed at the roadblocks, whereas Tutsi with Hutu features remained safe. In Cyangugu, a prefecture bordering the Congo, I found Tutsi friends who had crossed the entire country and had had no difficulty at the checkpoints, even though they had no more identification than a document certifying that they had lost their identity card. On the other hand, my mother, who was Hutu but had Tutsi features, was threatened with death a number of times, even though her identity card was completely in order. . .

We did not want to deny the presence of those who were guilty of genocide among the refugees, we simply wanted to remind people that the vast majority of the refugees in the camps had played no role whatsoever in the tragedy. We thought the best way to marginalize the guilty was to recognize the existence of the innocent majority, thereby lessening the appeal of the genocidaires. . . By the end of August, the majority of the refugees had been installed in the camps. There were between 350,000 and 500,000 Rwandans and Burundians crammed into about twenty camps in the areas of Bukavu and Uvira.

-Marie Beatrice Umetesi, "Surviving the Slaughter" (2000) excerpt.