The father and daughter we let down

Allan Thompson

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They were murdered in front of the world 15 years ago today. No one knew their names and, worse, no one seemed to care.

The man in the middle of the dirt road is praying, a woman cowering beside him.

Kneeling amid a pile of twisted bodies in the red clay of the Gikondo district of Kigali, the man repeats the same motion over and over, first clasping his hands in front of him, then spreading his arms wide, palms turned upward. A throng of men mills about nearby, holding machetes, crowbars and sticks with nails protruding from them. Except for the crude weapons, they look like members of a construction crew on a break.

It is just after 10 on a cloudy Monday morning – April 11, 1994, five days after the assassination of President Juvenal Habyarimana plunged tiny Rwanda into the abyss. The road in Gikondo is already lined with corpses.

Across the valley, from the top floor of a building known as the French school, British journalist Nick Hughes is watching the praying man through his camera lens and recording these final moments. One of only a handful of Western journalists in Rwanda, Hughes, a freelance cameraman, heard earlier in the day about killings taking place in Gikondo, a stronghold of Hutu extremists.

Hughes is one of those legendary characters among the coterie of Western journalists, adventurers really, who make their careers chronicling African tragedies. Last year it was Somalia, and next year it will be Zaire. Today's hellhole is Rwanda, and Hughes has come to the French school looking for a secure vantage point from which to shoot. Because Belgian troops are stationed there, the school is a gathering point for expatriates seeking evacuation. And evacuation of foreigners is the outside world's utmost priority at the moment, even though thou-

sands of Rwandans have already been butchered.

Earlier, on his way up the steps, Hughes met Reuters cameraman Mohammed Shaffi, who told him that from above, you could see killers slaughtering people across the valley. On a top floor, Hughes encountered a Belgian paratrooper. The distraught soldier was looking through the scope of a rocket launcher and pointed to the dirt road across the valley. Hamstrung by a United Nations mandate forbidding outright intervention, the paratrooper had been watching death squads drag people out of their homes to be tortured and killed in broad daylight, their bodies left in a heap in the clay.

Hughes sets up his camera. First he focuses on some of the bodies strewn along the road, then he pans across the valley, through the trees. When he pans back, he spots the praying man and the cowering woman, who have apparently been hauled up from the side of the road and are now among the pile of bodies. Hughes watches for about 20 minutes, periodically turning off his camera because he knows that he is almost out of tape and fears his batteries are running low. He also knows what is coming, and the journalist in him wants to capture the moment.

The man continues to pray. It is as if, resigned to his fate, he has already turned heavenward. The crew congregated in front of the low tin roof of a house up the street seems to be oblivious to the pair. A young boy dressed in a T-shirt strolls past, giving the man and woman only a backward glance. Then some armed men move forward and begin to pound the bodies that are strewn around the two figures, striking the corpses again and again. One man gives the bodies a final crack, as if driving a stake into the ground, then slings his stick over his shoulder and ambles off. All the while, the praying man continues to wave his arms.

A white pickup truck approaches and drives through the scene. The windshield wipers are flopping back and forth. One of the men huddled in the back of the vehicle gives a wave and seems to be saying something as the pickup bumps past.

Finally, two other men approach the scene on the street. One, dressed in dark trousers and a white shirt, winds up to strike the praying man. The attacker has the posture of someone who is about to whip an animal. The victim recoils before he is struck on the head with a stick. The praying man crumples to the ground, then suffers more blows from his murderer. Moments later, the woman is struck down by another assailant, who swings with such force that her head is very nearly lopped off by the initial blow. Finally, the two killers walk away casually, leaving the bod-

ies to squirm.

In the distance, there is the sound of birdsong.

THIS IS THE STORY of a journey to afford the dignity of identity to people whose deaths were captured on camera.

It is the story of a man who prayed to God to forgive his killers while his daughter cowered beside him.

And the story of how we watched genocide on television, then turned away and did nothing.

Remarkably, during a genocide that would eventually claim upwards of a million lives, this is one of the only times a killing was caught on video by the media – perhaps the only time. The praying man Hughes regarded through his camera lens is literally one in a million. The grainy footage was shipped out to Nairobi within hours. Hughes took it to the airport and gave it to a stranger who was boarding the aircraft. Then he hollered through his satellite phone at a producer in Nairobi who didn't seem to understand the urgency of getting to the airport to receive the package.

The tape was uploaded to London and distributed by the British agency WTN, for whom Hughes was freelancing. That night and the next morning, the footage flashed across television screens around the world – CNN, Australian Broadcasting and German giant ZDF – but somehow, it didn't make any difference. Rwanda never became a cause célèbre. And the killing in Gikondo rolled out across the country for another three months.

The images captured by Hughes have since become the virtual stock footage of the genocide, a sort of Zapruder film of the Rwanda tragedy. The pictures of those men wielding clubs and hacking their victims are used over and over in nearly every documentary account. The footage was even fictionalized by producers of the film Hotel Rwanda, in the scene during which the cameraman played by Joaquin Phoenix bursts in to show his producer the video of a killing he has just captured in the streets of Kigali. In the Hollywood version, no one really cares. "How can they not intervene, when they witness such atrocities?" asks the heroic Rwandan hotel manager played by Don Cheadle. "If people see this footage, they'll say, 'Oh, my God, that's horrible' and then go on eating their dinners," the cameraman played by Phoenix replies. And that's exactly what happened.

Hughes captured what should have been one of the iconic media images of our time. The footage is akin to the 1972 photo of the little girl, naked and terrified, her arms outstretched, running from a napalm strike during the Vietnam War, or the

image of the solitary figure in front of an advancing tank in Tiananmen Square in 1989, or the pictures of the falling man plummeting to his death after leaping from the World Trade Center on Sept. 11 – singular human figures who transcend historical events. The little Vietnamese girl, Kim Phuc, was identified years after the famous photo and now lives in Ajax and heads a foundation committed to the plight of war-affected children. So far, no one has definitively put a name to the solitary figure defying the tanks in Tiananmen Square, or to the falling man of Sept. 11.

But the images of the praying man and the woman who perished beside him on a dirt road in Rwanda are somehow different, more urgent, more haunting for what might have been.

The news footage of their deaths was captured in the first moments of a 100-day rampage, at the front end of the arc of a genocide that would overtake Rwanda in the months to come. If only we had understood what we were seeing – or cared enough to understand – Rwanda might have been different.

As their deaths were broadcast around the world, their unidentified bodies were hurled into the back of a yellow truck and dumped into a mass grave, forgotten by the world that also forgot their country.

RWANDA, A TINY central African country, a mere dot on the world map, garnered virtually no international media attention before the apocalypse that followed the president's death. A fledgling peace accord signed in Arusha, Tanzania, in 1993 after years of civil war had set out the details for a power-sharing arrangement between the majority Hutu population and the minority Tutsi. But an international peacekeeping force, commanded by Canadian general Roméo Dallaire, was left virtually powerless when the country plunged into mass killing, in a campaign orchestrated by Hutu extremists. The massacres began almost immediately in Kigali through the night of April 6 and 7. Hutu moderates, who were willing to share power, were among the first targeted, along with Tutsis marked for extermination in a campaign that eventually fanned out across the country.

Gikondo was one of the places where it all began, a stronghold of the Hutu extremist movement. The first large-scale massacre to be discovered by UN troops took place there on April 9. Brent Beardsley, the Canadian who was the staff officer for UN commander Dallaire, headed for Gikondo that day with two Polish military observers, Stefan Stec and Maric Pazik. Inside the walls of a Catholic mission the soldiers found bodies hacked apart. Stec used his camcorder to take pictures of the

bodies, believing he had evidence of genocide. But he was later forbidden by the UN from using the word.

Two days later, the French newspaper Libération ran a report by correspondent Jean-Philippe Ceppi, who visited Gikondo with the chief delegate of the International Committee for the Red Cross, Philippe Gaillard, and saw mutilated bodies of men, women and children. Ceppi used the word "genocide," but then the term dropped from the headlines for weeks.

Even though a handful of journalists risked their lives to tell the Rwanda story, most international news organizations initially misunderstood the nature of the killing in Rwanda, portraying it as the result of tribal warfare, not genocide.

The grainy video captured on April 11 by Nick Hughes is truly the exception that proves the rule. Eventually, when journalists returned in greater numbers, the international media reports on Rwanda were replete with images of bloated corpses, strewn at the roadside or choking Rwanda's rivers. But there were so few foreign journalists on the ground at the height of the killing – because media gatekeepers didn't seem to care and because the domestic media in Rwanda had either been cowed or co-opted into the massacres – that there are virtually no other known images of the crime itself, the crime of genocide.

FOR MY PART, I came late to the Rwanda genocide. Like many journalists, I seemed to be busy with other things in the spring of 1994. As a political reporter with the Star, I was based in Ottawa. Foreign affairs was one of my beats, and given that the Star's Africa correspondent was locked down in South Africa covering the end of apartheid, it would have been natural for me to volunteer to go to Rwanda. But I didn't. Indeed, I don't recall the thought even crossing my mind. My only vivid memory of the Rwanda genocide is of a conversation on the front steps of the Presbyterian church my parents attend in the southern Ontario hamlet of Glammis. A church elder, Jim Gilchrist, was marvelling at the news footage from the country. "They're just killing each other like animals over there," he said. That was Mother's Day. Even now, I can't explain how I remained oblivious to Rwanda during April, May and June of 1994, but it is something of which I am deeply ashamed.

It wasn't until 1996 that I found myself in Rwanda, dispatched by the Star to cover the situation in eastern Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo), where another peacekeeping force led by Canada was about to deploy to ease the plight of hundreds of thousands of Rwandan refugees who had been living in squalid camps since fleeing Rwanda at the end of the

1994 genocide. Among their number were many of the killers.

In one of the camps abandoned by civilians who had gone back to Rwanda, we came across a massacre site, nearly 20 bodies hacked apart and dumped in a heap. Some had their heads cracked open and brain matter exposed, others their entrails spilling out of body cavities. These were the first human remains I had seen outside of a funeral home, and they will always be with me. The most difficult to look at were the children, one a baby in a green woollen jumper, lying on its back, arms splayed. As if by reflex, my response was to take out my camera and step gingerly through the bodies, regarding them through my camera lens.

Those moments in the Mugunga camp, when I was confronted by some of the lost souls of Rwanda, were something of an epiphany for me. Two years after the Rwanda genocide, I found myself asking: How did I miss the Rwanda story? Why wasn't I here in 1994? How could I have been so oblivious?

I've been back to Rwanda nearly a dozen times since, both as a reporter for the Star and, more recently, to establish a partnership between Carleton University's journalism school – where I now work – and its counterpart at the National University of Rwanda. Later I edited a collection of essays on the topic of the media and the Rwandan genocide, and one of the pieces was by Nick Hughes, about his remarkable footage.

To be honest, I don't remember the first time I saw the Hughes footage, but I probably became aware of it years after the genocide, when it appeared in documentaries. I began to realize its significance when I came across the transcript of his testimony at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, in Arusha, where the video was entered as evidence of genocide.

In early 2007, I set out on a book tour to promote my collection of essays on the media and the genocide. The Hughes footage was a central part of the presentation I made at every stop, one of which was in Nairobi, Kenya. After dinner with a media colleague, I was talking about trying to identify the victims in the Hughes footage. The friend pointed out that Nick was actually living in town. I asked my friend to call him up right away and we arranged to meet for lunch the next day at the posh Norfolk Hotel in downtown Nairobi.

Nick was wearing a collarless shirt with a red handkerchief tied around his neck – the stereotype of the war correspondent. He told me he had made an attempt to identify the victims in his footage in 2002, when he and Rwandan filmmaker Eric Kabera managed to find at least one woman

who had witnessed the events. But after that the trail went cold.

THE NEXT TIME I travelled to Rwanda was in the last two weeks of June 2007, to work on the Carleton project. On the way to one appointment, I caught out of the corner of my eye a street scene that looked familiar and realized it was the spot in Gikondo where the killings had taken place. The road has since been built up and paved and now leads to a tourist market, Koplaki, where vendors sell wooden carvings and handicrafts. I left my colleagues at the craft market and headed up the road hurriedly on foot, glancing back over my shoulder and across the valley to the French school, trying to envision the sightline through which Nick shot his footage. I came to a spot in the road that looked right, judging by the streetscape and the adjacent buildings, and at that moment decided that I had to call Eric Kabera and finally make a concerted effort to identify the victims in the genocide video.

Eric agreed to help me, and on our first visit to the street we managed to find two women who said they'd witnessed a series of killings in front of their homes in early April. The scene they described matched the footage of people praying. Eric wanted to film our interview, so we returned the next morning. One of the witnesses was Godance Mukanyirigira, a tall woman with a regal bearing. The second was Rosine Kankundiye, quieter and slightly stooped. Eric and his crew set up their cameras on the front porch of Godance's home, inside a rusty tin fence that separated the property from the street. Both women were Tutsi survivors. Godance started by telling us that she had lost 27 people from her extended family, including her husband. "But I am okay, I am still here," she said. Rosine said she had lost 38 family members, including her husband and virtually all of her in-laws.

Godance and Rosine sat stiffly in front of the cameras and began to recount the killings that had occurred on the road in front of their homes. The interviews were conducted in Kinyarwanda, so I relied on Eric for interpretation at the time and then reviewed the tapes later with a translator. "I witnessed this, from where we are sitting now," Godance said, describing how in 1994 her property was bounded by a thick hedge that she'd peered through when she heard the noise. She said it was about 10 a.m., and victims were dragged from down in the valley and forced to crouch in the street at a roadblock in front of her home, were there were already dead bodies.

"We saw them kill an old man who was with his son," Godance recounted. "They beat him on the head and the brain matter landed on a tree on the other side of the street. But

no one spoke. We were like stones, we couldn't even scream or say anything."

They watched the killing of a person named Tatiana, a tall woman from across the road who had long hair and a limp, from a bout with polio. She also had a baby strapped to her back. Rosine said in passing that she heard later that two of Tatiana's older children had survived.

"And there was another man, oh what was his name – I'm going to remember after," Godance recalled. "This man was the father of a young woman, Justine. Yes, he was Justine's father and his name was Kabaga."

She said they were the ones who were praying.

I realized that for the first time, someone had put names to the people who died in the genocide video.

Rosine admitted she was simply too afraid to leave her home – until she heard a baby crying, the baby that had been strapped to Tatiana's back and remained alive after its mother's slaying. She slipped out of her house, but then saw a man coming back up the street, carrying a crowbar. "I personally witnessed that, I saw him hitting the baby with the bar," she said.

The bodies remained there for the rest of the day, until the yellow trucks came at around 4 p.m. to collect them. "We don't know where they went to throw them, and we haven't found them yet to be able to bury them," Godance said.

THE NEXT DAY, the death squads came back. "They took me," Godance said. "But God hadn't decided yet that I was going to die." Instead, she crawled out of a mass grave and survived. But Godance didn't want to talk about herself and returned to describing the scene in front of her house that day, particularly the deaths of Justine and her father, the praying man. Both born-again Christians, they were praying loudly, she recounted.

Through Eric, I asked if Godance and Rosine would be willing to look at the footage of the killings, and they agreed. I opened my laptop on a table inside the house, in a sitting room painted a muted aqua. The women sat transfixed, leaning forward to watch the footage for the first time. I thought they might become emotional or, worse, traumatized, but instead they watched intently, retelling the events of the day, talking to each other about the details.

"Yes, Justine and her father were praying, clapping their hands, saying, 'Thank you God, Thank you God,' Godance said. "Justine was right beside her father. And I remember that she was the last to die because she was the last one that they hit."

Godance winced at the point

when the video showed the killers coming forward to pound the bodies strewn around Justine and her father. Then she commented on the pickup truck that drove through the scene.

"I remember that this vehicle passed by and they asked why that cockroach was still making noise and asked, 'Why don't you kill it?' That's when the baby was still alive."

Godance and Rosine asked to watch the video again and again, each time picking up a new detail and commenting on the identities of some of the killers whom they recognized and remembered, including a brutal man nicknamed Gasongo, who came from Butare, in southern Rwanda. He was the one who had returned to kill the baby.

At one point I thought I heard Godance mention the Kinyarwanda word for mother. I pressed Eric to ask whom she was talking about, and Godance confirmed that Justine's mother still lived nearby.

My heart began to pound. I asked if we could go to see her. Godance sent a child to go and knock on the door, but the boy came back and said no one was at home. So we arranged to return the next day at 4 p.m. Eric said he was too busy to return, but offered to send one of his producers, Thierry, to act as my translator.

The following day, I slipped away from a meeting in the late afternoon and took a motorcycle taxi down past the Milles Collines hotel, along Rue Akagera, past the French school from which Nick shot the footage, and finally, across the valley to Gikondo. I met up with Thierry and Godance, who greeted me this time with a broad smile and a handshake. Then she led us down the road to her neighbour's house, about 100 metres from where the killings had taken place.

From the main road we followed a dirt path – the same path the death squads followed in 1994 – and in a minute or so, we came to a ramshackle tin gate that led into a small yard.

Godance knocked on the door, and a pretty young woman answered. She was Violette, Justine's younger sister. She invited us inside, into a small, dark living room lined with couches and well-worn chairs. The walls were painted a chalky yellow. Above the couch there was a small plaque with the words of Psalm 24, Verse 21 from the Old Testament, written in Kinyarwanda: "Evil shall slay the wicked; and those who hate the righteous will be condemned."

Violette called for her mother, Rosalie Uzamukunda (in Rwanda, family members often do not share the same last name), who emerged from a curtained-off back room. Her hair was wrapped in a red kerchief and she was wearing a yellow cotton outfit. Her face was stern and wary. She was polite, but distant, avoiding

eye contact. When we shook hands, I used my left arm to prop up my right, a Rwandan sign of respect.

A little boy perched on a chair in the corner. He was Justine's brother, Isaac. His mother had been seven months pregnant with him at the time of the genocide.

Through Thierry, I explained who I was and what I was doing here. I told Rosalie that as a journalist, I wanted to learn all I could about her family members, the people who were killed on the road that day and whose deaths were among the only ones recorded by the news media.

At the mention of the video footage, Rosalie became agitated. Thierry told me that she had no idea that the death of her husband and daughter had been captured on video. In an instant, I realized that Rosalie would almost certainly insist on seeing it, and I got a knot in my stomach. I told Thierry that I had no intention of showing her the footage. That's not why I had come here. I needed to show it to the other women, I explained, to make sure they were recounting the same event, but I didn't want to show it to a family member.

He repeated this to Rosalie, but she persisted and said that if there were pictures of her family, she wanted to see them. "Tell her the battery in my laptop has run out of power," I said. She replied by pointing to an electrical outlet on the wall. Again I cautioned that she had to understand what these pictures showed, and I insisted that I didn't want to show them to her. But she was adamant. So reluctantly, I knelt down beside her on the floor and opened my laptop on the coffee table.

One last time, I told Thierry to please tell her that I was very reluctant for her to see these images. She said to go ahead.

So I clicked on the icon for the Hughes footage.

The first person to speak was the little boy, Isaac, who asked who those people were, the ones praying. The witness, Godance, explained that they were his father and sister.

Within moments, Rosalie was sobbing uncontrollably, crying and panting while being embraced by her daughter Violette and wiping away tears. "I remember that shirt," she said, pointing at the screen.

Then she asked me to stop the footage and left the room.

"They didn't know how they were killed," Godance explained. "All they knew was what we told them."

A bit ashamed, I packed up the laptop and returned to my seat across the room. I told Violette I was sorry to cause such grief, but that I simply wanted the world to know about her sister and father, and that I still wanted to know more about them.

"We have photos," Violette of-

fered, just as her mother returned to the room. Thierry wondered aloud if we should stop and return another day. "It's okay now, it's fine," Violette said. "We don't want to hurt her more; we can stop and come back another time," Thierry said.

"No, it is okay," Rosalie replied. "But I had never seen that film. Other people told me how they were killed, but now I see it for the first time." Then she said to Violette: "Go and bring the pictures."

Violette returned from the other room carrying two dog-eared photographs and handed them to me.

It is hard to explain what happened next. I don't think I was prepared for my emotional reaction to seeing the photos, especially the one of Justine Mukangango. It was as if she became a real person in front of my eyes, in a moment that remains one of the most poignant for me in two decades as a journalist. I had watched her death a hundred times, but in the photo she was alive, and vibrant, sitting cross-legged on a chair in a bedroom, a crooked smile beaming at the camera. She wore a crisp white blouse and blue skirt. One hand was placed carefully in her lap.

On the end table at the foot of the bed there was a radio, a thermos for tea and a glass jar containing some flowers. Someone had drawn a cross on the photo in blue ink, a tradition after a person passes away. It was as if I had known her for years but met her for the first time when she looked out at me from that photograph. And now her face won't leave my mind.

"So this is her," I heard myself saying out loud. By then I couldn't hold back the tears any longer and sat there and wept, staring at the photo for a long time. When I turned it over I noticed that on the back someone had written in a careful hand "Le 11 - 4 - 1994," the date of her death.

Justine's mother was crying again, wiping her eyes with a tissue. "Please talk to me about her," I said. And she told me about her Justine, who was born on July 20, 1974, the oldest of three sisters. "She was a good believer, a Christian, and went to the Pentecostal church near the market, in Gikondo," her mother said. Justine loved to pray and sang in the church choir. She also enjoyed playing the piano.

In April of 1994 she was taking general courses in school, but dreamed of becoming a doctor so she could get her parents a new home.

"She used to say that she would build a house for me, and that when she begins to work and earn money she would buy her father a car."

Her father was an auto mechanic but never owned a vehicle himself.

And then I looked again at the photo of Justine's father, Rosalie's devoted husband of two decades, Gabriel Kabaga. In the old, black-

and-white photo he was stern and handsome.

Godance spoke again about what she had witnessed.

"The father was asking forgiveness for those who were about to kill them."

Violette, who was 8 at the time, recounted that the death squad had come in the morning, at around 9. In fact they had come the day before to take away her father, but he had managed to slip away, and a neighbour talked the intruders into leaving. But on the morning of the 11th they came back, banged on the tin gate, then stormed into the house and demanded Gabriel – who was accused of being an accomplice of the Tutsi rebels – also grabbing Justine. They said they would return for the rest of the family later and left. A Congolese neighbour helped Rosalie and the rest of her children to hide in a latrine. When they returned hours later to the house, neighbours told them Justine and her father had been taken to the street and beaten to death with sticks.

Justine "used to help me in small tasks at home," Rosalie said. "Whenever she came home from school or the choir she would take care of the little ones, her brothers and sisters, or clean the house and cook. She was a special child.

"All we can say is that they are not alive any more; they were a very important part of the family and now life has changed. We don't have a good life any more."

By then we were all drained, and I felt it was time for me to leave. But Rosalie began to speak and Thierry motioned for me to remain seated. "She wants to pray," he said softly, just as everyone began to hold hands. Thierry gripped my right hand and I reached over to Violette, who was sitting on my left. Then Rosalie bowed her head and began to speak in a low voice. I couldn't understand the words, but the sound of Thierry the translator sobbing was more than I could bear and once again, I broke down.

When I finally rose to leave, I shook hands with everyone in the room, and then embraced Rosalie in a long hug and said the only thing I could think of in Kinyarwanda. "Ihangane – I'm sorry, be brave." And then I climbed back up to the main road.

Before we parted, Thierry told me what Rosalie had said when we bowed our heads:

"Dear Lord Jesus Christ. We thank you for bringing these people to our home. I thank you for all the things we have been talking about ... Guide them as they go away and we will be grateful to you if we can meet again. Amen."

IT HAS TAKEN a long time to tell this story. After identifying

Justine and her father, I wanted to do them justice. But I hesitated. It felt a bit mercenary, as if by rights it should be Nick Hughes recounting the tale of his historic footage. I felt awkward about telling him I had gone ahead and investigated on my own.

As it turned out, Nick went to work almost immediately on a documentary, returning to Rwanda with a crew to retrace his steps and recount the events of 1994. They found new witnesses to the killings. And, in a remarkable turn of events, Nick and his crew followed up on the story of Tatiana, the woman with the baby on her back who perished just before Justine and her father.

They picked up on the comment from the neighbour, who said she'd heard that two of Tatiana's older children had survived. Tatiana brought the little boy and girl to the home of a Hutu neighbour, who hid them under a bed. The woman then spirited them out of Kigali at nightfall, and they remained with an aunt in a remote village in western Rwanda.

Nick and his crew found the children. And then Nick did something that the textbooks say journalists aren't supposed to do: He took the children to Nairobi, where they live with him while he puts them through school. Nick is very protective of the siblings, now in their late teens, and doesn't talk much about the fact they have joined his family in Nairobi.

The director of Nick's documentary returned to Rwanda again in November 2007 to chase down leads from eyewitnesses who were adamant that they recognized at least one of the killers in the footage. Some claimed they recognized Alexandre Usabyeyezu, who lived at the top of the road. By a remarkable coincidence, Usabyeyezu had been detained only days before, accused of looting and other crimes during the genocide. At the filmmaker's request, the co-ordinator of the Gaccaca communal justice program arranged a special public meeting during which Usabyeyezu and two other men accused of involvement in the killings were brought to a community centre, to watch the video in the presence of some of the survivors.

The documentary, Iseta: Behind the Roadblock, was released last year. It includes a stunning scene during which Usabyeyezu, in the pink uniform worn by prisoners in Rwanda, was filmed as he sat and watched the video in the presence of witnesses, who prodded him to confess.

LIKE NICK HUGHES, I have also become involved in a story, a journalistic transgression that I am willing to live with. My academic work takes me to Rwanda at least twice a year and whenever possible, I make a visit to Rosalie and her family.

The first time we met I pledged

to Rosalie that I would write about her family's tragedy, but would not profit from their story. Anything I earn from it would be delivered to the family.

At the end of one recent visit to Kigali I had a few hours left before my flight and decided to go to the street in Gikondo. I gave directions to a motorcycle taxi driver. It was a warm Sunday morning. At the side of the gravel track from the main road the bougainvillea bushes were in bloom.

At the house, Violette's older sister Yvette answered the door. I explained in French that I was the Canadian journalist, the one who had visited before. She said her mother had just left for church, but that she could probably catch her on her mobile phone. Then she invited me to come in and sit down. I had brought along a young Rwandan journalism student named Gilbert, who agreed to translate.

Before long the gate creaked open and Rosalie arrived. I remembered how wary she had been the first time we met, but now she greeted me with a broad smile and a hug. Choral music was playing on the radio in the background and grandchildren scurried about.

Rosalie said she had been wondering when I would come back to see her again and wanted to know about my article. I told her that I hoped to publish something soon.

Like the vast majority in Rwanda, Rosalie and her family struggle to get by, even though the country has made vast strides since the devastation of the genocide, rebuilding and trying to move forward.

We chatted about how things were going with her family. Her eldest son, Charles, is married and lives away. Yvette and Violette have finished their studies but don't yet have work. Isaac is going to school in Ruehengeri, in the northwest of Rwanda. And every day she misses her eldest daughter and husband.

"She was a real Christian and I have been told that when they were killing her she still took her time and prayed, and the same for my husband. Those people who were around said this lady was going directly to heaven."

I told Gilbert to try to explain to her that as a journalist, I feel some remorse for the fact that we didn't do a better job of telling the world what was happening in Rwanda, that we didn't make people understand what the deaths of her daughter and husband really meant.

And I also asked him to tell her that I sometimes regret showing her the genocide video.

"Tell her that I hope at least some good has come from that. I remember how emotional it was for her to see those pictures, so I'm sorry for the grief I caused."

Before Gilbert could finish translating, Rosalie was shaking her head.

"No, no, no," she said. "Thank you, thank you very much for showing me that video.

"Of all the million people who were killed in the genocide, it was the members of my family, my daughter and my husband, whose deaths were captured by that camera. Because of that I am one of the only ones who can show what happened. Because of that we know and the world knows.

"To have that chance to know, it was a miracle."

And then, as before, she stopped me just as I was preparing to leave and took my hand.

Like her husband and her daughter, lost in the cataclysm of the Rwanda genocide, she wanted to pray.

Allan Thompson, editor of The Media and the Rwanda Genocide, is also a journalism professor at Carleton University and director of the Rwanda Initiative, a project that seeks to help rebuild the media sector in Rwanda. He can be reached at: allan_thompson@carleton.ca.

Kigali, Rwanda–Alexandre Usabyeyezu spends his days behind the imposing walls of Kigali's central prison, dubbed "1930" because of the date inscribed above the gate of the castle-like structure. After two failed attempts to gain permission to visit Usabyeyezu, I was finally allowed an interview during a recent visit here.

He is serving a life sentence for murder, having been convicted partly because of evidence contained in Nick Hughes' footage of the killing of Gabriel Kabaga and his daughter Justine Mukangango.

A Rwandan friend named Jean-Pierre came along to translate, and the warden supervised the meeting in her stark office outside the prison walls. But first, she asked to know more about the purpose of my interview. While I was explaining my intentions, it became clear that she knew about the video footage that had led to Usabyeyezu's life sentence. "He still insists that it's not him in the video, but other prisoners tell him he should confess to the crime and try to reconcile."

Finally, Usabyeyezu was ushered into the room. More than 6 feet tall, he was dressed in the incongruous pink uniform worn by prisoners in Rwanda. (When he posed for a photo another day, he wore the orange reserved for convicts). He wore brown leather sandals and had a small wooden cross hanging from a string around his neck. In his left hand he clutched some folded papers.

Before sitting in a chair across from me he reached over to shake hands. The warden explained that I was here to talk to him about the Gikondo killing, the one captured on video. In the small of his neck be-

neath the Adam's apple I could see the skin vibrating in time with his heartbeat.

"I know there are people who say it was me, but they are wrong," he insisted. "I wasn't so heavy back then in 1994. I weighed only 50 kilos and was not so big as the man in the pictures."

After the genocide he stayed in Gikondo, where he worked as a welder and carpenter, living with his wife and six children, until his arrest.

When asked who was responsible for the slayings, Usabyeyezu spoke of a ringleader, Claver, and of Prosper, a man of his size who he said is the one in the video.

He insisted the video was never shown at his trial, but only at the public meeting held for the filmmakers. And he said it was witnesses who had seen the video who testified at his trial.

Usabyeyezu said that he confessed to involvement in other killings that took place at the time, though his version is that his role extended to reading out the ethnicity on the identity cards of people pulled aside at roadblocks. He said he was complicit in the killings of four people because he identified them as Tutsi and did nothing to prevent their deaths.

He said the killing in his area was co-ordinated by someone named Birushya. I asked him if he knew who had been killed that day. He said he knew the woman Justine – who he guessed was about 22 at the time – because he had once rented a room from her grandmother. And he said he knew her mechanic father.

"The film is the reason I am here," he said, referring to the life sentence that he is attempting to appeal.

"All I want is justice."