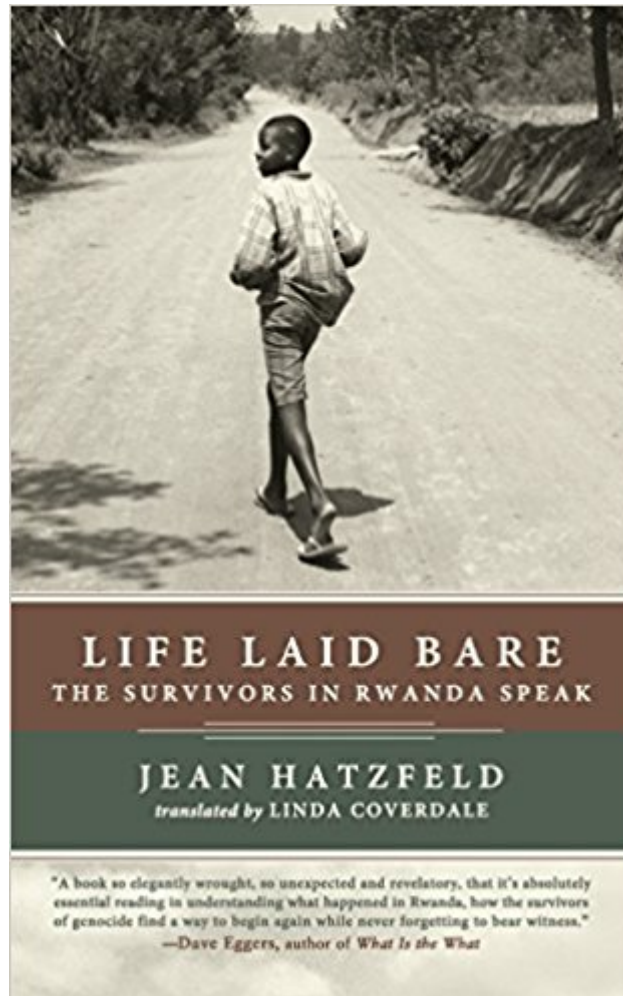




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# Life Laid Bare: The Survivors In Rwanda Speak



## Synopsis

"To make the effort to understand what happened in Rwanda is a painful task that we have no right to shirk." — Susan Sontag

In the late 1990s, French author and journalist Jean Hatzfeld made several journeys into the hilly, marshy region of the Bugesera, one of the areas most devastated by the Rwandan genocide of April 1994, where an average of five out of six Tutsis were hacked to death with machete and spear by their Hutu neighbors and militiamen. In the villages of Nyamata and N'tarama, Hatzfeld interviewed fourteen survivors of the genocide, from orphan teenage farmers to the local social worker. For years the survivors had lived in a muteness as enigmatic as the silence of those who survived the Nazi concentration camps. In *Life Laid Bare*, they speak for those who are no longer alive to speak for themselves; they tell of the deaths of family and friends in the churches and marshes to which they fled, and they attempt to account for the reasons behind the Tutsi extermination. For many of the survivors "life has broken down," while for others, it has "stopped," and still others say that it "absolutely must go on." These horrific accounts of life at the very edge contrast with Hatzfeld's own sensitive and vivid descriptions of Rwanda's villages and countryside in peacetime. These voices of courage and resilience exemplify the indomitable human spirit, and they remind us of our own moral responsibility to bear witness to these atrocities and to never forget what can come to pass again. Winner of the Prix France Culture and the Prix Pierre Mille, *Life Laid Bare* allows us, in the author's own words, "to draw as close as we can get to the Rwandan genocide."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

French journalist and war correspondent Hatzfeld offers brief, pithy accounts of 14 survivors of the three-day Rwandan genocide of 1994, in which 10,000 Tutsis seeking refuge in churches were slaughtered by machete-wielding Hutus. The survivors describe both devastation, as neighbors with whom [they] used to chat became executioners, and the degradation of later being marginalized by Rwandan society. Announcing their presence with whistles and songs, the Hutu killers arrived regularly in the morning and left in the late afternoon, their violent sprees corresponding with victims' efforts to hide the children in small groups under the papyrus at sunrise, and to emerge from hiding places in the marsh when the killers had finished their work at sunset. Even though each account tells the same harrowing story, each voice is unique. Bringing cumulative power to what, in lesser hands, might have been a random collection of historical accounts, Hatzfeld's wrenching collection compels an active response to the genocides occurring today. (Nov.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

"People not streaming with their own blood were streaming with the blood of others." In *Machete Season: The Killers in Rwanda Speak* (2005), French journalist Hatzfeld interviewed the perpetrators of the 1994 genocide that killed several hundred thousand Tutsis. Now he returns to speak to 14 survivors, who remember the horrifying atrocity they witnessed, from a 12-year-old schoolboy (who hid in a mound of corpses) to a 60-year-old teacher (who remembers his well-educated neighbors with their machetes). More than a random collection of oral histories, the focus is on one district, an area of 154 square miles, where in a period of six weeks, about 50,000 Tutsis—five out of six—were murdered by their Hutu neighbors. For each of the 14 interviewed today, Hatzfeld fills in the background and provides a black-and-white photo. Those photos, accompanied by the clear personal voices, break your heart. The daily struggle with survivor guilt and outsiders' indifference is part of a constant connection with the Holocaust.

Rochman, Hazel

This compilation of interviews with various survivors of the Rwandan Genocide is one of great depth. I read this work during my graduate studies for a Holocaust and Genocide studies MA. Considering the amount of material I have read that is similar in content to this work, I was not expecting such a strong and visceral reaction. At one point in the work, I was unable to keep reading and had to leave the book while I wept. It is not often that this reaction comes to me at this point. The suffering is palpable throughout these interviews and this is a must-read work for anyone interested in human rights, genocide, war, peace studies, history or life in general.

Life Laid Bare is simply superb. The author allows the voices of the genocide survivors ring through and gives them enough time and enough respect to allow them to verbally muse and mull. The net result is not only illuminating of Rwanda's history and the genocide itself - but presses home the complexity of genocidal events. I very much liked the fact that the author and the survivors made no attempt to speak for others in the sense that the claim here is that people are telling their own experience in the midst of events. They are humbly humble in their incite of the enormity, but yet at the same time, individuality, of what they experienced. Must be read with the two subsequent books, Machete Season and the Antelope's Strategy.

I liked the way the author gave a brief over view of the survivor's life before the genocide and then let them tell their story in their own words of what they went through to survive and how they are handling their life now. One common thread throughout each story was the fact that the world just seemed to be oblivious of what was going on in Rwanda or that they didn't seem to care. Not one survivor talked bitterly about this, they just couldn't figure out "why?"

yes very good book

as described

I loved the book. Yet - it's hard to rate a product like that. All three books by Jean Hatzfeld (this one is the first out of trilogy) are amazing, all three should be read.

The author puts a lot of information concerning the attitudes, fears, and unrest still prevalent in Rwanda. Survivor's guilt is an understandable emotion of the Tutsi's that remain. And, quite obviously, trusting those Hutus who were complicit in the genocide is a serious problem even now.

Accounts of survivors stories. I have read other books where everyone found god but this is a less "biased" account. Recommend for a great insight into Rwanda genocide.

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