



Rwandan genocide survivor recounts her harrowing story for college students

MATTHEW AGNELLI
Contributor

Eugenie Mukeshimana, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, delivered a virtual lecture to County College of Morris students Thursday, March 4. She recounted her heart-rending tale of survival and perseverance in striking detail, from being separated from her family and hiding from armed killers, to giving birth to her daughter while alone in the pouring rain.

The Rwandan genocide occurred in 1994. In 100 days, approximately 800,000 people — mostly Tutsis, Rwanda's minority ethnic group — were slaughtered by militias composed of Hutus, the country's majority ethnic group.

When the genocide began, Mukeshimana and her family, all of whom were Tutsis, sought ref-

uge with moderate Hutu friends. They offered to hide Mukeshimana, but the rest of her family had to find somewhere else to go. She never saw them again. After these friends were raided, Mukeshimana ended up in the home of a local official. Despite the fact that this official's job was to coordinate the killing of local Tutsis, she offered Mukeshimana refuge — likely because Mukeshimana was heavily pregnant at the time. Mukeshimana wasn't able to stay there for long, however, and eventually ended up hiding in an old, dirty outhouse. It was there, on a cold, rainy night, that she went into labor and gave birth to her daughter. Mukeshimana and her newborn daughter were found the following day and brought to a nearby killing site. However, the Hutus lost control of the country soon after, and she and her daugh-

ter were spared.

When the genocide was over, Mukeshimana discovered that her family and friends had been killed.

"But I was fortunate compared to many other people who went through the same experience," Mukeshimana said. "I came out with a new life — not just me. Many mothers lost their kids, and that kind of, like, kept me going."

Tensions between the Hutus and the Tutsis were already high leading up to the genocide — Rwanda's government had been disseminating anti-Tutsi propaganda and arming Hutu civilians for years.

"I started hearing these harsh words from people," said Mukeshimana when describing the growing anti-Tutsi sentiment in her community before the genocide. "They were calling us cockroaches and snakes, and they were

openly saying, 'Well, we will get you.'"

These tensions came to a head after Rwanda's leader, President Juvénal Habyarimana, was assassinated April 6, 1994. The government immediately blamed the Tutsis, and armed Hutu militias quickly began to massacre members of the minority group. Mukeshimana's powerful story served as a stark reminder of the dangers of hateful rhetoric, which is still relevant today.

"As you talked about the growth of negative language and the growth of propaganda, I think many of us were thinking of the recent siege on the Capitol and of white supremacist groups within the United States," said Dr. Jill Schennum, a CCM professor and co-chair of the Legacy Project. "So maybe just, in closing, that's something all of us might want to

think about."

In 2001, Mukeshimana and her daughter moved to the United States. Since then, Mukeshimana has pursued a bachelor's degree in social work, founded the Genocide Survivors Support Network and received a fellowship at Columbia University's Human Rights Advocates Program.

Mukeshimana's lecture was presented by the Legacy Project.

"This project has allowed us to bring guest speakers to CCM... to speak about their experiences or their expertise in a variety of different topics," said Professor Samantha Gigliotti. "Some presented topics have been on civil rights all the way to climate change, and to our current Legacy theme, which is war, peace, and healing."

Mukeshimana's full lecture can be found on CCM's YouTube page.

What Shakespeare can tell us about our nation's political divide

JARED BRODSKY
Editor-in-Chief

Professors, teachers, and students often question whether Shakespeare should continue to be included in their curricula. Many have urged their schools to shoot the Bard on charges of racism, misogyny, and homophobia.

But in summer 2017 it was Trump's supporters who were outraged by Shakespeare — or, more specifically, a certain politically-driven production of "Julius Caesar" — and these angry theatergoers were willing to get violent. According to James Shapiro, the conflagration started with a small match struck some time earlier, when casting in Shakespeare's plays became more inclusive.

"The face of the nation that Trump's most avid supporters wanted to see reflected back at them from the stage was white, not brown or black. In such a political climate, diverse casting now looked like part of a provocative leftist agenda," writes Shapiro in his latest book, "Shakespeare in a Divided America:

What His Plays Tell Us About Our Past and Future."

The Columbia University English professor was interviewed on March 23rd during an event hosted by County College of Morris' "Shakespeare Conversations." Despite the outrage of Trump's supporters at seeing more diverse casting in Shakespeare's plays, Shapiro revealed that he did not anticipate the level of controversy resulting from the 2017 Trump-like portrayal of Julius Caesar.

"We got to the last week of that show, and eight people wrote in letters," said Shapiro. "Eight letters is nothing."

Shapiro said that people were more likely to write in letters complaining about discarded banana peels in the parking lot or raccoons living under the stage than Caesar's altered appearance. But the play proved quite controversial. Death threats were made against the actors, as well as the director's wife and daughter. New York City Police detectives, along with Secret Service and FBI agents, were brought in to ensure the play would run safely.

The 58-year-old Delacorte Theater is built such that anyone can run from seat to stage in seconds, which, in light of the threats, posed a huge security risk. Shapiro recalled a particularly tense night in the 1,800-capacity, open air theater:

"It was so unnerving — you felt 'violence is going to happen' — that I simply got up and started to walk out in the middle of the show. And because I look like, you know, a guy in his 60s, like a Trump supporter, security forces thought I was rushing the stage, and went to knock me down and drag me out."

Shapiro escaped safely after he was recognized by one of the security guards, but not before realizing a marked difference in how disagreements are handled by the political Left and Right. Several years earlier, a Minneapolis production of "Julius Caesar" featured a Barack Obama look-alike in its titular role, and, according to Shapiro, nobody on the Left complained. However, when confronted with a Trump-like Caesar, the Right, as Shap-

iro noted, went to great lengths in their attempts to have the play cancelled — some interrupted the performance with verbal outbursts, and others brought paintballs to shoot at the actors.

"The Right decided they were not going to engage in conversation; they were going to shut this thing down, and they were going to use violence and rush the stage if they had to."

According to Shapiro, the Right's tendency towards violence was further exemplified when Donald Trump convinced his followers that the 2020 election had been stolen. Many of those followers, instead of pursuing civil discourse, stormed the Capitol, resulting in five deaths and over 140 injuries.

"I saw that in previews back at the Delacorte in 2017," said Shapiro. "The Delacorte was a dress rehearsal for the attack on the Capitol."

With Shakespeare under fire from both sides — Trump's supporters on the Right, and professors, teachers, and students on the Left — it is uncertain whether he

will survive. The more than 150 summer Shakespeare festivals in all 50 states, which Shapiro adds is more than in Britain or anywhere else in the world, would seem to indicate that the voices seeking to cancel Shakespeare have failed. But the professor's final words on the contemporary American disruption offer some bleak cultural pessimism. Having noted that 91% of US high schools teach Shakespeare's plays, he declares that, nonetheless:

"[H]is future seems as precarious as it has ever been. When one side no longer sees value in staging his plays, only a threat, things can unravel quickly."

"The Shakespeare Conversations," chaired by Professor John Soltes and Drs. Ann Patten and Yoonha Shin, is a series of discussions aimed at a better understanding and contextualization of Shakespeare's works. They will host two more events this semester, on Wednesday, April 14 at 7 pm and Thursday, May 6 at 7 pm, during which they will discuss Shakespeare's "Henry IV," parts one and two, respectively.

CCM music students work with NJ artists to gain real-world experience

JACK RIGGIN

Contributor

Music students at County College of Morris (CCM) have recently had the opportunity to work with bands and singers to help promote their musical projects along with their own projects at school. Through the college's Music Business Collaboration Project and Music Recording Practicum, students have learned about building electronic press kits, marketing and promotional practices, and podcasts that promote their material.

At CCM's newly renovated Music Technology Center, students had access to the latest audio and technical recording equipment used in the industry today.

"While I was working on this project, my main goal was providing the band with the best possible record and meeting their expectation of what the EP should sound like," said student Sergio Gomez. "What we learned, and working under a time crunch, and being on a set schedule allowed me to stay focused and develop my skills."

In the Music Recording Practicum, students get to work in a state-of-the-art studio that

has all the equipment that goes into the recording and production of a record. On the other hand, the Music Business Collaboration Project allowed CCM students to create press releases, video trailers, CD cover art, along with the management of Instagram and Twitter pages to promote and market these EP Projects for the artists.

The music artists who have participated include Tim "Day Off" Dayon, a singer-songwriter from Vernon, and Latchkey Kids, an indie punk band based out of New Brunswick, New Jersey. This kind of collaboration has allowed students to function as real-world marketing managers, gaining applications and practices that could exist in a future job scenario.

In addition to the skills that students are able to hone through these classes, they experience the time organization and responsibility that is required for this kind of work in the real world under a tight schedule.

"The students are responsible for all aspects of putting together a music industry marketing kit, from design, to mixing and engineering, to editing," said Professor Todd Collins of the Practicum class. "They learn everything that



PHOTO COURTESY OF CCM

CCM's Music Technology Center.

is required to produce a commercially viable record project, gaining hands-on training they can include in their portfolios and on their resumes."

These marketing programs help to better prepare the students for a future that may involve similar work constraints

and projects that go into the recording, production, promotion and marketing of a musical EP or album. This also provides CCM music students with new opportunities and ways to approach education aside from traditional textbook learning, note-taking and homework assignments that

may not have the excitement and engagement that these marketing and production projects have created.

With further participation in this program, students gain the experience to be successful and work effectively in a collaborative work environment.



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COVID-19 vaccinations race against variants

LEANN BENNY

Contributor

As the U.S. continues to report fresh daily vaccination records, the number of new cases is simultaneously growing once again. The U.S. is recording a weekly average of 61,821 new Covid-19 cases. It is now a race between vaccinations and variants. The number of new cases and hospitalizations per day is still far lower than an all-time peak in mid-January, when the U.S. recorded around 250,000 new daily cases. As states discard

masking mandates, the U.S. could see a fourth surge in coronavirus infections.

Jeff Zients, the White House Coronavirus coordinator, said, "There is a case for optimism, but there is not a case for relaxation," at a press conference March 26. "This is not the time to let down our guard. We need to follow the public health guidance, wear a mask, socially distance, and get a vaccine when it's your turn."

Health officials have begun to worry that the country is now facing an even more tremendous task, as strains of the virus have

mutated and made it more infectious and deadlier than the original. The CDC is carefully following another variant found in New York City, called B1526, which is also thought to be more transmissible compared with previous strains. Cases of the B117 variant, originally detected in the United Kingdom, made up about 38% of cases sequenced last week by Yale School of Public Health researchers, while cases of the B1526 variant, first found in New York, made up about 22%. Officials have described a race between COVID-19 variants and vaccines, cit-

ing the need to increase immunity before variants cause a renewed spike in cases and deaths. A third of the total U.S. population has received COVID-19 vaccines, and President Biden set a new goal at his press conference on Thursday of getting at least 200 million jabs into arms in his first hundred days.

The U.S. is now administering an average of 2.6 million shots per day and more than a third of adult Americans have received at least one dose, according to the latest figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Almost half of the people aged 65

and older have completed all of their necessary shots, CDC data shows. However, only 19.4% of the total US population are fully vaccinated. So it is recommended by health experts that until a large proportion of the population have been vaccinated, the public should adhere to mitigation measures — such as masking, physical distancing and improving indoor ventilation — to protect their own lives and those of their companions. The US is close to vaccinating more and more people as more spots begin to open up for vaccinations.

“Women March” showcases 200 years of women’s activism

JARED BRODSKY

Editor-in-Chief

A woman in a white bonnet stands against a black screen and speaks, her voice articulate and impassioned. Slavery has just been abolished, but she warns us that there is still much work to be done. Her name is Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, portrayed here by Tony-Award nominated actress, Ariana DeBose. In a stunning filmed reenactment, DeBose delivers a speech given by Harper in 1866, urging listeners to acknowledge inequality and pursue expanded rights for Americans. The reenactment is one of

many pieces in the New-York Historical Society’s exhibition, “Women March.” The exhibition uses photographs, campaign posters, and historic footage to showcase 200 years of women’s activism, including marches to end slavery and protect women’s reproductive rights. At the end of women’s history month, over 100 years after the ratification of the 19th Amendment, an interactive virtual presentation of “Women March” was led by Dr. Anna Danziger Helperin, a postdoctoral fellow at the New-York Historical Society.

Among the contents of the exhibit was the “Declaration of

Sentiments,” an 1848 document, which, following the model of the Declaration of Independence, demanded civil, political, social, and religious rights for women. Also in the spotlight were women’s abolitionist sewing circles, as well as anti-slavery fairs, books, and lecturers. The exhibit showcased myriad approaches to protest and education in the 1850s. But during that time many women still found it difficult to support the cause, as they had barely begun to escape the clutches of coverture. Dr. Helperin said that these women would sometimes “literally take off their jewelry and put it into collection plates”

because their husbands and fathers would not allow them to donate money to activists. The tour continued with a look at Victoria Woodhull, who in 1872 was the first woman to run for President of the United States, followed by Belva Ann Lockwood in 1884. Lockwood managed to receive over 4,000 votes, which Helperin said was “astounding, because she [Lockwood] couldn’t even vote herself.” After a continued effort over the next forty years, the 19th Amendment was finally ratified; but the amendment, as Helperin said, “did not give women the right to vote.” According to Helperin, as one obstacle was

overcome, another was put in its place. She said that literacy tests and violence were particularly instrumental in keeping African American women away from the voting booths. Dr. Helperin spoke about Rosa Parks and the Civil Rights Movement, then the second wave of feminism in the 1960s, before finishing the tour in the present day.

Today, new issues demand women’s attention, according to Helperin. She closed the presentation with objects and posters from recent marches, including a 2019 petition that sought to create solidarity among domestic workers and their employers.

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Just for thought: Who are the three greatest philosophers?

DR. KENNETH A. SHOULER
Adviser

One thing is for sure. It would be easier to rank the five greatest. With five, fewer deserving philosophers are excluded. I will forego any preamble and get straight to it.

3. David Hume

The Scottish philosopher David Hume (1711-1776) takes the bronze. The rascal who had been refused a post in moral philosophy at Edinburgh because of charges of atheism and heresy (he was actually an agnostic), had all the talents that I associate with turning out great philosophy, not the least of which was his ability to sniff out bad arguments. He just didn't miss specious arguments, not in metaphysics—especially on the questionable existence of souls or spirits and gods or miracles—not in epistemology or ethics.

One of his notable precepts is that no fact implies a value or, employing the more familiar locution, “No is implies an ought.” Imagine you see someone hurt. You could stop to assist them. Should you? Yes, but advancing from the factual premise that they are in hurt to the moral conclusion that you ought to help them is not a logical deduction for Hume. Rather, his distress aroused in you a feeling of sympathy, which moved you to act on his behalf. Hence his use of the word “implies” in “No is implies an ought.” Morality is activated by feeling, not reason.

Hume's thinking is equally provocative when it comes to metaphysics, as evidenced by his response to St. Anselm (1033-1109) of Canterbury, who devised the brilliant conceptual argument that God's existence is assured by his definition alone—“a being than which none greater can be conceived.” If God is “the

greatest conceivable being,” Anselm argued, then he must exist in reality (and not merely in our understandings), for if he didn't, then there would be one greater; namely, a greatest conceivable being that existed in reality and in the understanding. But that would be impossible, since there can't be a greater than the greatest. Thus, the greatest conceivable being exists in reality. Hume replies with his familiar analytic-synthetic distinction. “God exists” is not a synthetic statement comparable to “The Empire State Building is 1,250 feet tall,” since its truth cannot be established by an observation of the senses. That leaves one more possibility: that God's existence is a necessary truth just as “Squares are four-sided” is necessary. We know that proposition's necessity, since negating it produces the contradiction “Squares are not four-sided.” But no contradiction arises when we negate “God exists.” “God does not exist” is not internally contradictory, since any entity that exists can be conceived not to exist. Since his existence is neither analytic nor synthetic, it isn't knowledge at all.

Another criterion for greatness is a philosopher's influence on those to come. Hume's strict empiricism cast a shadow so long that it's manifest in philosophers such as Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) and A.J. Ayer (1911-1989) two centuries later.

2. Socrates & Plato

I've pulled a fast one here, combining Socrates (469-399 BCE) with Plato (428-348) since neither would be nearly as impressive without the other. Socrates earned a reputation for pugnacious dialectical skill, as he cross-examined his fellow Athenians, mostly about their values, in the market place and elsewhere. But since he wrote nothing down, we would know precious little of him were it not for the “Memorabilia” of Xenophon, “The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers” by Diogenes, or the superior accounts of



DR. KENNETH A. SHOULER

him in Plato's dialogues. Though connected in our conception of them, Babe Ruth could have existed (and quite well) without Lou Gehrig and John Lennon (though not nearly as well) without Paul McCartney. But our knowledge of Socrates and Plato reveals their interdependence. They're joined at the hip such that the thought of one leads inexorably to the thought of the other. Plato's dialogue form, in essence a dramatization of philosophical ideas, wouldn't have been nearly as effective minus Socrates, his protagonist. Socrates' abilities to counter the arguments of his fellows, and advance his own views, carries the action and philosophical momentum of Plato's work. Of course, their thinking can be separated: Socrates' ethical doctrine is found in the early dialogues such as “Euthyphro” and “Apology,” while the middle and later dialogues, such as “Re-

public” and “Theatetus,” represent Plato's perennial thinking in metaphysics, politics, aesthetics and other topics.

1. Aristotle

Aristotle (384-322 BCE) was Plato's student at the latter's Academy for 19 years. There he taught rhetoric and studied biology and researched other topics. Thereafter he opened his own Lyceum. But enough biography. Let's cut to the chase. Aristotle deserves the first slot because of his breadth and depth of thought. The breadth is evident. He systematized logic in the “Organon,” his logical works, including the “Prior Analytics,” where he worked out the rules for syllogisms; wrote the “Nicomachean Ethics,” which stressed a goal-oriented life as best; his scientific research in biology and zoology led him to classify more than 500 species. There was the “Rhetoric” and the “Poetics,” the “Metaphysics” and the “Physics.” Is there anything he didn't write? Well, maybe nothing about the Olympics. Depth of thought? Evident in abundance. The “Ethics,” though facetiously referred to as the first “self-help book,” describes a life of well-being as a journey toward the end of eudamonia or happiness. Aristotle argues that the best means to that end is cultivating the virtues such as self-control, courage (to face difficulties, resist pleasures and so on), and generosity. He expanded Plato's four cardinal or core virtues and systematized them by imposing a template of deficiency, mean and excess on each. Thus, the virtue courage was a “golden” mean between the vices foolhardiness and cowardice. Aided and abetted by the singular character of Socrates, Plato's elegant prose appeals to many of us more than Aristotle's. But the summation of Aristotle that leaps to mind is that sentiment from Dante:

“Aristotle is the master of those who know.”

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