



## Season of Blood: A Rwandan Journey

*Fergal Keane*

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When President Habyarimana's jet was shot down in April 1994, Rwanda erupted into a hundred-day orgy of killing – which left up to a million dead. Fergal Keane travelled through the country as the genocide was continuing, and his powerful analysis reveals the terrible truth behind the headlines.

‘A tender, angry account … As well as being a scathing indictment – Keane says the genocide inflicted on the Tutsis was planned well in advance by Hutu leaders – this is a graphic view of news-gathering in extremis. It deserves to become a classic’ Independent.

## Season of Blood: A Rwandan Journey Details

Date : Published April 25th 1996 by Penguin (first published 1996)

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Author : Fergal Keane

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## From Reader Review Season of Blood: A Rwandan Journey for online ebook

### Guchu says

It was good, all things considered. It attempted to put things in their colonial, economic and political context and I appreciated that.

I am always uncomfortable and overly/appropriately critical of African/black history through non-African white POVs. This one is not without its problems but I thought he tried to stick to the facts of his experience in Rwanda (which is what the book promises to be about) rather than the diagnosis of it.

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### Amy Kannel says

This was very different from other books I have read about the 1994 Rwanda genocide. Written within a year after the fact by a BBC journalist who traveled in the country while the killings were still happening, it has a feel of immediacy that makes the horrors palpable. The prologue provides a valuable analysis of Rwandan history that led to this tragedy, and the author's first-person observations and reflections make the horrors palpable. Since he is an outsider, he can provide a somewhat distanced third-party perspective, yet he is clearly very deeply affected by the evils he witnesses.

While the history and background provided are much more comprehensive than other books, the account itself is more of an "on the ground" perspective, with narrow slices of what he experienced in three or four specific locations during a brief visit. Keane writes maddeningly about the killers and the injustice of their being sheltered and fed in refugee camps instead of prosecuted. He also gives calmly scathing indictments of the international community's both refusing to get involved and meddling in unjust ways. It's a personal and penetrating account that has a valuable place in the canon for this topic.

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### Tim says

It's odd to have to rate a book like this. I feel odd, at any rate. As you can imagine, it's not an easy read in parts. But Keane managed to make me feel both heartbroken and angry, so I suppose he pulls it off.

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### Holly says

I thought this book was excellent, it gives the perfect combination of historical context and personal account. It's a memoir, and that's exactly the kind of book I enjoy most. There were definitely a couple of parts in the book where I absolutely couldn't put it down.

The only bad thing about this book was that, if I hadn't read anything about Rwandan history before, the history provided in this book was a little cloudy. Hard to follow.

Other than that, I think this book was excellent.

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### **Rob says**

This is a gut-wrenching tale for which Keane and team should be commended. Journalists who venture to the worst places on earth just to tell the story so the world would know are to be greatly admired. Keane tells the story, but not just the facts. He attempts to tell the truth. As I read it couldn't grasp why he went there. In Spring 1994, Rwanda was the very worst place on earth, wreaking of the stench of rot and death, everywhere. He went, so I and any other willing to read his short book would know. Now I know. I wish didn't but I am glad I do.

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### **Drew Doherty says**

It's hard to rate a book like this, it is a gruesome story but it is so important people read it. The book is well written and at times I felt compelled to keep reading. It tells the story of genocide in Rwanda, the slaughter of innocent Tutsi's by Hutu's while the world looked the other way. The Belgians and the UN ran away deserting a small band of brave UN troops who were forced to watch the slaughter. The French come out of the story heavily implicated in the genocide as it armed and supported the Hutus and provided protection for them when they were defeated.

It is hard not to be angry about this but more so there is shame because while we watched the 1994 world cup and the OJ Simpson side show innocents were slaughtered and evil won over good for 100 days in Africa.

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### **Debra says**

I think this is an important book to understand what happened in Rwanda. Genocide that the world seems to have forgotten.

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### **Valissa says**

Apparently I have reached the age when I can spend a Friday evening reading about genocide and call myself content. This is not a full history of the Rwandan genocide, but offers a brief explanation of how/what/why/when/where during a journalists trip through part of the country.

It is harrowing, horrible, affecting, confusing, depressing, amazing, and the courage of so many people is vastly contrasted against mob mentality, bigots, and extreme grudge holders. It is amazing that after, what, 6000 years of human civilization, this petty bullshit is still going on. I can only imagine the jerks fighting over something minor (an imaginary border or the last piece of fruit or an accidental bump) that led to this genocide eons later are really embarrassed. The jerks.

I am giving three stars not because it is not excellent, but because it is one man's brief visit to the area, and is not a full description of the horror. And because, who can give a book about genocide five stars?

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## **Paulo Teixeira says**

(PT) Começo com esta citação vinda do livro:

"Antes de ler este livro, e enquanto o lê, nunca se esqueça do seguinte: em cem dias, cerca de um milhão de pessoas foram mortas a tiro, à catanada, estranguladas e espancadas até à morte. Lembre-se deste número. Um milhão. Não ignoremos o vasto número daqueles que foram feridos, violados e aterrorizados, ou os milhares de orfãos que encontrei ao longo das estradas deste país. No nosso mundo de terror instantâneo é fácil ver um corpo negro em termos abstractos, uma parte de uma enorme mancha negra que paira nas nossas consciências: Biafra nos anos 60, Uganda nos anos 70, Etiópia nos anos 80 e agora o Ruanda nos anos 90. Somos alimentados numa dieta de crianças famélicas, de corpos empilhados e de batalhões de refugiados e no final acabamos por desprezar África por que nos envergonha e nos assombra."

Fergal Keane, "Season of Blood", pgs 29-30

Pessoalmente, é uma releitura de um livro que o fiz pela primeira vez há quinze anos. E nada mudou. Nada mudou - e se calhar, piorou - no ser humano, que tem medo dos outros, das hordas de outros que fogem de guerras, da fome, de regimes opressores. Substitua-se Ruanda ou Bósnia por Síria e Venezuela, como daqui a 30 anos serem outros lugares dos quais as tensões estão adormecidas, como vulcões. Nem tem de ser negro para ter medo. Basta ser diferente. Basta ser distante do seu círculo de vizinhança para os tratar de modo diferente. É aquilo que trata deste livro, do que acontece quando tiramos a civilização de nós e o substituimos pela barbárie, pela "darwinização" dos mais fracos, por ter uma etnia, religião ou cor diferente. É um relato de um horror que não faz parte de uma era. Faz parte do ser humano, e isso deveria nos fazer envergonhar, horrorizar e temer.

(EN) I'll open with this quotation from the book:

"Before you read this book, and while you read it, remember the figures, never forget them: in one hundred days up to one million people were hacked, shot, strangled, clubbed and burned to death. Remember, carve this into your consciousness: one million. This is not to ignore the vast numbers of those who were wounded, raped and terrorized, or the thousands of orphans whom I found clustered around derelict buildings across the country. In our world of instant televised horror it can become easy too see a black body in almost abstract terms, as part of a huge smudge of eternally miserable blackness that has loomed in and out of the public mind through the decades: Biafra in the sixties, Uganda in the seventies, Ethiopia in the eighties and now, Rwanda in the nineties. We are fed in a diet of starving children, stacked corpses and battalions of refugees, and in the end we find ourselves despising the continent of Africa because it haunts and shames us."

Fergal Keane, "Season of Blood", pgs 29-30

Personally, it's a re-reading of a book that I read some fifteen years ago. And nothing changed. Perhaps, it even got worse, in the human beings, on others that escape from hunger, wars, oppressing regimes. Replace Rwanda or Bosnia for Syria, Iraq or Venezuela, or even in 30 years time, for some other distant, unknown place where tensions are sleeping, like a giant volcano.

And what this quotation is saying is, no matter the place, the color of the skin, the religion, what people fear, loathe, hate and then kill, replacing civilization for barbarism, is the fear of the difference. The wrong religion, the wrong colour. It's a roadtrip from hell that is part of an era, but it's timeless, endless and boundless. And that should makes us fear from ourselves.

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### **MariannaInAfrica says**

This is different from all the books I've read about the Rwandan genocide because Fergal Keane's is an eyewitness account - he arrived in Rwanda in early June 1994 while the conflict was still raging across the country and so he and his colleagues from the BBC risked their lives trying to document what was going on. "Season of Blood" is a short memoir of those few weeks Keane spent in hell. The book was published in 1995 so naturally you won't learn from it too much about the full extent of the damage to the country and its population, or the aftermath (for that, read Philip Gourevitch or Jean Hatzfeld), but there's more than enough information on the origins of the conflict. Plus very evocative descriptions of the Rwandan inferno. Excellent read, if deeply harrowing, but what can you expect from a story of one of the bloodiest events in modern history...

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### **dawn says**

#### **An amazing book!**

Everyone should read this book! I knew very little about the Rwandan genocide and I am ashamed. It taught me so much; not just facts and figures, dates and times but about mankind and his capacity for evil.

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### **Mandy says**

I've read several disparaging remarks about Fergal Keane, the author, and his works as a journalist and presenter. People have called him arrogant and narcissistic but I beg to differ. Keane's account of travelling through a country undergoing genocide and war; his visits to a UN refugee camp in Tanzania and their journey through Burundi to get to government-held areas in the South of Rwanda is written with honesty, sensitivity and insight. Far from "narcissistic", Keane asks questions of everyone around him and gives a fair amount of insight into the lives of the RPF soldier, Frank Ndore, who escorts them for much of their journey and the Ugandan drivers who risk everything to take them on their journeys. He also asks a fair amount of questions of Interahamwe and government soldiers, giving us a glimpse of their reasoning and the ways in which the evil was perpetuated.

This is the fourth book I have read on Rwanda and I have a fifth lined up already. I would start with Left To Tell by Immaculee Ilibagiza or An Ordinary Man by Paul Rusesabagina but I would definitely say this is an important book to read.

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## **Nick Keane says**

In 1994 , Fergal Keane together with a small support team drive into the Rwanda to report on the genocide which eventually left one million people dead.

The dedication at the start is to the people of the Nyarubuye Parish murdered April 1994 and it is Keane's account of visiting the site in the aftermath that forms one the central chapters of the book. Keane is good at observing how eventually the scale of events renders once speechless at one point writing "I do not know what else to say about the bodies because I have seen too much." A survivor with an aggressive head wound has the team reaching for their first aid kit, they can only offer panadol. Another survivor can identify the local man who led the attack, Keane and his team find him in a refugee camp and interview him.

Details often shock and sadden, Keane points out that women and children were deliberately targeted. The heart rending accounts are marginally leavened by Keane's observations about the kindness and compassion he witnessed and also, on one occasion, the humour...these occasions are all too sadly rare.

It's a tough read; I found that the episodic writing of the chapters made it easier, I would finish a section and leave the book for days to let it settle before continuing.

My copy is a battery copy bought for me by a good friend who found it in a second hand book shop in Kigali.

Although it is over twenty years since publication the insights into how humanity acts in conflict and extremis tells us much about our current world.

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## **Karen says**

Fergal Keane is a Journalist for the BBC, and this book is a memoir of his reporting of the Rwandan Genocide. This was a difficult book to read, but necessary to understand what happened in Rwanda in 1994. The Rwanda holocaust is as important as the Nazi holocaust against the Jews during WWII, and the methods used (scapegoating, in particular) by The Hutus against the Tutsis.

I do not understand how the U.S. could not declare what happened in Rwanda: 1 million people slaughtered in 100 days, a genocide.

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## **Tom Elder says**

Fergal Keane. Real life.

Season of Blood.

This is one mans story of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. This book is possibly one of the hardest books I've ever read, but it was mesmerising and I could not stop reading it. How can man be as evil as this even if they are from different tribes. I would like to think this will never happen again, but who knows. After all this happened only 20 years ago. If you read only 1 book on this horrifying course of events, then make it this

one, you won't be disappointed horrified certainly but not disappointed. Very highly recommended.  
5+ stars. 04 January 2015.

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