



Blakely/Lloyd

Never Again

***Giving Voice to Survivors
of the Rwanda Genocide***

12 June - 11 July, 2010

Artist statement

It's sixteen years after the Rwanda Genocide and there remains with us a strong and lingering sadness.

In 1994, only six months after the RPF victory and the end of the slaughter the first soldiers from the United Nations Assistance Mission to Rwanda II arrived in-country. Australia provided the medical contingent. Following a long tradition of embedding 'war artists' with their troops in conflict areas, we were attached to the first rotation of Australian Forces to Rwanda. Our brief was to document the impact of the Australian unit. Like so many others, we believed the Genocide had ended once the killings had ceased.

In 2006 and 2008 we returned to Rwanda to find the traces of Australia's involvement in the contemporary society. What we discovered was that for many survivors there is no life after the genocide. They have lost, and continue to lose, their health, their dignity, their security and their liberty. In many ways, through the omission of the Rwanda government and the international community to enforce notions of justice, the genocide continues.

As we spoke to survivors it was obvious that many see their lives as finished and themselves as the living dead. Many carry the scars of the Genocide – both physically and emotionally. They shared their stories with us in the hope that people will care. We carry their stories so people will know.

Over time we have come to understand that through their stories each validates their survival.

Biography

David Lloyd and Angela Blakely lecture in photojournalism and documentary practice at Griffith University. For over fifteen years they have worked, individually and/or collaboratively, on a number of projects that have ranged from global conflict areas to personal crises. In 1995 they began working collaboratively and were commissioned by the History section of the Australian Army to document Australia's involvement in the Rwanda crises. In 1996 Blakely and Lloyd continued their collaboration and were commissioned by the World Health Organisation (Euro Office) to document sensitive health care issues in the former USSR. Prior to this they had worked individually with aid organisations in Somalia, Bosnia, Malawi and continued to work on a number of projects within Australia – sexual deviancy, hospice and palliative care, suicide and grief, eating disorders, solvent abuse in the far north regional areas. In 2006 and 2008 they returned to Rwanda to collect stories (visual and text) of the survivors of the 1994 genocide who are denied justice through the pragmatics of national politics and the indifference of the international community.

For Blakely and Lloyd, (visual) storytelling is a strongly political act. It can be used to challenge the boundaries that promote exclusion and establish a more universal and inclusive community. In attempting to give voice to the people in their stories, they seek to celebrate each person's particularity, negate stereotypes and identify those traits that connect us as a species.

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