

A Hidden Agenda: Decoding ‘Forbidden Stories’

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President Paul Kagame greets residents during the citizen outreach in Ruhango District on August 25, 2022. Photo by Village Urugwiro

A consortium of European newspapers have aimed their considerable resources in Rwanda’s direction. I expect a series of news stories and articles to come out attempting to portray Rwanda in a way that anyone who actually lives in and interacts with Rwanda would disagree with.

As someone who has been in the media for close to 20 years, I’ve seen Rwanda’s leadership get blamed for all sorts of things.

It’s been unfairly blamed for the Congolese mess. It’s been criticized for investing in its

tourism industry and partnering with European sports teams, being accused of ‘sports-washing.’

It’s been accused of ‘gender-washing,’ i.e., putting women at the forefront of its development agenda as a way to divert attention from its so-called human rights issues (as if gender equality isn’t a human rights issue).

It’s been accused of using peacekeeping as leverage. Helping a country combat Islamist terrorism has suddenly become a bad thing because it is Rwanda doing so (case in point, Mozambique).

Crystal Ventures is being looked at suspiciously as it invests in mining, agriculture, and infrastructure development across the continent (never mind that Western and Eastern businesses do so without any issues) simply because it is linked to Rwanda.

And Rwanda is being criticized for utilizing international mechanisms, such as Interpol Red Notices, as if we aren’t supposed to apprehend and extradite people who have broken our laws?

What I find interesting is the fact that the people making these accusations haven’t really changed over the last two decades. It’s

been the same petty cabal.

The first association is made up of former members of the genocidal governments (ex-MRND and MDR-Parmehutu militants such as Agathe Kanziga Habyarimana, Charles Ndereyehe, Celestin Mutabaruka, Joseph Mugenzi, Marcel Sebataware, and Gaspard Musabyimana).

Then there are disgruntled former RPF members who, after being accused of corruption or other crimes, fled the country to avoid facing the consequences of their actions (Theogene Rudasingwa, Kayumba Nyamwasa, and Jean-Marie Micombero).

There is also the progeny of genocidaires, mostly based in Belgium like Natacha Abingeneye, Placide Kayumba, Ruhumuza Mbonyumutwa, and Liliane Bahufite (who make up Jambo ASBL, a group that spouts genocide ideology all day).

Supporting this group are academicians and journalists like Charles Kambanda, Filip Reyntjens, Charles Onana and Peter Verlinden.

The second group is made up of hostile non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Here you find names like Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the Committee to Protect Journalists.

The third group is made up of virulent anti-Rwanda journalists found in in mostly Western mainstream media. The fourth (and last) group is the most sinister because I believe that they are the true puppet masters; it consists of some Western intelligence agencies and politicians who have a bone to pick with the Rwandan government.

What we are witnessing in the Forbidden

Stories articles and videos is the coordination of the four groups.

The goal? To destabilize Rwandans as they head to the general election; pressure European politicians to take hardline stances against the Government of Rwanda; embarrass our tourism partners; and fight the reality that the Government, led by President Paul Kagame, has bettered the lives of its people in very real ways.

All in an attempt to stall Rwanda's progress founded on a home-grown governance model.

What gives me satisfaction is the fact that the best they could come up with were rants from non-entities like Theoneste Rudasingwa, Samuel Baker, and others of similar ilk.

What that tells me is that Forbidden Stories literally has nothing new to report on. They are simply recycling old stories, told by genocidaires, disgruntled politicians, and desperate locals looking for visas.

There is a quote by African-American novelist and editor Toni Morrison about the insidiousness of racism: "*The function, the very serious function of racism is distraction. It keeps you from doing your work. It keeps you explaining, over and over again, your reason for being.*"

What Forbidden Stories is doing is a manifestation of the racism (and anti-blackness) that Toni Morrison talked about. They want us to be distracted as they hurl all sorts of insults our way, which is bad enough.

But even worse, they want the world to believe that Rwanda is a basket case, made up of cruel leaders and powerless and voiceless black people who need to be rescued by their

white saviors.

This NGO thinks that it can treat Rwandans like the Belgian colonialists did, making us jump when they say “*jump*” and cutting off our limbs if we refuse to comply. To that,

I say, good luck. Like present day Belgium, Forbidden Stories will quickly learn that it is inconsequential to Rwandans.

The author is a socio-political commentator