

UPSTANDERS

A reader's theater piece about genocide
by Teresa Docherty, Kathryn Nelson, Luke Walker, and Dr. Ellen Kennedy
University of Minnesota, Spring 2008

[This is to be read on a bare stage. Accompanying photos show 'upstanders' and scenes from the genocides for background during the presentation. Appropriate places for the slides are noted in the script; plain black slides occur between each major section.]

'Upstanders' may be performed free of charge and without prior permission. Groups performing this piece may want to include information on their own 'upstanders' at the end.

Slide 1

Slide 2

Narrator:

Genocide.

Geno means people.

Cide means killing.

Genocide means the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group. It means killing innocent people based only on who they are.

In the 20th century there were many genocides.

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In Turkey in 1915, more than a million Armenians were killed in a genocide.

In Europe in the 1940s, more than six million Jews and five million other people were killed in a genocide called the Holocaust.

In Cambodia in 1975 more than two million people were killed in a genocide.

In Bosnia in 1994 more than 200,000 people were killed in a genocide.

In Rwanda in 1994 nearly a million people were killed in a genocide.

In Darfur, in a genocide that began in 2003 and continues today, more than 400,000 people have been killed.

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We can't imagine all these people. We can't imagine what the world could have been like with their contributions. We do know that those who died were loved. They were someone's mother, sister, daughter; father, son, and brother.

Every genocide has a cast of characters. That cast includes the following roles:

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Victim
Perpetrator
Rescuer
Bystander

We know what a **victim** is. A victim is every one of the 10 million people lost in those genocides, people who were starved or tortured, or died in gas chambers, or were hacked to death with machetes.

We know what a **perpetrator** is. A perpetrator is someone like Hitler in Europe, or Pol Pot in Cambodia, or Milosovic in Bosnia, or Al-Bashir in Darfur, who tries to exterminate an entire group of people.

We know what a **rescuer** is. A rescuer is someone like Raoul Wallenberg, a Swede who saved 15,000 Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust.

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And we know what a **bystander** is. A bystander knows something bad is happening and does nothing. Bystanders think someone else will do what's right so they don't have to. Bystanders believe it's not their problem. Bystanders watch while millions of people die.

There's another role in the genocide cast of characters, that of **upstander**. What's an upstander? That's the person who stands up, speaks out, refuses to let injustice go unchecked.

We'll share stories of ten upstanders, men and women, young and old, of various races, religions, and backgrounds, and from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the United States. These people all were ordinary in most ways. They became extraordinary when they stood up against genocide.

[Each 'upstander' may be read by a different performer or a few performers can take multiple roles. If stage lighting and equipment are available, the stage should be dark with a spotlight on the person who is speaking; the appropriate multimedia images should appear on a large screen behind the speaker.]

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Raphael Lemkin -

My name is Raphael Lemkin. Forty-nine people in my family died in the Holocaust. I couldn't understand how an entire people could be destroyed. There was no name for what happened - and no punishment to prevent it. I became obsessed with creating a law that would make it a crime to exterminate a people.

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Winston Churchill said that the Nazi massacre was "a crime without a name." I needed a name, something to describe the extermination of people based only on who they are. I came up with a new word, "genocide." I wrote the Genocide Convention and it was approved by the United Nations in 1948. We have the word, we have the laws to prevent genocide, but millions and millions of innocent people continue to be killed all over the world.

Slide 10**Slide 11****Senator William Proxmire -**

My name is William Proxmire. After World War II I moved to Wisconsin to get into politics. I ran for governor in 1952, 1954, and 1956 and I lost every time. I finally won a special election and then I got re-elected - in 1958, 1964, 1970, 1976, and 1982. My persistence paid off.

Slides 12, 13

I stand up for it for what I believe in. I stood up against the Vietnam War, useless military spending, projects that wasted taxpayers' dollars - and genocide.

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My friend who worked for the United Nations begged me to get the Genocide Convention ratified in the United States Senate. I thought it would be easy. But I gave speeches on the floor of the Senate every single day for 19 years, 3,211 speeches, before it was finally ratified.

The only real difference between other senators and me was that I refused to sit down.

Slide 15**Slide 16****Taner Akcam -**

My name is Taner Akcam. I was born and raised in Turkey. When I was a student I learned about the Turkish government's vicious treatment of the Kurdish minority. I spoke out for minority rights in Turkey. In 1976, I was sentenced to 10 years in prison for writing about Turkey's persecution of the Kurds. Amnesty International adopted me as their first Prisoner of Conscience.

I escaped from prison; I tunneling my way out and I fled to Germany for political asylum. I went to graduate school and I wrote my dissertation on the genocide of the Armenians in 1915.

Slides 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23

The Turkish government systematically and brutally killed more than one and a half million Armenians. The Turkish government denies that this genocide ever happened. When Hitler's supporters asked how he thought he could get away with killing all the Jews, Hitler replied, "Who remembers the Armenians?"

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I write books and I give talks all over the world. The Turkish government calls me a terrorist and my life is in danger.

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Last winter my journalist friend Hrant Dink was assassinated for speaking about the Armenian genocide.

I want the Turkish government to admit its guilt in the Armenian genocide and I want people to know the truth.

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Oskar Schindler -

My name is Oskar Schindler. I was a Nazi.

I was a corrupt businessman, a womanizer, a drinker, and a gambler.

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When there was money to be made from exploiting the Jews, I was right there.

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My Gestapo friends helped me get a factory in Krakow, Poland, and I ran it with a thousand Jews working as slave laborers.

When Jews were rounded up in the ghetto and sent to be gassed and exterminated, I realized many were my workers, people I had gotten to care about. I couldn't let these innocent people die just because they were Jews. I hired as many as I could into my factory and then I made sure they'd be fed and protected.

When the Jews from my factory were sent to a concentration camp, I moved the factory with them, so that nobody would be sent to the gas chambers because they couldn't work. My new factory made weapons and I sabotaged the Nazi war effort. I made sure that all the weapons we made were defective, every single bullet, grenade, and missile. The weapons that we made didn't help the Nazis at all.

I smuggled Jewish children out of the ghetto to safety with Polish nuns. I spent all my money bribing German guards to keep Jews alive. I wrote lists of people who were essential workers in my factory and I gave the names to the Gestapo to keep these Jews from being killed. I saved almost 1,300 Jews from the Holocaust.

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Somebody found that list of names in one of my suitcases long after I died.

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In 1967 I, a Nazi, was honored at Israel's Holocaust memorial, Yad Vashem, for saving Jews. A tree is planted in my name at the Yad Vashem Memorial. Today there are more than 6,000 descendants of my Jews.

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Stephen Spielberg made a movie about me called "Schindler's List" that won seven Academy Awards.

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Slide 34**Dith Pran -**

My name is Dith Pran. I was born in Angkor Wat, Cambodia in 1942. The war in Vietnam spilled over into Cambodia and my country turned upside down in the 1970s.

I worked as a photojournalist with Sydney Schanberg, an American reporter for the *New York Times*. We covered the conflict in Cambodia.

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From 1972 to 75, the country fell into chaos. Many people believed that the ruling Communist Khmer Rouge, and the leader Pol Pot, would give us peace and a better life. This didn't happen. The Khmer Rouge wanted to take the country back to the year zero in terms of development, to create a primitive society. Every single form of progress was destroyed. They banned all institutions, including stores, banks, hospitals, schools, religion, and the family. Entire cities were emptied.

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Nearly every doctor, teacher, lawyer, business person, nurse, journalist, judge – even everyone who wore glasses – was slaughtered. In 1972 there were 600 doctors in the country. By the end of the genocide, only 42 had survived. Nearly a third of the entire country was killed.

Sydney and I covered the fall of the nation. Bodies were buried in killing fields throughout the entire country.

In 1975 we were interviewing people and photographing the chaos when Khmer Rouge soldiers grabbed us. We were arrested, guns at our heads, and we were accused of conspiracy.

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I was taken to a forced-labor camp. I was starved and beaten for four years, until the North Vietnamese invaded Cambodia and finally captured Phnom Penh.

I fled to Thailand, dodging the ten million landmines that the Khmer Rouge government placed there – one mine for every single person in Cambodia.

The Khmer Rouge killed my father, three of my brothers, and my sister, and all their families. My mother died of malnutrition. I lost more than 50 people in my family.

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Sydney wrote my story, "The Death and Life of Dith Pran," and it was made into a movie, "The Killing Fields." I became a one-man crusade to tell the world about two million innocent Cambodians who died in the genocide.

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Samantha Power -

My name is Samantha Power. Some people call me "that genocide chick." I've been to Bosnia, Darfur, Rwanda, East Timor and other places of tragedy, as a reporter, an observer, and now as a voice of conscience.

In the early 1990's I began hearing about the crisis in Bosnia - horrible mass murders were happening and the international community was doing nothing. I went to Bosnia to see this genocide for myself and to tell the world.

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I became a freelance journalist and I wrote about the horrors that I saw.

Children were jumping rope on playgrounds one minute and the next minute their young bodies were exploding in the air from bombs. I interviewed their parents.

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Women were chained to bedposts for months and were repeatedly raped by Serb soldiers. I interviewed these women. British, French and American diplomats lamented the slaughters but did nothing. I interviewed these diplomats.

I began to understand that there is silence in the face of genocide.

I saw it again in Rwanda. Over 800,000 people were killed while the world did nothing.

I was caught in the morass of these genocides and nothing was being done. Politicians turned their backs on the victims, millions of victims. So I wrote a book about genocide to try to get people to pay attention.

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The book won the Pulitzer Prize. The irony is that although this book got people's attention, nothing changed. Genocide is happening right now and we still haven't stopped it or figured out how to prevent it.

Sometimes I would see someone ordinary doing something extraordinary to try to make a difference. I started to call these people upstanders. We can all become upstanders and take a stand against genocide.

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Carl Wilkens -

My name is Carl Wilkens. I was in Rwanda working as a missionary when the genocide began in 1994. The American Embassy evacuated all Americans in Rwanda but I refused to go. I was the only American, and maybe the only white person, who stayed. I was there when 800,000 people, most of them Tutsi, were killed in a hundred days by militant Hutus.

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People ask me why I stayed. I tell them about the Tutsi young lady and the Tutsi young man who worked for me. I knew that if I left, they would be killed and their faces would haunt me forever.

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During those horrible days, I transported people to safety and took food and water to desperate people. I dodged dangerous militia who could turn on me in an instant.

There were orphans who were dying from diseases and had no water or protection. I heard that the killers had come to the Gisimba orphanage the night before. They had killed some people and said they would return to kill the rest. I saw killers surrounding the orphanage. I knew I had to do something. I went to

the headquarters. I found the Prime Minister, the man responsible for so much of the killing. I approached him with a firm handshake and deceptive confidence.

"Mr. Prime Minister, I'm Carl Wilkins, the director of ADRA." He looked at me, and then he shook my hand and said, "Yes, I've heard about you and your work. How is it?"

I said, "Well, sir, it's not very good right now. The orphans at Gisimba are surrounded, and I think there's going to be a massacre."

He spoke to some of his aides. Then he said to me, "We're aware of the situation, and those orphans are going to be safe. I'll see to it."

I wondered if I could believe him. But I returned home and the children were safe.

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They had been spared from the slaughter.

I am so angry at the United States. The United States – the land of the free and the home of the brave – did nothing. I did everything I could.

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Paul Rusesabagina -

I never intended to be a humanitarian. I was a hotel manager.

My name is Paul Rusesabagina and I helped save a thousand lives during the hundred days of genocide in Rwanda.

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I am Hutu, my wife is Tutsi. We had identification cards, and those labels, Hutu or Tutsi, were on those cards. Those words determined our rank in society

and the privileges we could have. We had to carry those cards with us all the time, just like the Jews were forced to do in Europe during the Holocaust. Our government was run by Hutus. Tutsis were legally discriminated against in schools, government, and jobs. My wife faced discrimination just because she is Tutsi.

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One night in April 1994, the President of Rwanda was flying back home when his airplane was shot down. That was when the killing started. Hutus murdered Tutsis and their sympathizers. They hacked them to death with machetes and clubs.

Pastors killed church members, church members killed pastors. Husbands killed wives. Students and teachers killed one another. Neighbors killed neighbors. Nuns and priests killed people who had fled to churches for safety. It's a situation no one can imagine.

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I moved my family into the Hôtel des Mille Collines for safety. Other families just like mine came to the hotel looking for help. I couldn't turn them away.

We were sheltering almost a thousand people by the end of the genocide. I thought we all were going to die. The whole country smelled of dead bodies. We heard a buzzing sound everywhere and realized it was the sound of flies as they swarmed on all the corpses. By God's grace, all those who stayed with us, lived. You know my story from the movie "Hotel Rwanda."

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The genocide took away nearly a million people in a hundred days. The whole world closed their eyes and ears and left us alone to this nightmare. People must listen.

Slide 57**Slide 58****Captain Brian Steidle -**

My name is Brian Steidle. I was a captain in the U.S. Marines from 1999 to 2003. In 2004, I signed on to be a military observer for the African Union in Sudan for six months. The North and South of Sudan had just ended a 20-year civil war and I was there to be sure that they didn't violate the cease-fire.

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When we heard reports of violence in a different region, in an area called Darfur, we went to see what was happening. No Marine training could prepare me for what I saw in Darfur. Arab militias called Janjaweed were systematically killing African tribes in the area. The Sudanese government was not only allowing this mass extermination of its own people; it was perpetrating it. Hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women, and children have been brutally killed.

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More than two and a half million people are displaced from their homes and their villages.

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Our government has called the Darfur crisis genocide, the first genocide of the 21st century. This is the first time in history that genocide has been declared while it is happening.

My only weapons were my camera and my notepad.

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The first photograph I took in Darfur was of tiny Mihad Hamid, only a year old. Helicopters had bombed her family's village and the Janjaweed came on horseback to rape and torture any survivors. Her terrified mother tried to escape, carrying Mihad in a cloth wrapped around her waist. But a bullet sliced through Mihad's flesh and punctured her lungs. When I saw the child, she was nestled in her mother's lap, barely able to breathe. In tears of desperation, her mother lifted Mihad for me to examine. It broke my heart to be able to offer her only a prayer and a look of compassion, as I captured this casualty with my camera. When the aid workers arrived the next day, there was more fighting and they never found Mihad.

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I have terrible guilt because I could do nothing to stop the massacre. I have tried to show Americans that the people of Darfur desperately need our help. Our country has the power to end this conflict.

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I've held press conferences, given speeches, written a book, and

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even made a movie, "The Devil Came on Horseback." I've spoken to our elected officials, to the news media, to anyone who will listen. When I was in Darfur and a witness to genocide, I truly believed that people in Washington would listen. I believed that they'd have the Marines on the ground in a week and this would be over. That was nearly four years ago.

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Mark Hanis -

My name is Mark Hanis. I grew up in Ecuador. All four of my grandparents are Holocaust survivors.

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In our community, none of the Jewish elders ever wore long sleeves. They wanted the numbers on their arms, tattooed there by the Nazis, to be visible forever. After World War II the world's leaders said 'never again,' never again will people sit by while millions of innocent people die. The tattoos reminded us every day that 'never again' must mean 'never.'

One day in college I was browsing through the newspaper when I read about a genocide going on in Darfur.

I was determined to do something to end this tragedy. My friends and I formed an organization called the Genocide Intervention Network.

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Our goal was to raise money to help support the limited African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur. We raised money for boots, tents, tarps, walkie-talkies – essential supplies that the African Union needed.

Students at other colleges and at high schools wanted to make a difference, too. Genocides happen because people don't know that everyone can take action to prevent and stop genocide. Today we have a nation-wide network with headquarters in Washington, D.C. and more than 800 chapters.

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Our mission: to educate, advocate, donate. We **educate** people about genocide; we help them **advocate** with their elected officials to prevent and stop genocide; and we **raise funds** to bring safety and security to people whose lives are in danger.

Genocides are expensive, and we've created a strategy to take invested money out of companies that fund this genocide. Through our Sudan Divestment Task Force, dozens of states, cities, colleges and universities, organizations, and businesses have divested. The message is clear: ordinary Americans don't want their money used to fund genocide.

Slide 72 [note: the Darfur Scores shown are for our state, Minnesota; go to www.darfurscores.org and use scores from your own state.]

We rate politicians on their support for anti-genocide legislation, and these **Darfur Scores** encourage our elected officials to end conflict. We have an anti-genocide hotline for people to call Washington and speak directly to their elected

officials. We train activists around the country. Everyone can take a stand against genocide.

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Narrator:

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These are stories of ten people who made a difference – one refugee out of millions; one senator out of a hundred; a hotel manager, a photographer, a journalist, a marine captain, a college student, a pastor, a professor, a businessman.

They stood up. They each did what they could with the skills they had. Raphael Lemkin passed the Genocide Convention and William Proxmire got it ratified. Dith Pran's photographs showed the world what happened in Cambodia. Paul Rusesabagina, Oskar Schindler, and Carl Wilkens saved lives. Samantha Power put words to the horrors of genocide. Brian Steidle took pictures and tried to change the political landscape. Taner Akcam tells the truth about the Armenian genocide. Mark Hanis mobilizes ordinary citizens to prevent and stop genocide.

[If there are members of your community whose anti-genocide work you'd like to highlight, have them prepare short narratives of their experiences to insert here. Add their photos to the slides. If narratives are added, say: Our closing stories are from our own upstanders here on stage.]

Narrator:

How can YOU become upstanders?

There are three things you can do. *[note: these actions will change depending on the political situation at the time. For up-to-date information, contact ekennedy@umn.edu]*

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First, contact your city government, schools, places of worship, and local organizations. Encourage them to sponsor speakers and events to raise awareness about genocide.

Second, raise funds to help people at great risk in Darfur and other places in the world. There are many organizations doing great work. Consider donating to the American Refugee Committee, the Genocide Intervention Network, the World Food Program, the International Rescue Committee, and others.

Third, and most important, contact your elected officials in Washington. Genocides happen because we don't have the political will to stop them. Our senators and representatives need to hear from us. Most people don't contact their legislators because they don't know who they are, or how to reach them, or what to say.

Mark Hanis and the Genocide Intervention Network make it easy.

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Call 1-800-GENOCIDE. You'll enter your zip code and then you can connect to your governor, representative, senator, or directly to the White House. Before you get connected, you'll hear 'talking points,' what to say.

Let's make the call.

[Have a cell phone programmed with the number – 800-436-2433- and set to speakerphone so the audience can hear the conversation. If the call is made after regular business hours, messages can be left for senators and representatives; however, the White House line doesn't take messages. Have a performer or a member of the audience come forward to enter his or her zip code and make the call.]

[applaud the person who made the call]

Every call gets noted; every call is important. We can create winds of change.

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Anne Frank said, "How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world."

Let's all stand up to end genocide in this century.

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