



Paul Rusesabagina, An Ordinary Man who did Extraordinary Things

In 1994, Paul Rusesabagina was a young man who was going places. A Rwandan hotel manager employed by Sabena to run one of the most important properties in Kigali, Paul knew all the movers and shakers and how to keep them happy.

Paul worked at the Hotel des Mille Collines and then the Diplomat Hotel. His career was moving. In the Spring of 1994, he and his wife along with his youngest son had just returned to Rwanda from a business trip to Europe. The future was very bright.

But, on April 6, 1994 something happened in that small African country that changed everything. A plane carrying the President of Rwanda and the President of Burundi was shot down and both men were killed. This sparked the violence that grew in to the Rwandan Genocide during which more than 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed.

After the plane was shot down, Paul and his family and some neighbors were taken at gunpoint from their home to the Hotel des Mille Collines by soldiers demanding hotel rooms and supplies. Paul used his charm and sales skills to save his family and the neighbors that traveled with him. He traded the liquor for lives and food for favors. Eventually 1,268 people ended up seeking shelter at the hotel, the only safe haven in a sea of Genocidal slaughter.

During the Hundred Days of the Genocide in 1994, the Hotel, under Paul's leadership, was the only public place where people were safe. Rwandans were killed and beaten in stadiums, schools, and churches, but not at Paul's hotel. No one under Paul's shelter was harmed or killed at the Hotel des Mille Collines. Soldiers came to threaten him, slaughters happened outside the gates, but the people at the Hotel were safe.

The story of Paul's life during the Genocide has been told in the movie ***Hotel Rwanda*** and his autobiography ***An Ordinary Man***. The movie ***Hotel Rwanda*** shows how Rusesabagina, played by Don Cheadle, saved the lives of more than 1,200 people during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. Rusesabagina served as manager of the Hotel des Mille Collines in Kigali and bravely risked his life to shelter Hutus and Tutsis who were seeking refuge from the genocide that killed more than 800,000 people.

Rusesabagina served as special consultant to United Artists and Lion's Gate Films' production of ***Hotel Rwanda***, which also starred Sophie Okonedo, Joaquin Phoenix and Nick Nolte. His popular autobiography, [***An Ordinary Man***](#), was published by Penguin Group (USA) Inc. in April 2006.

After the release of the movie and his book, Rusesabagina received many awards and honors:

February 3, 2000 Immortal Chaplains Prize for Humanity
December 9, 2004 Enduring Spirit award from Amnesty International
February 25, 2005 The Peace Abbey Courage of Conscience Award
June 3, 2005 The Golden Plate Award by the International Academy of Achievement
October 11, 2005 Raoul Wallenberg Medal of the University of Michigan
November 5, 2005 National Civil Rights Museum Freedom Award
November 9, 2005 Presidential Medal of Freedom
June 14, 2006 Visionary Leadership Award Twenty-First Century Democrats
February 23, 2007 Elijah Award B-NAI ISRAEL
December 6, 2007 Rescuer of Humanity Award
November 10, 2009 Appointed as Martin Luther King Jr. Fellow, Boston University
December 6, 2009 Black Heritage International Humanitarian & Hero Award
February 27, 2011 Sustaining Presence Award Interfaith CarePartners
November 17, 2011 The Tom Lantos Human Rights Prize

Paul Rusesabagina wanted to do more for the people of Rwanda and the Great Lakes region of Africa. He wanted to use the recognition he gained from the movie and the book and the awards to help all the people of Rwanda. He formed the Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation to help provide voice to victims of genocide and support peace efforts in Rwanda and throughout the world. What started as a personal mission to teach the lessons of Rwanda has become an international movement to fight genocide throughout the world.

He founded the [Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation](#) and continues to be the President of the foundation, a 501c3 public not for profit charity, based in Chicago Illinois in the United States.

The Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation raises public awareness about the need for an internationally administered Truth and Reconciliation Commission for Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region of Africa. The Foundation also works on issues related to the ongoing conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where more than 5 million have died. The Foundation is campaigning for an end to Rwandan military intervention in the Congo and against the deadly exploitation of conflict minerals in the region.

In order to further the mission of his foundation, Rusesabagina now tours the world speaking about social justice, human rights activism and the lessons learned from the Rwandan genocide, one of the worst tragedies of the 20th century. He has spoken to large organizations of journalists, educators, students, policymakers, business leaders and human rights advocates throughout Europe and the United States. Rusesabagina describes his experiences during the horrific genocide, the terror and the helplessness of the people he sheltered, and the ways in which governments, non-governmental organizations and ordinary people can work together to prevent genocide throughout the world.

Frequently Asked Questions for Paul Rusesabagina

1. Did you realize how bad the the tension was between the Hutu's and Tutsi's before the killing? What sparked the Genocide to begin on April 6?
2. Once the killing started, what did you do to keep the people who had taken refuge safe? Did you realize that you where going to end up sheltering and protecting 1,268 during the 100 Days of killing? How did you manage to save those people?
3. During the Genocide, did you think that other countries or the United Nations would come and help you?
4. When the Belgians, the French and the Americans were evacuated, when the journalists left, what did that do to your hope, and the hope of the other people in the country?
5. When did you leave Rwanda and why did you go to Belgium?
6. Have you returned to Rwanda after the end of the genocide? And what was the situation there?
7. During the genocide there was a lack of support from other countries, did they help with the rebuilding of the country?
8. How did you feel when Terry George the director of Hotel Rwanda, told you that he wanted to make a movie about your experiences?
9. Did the movie Hotel Rwanda tell the real story of what happened during the Genocide?
10. In your book, An Ordinary Man, you talk about how one person can make a difference. What would you tell young people about the impact that each of them can have in the world?
11. You also talk the power of words in your book. Tell us about the how words can be powerful for good and for evil. Why do you think that words are the most powerful weapons?
12. After the movie came out you started the Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation. In which ways has your Foundation tried to raise awareness about the situation in Rwanda?
13. What is going on in Rwanda, the Congo and the Great Lakes Region of Africa today?