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## 'Finding Peace In A World Where You Mean Nothing': The Implications Of 'One Rwanda' On Rwandan LGBTI And Twa Minorities

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FINDING INNER PEACE IN A WORLD WHERE YOU MEAN NOTHING: THE  
IMPLICATIONS OF “ONE RWANDA” ON RWANDAN LGBTI AND TWA MINORITIES

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## Abstract

In the aftermath of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi, the Rwandan government was faced with a herculean task of restoring peace, stability and unity to a divided, traumatized state. Led by President Kagame, the government instituted a comprehensive national unity and reconciliation policy to bring together divided “ethnic” groups, Hutu perpetrators and Tutsi survivors, and create one Rwandan identity. From an outsider’s perspective, this policy was a monumental success and an example for other post-conflict states on how to create peace. However, is our jubilation towards Rwanda’s “success” premature? Are we looking at post-genocide Rwanda through rose-coloured lenses? Utilizing a variety of scholarly material, eyewitness accounts and government documents, this paper will examine the un(intended) effects of this policy on other “minority” groups that exist within Rwanda, specifically the indigenous ethnic Twa and LGBTI communities. These minorities were selected, in spite of their differences, to examine whether or not this policy had implications for identities not part of the intended benefactors of this policy. This paper finds that, intentional or not, Rwanda’s “One Rwanda” policy excludes these communities and as a result, there is systemic societal discrimination against these minorities that make living their daily lives a struggle and threatens their existence entirely. For LGBTI people, despite the government's passive acceptance of their identity, cultural conservatism and the influence of religion leaves many LGBTI Rwandans in poverty, facing undue hardship. For the Twa, the federal government does not attempt holding a positive attitude towards this “ethnic” minority and anti-discrimination laws within the Constitution seem to be null and void as is evident by their persecution. Kagame’s government must make serious efforts to examine discrimination towards Rwandan minorities and implement a cultural shift. This shift will not happen immediately, but it must begin somewhere and soon.

## Introduction

Beginning on April 6, 1994, and lasting one hundred days, the Rwandan state was engaged in a largely ethnic-driven genocide leaving more than one million dead and over 200,000 accused of genocide-related crimes. In the aftermath, the newly established Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) government had a looming herculean task— to restore peace, stability and unity to a highly divided and traumatized state.<sup>1</sup> Led by President Kagame, the government instituted a comprehensive national unity and reconciliation policy in 1999 to bring together divided “ethnic” groups, Hutu perpetrators and Tutsi survivors, and create one Rwandan identity.<sup>2</sup> From an outsider’s perspective, this policy is a monumental success and an example for other post-conflict states on how to create peace where there was previously only chaos. Kagame’s policy brought together survivors and perpetrators through reconciliation villages, *gacaca* courts and *ingando* rehabilitation camps.<sup>3</sup> The author was able to see the success of such reconciliatory attempts in a Rweru-sector reconciliation village when conducting primary research. Today, it appears that the state is unified under one post-ethnic banner where Hutu majority and Tutsi minority groups no longer officially exist. However, is our jubilation towards Rwanda’s “success” premature? Are we looking at post-genocide Rwanda through rose-coloured lenses?

What are the un(intended) effects of this policy on other “minority” groups that exist within Rwanda? Do they receive government acknowledgment and support or are they ignored and assimilated into the “One Rwanda” identity? What many outsiders, and perhaps even government officials, seem to forget is that there was a third well-established ethnic minority that existed alongside Tutsis and Hutus from pre-colonial times, the indigenous Twa. What was the Twa’s experience post-genocide during the government’s rebuilding efforts? Were they included

in this reconciliation or were they erased? Additionally, what are the effects of this policy on other minority groups, such as the LGBTI, that did not receive as much attention? The genocide should have acted as an incentive and opportunity to ensure true societal acceptance and legal inclusion of all Rwandans. However, the “One Rwanda” policy does not allow for any societal divisions to prevent the rise of pre-genocidal conditions, and while “well-intentioned,” the policy halts inclusion attempts of other marginalized identities.

This paper will examine Rwanda’s national reconciliation policy through two case studies – the first being an examination of Rwanda’s LGBTI community and the second examining the indigenous Twa – to determine whether or not this “well-intentioned” policy has (un)intended negative consequences for these groups. These minorities were selected for this paper, in spite of their differences, to examine whether or not this policy had implications for identities not part of the intended benefactors of this policy. Intentional or not, Rwanda’s “One Rwanda” policy excludes these communities. As a result, there is systemic societal discrimination against these minorities that make living their daily lives a struggle and threatens their existence entirely.

This paper will begin with an examination of Rwanda’s National Policy, its key parts and critiques. Secondly, this paper will examine the case study of the Rwandan LGBTI community, the government’s policies towards this community and the effects of the “One Rwanda” policy on sexual and gender minorities. Finally, this paper will apply the case of the ethnic Twa to the government’s policies to determine whether or not they include the Twa, and if not, if they intentionally discriminate against them. It is critical to question any government’s policies. While they may seem extraordinarily successful at first glance, on closer scrutiny, significant implications become apparent. While successful in bringing together Rwanda’s major ethnic

groups, this policy fails to effectively acknowledge the lived Twa and LGBTI experiences. This omission has consequences.

### **Rwanda's National Unity/Reconciliation Policy: Establishing A "Banyarwanda" Identity**

The Rwandan government created a national unity and reconciliation policy to attempt to repair society and create *Ndi Umunyarwanda*, a unified identity,<sup>4</sup> removing Hutu, Tutsi and Twa ethnic labels.<sup>5</sup> In 1999, the government established the National Unity and Reconciliation Commission (NURC) to create a meta-*Banyarwanda* identity that transcended ethnic differences.<sup>6</sup> The commission applied a variety of reconciliatory approaches, including *ingando* (solidary educatory camps), *gacaca* restorative justice courts, conflict-prevention/resolution training, and perpetrator-survivor meetings.<sup>7</sup> These approaches were successful in not only bringing perpetrators and victims justice, but also in facilitating community and social development.

The government also reformed its Constitution, including several critical Articles that put the "One Rwanda" policy into the legalese. The 2003 Constitutional Reform implemented bans on the spread of genocide ideology, divisionism and ethnic ideology.<sup>8</sup> Article 10(2) stipulates Rwanda must "[eradicate] discrimination and divisionism based on ethnicity, region or on any other ground [and promote] national unity."<sup>9</sup> Additionally, Article 57 states "political organizations are prohibited from basing themselves on race, ethnic group, ... sex ... or any other division which may lead to discrimination."<sup>10</sup>

These provisions were enacted for three reasons. Firstly, the government believed "ethnic identities were alien constructions;" the Hutu, Tutsi and Twa categories were social categories put in place by colonizers, unnatural to Rwanda.<sup>11</sup> Second, "ethnic" identities were created to disadvantage the people.<sup>12</sup> Finally, these identities were social constructs and, as such, can be

discarded.<sup>13</sup> The ethnic categories that were, in part, responsible for the genocide arose out of a propagated Hamitic hypothesis by Belgian and German colonizers, which gave great significance and power to the Tutsi minority because of their tall stature (and other distinguishing features), and separated Rwandan society into permanent “ethnicities” distinguished by identity cards. The colonizers created a hierarchy that persecuted the powerless majority. Because these categories were unnatural to Rwanda, because they were discriminatory and because they are constructions, the government abolished these “ethnicities” to create one unified identity. However, this policy and its impact have negative implications for greater society.

### Critiques

For some scholars, the justifications for the “One Rwanda” policy grossly oversimplify reality.<sup>14</sup> In reality, pre-colonial divisions already existed economically. The colonizers merely intensified and exacerbated these inequalities. Propagating pre-colonial Rwanda as Rwanda’s “Garden of Eden,” is a dangerous trope and promotes false unity amongst Rwandans, failing to allow for honest engagement with the past.<sup>15</sup> By manufacturing “ethnic amnesia” amongst the populace, the government denies survivors proper closure.<sup>16</sup>

The Constitutional additions and amendments criminalizing divisionism and genocide ideology can also be criticized. Articles 10(2) and 57 are “intended” to stop any hatred that could lead to another genocide while, consequently, limiting free speech.<sup>17</sup> Human rights NGOs, donors, citizens, politicians and former allies must be careful in raising concerns about equal minority treatment to not criticize the government. If they speak openly/honestly, they could be accused of divisionism and declared enemies of the state.<sup>18</sup> Activists must tread carefully when approaching the government – taking a “quiet diplomacy” approach.<sup>19</sup> A proactive genocide prevention approach’s importance cannot be overstated. However, these Articles limit NGO

advocating power from representing marginalized minorities and achieving social inclusion. Activists representing individual voices, especially those with as limited power as Twa and LGBTI Rwandans, do not run the risk of creating another genocide. Marginalized minorities lack the manpower and political voice to challenge an autocratic RPF regime.

### **The *Abatinganyi* (LGBTI) And Their Place In “One Rwanda”**

#### Federal Position

Internationally, Rwanda has been praised for being one of the few “relatively” progressive states in Africa for failing to criminalize same-sex behaviour. Domestically, Rwanda’s policy framework is rooted in inclusivity, involving all Rwandans.<sup>20</sup> The Constitution establishes general protections for its citizens against discrimination. Article 16 states “discrimination on any kind or its propaganda based on... sex.... or any other form of discrimination are prohibited and punishable by law.”<sup>21</sup> The issue of sexual and gender diversity has been declared a private matter in Rwanda.<sup>22</sup> Key figures such as Kagame choose to deflect on the issue, stating, “We have laws already in place that cater for existence and co-existence of different categories and create harmony in society... we do not want to head towards unnecessary conflicts and debates that will not help the rebuilding of our country.”<sup>23</sup> For Kagame, protections against any form of discrimination or violence against his citizens is enough, believing there needs not be further division prioritizing specific groups. Kagame’s domestic position is interesting given that, internationally, Rwanda is a signatory party to various human rights treaties and declarations advocating for the protection of LGBTI rights, including a 2012 UN Declaration,<sup>24</sup> the ICESCR, ICCPR and the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights.<sup>25</sup> Rwanda’s Constitution makes no specific reference to sexual and gender minorities in its list of protections. It is to be believed that they fall within the “other forms” area of law.<sup>26</sup>



The government chooses not to vocalize its “apparent” support for LGBTI Rwandans for several reasons. Firstly, advertising inclusivity would create domestic difficulties given Rwanda’s strong sense of religiosity and cultural conservatism and the government’s dependence on faith-based organizations for delivery of public services.<sup>27</sup> Being an out-right ally could come across as being deliberately antagonistic towards religious groups.<sup>28</sup> Secondly, as one of the only African Great Lakes states not criminalizing homosexuality/same-sex behaviour, Rwanda is vulnerable against regional pressures and cannot afford to boast itself as “enlightened” and inclusive.<sup>29</sup> Finally, Rwanda’s relative domestic silence is strategic.<sup>30</sup> They do not plan to criminalize homosexuality, but they also do not plan to engage with the LGBTI agenda either.<sup>31</sup> This silence is convenient for international donors.<sup>32</sup> Because Rwanda’s position is “relatively positive” towards LGBTI minorities, more states feel comfortable giving aid to the country knowing its “progressive” stance.<sup>33</sup> If it adopted a more negative stance, Rwanda would jeopardize its international relationships.

#### Rwandan Societal Position

The government’s neutral “progressive” stance towards LGBTI minorities<sup>34</sup> leaves the state’s position in limbo. Politicians and government officials may choose to remain relatively silent on the issue,<sup>35</sup> but Rwandan society has not. For one gay man “P,” “although there are no specific legislation against [LGBTI,] the silence of political leaders to openly talk about the rights and privileges of [LGBTI] people contribute to the stigma and inaction to care more about our community.”<sup>36</sup> Politicians’ silence allows discrimination to percolate. Despite its laws, there is ample evidence of arbitrary arrests, detentions, and societal discrimination, disdain and intolerance towards LGBTI minorities.<sup>37</sup> Homophobia and transphobia remain a real concern

within Rwandan society and the government is not enforcing legal provisions in its Constitution and Criminal Code to prevent discrimination and uphold equality for all.<sup>38</sup>

In Kigali, LGBTI people have faced arbitrary arrests by a reserve group of the Rwandan Defense Forces, the *Inkeraguabara*,<sup>39</sup> on crimes of “idling in the streets” (*kuba inzerezi*), and thrown into an unofficial detention center in Gikondo.<sup>40</sup> This detention center, known as *Kwa Kabuga*, is a “socio-professional training program” to reintegrate those ‘wandering the streets’ back into the community. According to Human Rights Watch, people detained here are subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment, with no legal basis to deprive prisoners of their freedom.<sup>41</sup> Many cases of discrimination against LGBTI Rwandans remain undocumented due to the fear of further stigmatization and general social intolerance towards the community.<sup>42</sup>

Rwandan society upholds a sort of cultural conservatism and moralism reinforced through Christianity and Catholicism. Due to these conservative cultural beliefs, LGBTI people feel Rwandans do not show empathy towards or attempt to understand their “sinful behaviour.”<sup>43</sup> There is, in general, a certain disdain and intolerance,<sup>44</sup> or even rejection of LGBTI individuals.<sup>45</sup>

LGBTI Rwandans report facing discrimination and hardship through the coming out process, with family, and in housing, education, workplace and health environments. They are seen as having little value to the community.<sup>46</sup> When attempting to come out, most Rwandans still live with and are dependent on their families. When they do tell their parents, many are expelled from their homes and forced to live on the streets.<sup>47</sup> For Cyril, a gay man in Nyamirambo, he was told by his parents that “[he was] worth nothing” and he went to live elsewhere to “have inner peace and live [his] sexuality.”<sup>48</sup> The consequences of familial ostracization are the negative impacts to LGBTI mental and psychological health, especially for trans and gender non-conforming Rwandans, who fall into drug abuse, alcoholism and unsafe

sexual practices such as sex work.<sup>49</sup> They do this because they no longer have their family's financial and emotional support.<sup>50</sup>

At school, some LGBTI Rwandans have been expelled because of their sexual orientation and gender expression/identity.<sup>51</sup> If they are estranged from their family, they may not even be able to attend school because of the compulsory fees and unofficial prime payments demanded by teachers to supplement their meager salaries.<sup>52</sup> LGBTI people may not be able to afford these fees on their own.<sup>53</sup> In housing situations, LGBTI have been forcibly evicted by landlords.<sup>54</sup> In the workplace, LGBTI people face discrimination if they are “out”<sup>55</sup> and many remain closeted to maintain employment.<sup>56</sup> Finally, access to healthcare is difficult for LGBTI people.<sup>57</sup> Although there are no legislative barriers to providing health services, LGBTI people struggle to gain access to relevant information on HIV/AIDS and PrEP and some health-care service providers even expose them to public humiliation.<sup>58</sup> For “B,” people choose not to go to hospitals because of the stigma and, as a result, many self-medicate through videos and information from the Internet, which has obvious consequences.<sup>59</sup>

This discrimination towards LGBTI people is further propagated through the media and religion. Rwanda's media plays an extensive role in shaping and affecting public opinion, as we know from the use of the radio during the genocide to spread propaganda. In Rwanda, the media sensationalizes topics that encourage viewing and visibility to an issue.<sup>60</sup> This is consequential for LGBTI Rwandans, whose issues gain significant airtime because of the entrenched homophobia in neighbouring Uganda.<sup>61</sup> Rwandan media have often violated the privacy of LGBTI activists, publishing their pictures without their consent,<sup>62</sup> a situation parallel to the sharing of David Kato's information in Uganda that ultimately led to his death. Additionally, there have been reported incidents of religious leaders being particularly critical of LGBTI

Rwandans in their sermons and speeches on the radio.<sup>63</sup> Homophobic priests have encouraged their congregations to be intolerant and discriminate against LGBTI Rwandans, saying they must “be careful and protect [their] children from gays and lesbians (*abatinganyi*) because they are teaching homosexuality. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah.”<sup>64</sup> The use of radio and the Church’s influence in spreading hate is likened back to the genocide, where the same methods were used to dehumanize and polarize Tutsis from the Hutu population. Although these events are only happening on a micro-scale relative to the government-proliferated efforts in 1994, the use of the radio to spread hate is concerning because it discriminates against an already voiceless and marginalized group.

#### Advocacy Attempts

Rwandan LGBTI-related NGOs attempting advocacy efforts face government censorship so as not to promote “divisionist” rhetoric.<sup>65</sup> Under Article 47 of the Constitution, “The State has to safeguard and promote national values based on cultural traditions and practices so long as they do not conflict with human rights, public order and good morals.”<sup>66</sup> This provision can allow LGBTI organizations to be restricted to preserve national values should the State declare their activities immoral.<sup>67</sup> In practice, LGBTI organizations exclude any mention of “LGBTI” or “homosexuals” as target constituencies in their Constitutions and mandates.<sup>68</sup> LGBTI-related organizations also face alienation from other NGOs, with some refusing to collaborate with them because they “fear LGBTI” or want to disassociate from the morally “sick” people LGBTI groups work with.<sup>69</sup>

Although the government may hold an official position of acceptance towards the LGBTI community with anti-discrimination laws in place, in practice, Rwandan society is anything but welcoming. The laws the government espouses need proper enforcement and the fact that there is

little, is telling. If the government wants to be viewed as progressive as it states, LGBTI people should not be afraid to report incidents and seek justice. There should be anti-oppressive mechanisms in place to prevent discrimination in the housing, education, workplace and health sectors.

### The Impacts Of The One Rwanda Policy On LGBTI People

Despite claiming tolerance and wishing to bring unity to Rwandan society, the government's "One Rwanda" policy eliminating social divisions to prevent genocide negatively impacts the LGBTI community. Because LGBTI organizations are forced not to label themselves as aiding homosexuals, it deters people from utilizing these services and seeking assistance. LGBTI-related organizations tiptoe around the government so as to not appear to be critical of them, and to not come across as "westernized," spreading propaganda onto an African society.<sup>70</sup> The "One Rwanda" policy is a one Rwanda for the heteronormative, cishnormative majority, where sexual and gender minorities face societal discrimination and are unable to efficiently/effectively have their voices/concerns acknowledged by government. There have been successes in LGBTI advocacy, such as the halting of a 2009 bill to criminalize homosexuality.<sup>71</sup> However, there are still considerable problems facing LGBTI minorities. Although Rwanda is one of the most progressive African states when it comes to the legalese, activists cannot become complacent. There is much work to be done to evolve societal opinions and prevent discrimination.

### The Twa In "One Rwanda"

The second case study this paper will examine is that of the indigenous Twa, a forgotten people in a remembered land.<sup>72</sup> The Twa - forest people, hunters, and potters - make up roughly one percent of the population.<sup>73</sup> During the genocide, it is estimated 1/3 of their population

(roughly 10,000 people) were killed and another 1/3 left as refugees.<sup>74</sup> Despite their loss of life, the Rwandan government prevents Twa from participating in reconciliation efforts, excluding them entirely.<sup>75</sup>

#### Federal Position

Following the genocide, the government spouted a new origin myth to replace the one set by the colonizers, and described the genocide as a purely ethnic conflict between Hutus and Tutsis. By doing so, it erased any sense of a third ethnic category that may have been involved in the genocide. When the government instituted its “One Rwanda” policy, it delegitimized and erased the lived experiences of the Twa by believing that ethnicity was a “correctible colonial construct.”<sup>76</sup> Some argue the government was justified in erasing the Twa identity as collateral victims because the government feared that if Twa were recognized and given minority rights, the Hutu majority could voice their grievances of political exclusion and demand greater equitable political representation.<sup>77</sup> Unlike the LGBTI community wherein the federal government propagates inclusivity, the Twa are considerably ignored.

By erasing all ethnicities in promoting one *Banyarwanda* identity to foster unity, Twa lived experiences were ignored. They never received justice or support and cannot even commemorate their dead without risking arrest for “ethnic divisionism.”<sup>78</sup> The Twa are not even viewed as Rwanda’s indigenous people as “[all Rwandans] share the same territory, language and culture”<sup>79</sup> Their only consolation is classification as a “historically marginalized population.”<sup>80</sup> The government’s approach to ethnic unanimity is problematic because this policy means they treat the unequal equally, like everyone else, ignoring any hope for equitable inclusion.<sup>81</sup> As with the LGBTI community, under Article 47, groups advocating on behalf of the Twa are required to change their mandates and constitutions so as not to create further divisions.

For example, in 2004, the Ministry of Justice ordered the group CAURWA (*Communauté des autochtones rwandais*) to change its name to COPORWA (*Communauté des potiers rwandais*), or risk closure on a charge of ethnic divisionism for including “autochthons” (indigenous) in their title.<sup>82</sup> Not wanting to risk being labeled “divisionist,” few organizations exist to protect and promote Twa rights.<sup>83</sup> The federal government’s policies have substantial ramifications on how society views the Twa, and unsurprisingly, the Twa face considerable systemic and societal discrimination throughout their lives.

#### Twa In Society: Systemic and Societal Discrimination

The Twa’s lack of power within Rwandan society has significant ramifications directly impacting their livelihoods. Twa identity is linked to their traditional land and natural resources.<sup>84</sup> As *impunyu* (forest-dwellers), Twa historically lived in the Nyungwe and Virunga mountains, living off the land’s resources - gathering fruit, game meat and wild honey.<sup>85</sup> But in 1980, the government declared the parks protected areas, forcing Twa to leave their native habitats.<sup>86</sup> Following the genocide with little government assistance, Twa find themselves at the bottom of the socioeconomic hierarchy.<sup>87</sup> Many live in poverty, few own land and many exhibit signs of malnutrition.<sup>88</sup> None maintain their traditional existence as *impunyu*.<sup>89</sup> Most Twa now turn to begging on the streets.<sup>90</sup> In Musanze district, Twa live in single-room Red Cross-built houses, and survive by picking up whatever corn and potatoes their neighbors accidentally drop in the field.<sup>91</sup> For one Twa, they note, “Even the mountain gorillas get more protection. [The gorillas] bring in tourist dollars. We will get rubbed off the face of Rwanda before they do.”<sup>92</sup> Twa lack access to clean water, infrastructure, face mass land scarcity, and most are uneducated.<sup>93</sup> There does not seem to be much leadership by the government to address Twa issues excluding some slight activities to integrate Twa into medicare and housing schemes.<sup>94</sup>

Despite these consolations, Twa cannot access the survivor fund that provides education, healthcare and jobs.<sup>95</sup> Many still feel stigmatized and excluded,<sup>96</sup> and unfortunately, Twa livelihoods only get worse in the context of greater societal persecution.

In Rwandan society, the Twa are a social pariah,<sup>97</sup> subject to great disdain and ostracization.<sup>98</sup> Some Rwandans see the Twa as backward, uncivilized, primitive, uncultured and filthy.<sup>99</sup> For one Rwandan, they stated, “[Twa] are contaminated and it is best you keep your distance. ... There is a proverb that guides us to stay away from them. It states, ‘If you shelter from the rain in a Twa hut, then remain there.’”<sup>100</sup> This discrimination permeates into physical and vocal acts. There have been cases when Kinyarwanda radio stations broadcast racist jokes insulting the Twa even though mentioning ethnicity is illegal.<sup>101</sup> Additionally, Twa face social exclusion when amongst others. If invited to festivities, Twa are given extra plates of food and beer to prevent Rwandans from being affected by their impurity (*kunena*).<sup>102</sup> Meals are not to be shared with the Twa.<sup>103</sup> The Twa are seen as inferior, dirty, stupid, and lazy and Rwandans even use them as a verb (*kuba umutwa*, to be like a Twa) to insult people.<sup>104</sup> This discrimination has turned violent. On June 27, 2018, a Twa neighborhood was ambushed by alleged Hutus, leaving one dead and fifteen injured.<sup>105</sup> This attack follows a similar 2012 attack and is seen as a shock to a country that receives praise for its ‘reconciliation efforts.’

#### The “One Rwanda” Policy And The Twa

Twa persecution is evident in Rwandan society and government policies. The “One Rwanda” policy does not attempt to assimilate the Twa, it seeks to eradicate them and their culture. Not acknowledging their part in the genocide as bystanders, survivors, victims, and even perpetrators,<sup>106</sup> Twa are unable to participate in the reconciliation and commemoration efforts and their identity is completely annexed from Rwandan “truth.” Attempting substantive rights-



based advocacy would risk promoting “ethnic ideology” and divisionism, and at present, Twa have only been recognized as a historically marginalized group. The supposed anti-discrimination laws seemingly do not apply to the Twa to prevent their subjugation. Much of their culture is long lost and the government and society have no qualms in taking pleasure in their pain. Twa livelihood is defeated, so much so that Dativa Mukeshimana, an ethnic Twa, called on the government to take her children away to boarding schools and let the “last generation of us that knew the old ways die here. Back then our culture was to teach our children to hunt and gather honey. Are we [now] supposed to teach [our children] to beg?”<sup>107</sup> Without proper, serious efforts to address the systemic top-down persecution permeating Rwandan society towards the Twa, the situation is unlikely to improve. This “One Rwanda” policy is a policy for the majority, not the marginalized and it is in this case study this is best proven.

### **Conclusion**

This paper examined the effects of a “One Rwanda” policy on marginalized identities, the LGBTI and Twa, to determine if whether or not the policy accounted for their lived experiences and supported them through their hardships. For LGBTI people, despite a federal government that passively accepts their identity, cultural conservatism and the influence of religion leaves many LGBTI Rwandans in poverty facing undue hardship. For Twa, the federal government does not attempt to hold a positive attitude towards this “ethnic” minority and anti-discrimination laws within the Constitution seem to be null and void as is evident by their persecution.

The “One Rwanda” policy criminalizes divisionism, which means it is difficult for non-governmental organizations and advocacy bodies to advocate on behalf of the powerless without being accused of propagating divisive rhetoric that separates the newly formed *Banyarwanda* identity. The “One Rwanda” policy can be praised for its success in bringing Tutsi survivors and

Hutu perpetrators together as one and reconciling their grievances. However, the policy has consequences for other groups. Kagame's government must make serious efforts to examine the systemic social discrimination towards LGBTI and Twa Rwandans and implement a cultural shift through education and anti-oppressive laws. This shift will not happen immediately, but it must begin somewhere and soon. Without peace, all that is left is chaos.

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- <sup>13</sup> Ibid, 444.
- <sup>14</sup> Hintjens, Helen. "Post-Genocide Identity Politics In Rwanda," 15.
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- <sup>17</sup> Blackie, Laura E.R., and Nicki Hitchcott. "'I Am Rwandan:' Unity And Reconciliation In Post-Genocide Rwanda." 30.
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