

The Network for Peace through Dialogue
in cooperation with **Marymount Manhattan College**

Presents

Dialogue In/As Action

Is Dialogue with Evil Possible?



Marymount Manhattan College: Bradley Hurley and students

Students from Dr. Herling's class presented the results of their study of the Rwandan genocide as a case study of "evil," which they defined as "actions that are outside human understanding – things that go 'beyond bad'." Different students provided background information on historical and cultural aspects of the conflict. One factor was the history of colonialism in which Belgium pursued a "divide and rule" policy, first by favoring Tutsis over Hutus and later reversing their favoritism. Another factor was the role played by the Rwandan government in training militias and broadcasting hate messages against Tutsis on radio stations. A third factor was the invasion of Tutsi rebel forces from Uganda. Finally, UN peacemaking forces were not equipped to deal with the problem.

The students worked out two scenarios about the possibility of dialogue in this situation. In the first one, after they looked at the historical, cultural and institutional forces at play, they concluded that once evil starts happening on a macro scale, it will keep going until it reaches its end. Dialogue seemed impossible at this level.

The second scenario focused on examples of dialogue in which individuals made relationships with people engaged in evil acts and brought about slight changes in the

situation by doing so. Examples were Schindler in the movie “Schindler’s List;” a UN officer from Senegal, Capt. Mbaye Diagne, who successfully rescued many Tutsis by relating to Hutus humanly, despite their acts; and Carl Wilkins, an American member of a humanitarian relief organization who stayed in the country throughout the genocide.

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