

ECHOES OF HEALING:

*Supporting Survivors of the
1994 Genocide Against Tutsi
and their Communities Living
in Western Australia.*

Gukira Ibikomere



The Rwandan Community Abroad Perth Inc. is based on Whadjuk Noongar Country. We respectfully acknowledge the Whadjuk as the traditional custodians of this Boodja and recognise that their cultural beliefs are still important today. In upholding our values of Ubumuntu [Humanity], Ubumwe [Unity], and Ubufatanye [Solidarity] inherited from our abakurambere [elders]; we stand in community with, and extend our deepest respects to the traditional, present, and continuing leaders of this Boodja.

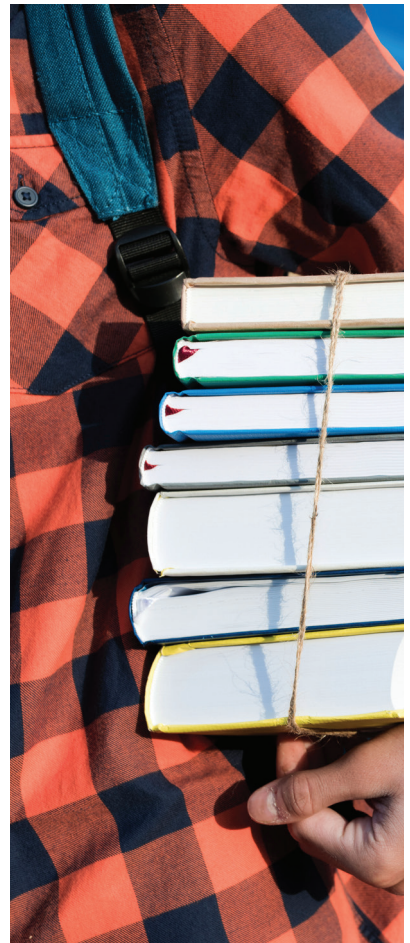
Iriburiro - Overview

In 1994, Rwanda experienced one of the darkest periods in human history: the Genocide against the Tutsi. Over just 100 days, the Genocide claimed the lives of over a million people, leaving behind profound social, economic, and emotional devastation. Families, communities, and infrastructures were shattered. Yet, amidst this unimaginable tragedy, remarkable displays of strength and resilience emerged as survivors began to rebuild their lives and communities from the ashes of destruction to a beacon of hope. However, wounds from the genocide continue to need continuing healing.

Echoes of Healing offers vital guidance and resources for those impacted by the 1994 Genocide Against Tutsi. We aim to facilitate healing, foster resilience, and provide support for survivors as they navigate the aftermath of trauma.

The resource seeks to shed light on the concept of trauma and intergenerational trauma (the enduring legacy of the genocide) and the profound impact trauma has had on individuals and communities alike. By exploring the effects of trauma and the available community support services, this resource aims to offer guidance and assistance to those still grappling with the aftermath of the genocide and its impact.

We strongly encourage all survivors to seek support, whether from trusted individuals, mental health professionals, or support groups. Seeking help is a courageous step towards healing and resilience; it is not a sign of weakness.



1. Ihungabana - Understanding Trauma and its Impact

What is Trauma?

Trauma is a deeply distressing or disturbing experience that is typically out of one's control or difficult to cope with. It often happens suddenly and can make you feel like you are not in control of what's happening to you. Trauma can come from many different things, like moving to a new place, losing someone you love, or big changes in your life. It can happen once or over a long time. The effects of trauma can last for a short while or a long time, affecting how you feel and behave.

Genocide: A Profound Traumatic Experience

Genocide, such as the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi, profoundly impacts individuals and communities, who have experienced it, directly or indirectly, causing lasting trauma. Trauma has effects on our mental health, and can affect individuals in differing ways. Trauma can result in mental distress and at times to disorders, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Recognizing and addressing these challenges is important for supporting survivors and rebuilding resilient communities.

Effects of Trauma on Mental Health at an Individual level

Trauma can lead to sadness, anxiety, fatigue, hopelessness, sleep problems, flashbacks, immobilization, anger, numbness, headaches, pain, and substance abuse, affecting mental health profoundly at an individual level.

Effects of Trauma on Mental Health at a Community Level

At a community level, trauma can manifest itself as shock, anger, disbelief, collective grief, loss of trust, hope, purpose, and identity, alongside uncertainty, confusion, 'othering', in-fighting, loss of cohesion, and negativity spreading across the community.

Trauma Diagnosis

Mental health professionals can effectively diagnose trauma. Symptoms may emerge immediately or years later, varying in intensity and duration. Trauma affects individuals differently, and no one's experience is more significant than another's. Each survivor's journey, regardless of age, is unique and valid, highlighting the complexity of trauma's impact on mental health and the importance of personalized care and support.



2. Ingaruka - Intergenerational Trauma

What is Intergenerational Trauma?

Intergenerational trauma is the transmission of past trauma from one generation to another, perpetuating pain and suffering across time. Trauma stemming from genocide casts a long shadow over mental health, affecting descendants with anxiety, depression, and identity struggles. Both survivors and their descendants bear the burden, with historical atrocities deeply embedded in communities, leaving a lasting impact on their mental well-being. This inherited trauma echoes the unresolved anguish of forebearers, shaping the experiences of individuals across generations.

Legacy of Trauma: Impact on Children and Communities

Intergenerational trauma, stemming from the direct experiences of adults, profoundly impacts following generations. Genocide survivor parents pass down not only stories of suffering but also unresolved pain to their children and grandchildren.

Young people growing up in such families often experience anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, identity issues, and struggle to form healthy relationships. This passed down historical trauma weighs heavily on children and communities, with cycles of pain moving across generations, having deep-seated impacts on mental well-being.



Passing on Healing: Nurturing Resilience and Understanding Through Generations

By being part of intergenerational healing, genocide survivors can impart valuable lessons to their children. Tips include raising awareness about family history and trauma, fostering resilience through coping skills, and creating safe spaces for expression. Engaging in open conversations about personal experiences, fostering empathy and understanding, noting the importance of historical context, and commitment to preventing future atrocities.

*See appendix for conversation starters

Kwibuka as a Tool for Healing Trauma

Every year from 7th April to 4th July, Rwandans across the world organise on different occasions events known as Kwibuka—a solemn occasion that serves as a poignant reminder of the atrocities of the genocide against Tutsi. The word “Kwibuka,” meaning “to remember” in Kinyarwanda, encapsulates the solemn duty to preserve the memory of the genocide victims. But beyond mere remembrance, Kwibuka represents a platform for reflection, education, and healing.

The Commemoration, often held at genocide memorials, plays a significant role in trauma healing by providing a special moment for genocide survivors, to honour their deceased loved ones, many of whom they did not have a chance to accord a decent burial.

The Commemoration serves as an acknowledgement of the pain and suffering endured during the genocide. This acknowledgement validates survivors’ experiences and promotes empathy and understanding, which are crucial for trauma healing.

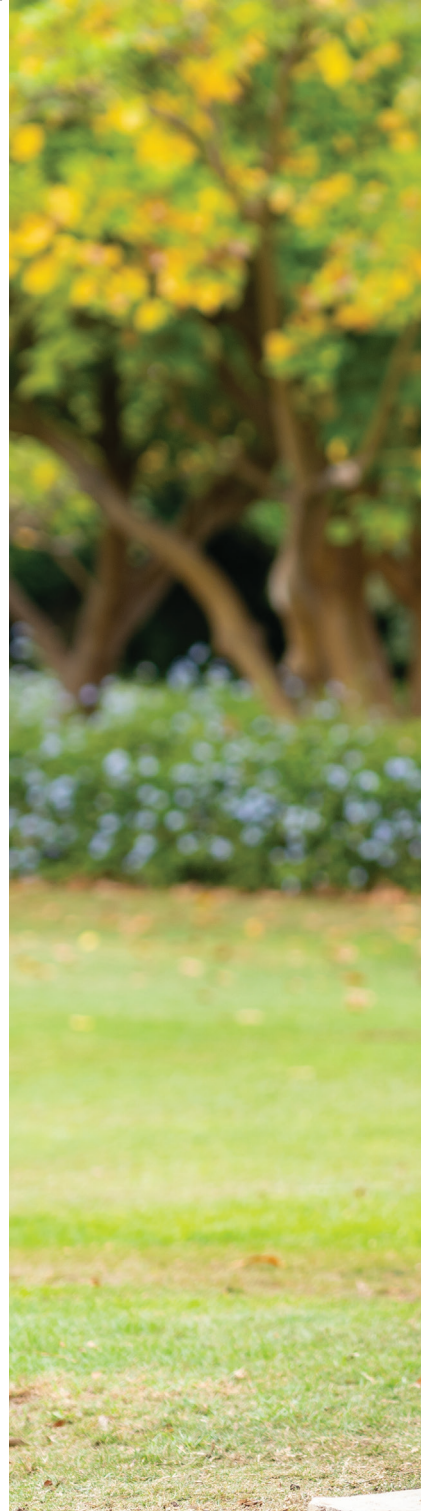


Urwibutso – Kwibuka Memorial in the City of Stirling, WA

The Kwibuka Memorial in the Stirling Civic Gardens, Western Australia, stands as a tribute to the victims and a beacon of hope for survivors of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. More than a mere monument, it serves as a sanctuary for remembrance, healing, and enlightenment. The memorial welcomes and embraces all who visit in fostering solidarity and strengthening community bonds; embodying a solemn pledge to never again allow such atrocities to reoccur. By honouring the lives lost and standing together in solidarity, the memorial reflects the City's commitment to inclusivity and serves as a vital educational tool, imparting lessons on the grave consequences of hatred, exclusion, and discrimination for future generations.



Kwibuka
kwibuka twiyubaka



*In memory of
the victims of
the 1994 Genocide
perpetrated against
the Tutsi in Rwanda.*

*Urwibutso rw' abazize
Jenoside yakorewe
Abatutsi mu
Rwanda mu 1994.*

UNITE

REMEMBER

RENEW

*Never Again to Genocide
anywhere in the world.*



Rwandan
Community
Abroad
Perth Inc.

Kwibuka – Memorial

*Officially unveiled by Rwandan Community Abroad Perth Inc.
and City of Stirling Mayor Mark Irwin on 11 May 2024*

*Kwibuka Memorial designed by Carol Stevens, in collaboration with Artforms WA
and Rwandan Community Abroad Perth Inc.*

3. Ubufasha - Support Services for Young People

Creating a Supportive Space for young people



To support children and young people, fostering peer support and encouraging a nurturing environment is essential. Adults can promote supportive relationships at home and within the community. Demonstrating open and safe conversations about mental health helps young people feel comfortable discussing their feelings. Parents can lead by example, modeling active listening.

Support services for Young People

In Western Australia, free and confidential mental health services for young people provide a safe and

supportive environment. Reach out early, seeking help is nothing to be ashamed of. Your General Practitioner (GP) can refer you, or you can call directly to access these services.

Mental health services

- CAHMS (08) 6389 5800 - branches across the Perth metro area
- Culturally Diverse Psychological Service (CDPS) - Life Without Barriers (years 12+) <http://lifewithoutbarriers.org.au/culturallydiversepsychologicalservice/>
0418 724 549
- Headspace (12 - 25 years old) - 1800 650 890
- Youth Focus <https://youthfocus.com.au/>

Online services

- Beyond Blue: <http://beyondblue.org.au/> 1300 224 636
- headspace: <https://headspace.org.au/online-and-phone-support/>
1800 650 890
- Orygen <https://www.orygen.org.au/>

Helplines

- Headspace (12 - 25 years old):
Phone 1800 650 890 (7 am - 10:30 pm)
- Kids Helpline: Phone: 1800 55 1800
- Lifeline: Phone: 13 11 14 or Txt 0477 13 11 14
- QLife: Phone 1800 184 527 (1 pm-12 am)

4. Mpore - Support Services for Adults

You are not alone. It's important to reach out for support to supplement the coping strategies we are already using, especially if we are finding it difficult to manage the effects of trauma and notice worsening symptoms. Seeking additional or professional support alongside our self-care efforts can help prevent further struggles and worsening symptoms.

Your Support Network

- Trusted Family, Friend, or Colleague: For support and a listening ear
- Religious Leader or Pastoral Worker: Confidential faith-based support
- Support/Self-Help Group or Peer Support Group: Community-based support for shared experiences
- Community Centre or Group: Connection and access to local resources and networks

Professional Support Along Your Healing Journey


- Counsellor/Support Worker: Provides talk therapy, emotional support, resilience-building, and referrals to psychologists or psychiatrists as needed
- Social Worker/Mental Health Nurse: Conducts assessments, provides support, connects with resources, and makes referrals as necessary
- Psychologist: Provides consultation, assessment, diagnosis, and treatment, with potential referrals for medication
- Psychiatrist: Offers consultation, assessment, diagnosis, treatment with medication, and periodic progress reviews

Culturally Appropriate Mental Health Services

- ASSETS - Trauma-informed counseling for survivors of torture and trauma
- Culturally Diverse Psychological Service (CDPS) - Life Without Barriers: Support by CALD Psychologists for CALD communities - 0418 724 459
- ISHAR - safe culturally informed counseling for women
- Sisters Healing Space – Counseling and therapeutic workshops
- Multicultural Health Program - Multicultural Futures: advocacy support in navigating the mental health system
- Peer Pathways - CoMHWA: Peer support for individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds in their mental health journey
- Someone.health: Online platform offering culturally sensitive mental health support

Mental Health Helplines and Crisis Support

- 1800-Respect
- Alcohol & Drug Support Line (08) 9442 5000
- Crisis Care 1800 199 008
- For You 1800here4U / 1800 437 348
- Lifeline 13 11 14 & Txt 0477 13 11 14
- MERHL 1300 555 788
- Men's Line 1300 789 978
- Suicide Call Back Service 1300 659 467



Let us restate our commitment to ongoing healing and remembrance. By honouring the memories victims and sharing our stories, we contribute to a collective journey of healing and resilience. Together, we can create a brighter future for ourselves and future generations.

Gushimira - VOTE OF THANKS

With immense gratitude, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the City of Stirling under the leadership of His Worship Mayor Mark Irwin for graciously hosting the Kwibuka memorial at the Stirling Civic Gardens, a symbol of remembrance, healing, and education.

We acknowledge the Embrace Mental Health Project and Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Services for their support in producing Echoes of Healing. Special appreciation to Pearl Proud, Nicholah Wasarirevu, and Esther Mwathi for sharing their knowledge and expertise in the process of creating this invaluable resource.

We also extend our gratitude to Carol Stevens in collaboration with Art Form WA for designing and producing the Kwibuka Memorial. Your creative vision and attention to detail have brought forth a monument that will stand as a testament.

We extend a profound appreciation to all members of the Rwandan Community Abroad Perth Inc. whose moral and financial support has been pivotal to the success of this project. Last but not least, special thanks to the Kwibuka Memorial Project Team: Ernest Kalisa, Linda Iriza, Rosemine Mutumuliza, Maurice Mudacumura, Innocent Mugema, and Jean Marie Vianney Gakwenzire. Your tremendous commitment and dedication to bringing this project to life have not gone unnoticed.

Together, let us continue to strive for a world without genocide, where love, compassion, and peace prevail for all. Murakoze.


Inyandiko Zifashishijwe: references

<https://kwibuka.rw/> <https://kgm.rw/>

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/mental-health>

<https://kidshelpline.com.au/parents>

Bonumwezi, J. L., Grapin, S. L., Uddin, M., Coyle, S., Habintwali, D., & Lowe, S. R. (2024). Intergenerational trauma transmission through family psychosocial factors in adult children of Rwandan survivors of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. *Social science & medicine* (1982), 348, 116837. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2024.116837>



APPENDIX

Tuganire: Tips for Engaging in Conversations with young people:

1. Personal Connection: “Do you know if our family has any stories or connections to events like the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda?”
2. Open-Ended Questions: “What have you heard about the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and how do you think it’s impacted people?”
3. Current Events: “Have you seen anything in the news lately about the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda? How do you think it affects our understanding of history?”
4. Empathy: “How do you think we can show support and understanding to those who went through tough times, like survivors of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda?”
5. Importance of History: “Why do you think it’s important for us to learn about events like the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda? What can we learn from them?”
6. Personal Stories: “Have you ever read or heard any personal stories about the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda? How did they make you feel?”
7. Peace and Unity: “How do you think promoting peace and unity could help stop things like the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda from happening again?”
8. Forgiveness and Understanding: “What do you think about forgiveness and understanding when it comes to things like the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda?”
9. Memorial Attendance: “Would you be interested in going to the Kwibuka Memorial to remember those affected by the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda? Why or why not?”





Kwibuka Memorial designed by Carol Stevens, in collaboration with Artforms WA and Rwandan Community Abroad Perth Inc.



**Rwandan
Community
Abroad
Perth Inc.**



embrace
multicultural mental health



Multicultural Women's
Health Services