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## Hotel Rwanda: The Story Of a Man Who Saved 1268 People

Hotel Rwanda is a 2004 historical drama directed by Terry George. The movie, which covers the 1994 Rwandan genocide, stars Don Cheadle, Sophie Okonedo, and Joaquin Phoenix. It was nominated for three Oscar awards and also won the Toronto and Berlin Film Fests. The film which encompasses the political and civil unrest, violence, corruption and the atrocious genocide, was co-produced by United Artists and Lion Gate Films. The movie is based on a true story. Hotel Rwanda tells the dismal tale of the highly infamous Rwandan genocide in a different light. It showcases the unheard perspective of the brutal and torturous atrocities by the vision of Paul Rusesabagina (played by Don Cheadle), the house manager of the luxurious hotel, Des Mille Collines. The epic saga of how he saved the lives of over a thousand refugees by housing them in the hotel and a bird's eye view into the massacre forms the totality of the story. The Rwandan Genocide that occurred in 1994 is perhaps one of the most well known genocides of all time. The genocide arised between the two tribal groups of the country - the indigenous Hutus and the cattle-gathering Tutsis. When the country was a Belgian colony, the government placed the supposedly more elegant, whiter and long-nosed Tutsis in high positions leading to the Hutus believing that they were repressed by an outside community.

However, when they left, they placed the power with the Hutus, causing to great political unrest. There was resistance from a minor section of the Tutsi community who formed the Tutsi Rebel Group or the RPF rebel group which was backlashed by a Hutu extremist group wishing to exterminate all Tutsis called the Interhamwe. After a successful peace negotiation was signed by the ruling Hutu President Habyarimana and the Tutsi rebels which was organised by the UN (the mission was called UNAMIR 1994) all was thought to be well. However, soon after, the President and many of the most important politicians were killed in a plane crash. Following this , the extremist Interhamwe used their RTLM, Hutu Power Radio to spread a message for the massacre of the Tutsis using a code line, "...Cut the tall trees...". This lead to a genocide that would witness over a million corpses in the short period of a month. Paul Rusesabagina is the house manager of the most luxurious hotel in Kigali, the capital of Rwanda - the Sabena owned Des Mille Collines.

A man of style, he wishes to integrate himself with the powerful sections of the society like the army and the Whites. He is a great negotiator and as mentioned in the movie, "the smartest one here". Paul is a Hutu but his wife, Tatsiana is a Tutsi. But the dreadful incidents that occur in 1994 leave him a changed man who is willing to sacrifice his own life to protect others who were conveniently abandoned by the society he wished to be a part. The how and why form the remainder of the story. Hotel Rwanda unlike the may movies made on this subject is not simply a story of the massacre, it is the story of a man who saved 1268 people. The movie is popularly called the African Schindler's List. Hotel Rwanda focuses and forces the audience, the majority being White, to look at the central theme of Racism. It focuses on the divide that was imprinted in the minds of the native Rwandans by the Belgians - measuring noses and heights to classify people as Tutsis and Hutus and how these imprints caused permanent scars that were filled with anger, hatred and jealousy.

The corruption, hegemony, intolerance and ethnic cleansing that guiding this atrocity also are recurring themes in the film. There is also a significant demonisation of propoganda that is seen.

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It revolves around the idea of tragedy. The film predominantly exposes the audience to the hellish lifestyle Paul and his family have during the Rwandan genocide. It accurately emulates the real life genocide that took place, and the impact it had on the lives Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The movie shows that in desperate times, when the government reeks of corruption, everything has a price. Paul Rusesabagina pays for his families and neighbours' freedom and life by bribing an army officer, even negotiating the price for each. He is able to purchase beer and scotch for the hotel from the distributor, as long as he is willing to pay the price demanded. He consistently bribes the army general for protection for the hotel's occupants from the armed militia. And when the bribes run out, so does the protection. There is a major theme of self-reliance, or absence of external help.

Throughout the movie it is repeated that the west refuses to help or does not value the Rwandans enough to intervene in the genocide. The West's refusal to intervene is seen when the UN peacekeeping force has orders to not use their weapons. It's seen in the size of the UN peacekeeping force, reduced to 260 men at the beginning of the genocide and civil war in 1994. In the movie this last reduction proved a false hope for the survivors holed up in the hotel. UN reinforcements arrive, only to evacuate many UN peacekeepers and foreign citizens from Rwanda and the hotel, respectively. There is also an episode where certain Rwandans who have foreign connections are granted visas to leave the country because of the intervention of their friends mostly from African nations. The contrast of this action to the west's non-intervention is stark. Who you know becomes a factor in survival. The distributor where Paul purchases supplies is a member of the Hutu militia. But because he knows him and has had a business relationship with him for years, he's able at a price to still secure supplies for the hotel residents. Don Cheadle playing Rusesabagina shows superb acting and performance throughout the movie. His display of affection towards his family is remarkable, especially when he finds his nieces at the refugee camp towards the end of the film.

Although the film moderately censors some of the extreme violence and horror that took place throughout the genocide, Terry George, the director, did a great job in the portrayal of the genocide and accurately incorporated both the foreign and domestic events that took place. Sophie Okonedo did an outstanding job in carrying out her character, expressing so much passion. As Paul leaves her and the children on the UN convoy to stay back with the refugees, her emotion was so raw and uncut that it made me as a viewer feel the sadness and misery behind her act. Her acting in the scene directly and effectively instilled the mood of sadness into the film, accompanied by the aforementioned qualities of the plot and the genocide itself. When the UN convoy got ambushed and the militia personnel held a machete to her neck, the amount of energy she provided in her fear was absolutely unreal.

The way she jumped over her children to protect them and shook uncontrollably furthermore brought out the mood of fear and horror in the film. Lastly, there was one particular scene of her acting that caught my attention because of the oxymoron it portrayed. On the way back to the hotel from the convoy, Tatiana was incredibly emotional because of Paul's abandonment and her near-death experience. Sophie's act was a combination of anger, happiness and sadness, all at the same time. Tatiana showed so much love, hate and resentment towards Paul, all at the same time. This scene not only contributed to the mood of the film, but also gave the audience an insight as to how life was like for those living in Rwanda during the genocide. Being hunted, as well as being neglected politically on the international scale, most Tutsis and moderate Hutus felt the emotions that Sophie portrayed in her character. Okonedo's acting excellently promoted the fearful and horrific mood/atmosphere the movie had. The objective of the creators was not

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only to show the audience what was happening in Rwanda, but to make them sympathize with the characters. With these rhetorical techniques, they are successful in doing so because they influence multiple senses in different ways. The music in Hotel Rwanda is one of the most effective rhetorical tools in any movie because it sets the mood without the need of visuals. Background music is a powerful tool in this film. During suspenseful moments, there is no background music. During moments of action, there is native music playing. During sad moments, slow, depressing music plays to add to the feel. The music is unbearably fitting for the mood of the movie. The film is shot in Rwanda and the set is made as realistic as possible.

The extras in the movie do a wonderful job as acting as tortured souls and corpses. The costumes breathe an air of African spirit and culture. The details in the film are at most points kept very accurate and stay true to the original story. However, there are a few exaggerations and goof-ups. There was no Colonel Oliver in the actual story. This character was loosely based on the head of the mission., Romeo Dallaire. There is no evidence of the photojournalist Jack Daglish. Hotel Rwanda is a deeply disturbing film that gives numerous sleepless nights. It will burst that bubble that we comfortably reside in. It will make you cry, scream out in frustration over the unfair treatment that many receive. It shows a hard hitting reality - the painful truth. When Paul asks Jack how the West would not intervene after witnessing such atrocities, Jack says the most gut wrenching yet true reply, 'I think if people see this footage they'll say, 'oh my God that's horrible,' and then go on eating their dinners.' This quote and many others stick and plague the mind into submission. This movie will force you to accept the cruel nature of the world. But if you watch it optimistically enough, it will urge you into helping. It will urge you into becoming the next Paul Rusesabagina. It will urge you to be kind, to learn and to never let go of hope and love. I believe that Hotel Rwanda is a movie that everyone must watch at least once. It is a brilliant movie made with a purpose to educate people to accept and love. I would rate it a 5/5 despite its minor errors because I think that the movie has achieved its purpose. "There is always enough room."