



FROM LEFT: Jacqueline Murekatete, 2008 Ellis Island Medal of Honor Recipient; Mr. Nicholas Shalita, First Counsellor at the Rwandan Permanent Mission to the United Nations; Mr. Francis Deng, U.N. Special Advisor for Prevention of Genocide; Holocaust survivor David Gewirtzman.

## MIRACLE CORNERS OF THE WORLD OBSERVES RWANDA GENOCIDE 15<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

### A Survivor's Reflection

BY JACQUELINE MUREKATETE

**WHEN I WAS NINE YEARS OLD** and living in a small village in Rwanda, I remember when a death sentence was pronounced on my family. It was April 7, 1994 when my life took such a dramatic turn that even today I often wonder how it all came to be—how did I and many other Tutsi children go from being happy and surrounded by family and friends, who all had goals and dreams, to being horrified and traumatized orphans.

For the next one hundred days, until June, I lived in a state of fear, waking up every morning and never knowing whether I was going to live to see the next day. Every day I was exposed to murderous acts that no child should ever witness. I watched as innocent men, women, and children were dragged to death. I heard the painful cries of children whose arms, legs and other parts of their bodies were hacked by those who were their neighbors and former friends. This was Rwanda in 1994, when the Hutu-led government declared that Tutsis, Rwanda's minority ethnic group, were cockroaches and needed to be exterminated.

Fifteen years ago, on April 7th 2009, I joined a small group of survivors at the Church Center for the United Nations, and lit a candle for my parents, six siblings, uncles, aunts, cousins, teachers and friends—all of whom were among the estimated over million innocent people whose lives were taken during the genocide.

The commemoration brought together diverse communities of genocide survivors, from Armenia, the Holocaust, Bosnia, and Darfur, as well as Rwanda, to reflect and to remember and to show solidarity with each other. The event was organized by Jacqueline's Human Rights Corner, a genocide program that I founded with the New York-based non profit organization, Miracle Corners of the World (MCW). We together called on public, private and non profit sector organizations and individuals alike to do more in fighting hatred, and intolerance of all types, and to foster tolerance and respect for all human beings in our increasingly interdependent and diverse world. As an organization that values tolerance, respect, and diversity, the National Ethnic Coalition (NECO) was one of the event's primary sponsors.

I am 24 now and living in New York. The month of April is a time when the world remembers not only the genocide in Rwanda, but also Armenia, the Holocaust, Cambodia, and Bosnia. In the presence of Darfur, one must ponder what, if anything, the world has learned from Rwanda, how far we have come, and how far we need to go. But we also know that remembering is simply not enough. We need to take action to fight hatred and denial, ensure justice and teach people of all ages the importance of tolerance and respect. We also need to make sure that survivors have the chance to live secure and fruitful lives. ✨

For more information about Miracle Corners of the World and how to get involved, please visit [www.miraclecorners.org](http://www.miraclecorners.org)