

## **Ali Avery**

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Albert M. Tapper Fellow Ali Avery researches the roots and drivers of genocide, focusing on Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region (GLR) of Africa. Her dissertation explores how militias form and how they implement genocide through a case study of the *Interahamwe* militia in Rwanda. Specifically, she examines the micro-dynamics that shaped the formation, organization, and evolution of the '*Interahamwe*' as well as the mindset of the perpetrators. The *Interahamwe* was the most powerful militia group in Rwanda whose members committed the majority of the killings during the genocide. Yet, while previous studies have examined the perpetrators of the Rwandan Genocide, hardly any of the existing literature has focused on the *Interahamwe*. Furthermore, previous works have often neglected or significantly understated the fundamental role the *Interahamwe* played in organizing and planning the genocide in the years leading up to 1994. Through a combination of archival data and semi-structured interviews with both former perpetrators (including both those currently incarcerated and those who have been released from prison) and non-perpetrators (including survivors and ordinary citizens who lived in Rwandan during the genocide), Avery's study will fill a critical gap in knowledge.

Central to Avery's research is the need to address the context in which the *Interahamwe* emerged and developed into a brutal killing force. As such, her project addresses the factors that shaped the dynamics of mobilization, recruitment, and grooming of militants. In addition, Avery's research examines the intersection of the racialization of social identity as it became linked with economic identity, and how this may have created the 'othering' that led to mass violence in Rwanda. Her project looks at the construction of 'Rwandan' identity during the period from 1990 to 1994.

Avery seeks to shed light on how militias form and participate in genocide, a highly under-researched subject of utmost relevance to the ongoing and spiraling militia violence in Democratic Republic of Congo that continues to threaten the stability of the entire GLR. In doing so, her research aims to provide new insight into how genocidal ideology develops and evolves through militia groups. Her findings could eventually prove useful in efforts to ban and prevent genocidal ideology in Rwanda and the GLR. A deeper understanding of the organization of the genocide in Rwanda might help NGOs and governments recognize and intercede with similar entities in other contexts.

Avery successfully passed her Kinyarwanda language exam, which is crucial to the fieldwork phase of her project. She has arranged an academic affiliation with the University of Rwanda under the supervision of resident historian, Dr. Gakwenzire, essential for securing her research permit from the Rwandan government. Clark's Institutional Review Board has approved her plans and she will be ready to conduct her fieldwork in the coming year.