

Closing

Allan Thompson: Thank you very much. I'm going to use the prerogative of the chair to move us to a close, and I think we will actually finish precisely on time. Believe it or not in a room full of journalists, lawyers, diplomats and academics, we've actually kept to this pace, one diplomat only, at least at the table. A lot of people have made the point that this has been a very quick exercise. This has been a compressed examination of these issues. I don't know about you, but I feel as if I have been here for two or three days at this point. And yet, I don't want this event to end. I just want to remind you of a few things how in many ways, this event is not going to end. This is the beginning of a process. From a technical point of view, Extreme Web Casting(?), the company that's doing the web cast today. That web cast will continue to be available on the website that we've established here at the university, for at least another 30 days, and we will take a temperature of the use of the web cast on an ongoing basis, and perhaps go back to some of our generous funders to look for ways to keep that alive. The website as well will continue to exist, no longer as a promotional vehicle for this event, but as a research platform on the issues that we've dealt with today. Before I leave the technical domain, I really have to thank the instructional media services staff here at Carleton University. Everything has run to perfection, and it simply couldn't have happened without their help.

There are a number of ongoing activities that spring from this event, and I encourage you to please keep in touch, all of those who have come here to speak, and everyone who has come to listen, pick up on some of these themes, please. The papers presented today will be posted to the website in their entirety, probably not tomorrow. We may take a day or two off, but they will be posted to the website very soon. The summer project for this symposium team is the publication that will flow from this event, and we will formalize, edit, incorporate the material from the conference into the papers, and produce a publication from that.

There are a couple of other initiatives. We would like to create here at Carleton something that we will probably call "The Media and Genocide Research Archive." There have been a lot of references to the kind of material, both involving the domestic media in Rwanda, and international media coverage of the genocide that exists. Some of this material is disappearing. Someone asked me the other day about an issue of Kangura newspaper. They couldn't put their hands on it. We have the capability to capture all of that material. I think we should put it in one place. I think we should find a way to have BBC digitize all of Mark Doyle's reports, and deposit them with the archive. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation should do the same thing if they're listening to this event. All aspects of media coverage. We have extensive material from RTLM, from Kangura that's been assembled for the purposes of the International Criminal Tribunal in Rwanda for the Media Trial, that material has been captured, and it's available on CD-ROM. I think we will lodge this material in an archive here at Carleton, hopefully make as much of it as possible available through the website.

I mentioned at the opening today, we also invited representatives of the National

University of Rwanda, the School of Journalism to join us here today. I think we really have to look at ways of sharing resources, sharing people. If Chris Dornan, my chair is still here, I would love to go next summer and teach a course at the National University of Rwanda in Butare. That's something I think we really need to explore.

Finally, another initiative that has sort of emerged from the corridors, Willy Rangira who is a representative of the Humura Association here in Ottawa has made a brilliant suggestion that we should use the resources of perhaps the School of Journalism and its students to begin to create an archive of testimonials of Rwanda genocide survivors. We could begin with those who live in the capital region. We could perhaps expand this across the country. It could be as simple as student journalists showing up at people's homes, and practicing their interviewing skills, and recording at the same time these important testimonials about the genocide before they're lost to us. And by the way, the Humura Association, which is helping us host this reception upstairs as soon as I stop talking is also holding a series of commemorative events itself, particularly on April 6, a candlelight vigil on Parliament Hill. For more information on that, go to their website humura.ca.

I'm sort of running out of words, so I'm going to very quickly close the event. I really want to thank a number of people though. I would like to thank my students for tolerating the quintessential, absent-minded professor for the last few weeks. I promise that I will get those assignments marked. I would very much like to thank my wife, Rula Al Rafaid(?), who is here today, and for allowing me to be also the absent husband, and particularly I would like to thank the woman, who I've actually seen more of in the last month than my wife, Claire Fitzpatrick. If she could sort of step into the limelight where people can see the person, who really made this event happen. Thank you. I'd like to thank Romeo particularly, among the speakers for being sort of the moral conscience, I think, behind this issue, and to a large degree behind this event. Romeo presents, for a journalist, the more you get to know this man, he presents you with a very real journalistic conundrum. How do you write about someone with any degree of distance when you have come to admire them so much, and it is a journalistic conundrum, which I hope to continue to confront. I apologize that this event has been heavy on content, and short on ceremony. So there is no elaborate closing. I would like to once again thank all of the participants. Many people have come a great distance to be here, and they have given so much of themselves today. A lot of these presentations have been very, very personal. It's been short, but I think there's been a certain magic of the moment to this event.

Myself, I came to Rwanda late. I wasn't there in 1994, unlike my colleague, Jeff Salot from the Globe and Mail, who was there, and I think certainly that experience changed his life. I visited Rwanda first in 1996 as a journalist, as part of this repatriation exercise, and it did get inside of me, and since then, I think to some degree I maybe have been trying to make amends for not having been there in 1994. In going through the Toronto Star archives, I actually found an article from April 9, 1994, that I had completely forgotten even having written, and I think I know why it left my memory, it was awful. It was an awful piece of journalism. I had just taken up my position in the Toronto Star's

Ottawa bureau, and my article three days into the genocide was about the evacuation of Canadian expatriates from Kigali. It invoked every cliché of tribal conflict, chaos, anarchy, every mistake you could imagine, the kinds of mistakes that we've been talking about today. I hope that I have improved with time.

We've accomplished a great deal today. I wish I could echo Gerry Caplan, who said, "never again." I think in speaking of a lot of these journalistic errors, or exercises, or lessons learned, I don't think we can honestly say, "never again," because we're making the same mistakes right now. You could count on your left hand the number of Canadian journalists, who are based in Africa, and honestly I don't know what stories that we're missing out there right now.

I think it was Voltaire, if I'm correct, who said, "that to the dead we owe only respect. To the living, we owe the truth." True to form as a journalist, I've probably misquoted him, but that's the gist of it. I would submit that to the dead we also owe the truth, and with a bit more truth maybe, just maybe there wouldn't be so much death.

I would like to close, if I could ask those in charge of the technical magic in this room, if we could lower the lights. I think the best way to close this event is with a brief video montage that's drawn largely from archival media footage from the period in Rwanda in 1994. I have to warn you that many of these images are very disturbing, and they should be. They should be disturbing. Thank you. Thank you very much.