

Cinema and the Documentation of Mass Killings in Third World Countries: A Study of Selected African Films

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Abstract : Mass killing also known as genocide is the systematic killing of people from national, ethnic, or religious group, or an attempt to do so. The act has been there before 1948, when it was officially recognized for what it is. From then, the world has continued to witness genocide in diverse forms- negating different measures by the United Nations and its agencies to curb it. So far, all the studies and documentations on this subject are biased in favor of radio and the print. This paper therefore extended the interrogation of genocide, drumming its devastating effects, using the film medium; and in doing so devised innovative and pragmatic approach to genocide scholarship. It further centered attention on the factors and impacts of genocide, with a view to determine how effective film can be in such a study. The study is anchored on Bateson's Framing Theory. Four films- Hotel Rwanda, Half of a Yellow Sun, Attack on Darfur, and sarafina, were analyzed, based on background, factors/causes, impacts, and development of genocide, via Content Analysis. The study discovered that: as other continents strive towards peace, acts of genocide are on the increase in African. Bloodletting stereotypes give Africa negative image in the global society. Difficult political frameworks, the trauma of postcolonial state, aggravated by ethnic and religious intolerance, and limited access to resources are responsible for high cases of genocide in Africa. The media, international communities, and peace agencies often abet other than prevent genocide or mass killings in Africa. High human casualty and displacement, children soldering, looting, hunger, rape, sex-slavery and abuse, mental and psychosomatic stress disorders are some of the impacts of genocide. Genocidaires are either condemned or killed. Grievances can be vented using civil resistance, negotiation, adjudication, arbitration, and mediation. The cinema is an effective means of studying and documenting genocide. Africans must factor the image laundering of their continent into consideration. Punishment of genocidaires without an attempt to de-radicalize them is counterproductive.

Keywords : African film, genocide, framing theory, mass murder

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