

**First Lady Jeannette Kagame's
remarks at the Peace and Love
Proclaimers Ku Gicaniro
conversation | Kigali,
13 April 2022**

**Honorable Dignitaries,
Peace and Love Proclaimers,
Distinguished Guests,
Good evening.**

**Humura Rwanda, abawe bazize Jenoside yakorewe
abatutsi, tubibuka iteka. Tubibuka kandi twiyubaka!**

I am thankful to be here tonight.

And yet, there is a bittersweet quality to these gatherings.

While we are grateful for the light and warmth from the bonfire's flames (IGICANIRO), we are forever reminded, of the darkness and the coldness, that this fire was lit to remedy to.

Today, we commemorate those that we have lost in the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi, but we also celebrate the strength, that survivors and their communities have displayed, as they contributed to rebuilding a Rwanda erected on love, in the midst of healing from the incomparable wounds of hate.

Today, we retrace the path of our existence, which many called unlikely, and claim our truth over what this path entailed;

Today, we reflect on the values to which we owe this Rwanda; a Rwanda that found itself at crossroads, while the world watched, in culpable or indifferent silence, as Rwandans made the promise of our country's survival, of our humanity and dignity's prevalence.

We chose peace.

We chose love.

And today, we proclaim the power of these choices.

Thank you PLP.

Dear Youth, Bana Bacu,

Many of you are too young to recall the skepticism, that weighed upon our backs, when Rwandans made the defiant, yet ever self-loving choice, to revoke hate and embrace unity;

The decision to bend over a nation, that was soiled by the blood spilled from our own;

The decision to plant the seeds of reconciliation, so that its trees could shelter our children.

For some, to speak the truth on the atrocities that we have had to overcome, is to rehash a past, and confront an eternal reality, that they either don't have the capacity, or the willingness to absorb.

And for others, denying our past altogether, is a cowardly escape from guilt over their inaction, or worse: their part in keeping genocide ideology existent, in the more sinister parts of our society, or abroad.

This is a shame!

But our united and harmonious country, is a beaming new moon; and an old saying, that perhaps you might have heard, says that the moon, does not care for howling dogs.

Peaceful cohabitation has been for some, so demanding a task, and for others, so invaluable a blessing, that we cannot center skeptics or racists, in our celebration of our survival.

We can invite them, as the serenity prayer would gently nudge them, to accept the things that they cannot change.

We can pray that they find the courage, to face head on the unbending reality, that the darkness they supported, defended or even designed, lost to the undimmable light from our flame.

The obscurity that they pled for our country to be engulfed in, was conquered by the fire, that burns the refusal to die, even now, into the chests of our people, and those they will engender.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honorable Guests,

Rebuilding is an endless task.

It will require exploits of the spirit, such as engaging in uncomfortable exchanges, and daring to honour the truth - however bitter, however brutal.

But fortunately, I sense courage in the room tonight.

I've seen your willingness to seek answers to painful questions. Be assured, that this quest, although taxing, is a decision that your fellow Rwandan will understand, and perhaps even applaud: to ponder on the source of the inconceivable, is not seeking justification or expecting reason.

No!

- One chooses to ponder,
- One chooses to reflect, and if brave enough,
- One chooses to remember,

Because by recognizing a threat, by learning its designs, one can neutralize its future.

This is the cost of Never Again.

At times, **dear guests**, to commit to Never Again, will require that you claim accountability for allowing our diverse, colorful facets, to be distorted into divisions - divisions from which grew abysses, that we allowed to be filled with hate, ignorance or apathy.

If the task ahead seems sizeable, it is because it is.

And yet, I see no reason why you, the youth that has bred wonderful initiatives, such as the one that has gathered us today, should fail.

For one, you have done a commendable job at tackling this task so far. And secondly, you are not alone.

Peace and Love Proclaimers, United Youth,

Your country loves you back.

To the Survivors,

Beyond the love that every Rwandan that loves Rwanda has for you, there is gratefulness, gratefulness that you were not ripped from us, that I hope you can feel in this room this evening, and every day beyond.

You are the faces of resilience. You are a story of courage that we will never allow to be silenced.

It is that very courage, that has inspired many of you to keep the mantel of the good fight alive.

Dear Youth, Dear Rwandans,

Your efforts are seen.

Many of you choose to use your voice daily, to speak on the progress that you have seen good governance offer us all, progress which compelled you to contribute to this sometimes heavy, but always rewarding, pursuit of healing; this quest for an equally dignified status for every Rwandan, for every African, for every human.

You have found the certitude within yourself, that the good choice, the honourable choice, is not to be argued, or weighted. Even though you do not engage, in comparisons or equivalences in pain, you know that there exist, unnegotiable truths and distinctions.

You are the custodians of our history, and we thank you for believing in the bright turn this history would take.

28 years into Rwanda-pessimists awaiting our disgrace, and only designing their own, by fanning the embers of hate to no avail, who would say you were wrong?

To Our Government of National Unity

Survivors,

Heroes acknowledged and unknown,

The politicians we remembered today,

Friends of Rwanda,

Determined Youth,

Peace and Love Proclaimers,

Fellow Rwandans,

Your existence, your contribution, your resilience, are the proof that the poison and cynicism of naysayers are inconsequential.

You have understood, that though harvesting forgiveness can be tough, never will it bear sour fruits. You testify to the fact, that if you sweep bitterness from the street that you and your neighbours walk, one day it will lead your children to success.

I must also applaud our communities, initiatives such as this one, and beyond Rwanda, the AEGIS trust, for choosing to honour our shared humanity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Those watching in this room, this country, or outside of it:

We only have one Rwanda, and this Rwanda belongs to all Rwandans. I hope that those battling trauma, sadness or even the detractors, and every Rwandan in between, can ask ourselves these enlightening questions:

What other choice did we ever have?

- **Who could condemn, a government that replaced a discriminatory leadership, with one of national unity.**
- **Who could condemn, a government that employed restorative justice, over revenge?**
 - **One that repatriated its people used as a shield by genocidaires?**
 - **One that abolished the death penalty, and the quota system, giving access to basic rights for all Rwandans?**

The list is not exhaustive.

We must maintain unwavering faith, in our choices to stay together, be accountable, and think big.

Indeed.

Progress and survival are the fate we will always pursue, to the dismay of our healing's critiques.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On our 28th commemoration, we ask from detractors, the decency to stop the noise, enflaming the sorrow of our people. It is high time, that we are allowed to grieve our lost unapologetically.

Do we not deserve, to mourn the 10,000 that were killed every day, for one hundred consecutive days, in peace and dignity?

We must reject any shame for defending our dignity.

I wish for better for Rwanda.

I pray for better for humanity.

May we all be our sisters and brothers' keepers for this Kwibuka 28.