From an American living in peace, a definition of justice would be lacking. Ask a Holocaust survivor how he defines the word. Ask someone from Rwanda; ask someone from Bosnia, or Cambodia. Take a chance with a Syrian refugee and ask for his definition, as well. Ask a survivor how they define the word justice, how they picture the scale that measures it. Maybe the miles they have crossed, the people they have lost, the blood they have seen, maybe the self-right they have had to question, and the life they have watched made cheap, maybe those terrors reciprocated would define justice. But maybe not. Maybe life in prison is enough to give the millions that have died in any of these genocides peace. Maybe hanging can substitute a gas chamber or rape. Over six million Jews were stripped, tortured, and killed during the Holocaust (1939-1945), yet only twenty-two Nazi leaders were convicted of war crimes through the Nuremberg Trials. During the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, up to a million people were murdered because of their tribal ancestry. Meticulous Rwandan prosecutors were sentenced death in Rwanda's *gacaca* courts, however, in 2007, Rwanda abolished its death penalty, making the only punishment to match the face of 250,000 raped women a lifetime in prison. These are only statistics. The numbers that are being added have names and families; they have hobbies and bad habits. If one studies the statistics of genocide and then proceeds to explore the lives that make up these digits, one will discover that although it is rightfully sought, justice cannot be found after genocide.

In order to attain the true definition of justice one must experience the atrocities of genocide. The closest one can get to the mindset of a Holocaust survivor is through her words. Eva Galler is one of the 3.5 million Jews that survived the Holocaust. Eva Galler was raised in a religious Jewish household in Oleszyce, Poland. At a time when most girls did not receive a secondary education, Galler starved herself, coercing her family to send her to high school. When Germany and Russia divided Poland, Galler watched her life crumble like a nightmare. As soon as her father lost his business, Galler wrote a letter to Stalin. Her demanding request for a better life granted her a job as an assessor at a local revenue office. Soon, Jews were forced to
wear labels revealing their faith, they were forbidden from walking on sidewalks, and they were compelled into deceitful labor and prostitution. Eva alone kept her job, a gift until another was done training. Eventually, Eva lost her job, too. Next, the Jews of Oleszyce were dragged to the center of the square. SS soldiers snickered as they burned down the prized possessions of the most discriminated religion in Europe. Everyone watched as all the synagogues in Oleszyce, the Torahs inside, and the hearts of the Jews went up in smoke. Eva couldn't bear it; flames reflected in the eyes of the crowd, dismal and weary, with only vague ideas of what was to come. The ghettos came next, and then the train. When word spread that the train was going to a crematorium, Eva's parents ordered her and her siblings to jump. As they fled, bullets flew from to the roof of the cart; she was the only one who made it. Eva traveled to Sweden, learned multiple languages, and adapted to the ways of a poor farm girl. She worked until the end of the war. Years later, when Eva immigrated to America, she spoke German, Polish, Yiddish, Hebrew, Swedish, and Russian. Eva's story is one out of millions. Most stories don't end with immigration; they end with death (Holocaust Survivors).

The Nuremberg Trials were a series of lawsuits held in Nuremberg, Germany, organized to bring justice to the Nazi war criminals who ruined lives like that of Eva Galler. Indictments were categorized into crimes against humanity, war crimes, crimes against peace, and crimes alleged in other counts. All but three of the men convicted were found guilty. Twelve were sentenced death, leaving the rest with prison sentences ranging from ten years to life behind bars. Ten convicts were executed in 1946, but Hitler, the monster behind Nazism and World War II, was not one of them. Adolf Hitler chose to commit suicide at the end of the war. According to Rochus Misch, a member of Hitler's elite bodyguard unit, "Hitler had asked his doctor, 'What is the best way [to kill myself]?' Professor Haase explained to him, 'Capsule and shooting; that is the best way'" (Adolf Hitler Commits Suicide in His Underground Bunker). Hitler's second in command and designated successor, Hermann Göring, also committed suicide the night before his execution with a cyanide capsule. One may argue that the Nuremberg Trials found efficient peace after the Holocaust, but all peace had already died in gas chambers designed by men who were given the privilege of ending their lives the best way. Justice is finding fair punishment for one's actions, but Hitler and the defendants were not in any way punished like Eva. They were hanged immediately, while the Jews suffered for years. They were sentenced alone, while the Jews were forced to watch their loved ones in despair. Would it have been right to put the war criminals in concentration camps to find true justice? No, and that is why true justice cannot be achieved after genocide.
About 6,052 miles South of Nuremberg, Germany, Valentina Iribagiza has a different story to tell. Valentina was thirteen years old when she witnessed the genocide in Rwanda. After Rwanda's Hutu President was assassinated in 1994, all reign belonged to the Hutu extremist majority. Blaming the death of their president on the Tutsis, Hutus embarked on a "Final Solution": to kill the "inferior," the "cockroaches," the Tutsis. After a massacre in Kabgayi's local market place, Valentina and her family took refuge in their local church. Barbarous Hutus attacked the church the same night. Valentina watched as her mom, dad, and sixteen-year-old brother were killed by machetes. The Hutu murderers were old friends, classmates' fathers, and parents' colleagues. Even the mayor took part in the extermination of all Tutsis. In order to survive, Valentina had to withstand the chopping off of half her hand and two machete slashes behind her head. She had to fake her death as she heard pregnant women pleading for mercy and babies crying for their parents. Valentina had to lay back and watch as kids had their heads smacked against one another until the blood came gushing out with their lives. Finally, dogs arrived to feed off the dead because the killers couldn't anymore. Valentina hid in the church for forty-three days until help arrived. Only luck and courage spared Valentina's life through the Rwandan genocide and separated her from the others who did not make it (Fergal Keane).

Immediately after the UN interference and the surrender of the Hutu savages, word of justice scattered about Rwanda. Although the country's judicial system had been torn apart and most lawyers and judges were killed during the genocide, the Rwandan government embarked on an ambitious journey towards righteousness. The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) was established by the United Nations Security Council on November 8, 1994. Four years later, twenty-two people were executed. The rest of the criminals were sentenced time in jail after the Rwandan government abolished its death penalty. Twenty-two people executed for a genocide that killed over 800,000. The large number of Hutu killers caused the Rwandan court to divide the remaining suspects among local Gacaca courts. The Mayor who attacked Valentina's church induced a 294-page verdict stating the evidence of his merciless rape and unyielding death list; he was sentenced life in prison (US Holocaust Memorial Museum). Although Hutu extremists were punished, justice never prevailed in Rwanda. Justice in Rwanda could not prevail because the atrocious Kabgayi mayor still has eight happy children living in America, while Valentina suffers from seeing his shadows in horrific nightmares. Justice could not prevail in Rwanda, and justice cannot be achieved after genocide, because there is not a sentence or an execution that could justify the fact that Valentina will never have a family, she will never have a healthy hand, and she will never forget the loss of humanity in her oppressors' eyes.
In conclusion, justice cannot be achieved after genocide. Justice will only prevail when the mind of the oppressed has been put to peace. By reading Eva Galler's story, one finds that she still has nightmares. One finds that her life is still vacant and that she is unconsciously overprotective towards her kids. Valentina Iribagiza lives with a mutated hand, blackened by poison; the visions never leave her head. These people have not found peace; they have only found acceptance. Justice for Eva and Valentina had been sought in the Nuremberg Trials and the Gacaca courts, but real, permanent justice could only be found globally. Justice is NOT inflicting punishment on war criminals to equate their wrongdoings, it is not treating oppressors like the oppressed, and it is not creating a war with the past. Justice is allowing Eva and Valentina to live their lives knowing that the terrors and atrocities they experienced will never happen again. It is preventing the future from genocide and finding world peace. It is saving Syria now, interfering with the religiously affiliated killings in Central African Republic, and accepting refugees from all across the world. Justice is realizing that killing is no sport, that life is no game, and that people are more than their religion or ethnicity. Humans are not numbers, and justice is not a sentence. Let us stop searching for justice in court, and instead, let us search for justice and peace in people. From an American, a definition of justice would be lacking, but knowing the definition of peace is enough.

Works Cited


