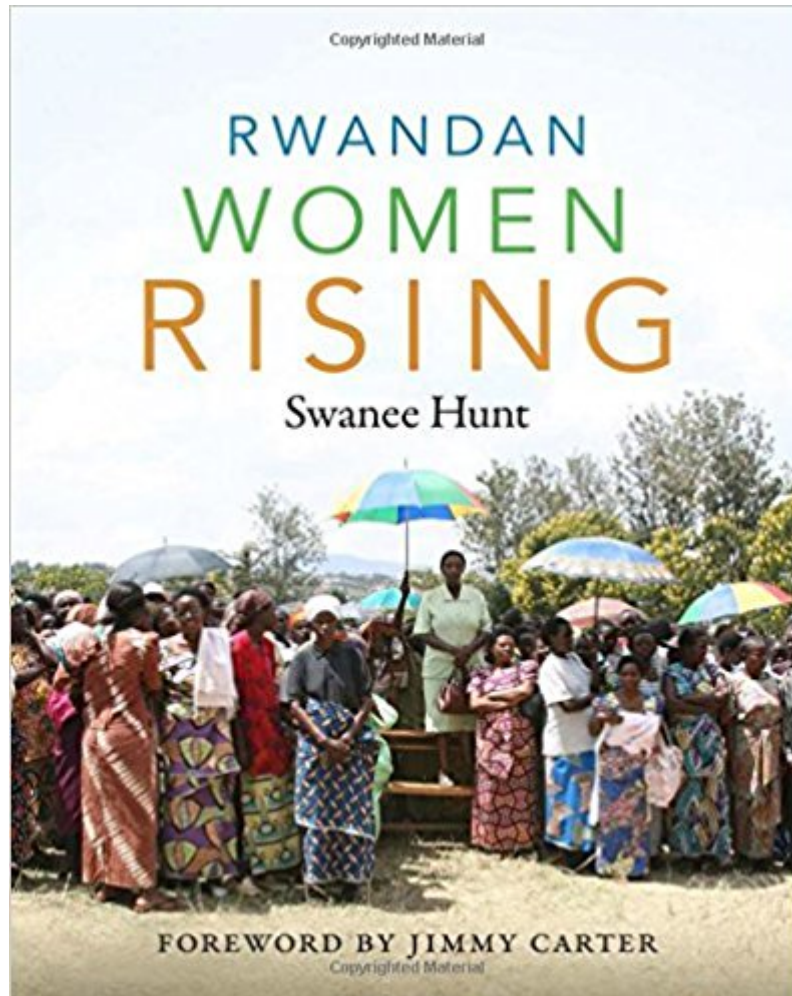




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Rwandan Women Rising



Synopsis

In the spring of 1994, the tiny African nation of Rwanda was ripped apart by a genocide that left nearly a million dead. Neighbors attacked neighbors. Family members turned against their own. After the violence subsided, Rwanda's women—drawn by the necessity of protecting their families—carved out unlikely new roles for themselves as visionary pioneers creating stability and reconciliation in genocide's wake. Today, 64 percent of the seats in Rwanda's elected house of Parliament are held by women, a number unrivaled by any other nation. While news of the Rwandan genocide reached all corners of the globe, the nation's recovery and the key role of women are less well known. In *Rwandan Women Rising*, Swanee Hunt shares the stories of some seventy women—heralded activists and unsung heroes alike—who overcame unfathomable brutality, unrecoverable loss, and unending challenges to rebuild Rwandan society. Hunt, who has worked with women leaders in sixty countries for over two decades, points out that Rwandan women did not seek the limelight or set out to build a movement; rather, they organized around common problems such as health care, housing, and poverty to serve the greater good. Their victories were usually in groups and wide ranging, addressing issues such as rape, equality in marriage, female entrepreneurship, reproductive rights, education for girls, and mental health. These women's accomplishments provide important lessons for policy makers and activists who are working toward equality elsewhere in Africa and other postconflict societies. Their stories, told in their own words via interviews woven throughout the book, demonstrate that the best way to reduce suffering and to prevent and end conflicts is to elevate the status of women throughout the world.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“As Director of the Africa Bureau of the United Nations Development Program, I had the sad experience of visiting Rwanda after the genocide. Women with families torn apart bore their suffering with strength as they organized to be the catalyst for their country’s renewal. Today, 64 percent of Rwanda’s Parliament are women, and they provide exceptional leadership in regional institutions. For a dozen years, Swanee Hunt and I have been finding ways to raise the voices of women in my country. Rwandan Women Rising is a new guidebook for a journey toward justice, a journey beyond Liberia that holds the promise of global change, empowering women to create a more secure world for us all.” (Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, President of Liberia)

“Ambassador Swanee Hunt is a remarkable, passionate, and courageous public servant for our country and the world. Her commitment to women’s rights, human rights, and human dignity is unsurpassed. In this timely new book, Rwandan Women Rising, Hunt uncovers lessons about how courageous women helped to rebuild a nation shattered by genocide. These are human stories worthy of our attention and admiration.” (Ambassador Nicholas Burns, Harvard professor, former U.S. Under Secretary of State)

“In these pages we hear the heartbeat of [Rwandan] society. We listen to the mothers. We hear from politicians and businesswomen. We watch those running the local reconciliation courts that were at the grassroots of society. We follow their halting advances at the helm in hamlets and in the capital. We explore how Rwanda has become the standard-bearer in female political representation . . . Since I came to know Swanee Hunt in the early 90s, we’ve crossed paths on different continents and across decades as we’ve worked together on free elections, against corruption, toward independent media, and for decent health conditions. . . . Over the years, I have taken pride in watching Swanee fight for recognition of the fact that true security must be inclusive.” (President Jimmy Carter, from the Foreword)

“This is an extremely valuable contribution to the understanding of peacemaking and peace building. It is a powerful account by Rwandan women who rose to reform their nation’s society and government. They tell of their struggles, achievements, and still unfinished agendas. Ambassador Hunt draws on her extensive research and experience to provide a thoughtful analysis of women’s roles in conflict and reconciliation, with lessons well beyond Rwanda. This book is a work of love for Swanee Hunt, who for decades has befriended, encouraged, and supported these women and others like them who have stood up to violence and

advocated for peace. (Princeton Lyman, Senior Advisor to the President of the US Institute of Peace)"This is an excellent book! It is an honest, authentic, and thoughtful representation of how Rwandan women experienced the narratives of their lives and country. Swanee Hunt's unique voice and experience show how the story of one nation becomes meaningful and applicable to the rest of the world. This is a page-turner and an essential read for anybody interested in social change and women's rights beyond Rwanda." (Zainab Salbi, Founder of Women for Women International, author, and media personality)"This is an important book on a gripping topic...." (Jane Haile New York Journal of Books 2017-05-25)"There's no doubt that the stories in Rwandan Women Rising carry lessons about the importance of fostering and maintaining women's leadership to achieve "enduring stability and meaningful reunification in conflict-ridden societies across the globe." (Kathleen B. Jones Los Angeles Review of Books 2017-07-26)

Swanee Hunt chairs the Washington-based Institute for Inclusive Security. During her tenure as U.S. ambassador to Austria (1993-1997), she hosted negotiations and symposia focused on securing peace in the neighboring Balkan states. She is the Eleanor Roosevelt Lecturer in Public Policy at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government, CEO of Hunt Alternatives, and a member of the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations. She has appeared on CNN, MSNBC, Fox News, and NPR and written for Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy, the International Herald Tribune, Chicago Tribune, Los Angeles Times, and Boston Globe, among other publications. She is the author of *Worlds Apart: Bosnian Lessons for Global Security*, *Half-Life of a Zealot*, and *This Was Not Our War: Bosnian Women Reclaiming the Peace*, all also published by Duke University Press. Jimmy Carter was the thirty-ninth president of the United States. A Nobel Prize laureate and author of numerous books, President Carter is the founder of The Carter Center, which has worked for decades to resolve conflict, promote democracy, protect human rights, and prevent disease around the globe.

I met Swanee in Rwanda 17 years ago at the beginning of this project, (even before she knew this was a project) and visited her home in Cambridge in the middle of the writing process a few years ago. Her capacious dining room table was strewn with Swanee and Laura's cursive hieroglyphs, half written chapters and dog-eared reference materials. It was the frenzy before the insight, and the insight was that these Rwandan women, who lived through the genocide and persevered through the rebirthing of a nation, possessed the values of tolerance, self determination and bravery, which

are essential to sustain any nation; and they are eloquent about those values. I look at the book now, the project at the end of a consummate process, (Laura is a lovely, bare-knuckled brawler of a researcher) and surmise that it takes a writer of Swanee's stature and restraint (personal grace) to get out of the way, and allow that eloquence to shape future generations. Michael Fairbanks

Just finished the book- brilliant -an extraordinary example and context for all you have worked toward. Amazing to be so fortunate to have such a template for all women in all countries who are facing destabilized societies. Fabulous and inspiring read and wonderfully written.. They must be over the moon in Rwanda about this book. Talk about affirmation! Every woman will read it and if illiterate will hear about it and learn to read just to be able to do so- all over the country!

This book is a fascinating read, and incredibly important for everyone to learn from. I honestly couldn't put this book down once I started reading it and learned a lot about an incredible community of inspiring women. Highly recommend that you add this to your reading list for an extra dose of inspiration, especially as we move about this wild world.

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