

Reflection after speaking with Gisenyi Genocide Survivors 7-17-17:

When teaching history my students often ask me: "Is this true?". This question elicits my laughing response. "Of course," I scoff, "this is History class, what else would I be teaching you?" However, now that I've heard so many stories related by the survivors and witnesses of the Rwandan Genocide I believe I will change my attitude about this question. In preparing for the Genocide against the Tutsi the Rwandan government focused on altering history. They did this in order to indoctrinate the hate and separation of the people. When Rwandan students asked their history teachers, "is this true?" the educators probably had the same response as me: "of course!" they would say with a dismissive wave of the hand, "This is history class, what else would I be teaching you?"

How then should I alter my response? I often assume that all teachers are like me, and would never intentionally spread divisive lies or hateful histories. Students should be able to trust their teachers.

However, it is also my responsibility to prepare my students for a world they may not be able to trust. These young questioners need skills to pursue their own truth. Which of course brings up the ultimate unnerving quandary: What is truth if we each have our own version?

- How am I supposed to teach History in a post-truth society?

So, I suppose by writing I have drawn myself into an entirely new question. This is one I know I will struggle with ceaselessly. While I work thought it I will attempt to support my student's seemingly inane, but deeply resonant question; "Is this true?"