

# Dept of Social Science – Job Talk

Criminology & International Development Studies

## Dr. Yolande Bouka

Date:  
Tuesday,  
March 05

Times:  
Research  
10:00 am  
– 11:30 am

Teaching  
2:00 pm  
– 3:30 pm

Location:  
701 Ross  
South

All sessions will be  
open to faculty &  
students.

Light refreshments  
will be provided.

### "I am Half the Man I Use to Be": The Personal Politics of Post-Genocide Justice and Incarceration



Gacaca Court, Rwanda. Photo: New York Times



Prison, Rwanda. Photo: Reuters

**Abstract:** Following the civil war and genocide in Rwanda, one of the most comprehensive transitional justice projects to date was put into place. The Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), having defeated the previous Hutu regime and its militias, created a legal framework that sought to hold criminally accountable all ordinary citizens who participated in the genocide. Although the evidence suggests that while victimhood was concentrated on the Tutsi, it was not confined to them. Nevertheless, while the post-conflict legal system aggressively punished narrowly defined genocide crimes committed by Hutu, it suppressed the reporting and prosecution of other serious crimes often committed by the current regime before, during, and after the genocide against members of that group. Between 1996 and 2012, the government prosecuted over a million of Hutu suspected of genocide crimes against the Tutsi.

An investigation of transitional justice from the perspective of the accused perpetrators who journeyed through the legal system suggests that former detainees were forced to take on simplistic identities that highlighted their criminality and eschewed their victimhood and other identities they held following their release. In this talk, I will walk the audience through the full judicial experience and reintegration of released prisoners of the genocide. Based on ethnographic fieldwork and thematic interviews of 66 released prisoners of the genocide and some of their family members, this talk offers an analysis of the transformative impact of victor's justice on ordinary Rwandans in the aftermath of mass violence and their prospects for reconciliation.

*Dr. Yolanda Bouka received her PhD (American University, 2013) in International Relations. Her dissertation, entitled 'In the Shadow of Prison: Power, Identity and Transitional Justice in Post Genocide Rwanda', passed with distinction and was nominated for APCG-Lynne Rienner best Dissertation award. Dr. Bouka's expertise is in the areas of conflict and development, gender and security studies, post conflict politics, and identity politics and transnational Justice. Upon completion of her PhD she worked at the Institute for Security Studies, Conflict Prevention and Risk Analysis in East Africa and served as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Denver. Dr. Bouka is currently a visiting Assistant Professor at the Elliott School of International affairs at George Washington University.*