Prevention through Education:
 A Journey of Witnessing to Rwanda and Ethiopia’s Sites of Conscience.
Article by Amy Fagin
Seminar Instructor; Scholar and Director of Beyond Genocide
in Partnership with Rutgers University
Center for the Study of Genocide and Human Rights

The Emerging Scholars Travel Seminar has returned from Rwanda and Ethiopia with a profoundly augmented and authentic understanding of genocide and its aftermath in these two African countries. The directives of the seminar were to develop a professional degree of knowledge in the fields of memory studies; museum studies and genocide studies with a comparative analysis of the political histories and legacies of mass atrocity in both nations. We began our journey with our arrival in Kigali with the important first stop at the Kigali Memorial Center. This AEGIS Trust funded memorial site serves as a truly international institution and symbol of the recovery, reconciliation, memorialization and commemoration of the victims of the “Rwandan Genocide against the Tutsi”. Politics aside, this somber and beautifully designed memorial site conveys an emotional truth behind “Kwibuka: Remember; Unite; Renew”. Our guide delivered our small delegation to several nationally supported memorial sites scattered around the west and south of the country, including: Nyamata; Ntarama; Bisesero; Murambi; and Nyange memorials. Each location reflected a grim tale of the voluminous massacres perpetrated throughout this tiny country. The suffering and death toll was palpable through the empathic conveyance of the sites’ guides, structures and graves. Our sessions and conversations with the hard working KMC staff; CNLG director and organizers of “Kwibuka20” gave our delegation a full experience in the real-politic of Rwanda, 20 years after the atrocities.

Our journey through the exotic landscape of Ethiopia was infused with deeply courteous and generous professional support and orchestrated programming with liaisons from the Red Terror Museum; the African Union’s Human Rights Memorial Project; the Red Terror Survivors Group as well as Inter Africa Group and their work in early warning relay’s and gender based population studies. With the Red Terror Era now 40 years in the past, the country’s survivors are dwindling and the nation has moved forward with a generation now lost to history. Its questionable the commitment that the current government has in promoting a directive of a thorough understanding and integration of the atrocities of this era into the official narrative of Ethiopia’s recent history as is told to its population. However, our liaisons provided us with a clear picture of the government’s hand in the contest of strength it wields in controlling the narrative of Ethiopia’s past atrocities and its legacy and impact, or lack thereof, on current politics and democratic institutions.

In conclusion, the goals of the Emerging Scholars Travel Seminar in Genocide Studies is designed to provide a global platform for education which is directed at building internationally relevant critical analytic skills, problem solving skills, historical understanding within the context of educational travel locations, authentic cultural sensitivity and a global perspective on the nature of genocide and mass atrocity in post conflict societies where reconciliation, commemoration and rebuilding trust, peace and healthy communities is in process.