

**PAUL RUSESABAGINA**  
***REAL-LIFE HERO, HOTEL RWANDA***

Ten years ago, as the country of Rwanda descended into madness, one man made a promise to protect the family he loved – and ended up finding the courage to save over 1200 people. Over the course of 100 days, almost one million people were killed in Rwanda. *Hotel Rwanda*, nominated for three Academy Awards, tells the inspiring story of real-life hero Paul Rusesabagina, who is portrayed in the film by Don Cheadle, a hotel manager in Rwanda who used his courage to shelter over a thousand refugees from certain death.

His autobiography, *An Ordinary Man*, was published on the 12<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide in 2006. A moving story, it delves into Rusesabagina’s personal journey while explaining the history behind Rwanda’s Hutu and Tutsi tribes within the historical context of the conflict.

His story fast becoming a part of history, Rusesabagina has traveled the world with his message of hope, peace, and “never again.” He has founded the Hotel Rwanda Rusesabagina Foundation (HRRF) which provides support, care, and assistance to children orphaned by, and women abused during, the genocide in Rwanda. Lauded by many, he is the recipient of numerous prestigious awards, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the National Civil Rights Museum Freedom Award, and the Peace Abbey Courage of Conscience Award. Rusesabagina, whose journey from hotel manager to humanitarian has been life-changing has said, “I’ve become a humanitarian and I never thought I would become one. And, as a humanitarian, I wanted to take this message on a wider scale, to raise awareness of what happened in my country so that the international community can help others who suffer now.”

Rusesabagina was born June 15, 1954, at Murama-Gitarama in the Central-South of Rwanda; his parents were farmers. In 1962, he entered the SDA (Seventh Day Adventist) College of Gitwe, a Missionary School, and was there for seven years of primary school and six years of secondary studies.

From 1975 to 1978, Rusesabagina attended the Faculty of Theology in Cameroon and, in January 1979, was employed by Sabena as a front office manager in their newly opened Hotel Akagera in the Akagera National Park. It was at this time he learned about the Tourism, Hotel, and Catering Industry.

Through The Suisse Tourist Consult, Rusesabagina's application was accepted for entrance into the Kenya Utalii College in Nairobi in the Hotel Management Course, which he started in early 1980 and finished in September 1984 in Switzerland.

Back from Switzerland, Rusesabagina joined Sabena Hotels again and was employed as assistant general manager in the Mille Collines Hotel from October 1984 until November 1992, at which time he was promoted to general manager of the Diplome Hotel (also in Kigali).

For the 100 days of the genocide, Rusesabagina had to move back to the Mille Collines Hotel. His colleague Bik, manager of that unit, left Kigali on April 11, 1994, despite the number of refugees still left on their own. It was the next morning, when the government (Interim Government) left Kigali for Gitarama. Rusesabagina was there for almost the entire span of the genocide.

When the massacre slightly calmed down, in July 1994, Bik came back and joined his unit, and Rusesabagina went back to the Diplomate Hotel where he stayed until September 1996, after which he went to Belgium as a refugee. From that time to date, Rusesabagina has worked as a businessman and owns a transport company. For more information please visit [www.apbspeakers.com](http://www.apbspeakers.com).

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