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Mellon Foundation Area and International Studies Fellowships for Incoming Graduate Students
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The Mellon Incoming Graduate Student Award, offered by the Institute for Regional and International Studies, enabled me to conduct research in Canada during summer 2018. This fieldwork was an essential component of my dissertation on narrative practices, attitudes, and processes of socialization among people of Rwandan heritage living outside of Rwanda, in which I am exploring how those in the Diaspora commemorate the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi (a.k.a the Rwandan Genocide) by discursively positioning themselves in agreement with or in opposition to Rwanda's national narrative, as well as how they may socialize others, particularly those not physically present for the genocide, into telling similar narratives.

With the help of the award, I spent two months this summer, visiting Rwandan Diasporic communities in Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa. While there, I observed and audio-recorded meetings of and commemorative events sponsored by Rwandan Community Abroad, including the Rwandan Christian Convention (Toronto) and the Celebration of the Twenty-Fourth Anniversary of Liberation Day and the Fifty-Sixth Anniversary of Independence Day (Ottawa).

In addition, I also conducted ethnographic interviews with group members. In Toronto alone, I interviewed ten people, ranging in age, gender, and birthplace, with the expectation of further interviews to be conducted via Skype or upon my return to each city for their commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in April 2019.

Already, I am transcribing the conversations I audio-recorded and examining them alongside each other, as well as next to speeches and testimony presented at commemorative events and other narratives that the speakers reference, work which has already been put to use in my dissertation proposal, which I successfully defended in August 2018.

Thus, the fieldwork I conducted with the help of the Mellon Incoming Graduate Student Award has been invaluable to the development and refinement of my dissertation topic, and I am all the more grateful for the generous support provided by the Institute for Regional and International Studies.