

FROM RWANDA TO THE RUNWAY

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It is a fact that the European myth of beauty and attractiveness caused the genocide in Rwanda between the Hutu and Tutsi tribes. The 1995 genocide that took place in Rwanda, in East-Central Africa, was precipitated by European antagonists who created a mythology surrounding physical characteristics. Although Europeans didn't explicitly say to the Hutus and Tutsis to murder each other, English explorer John Henning Speke articulated the European point of view, when he stated that:

*The tall, elegant people with Caucasian features migrated from Ethiopia and are descended from King David. The shorter people with flat noses are Negroid and come from the South. The tall ones have 5,000 years of civilization in their blood, the short ones, a timeless history of backwardness.*¹

The tall, elegant people represent the Tutsis, and the short, backward people symbolize Hutus. This mythologizing of people led to the tragic genocide of one group over another, perpetuated by a European, racist attitude resulting from mythological, superstitious behavior. The European suggestion of the Tutsi superiority because of their high cheekbones, narrow noses and thin lips, as a symbol of European beauty and attractiveness, exacerbated an already fragile relationship between the Hutus and Tutsis causing the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people.

That European mythology is the same dynamic that informs today's global fashion industry where the myth of color superiority and so-called European facial features are the rule of the day. Black models are underrepresented in runway modeling, resulting in friction between models with so-called European features and models with so-called Negroid features. (We must understand that the term Negroid was created by white anthropologists who were describing the beautiful facial features of sub-Saharan Africans.)

It is true that Black Africans come in all colors and all facial structures and features. What has to be understood is that the global fashion industry's penchant for a European structure of beauty and attractiveness is caused by symbolism and its resulting mythology and superstition. This dynamic causes a symbolic-behaving people to automatically mythologize the models based on their physical characteristics. People who mythologize others are behaving symbolically - this symbolism has caused enormous harm to the psyche of people throughout the universe. Indeed, this event of symbolism in the human psyche has caused conflict and destruction throughout the world.

The above is further explored in my book, ***The Golden Apple: Changing the Structure of Civilization*** (Africa World Press). http://www.amazon.com/Golden-Apple-Changing-Structure-Civilization/dp/1592215890/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1244864419&sr=1-2.

¹ Excerpted from Edgar J. Ridley, ***The Golden Apple: Changing the Structure of Civilization*** (Africa World Press) 2008.