

# African Studies Initiative

## *reframing* mass violence in AFRICA *social memory & social justice*

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### **They Say, We Say: Representation of Congo (DRC) Conflict and Rapes**

Understanding conflicts and rapes in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) is no easy task because the conflicts have been referred to as civil wars and the location where the rapes and conflicts take place described as another lieu, the Great Lakes. DRC rapes and conflicts are also oftentimes conflated with the Rwandan genocide, which frequently elides the violence, the cruelty of the rapes and naturalizes them. The humanity of the Congolese people and of the various crises are themselves often obliterated by the ethnological and ecological discourses framing the events and the people described in a primal Conradian vision that ascribes, overtly and covertly, these tendencies to irrational, unmanly Congolese behavior and culture. The international discourse obfuscates and collectivizes the rapes as a Congolese phenomenon and implies that they are encouraged by Congolese culture and Codes of Family Law. In fact, many local rapes are individual acts or gratifications sanctioned by superiors, and many are committed by external factions. Fortunately, counter-discourses to such representations of conflicts and rapes have emerged from both Congolese and international academic publications, films, and novels and the popular sites of resistance Facebook and WhatsApp. But, to move into the future, the marked bodies of Congolese women must also be rewritten and named womanhood.

### **Keynote Address**

**April 13, 2018  
3:15 p.m.**

**120 Elmer L. Andersen Library  
University of Minnesota**

*\* Refreshments will be served.*

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