

Black Earth Rising (2018)



The American Michael and British-raised Rwandan orphan Kate seek to find who is behind the killing of her adoptive Brit mother. (c)

NetflixWriter/director Hugo Blick's suspenseful eight-part political thriller is set in the aftermath of the horrible Rwandan genocide of the 90s. Despite the "Lest we forget" mantra of society, genocides have continued in Asia and in Africa, and in Europe, in the Balkans. Blick's story focuses upon Kate Ashby (Michaela Coel) whose Tutsi family was slaughtered over 30 years earlier. Rescued and raised in the UK by Eve Ashby (Harriet Walter), an international prosecutor for the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Kate herself has become an investigator for a divorced American working as a barrister in the UK, Michael Ennis (John Goodman).

Kate is upset when her mother agrees to prosecute for war crimes Simon Nyamoya ([Danny Sapani](#)), a Rwandan general-turned-mercenary. The man is reputed to have saved many Tutsis by ending the genocide, so why is her adoptive mother agreeing to prosecute him as a war criminal? Kate angrily blurts out, "He's a Rwandan Tutsi who helped stop the genocide! ... It's like the Second World War is over, and we're Jewish, and suddenly you've decided to prosecute Gen. Eisenhower because

he tried to stop Hitler.”

The mother-daughter breach comes to an abrupt end when violence erupts during the trial and Kate becomes entwined with the events swirling around the assassination and events back in Rwanda. Kate works with Michael to research her mother’s unfinished case, both of them come under surveillance and attacks. Events jump from England to Europe to Africa, with enough intrigue and suspense to keep one hitting the “Next Episode” button despite the lateness of the hour.

The complicated plot depicts rebel campaigns in the Democratic Republic of Congo, conflict-free mineral rights and court tribunals at The Hague. Kate presents the African viewpoint when she complains, “It’s as if the Western world and Europe just assume that ‘down there, genocide, war crimes, that’s just what they do to each other.’”

Among the intriguing characters that turn up are:

- Rwandan general Alice Munezero ([Noma Dumezweni](#)), an old friend of Michael’s who, upon coming to France is arrested and accused of murdering a French priest in Africa during the genocide.

- Bibi Mundanzi (Abena Ayivor), the popular third-term [president of Rwanda](#), and adoptive sister of Alice Munezero

- David Runihura ([Lucian Msamati](#)), special advisor to the Rwandan president Alice Munezero.

- [Hugo Blake \(Gaines Blick](#), also creator of this series), the unscrupulous defense barrister and rival of Ennis who is hired to defend Patrice Ganimana.

- Eunice Clayton ([Tamara Tunie](#)), US [Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs](#).

- And many more.

Europeans and Americans, who largely ignored the 1994 genocide do not come off well. An estimated 800,000 people slaughtered during a 100-day, but because none of them were Americans or Europeans, little was done to stop the murders. And France especially comes under scrutiny and is even accused of covering up its involvement in the horrendous events. At times there was almost too much happening to too many characters for me to comprehend, but there was never a boring moment. For those who like their intrigue on an international stage this is a "must see" series that you will long remember. It is one more example of Netflix's offering us film fare that ranges far beyond our shores.

No questions for this review.