

NOTES FOR TEACHERS



Information

FAQ

Who are the Tutsi, Hutu and Twa?

Traditionally Rwanda has had 3 groups of inhabitants; the minority Twa who are hunters, the Hutus, traditionally farmers and the Tutsi, traditionally cattle keepers. Historically, the difference between the three groups was occupation. They shared language, other cultural norms and shared the same King who was traditionally a Tutsi.

Do these three groups socially interact?

Tutsi, Hutu and Twa intermarried over the years, they fought together to stop the slave trade, and there was social mobility between the groups of people moving ranks. Farmers could become cattle keepers and so mingled with / assimilated into the Tutsis.

So how are the Tutsi, Hutu and Twa different?

The main distinction between the three groups was socio-economic until the Belgian rulers introduced identity cards, which in effect set in motion a policy of divide and rule that lasted until 1994. The labelling of people as Tutsi, Hutu and Twa reduced flexible social interactions and caused high tension amongst Rwandans. As a result Hutus resented Tutsis. At independence the Belgian colonisers, who had previously supported the Tutsi ruling class, switched sides to support the majority Hutus, who then took power after independence. This caused resentment from Tutsis who felt betrayed by the Belgians.

What was life like for Tutsis in Rwanda before 1994?

There were violent attacks on Tutsis during the 1959 revolution in Rwanda, and in again in 1962 and 1973. Many thousands of Tutsis feared for their lives and were forced to live in exile as refugees in Uganda, Tanzania and other countries. Life was hard and they were denied the right to return as citizens to their own mother country. They took up arms leading to international community recognition of the refugee crisis. The Rwanda Patriotic Front, made up of Tutsi exiles in Uganda emerged.

What are the Arusha Accords?

The Arusha Accords, signed in August 1993 by the Rwandan Government and the Rwandan Patriotic Front were designed to bring an end to the civil war which had been going on in Rwanda since 1990. They recognised the right of refugees living in exile to return to Rwanda and integrate into Rwandan society. The Accords were unpopular with Hutu extremists who plotted to kill all Tutsis to disrupt the Peace Accords.

Why did the genocide happen in 1994?

The spark for genocide was the plane crash which killed President Habyarimana on April 6th 1994. It is still not clear who shot down the plane, some believe it was Hutu extremists concerned that the president was about to hand over the country to Tutsis, but others have different theories.

Whoever shot down the plane, clear evidence has come to light since the attack which shows that a systematic plan to exterminate the Tutsis in Rwanda had been in place long before the President's death. Lists of names were produced and the killings began on April 7th.

Did the West know the genocide was being planned?

The UNAMIR (United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda) Commander in Rwanda General Romeo Dallaire, sent warnings to the United Nations with evidence of planned massacres, but Rwanda was insignificant and not worth anyone's response. (To find out more about how the West betrayed Rwanda, see books by Linda Melvern.)

Ten Belgian peacekeepers were killed and the West withdrew its troops. Any response was delayed by France which was a good friend of the Rwandan government.

What role did the Media play in the genocide?

In Rwanda, the media was controlled by the government; the state owned radio and television broadcasters, Mille Collines was used to poison peoples' minds against Tutsis, and before and during the genocide instructed Hutus how to kill Tutsis with machetes, clubs etc. Outside Rwanda, the international media fell prey to the Rwandan government's trick of downplaying the genocide as merely a tribal war.

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(FAQ continued)

How important were identity cards before and during the genocide?

All Rwandan citizens had to have an identity card, and like birth certificates they isolated Tutsis making it easy to target them. All identity card details were kept on a central database which made it easy for Hutu extremists to compile lists of those to be killed.

Who was in charge of killings?

Interahamwe (a Kinyarwanda word meaning 'those who attack together'), militia trained and armed and the Rwandan Army. Meticulous plans were made and then carried out as the genocide took place.

Why did so many ordinary people get involved in the killings?

For outsiders it is difficult to comprehend how and why neighbour turned against neighbour in Rwanda. Yet Rwandans had undergone years of indoctrination and hate messages, they feared reprisals from the government who exploited the historical myth that Tutsis were coming to grab land and enslave the population. Rwandans generally

had a very low level of education, and many listened to Rwandan radio where the hate messages were broadcast with no access to any other angle or opinion. Many people also killed because of hate.

What did the religious organisations in Rwanda do?

80% of Rwandans are Catholic, and there is also a strong Protestant presence in the country. The church played a mixed role in the genocide, but worst of all it remained silent. It was the second biggest organisation after the state and was very powerful yet it did not condemn the killings or killers. Churches became sites of mass murders. However, some religious leaders were victims as well.

What did other African countries do during the genocide?

Most did little although they had been involved in enforcing Peace Accords. But notably Ghana retained its troops (250 men) in Rwanda under the command of General Dallaire after the rest of the United Nations Peacekeepers left. Other African countries sheltered refugees.

Weren't the killings in Rwanda in 1994 simply part of an ongoing tribal conflict?

Contrary to the belief of many at the time, the killings in Rwanda in fact constituted a well planned genocide which sought extermination of Tutsis in Rwanda through use of propaganda, legal isolation and economic persecution. Trained armed gangs drew up lists of those who were to be exterminated, and anyone who stood in their way was also to be killed.

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Selected Bibliography

Linda Melvern: *Conspiracy to Murder— The Rwandan Genocide and the International Community* (2004)

Linda Melvern: *A People Betrayed— The role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide* (2001)

Fergal Keane: *Season of Blood: A Rwanda Journey* (1996)

Philip Gourevitch: *We Wish To Inform You That Tomorrow We Will Be Killed With Our Families—Stories From Rwanda* (1998)

Gerald Prunier: *The Rwanda Crisis—History of a Genocide* (1995)

Samantha Power: *A Problem From Hell: America And The Age of Genocide* (2003)

See also articles by African Rights at www.africanrights.org

For information on the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, please go to www.icttr.org

For further reading go to: www.survivors-fund.org.uk/history/index.htm

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Information

Linking SURF's Materials to the Citizenship Curriculum

Area of Citizenship Curriculum	Topic Covering Curriculum Area
Knowledge and Understanding About Becoming Informed Citizens	
Pupils should be taught about:	
1a) The legal and human rights and responsibilities underpinning society, and how they relate to citizens.	Life Before Genocide 100 Days of Genocide Responses to Genocide Life for Survivors
1g) The importance of a free press and the media's role in society.	Life Before Genocide
1i) The world as a global community, and the political, economic, environmental and social implications of this, and the role of the European Union, the Commonwealth and the United Nations.	Responses to Genocide Life for Survivors
The Importance of Resolving Conflict Fairly	Life for Survivors
Developing Skills of Enquiry and Communication	
Pupils should be taught to:	
2a) Research a topical political, spiritual, moral, social or cultural issue.	Life Before Genocide 100 Days of Genocide Life for Survivors
2b) Express, justify and defend orally and in writing a personal opinion about such issues, problems or events.	All topics
2c) Contribute to group and exploratory class discussions and take part in formal debates	All topics
Developing Skills of Participation and Responsible Action	
Pupils should be taught to:	
3a) Use their imagination to consider other people's experiences and be able to think about, express, explain and critically evaluate views that are not their own.	All topics