

Historical Context: The Rwandan Genocide



On April 6, 1994, **Hutus** began slaughtering the **Tutsis** in Rwanda, Africa. As the brutal Genocide took place, the world stood idle and watched the massacre take place. The Rwandan Genocide, also known as the genocide against the Tutsi, lasted 100 days and the brutal, barbaric mass killings left approximately 800,000 Rwandans dead.

Who Are the Hutu and Tutsi?



The Hutu and Tutsi are two peoples in Africa who share a common past (i.e., language, religion, beliefs, etc.). When Rwanda was first settled, the people who lived in the region raised livestock; the people who owned the most cattle were called "Tutsi" and everyone else was called "Hutu." The Tutsi were the minority upper class and the Hutu majority, were generally considered to be lower class; however, social mobility was possible. If a Hutu acquired more than 10 cattle or received a dowry of cattle through marriage, they could easily change categories and become a Tutsi.

What Impact Did Colonialism Have on the Hutu and Tutsi?

German's colonized Rwanda in 1894. Upon their arrival, they began to make ethnic distinctions between the three groups: The Hutu, the Tutsi and the Twa (a small group of hunter-gatherers who also live in Rwanda). The German's favored the Tutsi because they felt that they embodied more European features and characteristics such as lighter skin, lighter eyes, longer noses and a thinner and taller physique. Because of this, German rulers gave special status to Tutsis. They put Tutsis in roles of responsibility and authority because they deemed them superior to Hutus.

What Happened Next?

After World War I, Germans lost their colonial holdings and Belgium was given control over Rwanda in 1919. Under Belgian rule the divide between the Hutu and Tutsi widened because they created a strict system of class distinctions based on Eugenics- a science that places more value on those with "desirable" traits. In line with this practice, the Belgians mandated that every Rwandan carry an identification card which labeled them Hutu, Tutsi or Twa in 1933. Although the Tutsi only made up about ten percent of Rwanda's population and the Hutu consisted of nearly 85 percent, the Belgians also gave all of the leadership positions to the Tutsi. This inequitable distribution of power angered the Hutu.

How did the Tutsi Treat the Hutu?

Tutsi leadership mirrored Belgian leadership. Tutsi leaders discriminated against the Hutu. They denied the Hutu opportunities to obtain higher education and positions in government. Hutus were expected to carry out the hard physical work on plantations and in mines. And they were often treated harshly by Tutsi supervisors. Many of the Twa, who were considered the lowest class, migrated into the forests to avoid Belgian rule and discrimination.

How Did Hutu's Gain the Upper-Hand?

By the 1950s, the Hutus were tired of being treated as second-class citizens who were inferior to both the Belgian's and Tutsis. Additionally, opposition to Belgian rule was growing amongst the Tutsi who wanted to govern themselves. This did not sit well with Belgians because Rwandan Independence would mean loss of vital resources and revenue streamed from the colony. To maintain power and avoid being pushed out, Belgian's decided to reverse the roles and status' of the two groups. They gradually gave Hutu's more power and demoted the Tutsi. This ultimately resulted in a Hutu led government, after hundreds of years of Tutsi domination and rule. In 1961, a series of rebellions, coupled with anti-colonial sentiment, resulted in Belgium granting Rwanda independence. Tension and enmity (animosity) between the Hutu and Tutsi would continue for decades to come.

Key Facts, Thoughts & Questions



Rwandan Genocide



The Hutu and Tutsi... Let's Fast Forward To 1994!

At 8:30 p.m. on April 6, 1994, President Juvénal Habyarimana of Rwanda was returning from a summit in Tanzania when a missile shot down his plane over Kigali, Rwanda. Everyone on board was killed. Under Habyarimana's totalitarian regime, Hutu's excluded Tutsi's from power. However in August of 2003, the Hutu strong-hold weakened when he signed the Arusha Accords, which allowed Tutsi's to participate in government. This concession angered Hutu extremists. Within hours of the Presidents plane crash, Hutu extremists claimed control of the government. They blamed the Tutsis for the assassination of Habyarimana. The Presidential Guard, along with members of the Rwandan armed forces (FAR) and Hutu militia groups set up road blocks and barricades and began to slaughter Tutsis. This marked the beginning of the systematic mass killing and slaughter of Tutsis and moderate Hutu in Rwanda.

The killings began in Rwanda's capital city of Kigali then rapidly spread to the rest of the country. Over a period of 100 days (3 months) approximately 800,000 men, women and children were brutally tortured and murdered. Along with the Rwandan armed forces (FAR), Hutu militia groups like the *Interahamwe* ("those who strike as one") and *Impuzamugambi* ("Those Who Have the Same Goal"), hunted and gathered Tutsi day and night. They checked government mandated identification cards and killed anyone who was Tutsi. Since the government kept records of the names and addresses of almost all of the Tutsis living in Rwanda, death squads went door-to-door slaughtering Tutsi by the scores. Because ammunition was expensive, most Tutsi were killed with machetes, knives and clubs.

During this period, the government, newspapers and government-sponsored radio stations like RTLM vigorously called for Hutu civilians to "crush the cockroaches" and to "cut down the tall trees," a code for killing the Tutsi. Neighbors killed neighbors and some Hutu husbands even killed their Tutsi wives. Thousands of Tutsi tried to flee persecution by hiding in churches, hospitals, offices and schools, but there was no refuge or sanctuary from the violence. Hutu killers massacred their victims anywhere, including places of traditional asylum such as churches. In addition to the daily purging of Tutsi, thousands of woman and girls were violated, raped and mutilated before being killed. To further degrade the Tutsi, the Hutu desecrated their dead bodies by allowing them to rot where they lay; bloated and decaying corpses piled up into large mounds all across the region. Eventually the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a trained military group comprised of Tutsis, was able to enter Rwanda and slowly claim control of the country. Their advances finally ended the Genocide in mid July of 1994.

Hindsight is 20/20: Why Didn't the International Community Intervene?

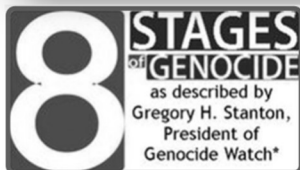
The U.S. government, under President Clinton, chose not to intervene in the Rwandan genocide of 1994. The administration did not view the violence as "Genocide" and therefore had no mandate to send forces. The United Nations did have a small presence in Rwanda at the time of the genocide which was headed by Romeo Dallaire (head of UNAMIR – United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda); however, The UN did not send enough troops to the region and Dallaire's forces were only authorized to provide humanitarian assistance and to evacuate foreigners, not to take military action. Ten Belgian troops were among the first victims of the Hutu Militia, and the murder of these soldiers prompted many countries to get their own citizens out of Rwanda. In 1999 an independent enquiry as to why the international community did not step in to prevent the genocide concluded that countries, either did not have the resources to intervene or they didn't have the political will and/or motivation to do so.



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Let's Apply What You Learned!



Vocabulary: The legal definition of genocide is contained in the 1948 Genocide convention. In simple terms, **GENOCIDE** is the intentional, collective destruction of an entire human group based on national, racial, religious or ethnic identity.



Directions: Evaluate the chart and note the stages of Genocide then place one example of each stage from the reading in the correct box below.

CLASSIFICATION 	POLARIZATION 
DEHUMANIZATION 	PREPARATION 
DEHUMANIZATION 	EXTERMINATION 
ORGANIZATION 	DENIAL 



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Guided Reading Questions

Directions: Answer the following questions based on the text. Use academic language AND complete sentences when writing your answers.



1. Based on the text, *The Rwandan Genocide*, why did the German's and Belgian's favor the Tutsi when they colonized Rwanda?
2. How did the Belgians promote enmity between Hutu and Tutsi through their policies of indirect rule.
3. At the end of WWI, how did the Belgian government differentiate Hutu's from Tutsis? Why was this necessary?
4. How did the Hutu gain power in Rwanda?
5. What was the cause and effect of the Rwandan Genocide in 1994?
6. How did Hutu Extremist use propaganda to forward their pogrom in Rwanda?
7. What was most shocking to you regarding the Genocide in Rwanda? Why?
8. Why should we study Genocide?