**CHY4U Unit 4, Activity 2 - Rwandan History**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Facts | Connections to Unit 3/4 Themes\* |
| Hutus and Tutsis, the main groups, shared a common ancestor, spoke Kinyarwandan, had shared customs and culture. They even came together politically under one king in the middle ages.  |  |
| Tutsi (14% of the population) came to be known as those who owned cattle (and were more wealthy because of it). They formed the monarchy and social elite. These advantages were passed down from generation to generation. Hutu worked the land – they were 85% of the population. Twa (the common ancestor group) were a servant and worker sub-class. These were primarily class differences, not ethnic, at this point. |  |
| Rwanda was part of German East Africa in the late 1800s as a result of the Berlin Conference. European colonial powers were interested in the “ethnic” differences between Hutu and Tutsi. They saw the Tutsi as being superior because of their tall and thin stature and their thinner lips. From this they thought Tutsi to be intellectually superior as well. One colonial leader even said the Tutsi were descended from Ethiopian Christians who had migrated southwards with their cattle.  |  |
| As such, the Europeans turned to the Tutsi to fill the positions of authority once they actually colonized the region. The Belgians, who first came to Rwanda in 1916, basically instituted a caste system. Hutu were kept out of higher education until after World War Two. Belgium had been given a mandate to rule this part of Central Africa by the League of Nations. |  |
| After independence in the 1962, the Hutu took power and reversed the trends. Tutsi were killed because of their previous privileged position. Many Tutsi fled the country (for Uganda and Burundi) and created a rebel movement.  |  |
| Meanwhile, many foreigners were running the universities, especially Quebec Catholic priests. They supported the Hutu over the Tutsi. Hutu began to call Tutsi *inyenzi*, meaning cockroach. The Hutu Power movement grew. In the 1980s and 1990s government leaders spread anti-Tutsi propaganda throughout the country. The radio became a very powerful tool for this. It was a government-licensed radio station that took the lead.  |  |
| In 1990 the rebel movement invaded Rwanda. The government and rebels fought. Meanwhile, government supporters arranged death squads, stockpiled weapons and recruited new members. They went out to the countryside to start Operation Extermination against the *inyenzi* (Tutsi).  |  |
| It is said that over centuries the Rwandans had developed “a system of blind obedience to authority.” The radio and rap-hate music were used to spread the message to people waiting for orders.  |  |
| Under the watch of UN peacekeepers, a genocide took place in 1994. Hutu death squads killed between 500 000 and one million people: women, children, men, almost any Tutsi found to be alive. Since it was difficult to import arms into the country, machetes were stockpiled and used to kill victims.  |  |
| Two million Hutu refugees escaped to Zaire following the genocide. 150 000 to 250 000 were still there in the re-named Democratic Republic of Congo as of 2017. Their presence greatly affected the stability of the country, leading to clashes with Tutsis who already lived there, overthrow of the government, civil war and famine.  |  |
| The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda was established to prosecute those responsible for genocide. Shutting down in 2015, it managed 93 prosecutions out of which it got 63 convictions.  |  |

\*Decolonization, imperialism, nationalism, terrorism, technology, refugee crisis, international organizations, genocide.

OTHER THEMES:

Sources:

Carol Off, The Lion, the Fox and the Eagle. A Story of Generals and Justice in Rwanda and Yugoslavia. Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2001. 12-20; BBC, Rwanda Profile – Timeline, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-14093322> ; UN, UN Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals, N.d., <http://unictr.unmict.org/en/genocide>