

12.13 One Hundred Days of Genocide in Rwanda (1994)

Source: Singer, A. *Social Studies for Secondary Schools* (NY: Routledge, 2008), p. 5.

Instructions: Read the story of Jacqueline Murekatete’s survival during the Rwandan genocide, locate Rwanda on a map of Africa, and answer the questions at the end of the story. You can learn more about the Rwandan genocide from the website <http://www.miraclecorners.org> and from the movies *Hotel Rwanda* (2004) and *Sometimes in April* (2005). As a follow-up project you can (a) write a report on the causes, events, and impact of the Rwandan genocide; (b) write a “daily journal” of the Rwandan genocide from the perspective of the teenager modeled on the story of Jacqueline Murekatete; or (c) create a “current events from the past” portfolio based on twenty contemporary newspaper or magazine stories about the Rwandan genocide.

Jacqueline Murekatete’s Survival Story

I spent most of the 100 days of genocide at the orphanage. Each day we had more kids arrive whose parents had been killed and it grew very crowded. Some of the children had hands or arms cut off by the killers. Sometimes parents dropped off their children for safety and then they would try to find a place to hide from the Hutus. There were many instances where I witnessed Tutsi men and women being dragged to their deaths by the killers as they tried to climb the fences of the orphanage. In the orphanage, little children cried every night for their parents. We did not have enough food in the orphanage and many children died from malnutrition or diseases that spread because of the overcrowding. It got to the point that the priests built a cemetery inside the orphanage. Every day or so we all went to the cemetery, the priests would say a prayer, and they would bury a child. It became almost like a daily routine. I was fortunate to never get really sick. Every night, I prayed that the whole thing would be over soon and then I would go back home and see my family.

Hutu soldiers, who were trying to escape, came to the orphanage and told the Italian priests that they were going to finish the job and exterminate all the Tutsis, including the children and babies. They herded us into the cafeteria and made us sing their victory songs. Soldiers walked up the aisle in the middle of the cafeteria pointing guns at us and pushed around the priests. The children cried and we thought, “They are going to kill us.” But the priests convinced them we could do them no harm and offered them money to leave us. I was almost ten years old when all of this happened. I do not know how I managed to escape the killers in the several instances when I came face to face with them. I believe that God was responsible for my safety.

Questions

1. How old was Jacqueline Murekatete when the Rwandan genocide took place?
2. What horrors did she witness?
3. How was she able to survive?
4. In your opinion, should the United States or an international military force have actively intervened to prevent the Rwandan genocide? Explain.