

# ETHNIC COOPERATION and COMPETITION in RWANDA



## EARLY RWANDA

Rwanda has been home to the Twa pygmies for hundreds of years. Another group also migrated there long ago – the Hutu.

The **Twa lived in the forest and hunted** for their food. The **Hutu were farmers**. This made it easy for the Twa and Hutu to get along. They didn't have much contact with each other.

But many years later, **a new group conquered the area – the Tutsi**. Even though the Tutsi people were only about 15% of the population, their king ruled the area. The Hutu kept farming and

the Twa kept living in the forest and hunting. The Tutsi raised cattle, which made them richer than the Hutu farmers or the Twa forest hunters.

So Tutsi people held the most power. But the **Tutsis and Hutus** also married each other and **become very similar**. They soon shared the same language, religions, and extended family systems. Some Hutu became wealthy and were accepted as Tutsi. So while the Hutus and Tutsis had a different history, they were becoming one group.

## EUROPEAN INVADERS

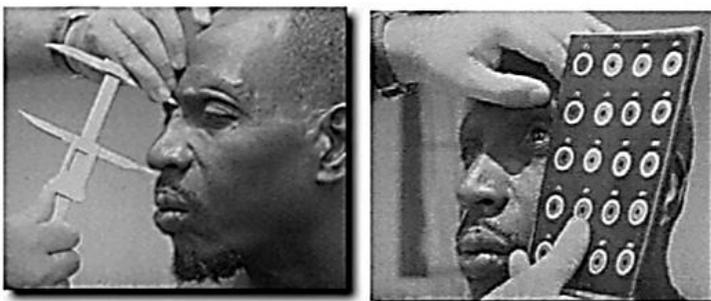


By the mid-1800s, European countries had taken over most of Africa. In 1884, leaders from European countries met to divide up Africa. Different European countries got control of different parts of Africa. A little European country called Belgium ended up controlling Rwanda.



The Belgians decided to officially label each person by ethnic group: Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa. The Twa were very short, lived in the forest, and had a very different culture from the other two groups. So it was easy to decide who was Twa. But dividing the Tutsi and Hutu was a little harder.

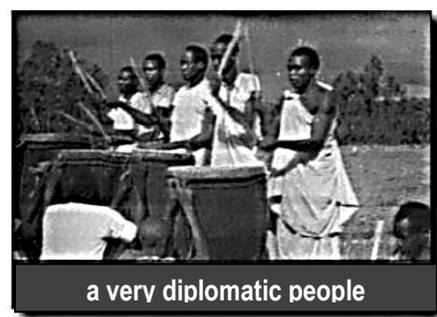
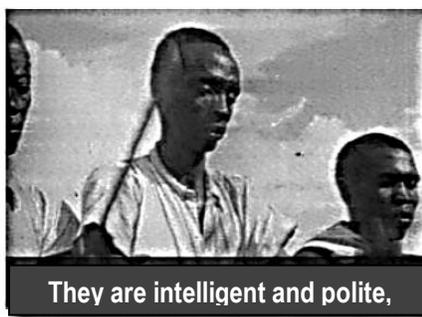
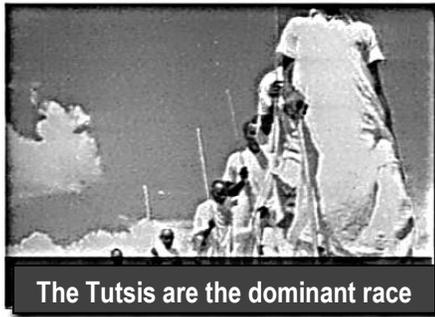
The Belgians thought that the Tutsi were a higher class because their faces were a more "white" looking. This is because many Tutsi had long thin noses and their eyes were a little lighter than Hutu eyes.



It got very hard for the Belgian officials to measure eye color and face shapes. Therefore, the Belgians ended up saying that anyone with more than 10 cows or with a long nose was officially a Tutsi.

The white Belgians believed that the Tutsi were natural rulers, so they put only Tutsis in charge and discriminated against

Hutus and Twa. Each person in Rwanda was forced to carry an identity card telling his or her ethnic group.



The pictures are from an old film made by the Belgian government about the people of Rwanda.

Photos: Amnesty International Film *Forsaken Cries*, 1997

## BELGIAN RULERS TRY TO KEEP CONTROL

The Hutus were about 85% of Rwanda's population. But the Belgian rulers did not allow them to go to college, own land, or work in the government. By the 1950s, they were sick of it. This did not surprise the Belgian rulers.

But there was a surprise coming. The Tutsis, who had more power than Hutus, were also getting angry. They were tired of being ruled by the white Belgians. They wanted to be independent. The Tutsi started working to push Belgium out.

The Belgians didn't want to lose control. Some Belgian rulers came up with the idea of getting help from the Hutus. They decided to start giving the Hutus more power. They thought maybe the Hutu would help them keep power over Rwanda if they treated the Hutu better. Of course, this just upset the Tutsis more.

## INDEPENDENCE and HUTU RULE

In 1959, a violent struggle began in Rwanda. The Hutu people took control from the Tutsi leaders. But the Hutus also threw out the white Belgian rulers. Then the Hutu declared an independent country and elected the first Hutu president ever. This was a dangerous time for the Tutsi people in Rwanda. Thousands of people – mainly Tutsi – were killed and about 150,000 Tutsi people had to leave Rwanda and became refugees.



The new Hutu leaders decided to limit Tutsi enrollment in schools and colleges, and also limited how many could work for the government. The Hutu government told people that Hutu-Tutsi marriages were a bad idea, but they never made mixed ethnic marriages illegal. The identity cards started by the Belgians were still required.

There was violence off and on in the 1970s and 1980s. Tutsi people sometimes got more rights, but then lost them. Sometimes Tutsis protested the way they were treated, but many just left the country to stay safe.

Tensions between the Tutsis and Hutus never really went away. But most of this time, Rwanda was fairly peaceful. They exported coffee and tea, and their economy was growing. But in the late 1980s, coffee and tea prices around the world dropped. Rwanda's economy got worse, and people became worried about day-to-day life. Prices inside the country went up, but there were fewer jobs.

## EARLY WARNING SIGNS

Many **Tutsi refugees** still wanted to return to Rwanda, but the Rwanda government said "no." According to the government, Rwanda was too small and did not have enough jobs for so many people. The Tutsis would have to stay out.

This made many Tutsi refugees angry, because Rwanda was their homeland. In October of 1990, **Tutsi refugees** invaded Rwanda. They invaded again in 1993. The invaders killed innocent Hutu civilians, as well as Hutu soldiers. This made many Rwandans afraid of them. Hutu soldiers also killed innocent Tutsi civilians. The Tutsi refugee fighters lost, and the Hutus of Rwanda were determined to keep them out forever.

Inside Rwanda, the tension between the Hutus and Tutsis got worse and worse. **Hutu leaders** organized youth groups, encouraging them to hate Tutsis. Hutu leaders trained and gave weapons to Hutus who agreed to help kill Tutsis. They made lists of people who were to be murdered, and gave copies of these lists to many Hutus.

Information about this started leaking out. The **United Nations** commander in Rwanda, General Romeo Dallaire, heard that a massacre of Tutsis was planned. Gen. Dallaire immediately sent a message to the United Nations that the situation was very dangerous for Rwanda. But U.N. leaders decided to ignore the possibility of genocide. They had only a small force of soldiers in Rwanda, and did not send more.

**Hutu radio stations** broadcast messages of hate, encouraging Hutus to kill Tutsis and anyone else who got in their way. The most powerful hate media was the private radio station, Radio Television Libre des Mille Collines, started in 1993. This radio station called the Tutsis evil cockroaches, sneaky snakes, and rats. They said the goal of the Tutsis was to take back power in Rwanda and go back to the days when Tutsis mistreated the Hutu people. This made the Hutu people afraid.

**By April, 1994**, tensions were running high between Rwanda's Hutus and Tutsis. On April 6, the plane of Rwanda's Hutu president was shot down and he was killed. This Hutu president had been trying to work with Tutsi leaders to keep peace in the country and to give rights to all people. It is possible that Hutu extremists may have killed their own president to keep him from signing peace agreements with the Tutsi.

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## Hutu Ten Commandments

as published in *Kangura* magazine, No. 6 (December 1990)

1. Every Hutu must know that all **Tutsi women** are working for the Tutsi ethnic cause. Therefore, any Hutu is a **traitor** who marries a Tutsi, sleeps with a Tutsi woman, or hires a Tutsi secretary or employee.
2. Every Hutu must know that our **Hutu daughters are more worthy and more honorable** as women, wives and mothers. They are lovely, excellent, and more honest!
3. Hutu women, **watch** and make sure that your **brothers and sons** prefer Hutu women.
4. All Hutus must know that **all Tutsis are dishonest in business**. Their only goal is to control Rwanda. We have learned this from experience. Therefore, any Hutu is a **traitor** who: forms a business partnership with a Tutsi, invests his money in a Tutsi business, or borrows money from or loans money to a Tutsi
5. Important positions in **politics, economics, and military** must be given only to the Hutu.
6. A Hutu majority must be in charge of the **educational system**.
7. Only Hutu must be allowed in the Rwandan army. No soldier may **marry** a Tutsi woman.
8. Hutu must **stop taking pity** on the Tutsi.

9. Hutu must **stand united** and concerned about their Hutu brothers.

Hutu must constantly explain why **Tutsi ideas are wrong**.

Hutu must stand firm against their **common enemy: the Tutsi**.

10. The Social Revolution of 1959, the Referendum of 1961 and the Hutu Ideology must be **taught to Hutu of every age**. Any Hutu who criticizes his brother Hutu for spreading and teaching this is **a traitor**.

## The GENOCIDE

Within hours after the president's plane was shot down, the country burst into violence. Governments around the world ignored what was happening. The **Hutu leaders** did not want the United Nations soldiers there, so they killed 10 U.N. soldiers hoping to scare the United Nations into leaving. It partly worked, because the **United Nations** pulled out half of their soldiers. No country sent help. No country sent people to save victims.

Once the murders started, the **radio station** that had already called the Tutsi people cockroaches, snakes, and rats started reading over the air the names and addresses of Tutsi citizens – and told Hutu people to go kill them. **Tutsi leaders** tried to convince the United States and European countries to jam the radio station's broadcast signal to stop this information. But no country tried to do it.



photos of victims at one of the memorials in Rwanda

[http://hotelivory.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/rwanda\\_genocide\\_\\_357361artw.jpg](http://hotelivory.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/rwanda_genocide__357361artw.jpg)

Every day for over three months, Tutsis – and anyone who tried to protect Tutsis – were hunted, tortured, and killed. They were killed in the streets, in their homes, in churches, and in schools. Hutu soldiers were not the only ones doing this. Many of the killers were **regular Hutu people** picked up machetes and guns and killed their Tutsi neighbors.

By the end of the murders, almost one million Tutsis and moderate Hutus had lost their lives. Three-fourths of the Tutsis in Rwanda were dead.

**What does it mean that a million people were killed?** Think of the population of Oklahoma City and

its suburbs (about 1,200,00), or of the population of Tulsa and its suburbs (around 950,000). Imagine the entire population of Oklahoma City or of Tulsa being murdered over a period of three months – not by bombs or machine guns but by garden tools, kitchen knives, and machetes. That's what happened in the tiny country of Rwanda.

The genocide finally ended when Tutsi refugee troops overpowered the Hutu military.

Adapted from The Genocide Teaching Project lesson plan designed by American University Washington College of Law students Sarah Hymowitz and Amelia Parker,

<http://www.wcl.american.edu/humright/center/rwanda/lesson.cfm>