

CLASSROOM GUIDE FOR

DEFYING GENOCIDE

Produced by the Committee on Conscience of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

■ GETTING STARTED IN THE CLASSROOM

This collection of activities and resources is a companion guide for the 15-minute film *Defying Genocide*. The history of the Holocaust and the 1994 Rwandan genocide illustrate the entire spectrum of human behavior, from unimaginable evil to extraordinary goodness.

Through a study of the Holocaust, Rwanda, and genocide, students learn that genocide occurs because individuals, organizations, and governments make choices to participate, resist, or turn away. Students can also see that at the same time human beings have potential to inflict harm and suffering, they have the potential to rescue and to stand up against evil.

The information in this packet is designed to help learners of grades 7 and up understand the context of the genocide in Rwanda and consider the actions of a few individuals who saved lives.

In addition to background materials, a timeline, a map, and a vocabulary list, the packet provides activities for before and after viewing the film.

■ COURSE OF STUDY

The film, *Defying Genocide*, and these classroom activities are highly recommended for incorporation into a larger course of study. These learning activities would be appropriate for the following courses of study:

- African history
- Current events
- Holocaust and genocide studies
- Human rights
- Social justice
- Western civilization
- World cultures

■ OBJECTIVES

With the help of the film and companion guide, the students will be able to

- Define and identify genocide
- Trace events that took place during the Rwandan genocide and focus on how ethnicity played a role in the process
- Analyze what it takes to be a rescuer when genocide occurs, using the examples of Damas Gisimba, Carl Wilkens, and Simone Weil Lipman
- Learn about the aftermath of genocide and what is taking place in Rwanda today as its citizens work to rebuild their nation
- Explore the choices students have in today's society to respond when genocide threatens

■ NATIONAL STANDARDS FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES

Individuals, Groups, and Institutions (Strand V): Social studies programs include experiences that provide for the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions. Social and political institutions have tremendous impact on individual and group behavior. What factors contribute to individual decisions to be a perpetrator, bystander, or rescuer?

Power, Authority, and Governance (Strand VI): Social studies programs include experiences that provide for the study of how people create and change structures of power, authority, and governance. What role do governmental policies play in inciting and encouraging genocide or in preventing and responding to it?

Civic Ideals and Practices (Strand X): Social studies should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic state. What are the responsibilities of citizens of the United States and of the world community toward others?

■ THE FILM

**Whenever genocide has occurred, individuals have risked their own lives to save others.
How can their courage inspire us to defy genocide?**

The story of how Simone Weil Lipman was able to save thousands of Jewish children during the Holocaust is a starting point for an explanation of what it takes to defy genocide. The film focuses on Damas Gisimba, director of a small orphanage in Rwanda that was besieged by militias during the 1994 genocide. Learn how Gisimba, with the help of American aid worker Carl Wilkens, managed to protect, care for, and save some 400 people.

■ PREPARATION RESOURCES

Before viewing the film, have students read what genocide is, review the timeline of events in Rwanda around the 1994 genocide, and preview the following historical overview and information about ethnicity in Rwanda.

■ WHAT IS GENOCIDE?

Find out what the legal definition of genocide is, who coined the word, and how the world has responded to genocidal situations at <http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/history/>.

■ TIMELINES

Review one of the suggested timelines:

Frontline's *Ghosts of Rwanda*

Timeline: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/etc/cron.html>

BBC News

Timeline: 100 Days of Genocide: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/3580247.stm>

American Radioworks' *Justice on Trial*

Chronology of a genocide: http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/justiceontrial/rwanda_chronology.html

■ HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In April 1994, extremist leaders of Rwanda's Hutu majority launched a campaign of extermination against the country's Tutsi minority. In 100 days, as many as 800,000 people were murdered and hundreds of thousands of women were raped. The genocide ended in July 1994, when the Rwandan Patriotic Front, a Tutsi-led rebel force, pushed the extremists and their genocidal interim government out of the country. For more information, visit <http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/alert/rwanda/>.

■ PREPARATION ACTIVITIES

Have students review the insert "ethnicity in Rwanda" (found at the end of this package of information) and discuss the following questions:

1. What factors influenced how Rwandans viewed their ethnicity?
2. Think about how you define yourself and characteristics that connect you to other people. Are your connections geographical, biological, national, ancestral, or economic?

■ DEBRIEFING RESOURCES

The following series of questions can be used to focus group discussion, guide individual student work (in an essay or reflection piece), or inform student projects such as videos, public service announcements, cartoons, comic books, interactive Web pages, or PowerPoint presentations.

How did students understand the main stories presented in the film?

1. What did Damas Gisimba, Carl Wilkens, and Simone Weil Lipman value, and what risks did they take by holding onto their values?
2. What values did the children of the orphanage demonstrate?
3. As events unfolded, what were Damas Gisimba's concerns?
4. What does it mean—as both Simone Weil Lipman and Damas Gisimba state—to “see the other as yourself”?

What does it take to be a rescuer?

Think back to the incidents that took place during the Rwandan genocide.

1. What is the international community? Are you a part of it?
2. What role did the international community play during the genocide?
3. Does the international community have the responsibility of assisting countries threatened by genocide?
4. What does the community risk when it becomes involved in rescuing people from genocide and what does the community risk when it allows genocidal incidents to escalate?
5. What role can average citizens play in assisting when genocide threatens? How can students get involved and make their voices heard against genocide? (To see some suggestions, visit <http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/alert/students/>.)

Think about challenges you face in your everyday life:

1. Have you ever witnessed an incident in which a bystander took the responsibility of offering assistance to someone in need of help? If so, what took place?
2. When someone needs help, do bystanders have the responsibility to offer assistance? What do bystanders risk when they intervene or when they do not get involved?

Can hatred be banished?

At the end of the film, Damas Gisimba stated that hatred must be “banished” to make the world a peaceful place and that children need a “good education.” Have the class discuss the following:

1. What is “hatred”? When is it dangerous?
2. What are examples of different forms of hatred in the global community?
3. Can hatred be banished? Debate the issue from different perspectives.
4. What would it take to banish hatred?

Do national or international policies exist that could contribute to such a goal?

Whose responsibility is it to work to end hatred or to respond when hatred provokes violence?

How can the average citizen influence national and international policies?

■ RWANDA AND GENOCIDE TODAY

What challenges does Rwanda face today?

For information about the aftermath of the genocide and how it continues to affect Rwandan society, visit the “current situation” section of our Rwanda pages: <http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/alert/rwanda/>.

Where is genocide threatened today?

To learn more about places where genocide threatens today, visit our “Alert” pages: <http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/alert/>.

Can students find stories about people “defying genocide” today?

For news and information about Rwanda, threats of genocide, and other related issues, visit <http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/news/>.

■ ETHNICITY IN RWANDA

Hutu and Tutsi: What’s the Difference?

Rwanda has two major social groups, the Hutu and Tutsi, and one smaller group, the Twa. Approximately 85 percent of the country is Hutu, 14 percent Tutsi, and 1 percent Twa. The labels of Hutu and Tutsi are often referred to as “ethnic” groups, but they actually share characteristics that normally distinguish one ethnic group from another, such as language, music, religion, and art. The group identities as they exist today are largely a product of Belgian colonial rule in the early and mid-20th century.

The Belgians, under the influence of theories about racial superiority that were widely accepted at the time in Europe and North America, believed that the Tutsi and Hutu were separate races. They classified the Tutsi as genetically superior to the Hutu, because they thought the Tutsis’ physical attributes were more European than those of the Hutu, and systematically favored the Tutsi. The Belgians installed a system of identification that tried to fix individual’s ethnic identities, which had previously been more fluid, into one of the two main groups. For example, they introduced a system of identity cards that clearly marked the owner’s ethnicity. Group affiliation became a more important component of individual identity for many Rwandans, and divisions between the groups became more pronounced.

By the 1950s, the notions of racial superiority were discredited, but the idea that the Tutsi and Hutu were fundamentally different from each other persisted. The legacy of colonial rule was an atmosphere of hostility and distrust between the groups, which some leaders manipulated for political purposes. Each time political leaders used violence to achieve their ends, the hostility and the distrust between groups deepened.

To view an example of a Rwandan ID card, visit the photography section of the Committee on Conscience Web site: <http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/photos/>.

You can learn more about the role of racial science in Nazi Germany at the Museum’s online exhibit “Deadly Medicine: Creating the Master Race,” <http://www.ushmm.org/museum/exhibit/online/deadlymedicine/>

For additional information, visit [ushmm.org/conscience/defying-genocide](http://www.ushmm.org/conscience/defying-genocide).

UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

100 Raoul Wallenberg Place, SW | Washington, DC 20024-2126 | Metro: Smithsonian | ushmm.org

COC.196A.PDF