

When Conflict Turns Deadly:
The Rwandan Genocide

Senior Division
Individual Website

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Website Student Words: 1,185 words

In September, I joined the National History Day program at school for the second year. As I began searching for a project topic, I learned about the 1994 Rwandan Genocide, a gruesome episode in history perpetuated by the majority Hutus who murdered nearly one million of the minority Tutsis. I found myself drawn to this topic because of its similarities with the Holocaust and other historical genocides, and because I wanted to better understand why this pattern of atrocities continues to occur.

After I selected my topic, I started to research by ordering books about my topic through interlibrary loan. The book that was most helpful to my project was, *An Ordinary Man*, which gave me an inside into the genocide in Paul Rusesabagina's eyes. I also looked online in newspaper archives and journal archives to learn about the Genocide as well as finding more about Paul Rusesabagina, who saved many by hiding Tutsis in his hotel. In November, I headed to the University of Northern Iowa where I scoured newspapers and journals to obtain quality information about my topic and perspectives concerning it at the time it occurred, as well as to ascertain the United Nations' role in the event. While I was there I found and scanned a copy of a government document titled, *War Crimes*, which gave me insight concerning the United States government after this event. After I finished gathering all of my information, it was time to start creating my project.

I decided to do an individual website because I felt that I could best explain the Rwandan Genocide by arranging pictures, quotes, and information to tell the story of my topic. To prepare, I looked at projects from past history day years to acquaint myself with the scope of the project I was doing. I decided to work alone because I tend to work better by myself as I am confident in

my skill set and my ability to produce a quality exhibit. Additionally, it is easier to plan out my own time then to plan for two or more people.

My topic connects well to this year's National History Day theme, "Conflict and Compromise." After nearly a half century of racial oppression in Rwanda by the colonial ruling class Tutsi minority toward the majority Hutu, the country gained its independence from Belgium in 1962, causing waves of Hutu rebellions to sweep the country, a conflict that was intensified when the 1993 Arusha accords failed to forge an acceptable political compromise between the two groups. In 1994, the turmoil turned deadly when the assassination of Rwanda's president was blamed on Tutsi rebels resulting in a genocide that killed nearly one million Tutsis and created the impetus for an International Criminal Court to prosecute crimes against humanity.