

Documenting Rwanda's Painful Past

Difficulty:

DIFFICULT

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Discussion activities to be done after completing this EA lesson

Today's report is about a program for documentation specialists. What are the specialists documenting? What are they learning in the program? Who is providing the training? Why is this work important?

Extension discussion topics

A. Talking about and going over the specific topic / idea / issue in listening text

Introduction = Who do we hear from in the report, and what do they say? What do we hear about the Shoah Foundation Institute and their work? Where are they carrying out work?

1. Who are the three people we hear from in the report? What type of work do they do? Why are they interviewed? What do they talk about?
 - Yves Kamuronsi: survivor of 1994 Rwandan genocide, heads the documentation center at the Kigali Genocide Memorial Center; interviewed because he and three colleagues are being trained in interviewing techniques; says that the worst part of the genocide is its aftermath, says that sharing with other survivors is an important part of the healing process.
 - Romeo Dallaire: retired Lieutenant General, force commander for the U.N. peacekeeping force in Rwanda at the time of the genocide; says that we all lost our sense of humanity, because we knew the genocide was going on for 100 days and did nothing to stop it.
 - Stephen Smith: executive director of the Shoah Foundation Institute, where Yves Kamuronsi and his colleagues are in training right now; says that it's important to recognize the similarities between different cases of genocide, and that survivors are the ones who know best what genocide looks like, so we should listen to them so that we can recognize the warning signs.
2. What do we learn about the Shoah Foundation Institute?
 - It's located at the University of Southern California.
 - It was started by Steven Spielberg after his movie *Schindler's List* came out.
 - They have collected 52,000 testimonies from Holocaust survivors.
 - They are collecting interviews with genocide survivors from Cambodia and Armenia.
[Note: These interviews include existing ones which need to be transferred to digital storage to ensure their preservation]
 - They are providing training to Yves Karumonsi and his colleagues to help them conduct better interviews and teaching them how to store, preserve and archive the survivors' stories.

B. Expanding on (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

Topic = Cases of genocide.

1. The report mentions the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, and genocide in Cambodia and Rwanda. What do you know about these genocides? Did you learn about them in school? If not, why do you think that is?
2. Are you aware of any other cases of genocide? What do you know about them? (former Yugoslavia; Darfur, Sudan; others?)
3. The term "genocide" is defined as "the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group". (What constitutes enough of a "part" to qualify as genocide has been subject to much debate by legal scholars.)
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocide>. How could this one little word cause debate? What do you imagine the different arguments would be?
4. What do you think makes people want to hurt or kill a whole group of people? Is it part of human nature? Is it a serious problem within a society that makes one group turn against another to this extent? What do you think the role of leaders is in these cases? Can positive leaders prevent such terrible things from happening?

OR, Topic = Kigali Genocide Memorial Center.

Find out all you can about the Kigali Genocide Memorial Center and give an oral presentation of your findings to a partner or to your teacher.
 (You can start here: <http://www.kigalimemorialcentre.org/old/index.html>)

C. Extending discussion of (one of) the topics / ideas / issues in listening text

Topic = Preventing genocide.

In 1996, Gregory Stanton, the president of Genocide Watch, presented a briefing paper called "The 8 Stages of Genocide" at the United States Department of State. The following table gives an overview of the eight stages defined by Stanton, with preventive measures for each stage. (Text and table borrowed from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genocide>)

First, with a partner or in a small group, try to guess what the characteristics and preventive measures might be for each of the eight steps listed. Then compare with the full table. How close did you come to matching the characteristics and preventive measures given by Gregory Stanton?

Stage	Characteristics	Preventive measures
1. Classification	?	?
2. Symbolization		
3. Dehumanization		
4. Organization		
5. Polarization		
6. Preparation		
7. Extermination		
8. Denial		

Stage	Characteristics	Preventive measures
1. Classification	People are divided into "us and them".	"The main preventive measure at this early stage is to develop universalistic institutions that transcend... divisions."
2. Symbolization	"When combined with hatred, symbols may be forced upon unwilling members of pariah groups..."	"To combat symbolization, hate symbols can be legally forbidden as can hate speech."
3. Dehumanization	"One group denies the humanity of the other group. Members of it are equated with animals, vermin, insects or diseases."	"Local and international leaders should condemn the use of hate speech and make it culturally unacceptable. Leaders who incite genocide should be banned from international travel and have their foreign finances frozen."
4. Organization	"Genocide is always organized... Special army units or militias are often trained and armed..."	"The U.N. should impose arms embargoes on governments and citizens of countries involved in genocidal massacres, and create commissions to investigate violations."
5. Polarization	"Hate groups broadcast polarizing propaganda..."	"Prevention may mean security protection for moderate leaders or assistance to human rights groups... Coups d'état by extremists should be opposed by international sanctions."
6. Preparation	"Victims are identified and separated out because of their ethnic or religious identity..."	"At this stage, a Genocide Emergency must be declared. ..."
7. Extermination	"It is "extermination" to the killers because they do not believe their victims to be fully human."	"At this stage, only rapid and overwhelming armed intervention can stop genocide. Real safe areas or refugee escape corridors should be established with heavily armed international protection."
8. Denial	"The perpetrators... deny that they committed any crimes..."	"The response to denial is punishment by an international tribunal or national courts."

Audioscript

Yves Kamuronsi and three of his colleagues have traveled thousands of miles from home to the University of Southern California to learn how to best document and preserve a painful past.

"My elder brother and my parents were both killed."

Kamuronsi was only 13 when the Rwandan genocide occurred. He said the worst part of the experience is the aftermath.

"First of all you ask questions like why that happened, then why [did] that [happen] to you and your family. But at the same time you get to ask yourself why you are alone. For example, when you start going to school you find [it] difficult because no parents."*

For Kamuronsi, talking about his experience and sharing it with other survivors helps.

"It's important because you get to learn the experience of others. And at some point you may feel that you're a lucky survivor because you may see that some others has experienced [more] horrible things than you did.** So I think sharing stories, it's a part of the healing process."

Kamuronsi now heads the documentation center at the Kigali Genocide Memorial Center in Rwanda. He has videotaped and interviewed other survivors of the genocide. He says since 2004, his team has collected 200 interviews.

"There are more than 300,000 survivors, but the difficult question is that: 'Are they ready to start talking?'"

For many survivors it is still too soon.

"The Rwandan genocide was 17 years ago, but for me it was this morning. It's still that vivid."

Retired Lieutenant General Romeo Dallaire was the force commander of the U.N. peacekeeping force during the Rwandan genocide. He says it is important for survivors to tell their stories so the suffering caused by the brutality of their attackers is not lost to the rest of the world.

"The rest of the world also lost its sense of humanity because it let that slaughter happen. We saw it in the media, we heard about it, it was going on for 100 days and we did nothing."

The Shoah Foundation Institute at the University of Southern California has been collaborating with the Rwandan team collecting the survivor interviews. Established in 1994 by movie director Steven Spielberg after his movie *Schindler's List*, the Shoah Foundation Institute collected 52,000 testimonies of the survivors of the Holocaust.

Now, the institute is training Kamuronsi and his colleagues to better conduct interviews, and how to store, preserve and archive the survivors' stories.*** The institute also is collecting video testimonies of the survivors of the genocides in Cambodia and Armenia.

Executive director of the institute, Stephen Smith, says while each case is different, "But we absolutely need to be able to compare the causes and the consequences of genocide. If we know what happened and we understand the pattern and the similarities, it gives us that early warning, and nobody knows better than the victims what happens in a situation of genocide, so their voices are a warning for our future."

The survivor stories from Rwanda and other countries will be sent to computer servers in California and then distributed to 34 universities and museums around the world, where the voices of the survivors can be heard.

Elizabeth Lee for VOA News, Los Angeles.

* The speaker should say: *"But at the same time you **start** to ask yourself why you are alone. For example, when you start going to school you find it difficult because **you have** no parents."*

** The speaker should say: *"At some point you may feel that you're a lucky survivor because you may see that others **have** experienced **more** horrible things than you did."*

*** The speaker should say: *"Now, the institute is training Kamuronsi and his colleagues to better conduct interviews, and **teaching them** how to store, preserve and archive the survivors' stories."*