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A Horror of the Holocaust Example

As a fourteen-year-old, killing is never on your mind. The only thing you think of is a happy life, going to school, and becoming someone someday (Nishimwe 153). This is a quote from Consolee Nishimwe, a survivor of the 1994 Rwandan Genocide. Jack Beaudoin defines genocide as The systematic killing of a social, political, cultural, or religious group (11). The most well-known genocide is the Holocaust which occurred from 1941-1945. Although the Holocaust is the most well-known, there have been hundreds that came before and after it. Some examples you've probably heard of are the Armenian Genocide where at least 50% of Armenians in Turkey were killed, the Rwandan Genocide, the Cambodian Genocide, and the Ukrainian Genocide where almost 10% of Ukraine's population died. In this essay, I will be talking about the two most known genocides; the Holocaust and the Rwandan Genocide.

The Holocaust occurred from 1941 to 1945, just shortly after World War II had started. Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Holocaust, was elected as chancellor in 1933. Shortly after he was elected, he began the building of concentration camps for Jews. Hitler had promised to restore Germany's honor after their devastating loss in World War I. He planned to restore this honor by executing all the Jews. First, he started by passing the

Nuremberg Laws, which prevented Jews from owning businesses or going to school. Soon after, he branded the Jews by having them wear a Jewish star at all times. After World War II started in 1940, Hitler and the Nazis established the Warsaw Ghetto in Poland, where Jews were to stay behind a walled section of the city. In the Warsaw Ghetto, the Jews were forced to live in poverty, sickness, and malnutrition. Then in 1941, the concentration camps began to fill with Jews, gypsies, homosexuals, and others. Concentration camps were located in Auschwitz, Chelmno, Treblinka, Sobibor, Belzec, and Majdanek. At the Wannsee Conference in 1942, Hitler and the Nazis decided they were to kill all the Jews. They called this the final solution. After Hitler proclaimed the final solution into effect, Five million people died in death camps in 1942 to 1943. In Auschwitz, 1.6 million were killed (Beaudoin, 10). The Jews that survived the concentration camps were released in 1945. Many of the survivors had nowhere to go as their families were murdered and their towns destroyed. Most of them were forced to immigrate to the United States or Israel. After they were released, the Nuremberg trials started. Only a small number of Nazis were sentenced to death for their help in the Holocaust while others were free to flee to safety. Five months after the trials started, Hitler committed suicide when the U.S. and Soviet Union troops began to close in. Eight days later, Germany surrendered and lost the war. The Holocaust is the most well - known genocide and also had the largest numbers of fatalities of any genocide with almost 7 million people dead from the concentration camps.

Perhaps the second most well-known genocide is the Rwandan Genocide of 1994. Most of the victims of the genocide were that of the Tutsi, an ethnic minority in Rwanda. The government carried out this genocide in order to protect the Hutu ethnic majority. Even though the two groups are very similar, their feud can be dated back to the early 1900s. When the Belgians had colonial rule in the early 1900s, they favored the Tutsi and gave them many opportunities that the Hutu did not receive like education and health care. When Rwanda was struggling for independency in the 1950s and 1960s, the Belgians helped the Hutu take over the government despite their previous favor for the Tutsi. This period was called the Hutu Social Revolution. After this revolution, there was a lot of violence that led in the death of thousands of Tutsi. But the worst was yet to come. In 1990, a rebel Tutsi group was formed called the Rwandan Patriotic Front. Their goal was to launch attacks on the Hutu government so that the Tutsi could take over. A few years later, the Hutu government signed a peace treaty with the group in

order to stop these attacks. But on April 6, 1994, Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana, a Hutu, was killed when his plane was shot down above Kigali, Rwanda's capital (Frank and Wagnalls New World Encyclopedia). Over the next few months after his death, the government killed at least 500,000 people, the majority of victims being Tutsi. So many homes were destroyed. The Hutus broadcast over the radio that any Tutsi, young or old, should be killed. They went through all of the homes and destroyed them says survivor Consolee Nishimwe. Nishimwe goes on to tell the story of how her father and brothers were killed, leaving only her mother and herself as survivors. Most of the women survived because instead of killing them, they would rape them multiple times and leave them there to die. Along with Nishimwe and most women who were raped during the genocide, they had developed HIV, a reminder of what they had endured. The Rwandan Patriotic Front eventually took over the Rwandan government. Many of the Hutu fled to neighboring countries in order to escape the front. In 1994, the United Nations held a series of trials to prosecute the leaders of the genocide. Although they convicted dozens of individuals, many of the leaders had already escaped or died during the genocide. The new government has outlawed the names of the Hutu or Tutsi in order to prevent another genocide like the one that killed almost a million.

Genocides date way back to the early 1400s and are still happening to this day, although we don't hear much about them until thousands of people had already died. Our school system is not doing much to teach about the history of genocides. They rarely speak about the Holocaust or the Rwandan genocide and soon, all the survivors will be dead. If we don't continue to teach about the past and what terrible things have happened, history will repeat itself. Of all the testimonials of survivors, they say they are happy to be alive and forgive the people who hurt them. Even though the surviving Jews have to live with a brand on their arm and the Rwandan women survivors have to live with HIV for the rest of their lives, they still forgive even though they are reminded of what happened every day. It takes a lot of courage to be able to forgive someone after the horrible events that had happened. In order to prevent another genocide from happening, we need to bring awareness to them. History always repeats itself.