

## US RELATIONS WITH RWANDA

Eric arrived in the United States in 2016. This was a turbulent time in America in relation to immigration policy, as Donald Trump had just taken office as president. He proposed many laws against immigration to the US, focusing mainly on immigrants from Mexico and South America. In 2017, however, he put in a ban that included several Muslim countries such as Iraq and Syria but did not include Rwanda. This was because Trump and Rwandan president Paul Kagame have good relations with each other, as they both have commercial worldwide views, and understand the economic value they have for each other. During this time, people living in Rwanda were allowed to apply for immigration to the US through family, employment, percountry ceilings, as refugees and asylum seekers, as well as through the Diversity Visa program. Additionally, the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 allows the US to admit up to 675,000 permanent resident visas, and since 2002, 2,158 Rwandans have resettled in the US. This act removed the National Origins Formula, which allowed the US to limit the number of immigrants based on population proportions and got rid of de facto discrimination. As of today, the most recent available information of Rwandan immigrants living in the US census is from 2010, which suggests about 7,000 lived here, and 1,020 of them were refugees.

## REFUGEE PROGRAMS IN THE US

Eric came to the United States under a refugee program. In 1980, the Refugee Act was passed by the United States, allowing refugees and asylum seekers into the country. This act slightly made changes to the text of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952, which set limits on the numbers of individuals from a country that could immigrate to the US. The new act allowed the government to surpass the allotted number for humanitarian efforts. If selected for the program, you have to pass a series of interviews, and then go onto a medical check-up. If these steps are passed as well, the refugee is placed in the US based on the location of any friends or family here or is placed in a community of people who share the same culture. Eric and his family were Tutsis living in the Congo up until 1994, but a genocide of their people by Hutus occurred in 1994, displacing them. As a result, they moved into a refugee camp in Rwanda, fearing for their safety and lives. So, they qualified to become refugees in the United States, because he had been forced to flee his country due to persecution, war and violence. Refugees maintain many of the same rights natural-born citizens have in the US, such as freedom of thought and movement, but also the right to safe asylum and international protection. Refugees are also allowed to stay in the US indefinitely, or until conditions in their home country improve, and they don't fear persecution or violence. Additionally, refugees have the right to apply for a green card, which allows them to become a permanent resident. Yet this can only be done after living in the US for one full year.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE CONGO

There are many important demographics of the Congo, one being the number of refugees in the country. The number in Rwanda is high, as the country hosts many from the Democratic Republic of Congo as well as people suffering from the increased political and ethnic violence in other neighboring countries like Angola and Burundi. In 2017, Rwanda held 172,000 refugees from over 60 countries that lived in one of the following eight camps in Rwanda: Gihembe, Nyabiheke, Kigeme, Mugombwa, Kizibia, Mahama, Bugesera, and Nyanza. Gihembe is located in the Northern Province of Rwanda. Nyabiheke, Bugesera and Mahama are located in the Eastern Province, Nyanza, Kigeme and Mugombwa are located in the Southern Province, and Kizibia is located in the Western Province. It is also estimated that around 2.1 million Rwandan refugees are located in 35 camps in neighboring countries. This number dramatically rose after the 1994 Rwandan genocide where Tutsis had to escape extreme violence based on their ethnicity. Rwanda also consists primarily of three ethnic groups: Hutus, Tutsis and Twa, where Hutus are the largest group at 85%, Tutsis at 14% and Twa at 1%. The demographics of ethnicity played the biggest role in the 1994 Rwandan genocide, where over 800,000 Tutsis were targeted and killed because of their ethnicity in just 100 days. The genocide has had a long-standing impact on the tensions between the groups and has even made talking about ethnicity illegal.

## EDUCATION IN RWANDA

Education in Rwanda is mandatory for students starting at age seven, and public education in Rwanda is even free for these students. Citing the reason for free public education, the government said that they wanted a higher enrollment rate within their state and wanted to see a larger number of people who could find jobs and help the economy become stronger. However, Eric did not have access to this free education, as he was a refugee from the Congo. Many refugees around the world have limited access to education ranging from primary school all the way to college, and millions each year don't attend. However, some children refugees in Rwandan camps are integrated into Rwandan schools through help from UNICEF. UNICEF also provides these children with materials necessary for school such as notebooks and backpacks and have even given some schools computers and other types of technology. Some schools in Rwanda have also expanded their school's infrastructure to help expand the amount of children they can take. These schools are able to do this through support from the Rwandan government. Additionally, the Rwandan government has partnered with UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and the UN Refugee Agency that enables Refugee children to receive education courses that many children who are not refugees receive in schools.

## LANGUAGE IN RWANDA

The three major and official languages of Rwanda are Kinyarwanda, French and English. In 2017, however, the Rwandan government passed legislation that also made Swahili an official language of the country. This decision was made in part to move away from their colonial roots and teach and speak a language that is heavily used in East Africa, which would add value to their economic ties with other countries. Swahili is integrated into the Rwandan education system and increasing the use of it helps refugees from other parts of Africa to integrate themselves better in Rwanda. Almost the whole population speaks inyarwanda, as it is one of their main languages for business and media and is the most widely spoken of all the languages. On the other hand, the number of people in Rwanda who speak French is low and is continuing to decline, as the government is urging their people to assimilate to western culture and participate more actively in economic trade. The government is also discouraging the use of French because of France and Belgium's response to the 1994 genocide, where the US and Britain actively helped more. English is also an official language, as it's seen by the world as the language of trade, which the government wants to participate more actively in. English is also the second most spoken language in the world, and with knowing it, your chances of receiving higher education and better jobs is increased.

## US HISTORY WITH RWANDA

During the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the US government under Bill Clinton did not respond in effective ways. The US's foreign policy during this time was more focused on aiding countries that were important to stimulating economic growth, rather than on humanitarian efforts. This was mainly due to the 1993 Battle of Mogadishu, also known as Black Hawk Down, in which the US failed to peace-keep from the violence in Somalia. During this operation, the US sent 100 troops to Somalia, almost all of them dying or facing some sort of injury. It was viewed as a disastrous attempt of sending humanitarian aid and trying to instill peace by the US government and US citizens, so as a consequence, the US was very hesitant to send more troops to help another foreign country in fear of another repeat accident. Clinton and his government even failed to publicly refer to the situation as a genocide, fearing that doing so would obligate them to send aid under the US's Genocide Convention. Further, the US had also supported the withdrawal of UN troops that were stationed in Rwanda just a month before the genocide took place, even though the UN reported of ethnic killings, extremely violent demonstrations and huge threats to the civilian population in the country. 800,000 people died during the genocide.

## 1994 RWANDAN CIVIL WAR

From October 1, 1990 to July 18 1994, the Rwandan Civil War occurred, and was fought between the Rwandan Armed Forces (Rwanda's national army) and the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front, mostly made up of Tutsi refugees. The Hutus held, and still do, the majority in terms of the ethnic population at 85%, where Tutsis make up just 14%. Stemming from ethnic tensions between Hutus and Tutsis that has been a long-standing part of Rwandan culture forever, members of the RPF invaded Rwanda from Uganda in 1990. Their ultimate goal was to overthrow Juvénal Habyarimana, Rwanda's second president who was a Hutu, as well as gain control of the country because of the belief that they had rights to it. The genocide was made up of extreme violence, where machetes and rifles were the main way the killings were executed. Sexual violence was also a huge part of the Rwandan genocide, where an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 women and girls were raped and held as sex slaves. Many of these women were to be diagnosed with HIV and AIDS, because of the epidemic that was tearing through the country. Ethnic cards were also still being used during this time, so it was easy to seek out Tutsis. Many members of the RPF would hide in churches and schools just to seek out their victims, so there really was nowhere for Tutsis to hide.

## COLONIALISM IN RWANDA

Colonialism has had a huge impact on Rwanda and is an important reason as to why there is such a massive disconnect between the Hutus and Tutsis. In 1918, the Treaty of Versailles made Rwanda a League of Nations protectorate that was going to be controlled by Belgium, and during this era, the ethnic minority in Rwanda was Tutsis (14%), and the majority was Hutu (85%). Both Belgium and Germany favored the Tutsis over the Hutu majority, and gave them special privileges and education similar to the West. Political power was soon given to the Tutsis as well, while Hutus remained farmers, giving them dominance. In essence, the Tutsis ruled the Hutus. Belgium also integrated eugenics into the country, further creating the divide between the two groups. Measurements of larger skull sizes, taller heights and lighter skin tones (closer to the "superior" white), further backed the claim that Tutsis were far superior than all Hutus. Belgian scientists who were aiming at keeping the Tutsis as the dominant race in Rwanda. Further, group identity cards, similar to Nazi Germany, were also put in place by Belgium, and was an easy way to identify between Hutus and Tutsis. It created a huge racial and class divide between the two groups, and it continues to have lasting impacts on Rwanda. This disconnect is still prevalent in Rwanda today, and is one of many reasons for the 1994 Rwandan genocide.