

Rwandan survivor

In the 1990s, conflict between Hutus and Tutsis devastated Rwanda. The **Hutus**, who occupied most of the positions of power in the government and other institutions, were responsible for the massacre of the better part of an entire generation of **Tutsis**. In only three months, **one million people were brutally murdered**. Apollon Kabahizi is a Tutsi who was lucky to escape with his life.



When war began in Rwanda in 1990, Apollon had just left high school. He was told by his best friend, a Hutu, that he didn't think he would ever be able to kill him. But it was this very same friend, who four years later, killed Apollon's mother. Apollon says, "it's amazing how people can change".

The day in 1994 that Apollon remembers very well is 11 April. This was the day that the UN pulled out of Rwanda. The Hutu militia had surrounded the school where Apollon's father had worked.

This was also where 2000 Tutsi were slaughtered. Apollon escaped because he was in hiding.

Initially Apollon thought all his family members had been killed. Apollon was living in the UK when the bodies of his brother and sister-in-law were discovered in Rwanda. His sister-in-law was 8 months pregnant at the time she was killed. But to this day, his mother's body has never been found.

But Apollon has no appetite for revenge. He knows he is one of the lucky ones. He was overjoyed to discover that two of his siblings had in fact survived - a brother and a sister. This has helped him enormously.

After moving round Africa and coming to live in the UK, Apollon has now moved back to Rwanda. He no longer feels threatened, but his trust has been damaged. But things do appear to be changing there. The surviving population is very young and there is hope for the future.

Northern Ireland Conflict / Troubles

The Troubles consisted of about 30 years of repeated acts of intense violence between elements of Northern Ireland's nationalist community (principally **Roman Catholic**) and unionist community (principally **Protestant**).

The conflict was caused by the disputed status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom and the domination of the minority nationalist community, and discrimination against them, by the unionist majority. The violence was characterised by the armed campaigns of paramilitary groups. Most notable of these was the **Provisional IRA** campaign of 1969-1997 which was aimed at the end of British rule in Northern Ireland and the creation of a new, "all-Ireland", Irish Republic.

The **origins of conflict between Catholics and Protestants** in the north of Ireland lie in the British settler-colonial Plantation of Ulster in **1609**, which confiscated native owned land and settled Ulster with English and Scottish Protestants. Conflict between the native Catholics and the "planters" led to two bloody ethno-religious conflicts between them in 1641-1653 and 1689-1691. The British Protestant political dominance in Ireland was ensured by victory in these wars and by the Penal Laws, which curtailed the religious, legal and political rights of anyone (including both Catholics and Dissenters, such as Presbyterians) who did not conform to the state church - the Anglican Church of Ireland.

Though the number of active participants in the Troubles was relatively small, and the paramilitary organisations that claimed to represent the communities were sometimes unrepresentative of the general population, the Troubles touched the lives of most people in Northern Ireland on a daily basis, while occasionally spreading to Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland.

Several times between 1969 and 1998 it seemed possible that the Troubles would escalate into a genuine civil war; for example in 1972, after the **Bloody Sunday** (in which 26 civil rights protesters were shot by members of 1st Battalion of the British Parachute Regiment), or during the **Prison Hunger Strikes of 1981**, when there was mass, hostile mobilisation of the two communities. Many people today have had their political, social and communal attitudes and perspectives shaped by the Troubles.