Rwanda’s People Groups of the 1500’s based on livelihood:

• Batutsi (Tutsi) - Pastoralists, also formed the royal family
• Bahutu (Hutu) - Agriculturalists
• Batwa (Twa) - Hunters and Potters
• Stratified into three socio-economic groups
• Socio-economic status was fluid.
• Identity was formed through family clans that could have farmers, potters and cattle owners in them.
1884 - Germany establishes colonial rule in Rwanda

1918 - The defeat of Germany in the First World War allows Belgium to take control of Rwanda
1926 - Belgians introduce a system of ethnic identity cards differentiating Hutus from Tutsis

- Hutu (85% of the population)
- Tutsi (14% of the population)
- Twa (1% of the population)

The Belgians used the Tutsi minority to enforce their rule to maintain divisions between the Hutu and Tutsi.
Belgians reclassify socio-economic classes into ethnic groups according to racist theories circulating in Western cultures. Belgian colonialists believed Tutsis were a naturally superior nobility, descended from the Israelite tribe of Ham.

Belgians distinguished between Hutus and Tutsis by nose size, height & eye type in order to “prove” the superiority of the taller, thinner, lighter-skinned people. Reclassification could change wives, husbands, children, etc. to another so-called ethnic group.
1959 - Hutus rebel against the Belgian colonial power and the Tutsi elite; 150,000 Tutsis flee to Burundi

1961-62 - Belgians withdraw. Rwanda becomes an independent country. A Hutu revolution installs a new president; fighting continues and thousands of Tutsis are forced to flee
April 6, 1994 – The President of Rwanda is killed when his plane is shot down near Kigali Airport. That night the killing begins.
In less than hundred days, 800,000+ Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed.
July 1994 - The Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), a Tutsi-dominated organization, captures Kigali. The Hutu insurgents flee to Congo and continue sporadic attacks until the late 1990s.

- During the genocide, parents were killed leaving an estimated 280,000 street children

By 2002, Parents killed in the genocide, having died from AIDS or imprisoned for genocide-related crimes had left:
- 1,264,000 orphans
- 13.5 of the population was HIV Positive
How to stop the fighting and heal from the genocide?

- Benevolent dictatorship
- Mass adoptions of children—Hutu families adopting Tutsi children and vice versa.
- Traditional Gacaca courts—literally, flattened grass under the elders’ tree—for non-heinous crimes
- Dialogues moderated by respected, trained community leaders
- Prisoners released after 15 years, returning to villages where they killed their neighbors.
- Time of mourning, April to July 4, every year.
- Remembering; educating in schools.
“I could forgive or I could seek revenge. I saw no choice but forgiveness for my own peace of mind.”
Fredrick Ndabaramiye

“I had freed myself.”
Theogene: Saw all 9 members of his family killed at age 6. Now he lives peacefully with the people who killed his family.

Rose: Saw her children killed. Was reunited with her husband. They now have 2 children and they adopted some orphan children, which is common. She and her husband live next to the people who killed her children; they have forgiven the perpetrators.