

## Teaching Africa

Spring time, two years ago, I learned that I was transferred to a school that focused on African-Centered learning. While I often pride myself on being a student of history, I confess, that I had no idea what it mean to teach an African-Centered curriculum. My knowledge of African culture was a small rain drop. A thought began to linger in my mind, “Who did I think I was?” I continue to ask myself this question well into my second year of this journey. What could I teach in an African curriculum that wasn’t already well-known?

In the winter of 2017, the opportunity presented itself to apply to study in Rwanda. A small country that I knew little about beyond a fleeting recollection of a blockbuster movie I had seen many years ago. This opportunity to travel to Rwanda promised me a unique experience after which I hoped to be able to offer my students information and experience about a modern side to this continent.

I determined that what I would find out in my 28 days in Rwanda was how the Rwandans taught about themselves, about their neighbors, and about their continent. I spent lunches dialoguing with teachers and students about their lesson and classes. During each encounter, I asked my lunch partner a series of questions about teaching Africa. If they were me, what would they teach? What was the biggest misrepresentation they saw of themselves? Etc. I had the opportunity to ask two teachers as well as a student.

Each individual that I spoke with talked about the importance of teaching genocide in one way or another. Often, they advised to teach students to recognize genocide ideology, or the thoughts and events that are genocidal the precede violence and killings. One of my interviewees shared with me the following line that has haunted me since, ““We don’t teach genocide as history but as our life.” I wondered then and still do what it would mean to help my students understand genocide and the ideologies that support it through the day-to-day lives of our contemporaries. In other words, if I can teach my students about genocide through they eyes of someone who’s father was a genocidaire or who was orphaned at the age of 6 and is alive today.

This has led me to a final challenge to my teaching practice. So often, my students understand Africa as the “other.” It is often mysterious and exotic, even when it is exciting and respected. They frequently view Africa through the lens of history. In reality, as any place, the continent of Africa is dynamic and changing. The Rwandans I spoke with approach their future with eagerness and pride. I hope to grow my teaching practice to illustrate that narrative of the Rwandan people.

The information below represents primarily the results of my conversations. I have included websites, resources, and lesson plans that I have uncovered since then as I work to improve my own background knowledge in order to incorporate these ideas into my curriculum. My hope in creating this document is that teachers across the nation will gain new perspective on the things that mattered most to the Rwandan educators and incorporate some of those ideas into U.S. curriculum.

### Conversation 1: Teacher of English and Kinyarwanda

#### *Genocide Ideology*

Articles on this topic can be found at:

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1166506>

[https://clg.portalxm.com/library/keytext.cfm?keytext\\_id=183](https://clg.portalxm.com/library/keytext.cfm?keytext_id=183)

<http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/210523/>

#### Reconciliation

Articles on this topic can be found at:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/25/world/africa/rwandans-carry-on-side-by-side-two-decades-after-genocide.html>

<http://freecontent.abc->

[clio.com/ContentPages/contentpage.aspx?entryid=1853425&currentSection=1853403&productid=1853402](http://freecontent.abc-clio.com/ContentPages/contentpage.aspx?entryid=1853425&currentSection=1853403&productid=1853402)

(lesson plan)

<http://www.justice.gov.za/trc/> (Reconciliation in S. Africa)

21st Century Development Initiatives  
UN Development Goals: <http://www.rw.one.un.org/sdg>  
Rwanda Development Goals, "Rwanda Vision 2020": <http://www.sida.se/globalassets/global/countries-and-regions/africa/rwanda/d402331a.pdf>

International Cooperation  
Lesson Plans  
<https://www.icivics.org/teachers/lesson-plans/conflict-and-cooperation>  
<https://www.icivics.org/curriculum/international-affairs>  
<http://www.pbs.org/pov/goodfortune/lesson-plan/>

The importance of studying languages  
<https://www2.ku.edu/~kiswahili/>  
Kiswahili is also available on the Edmodo app for students to use.

### **Conversation 2: Teacher of Social Studies**

Comparison between *decolonization* in Africa and the *Revolutionary War* in the United States  
[http://www.slate.com/blogs/quora/2014/07/24/american\\_revolution\\_did\\_britain\\_treat\\_all\\_its\\_colonies\\_equally.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/quora/2014/07/24/american_revolution_did_britain_treat_all_its_colonies_equally.html)  
<http://ieg-ego.eu/en/threads/europe-and-the-world/european-overseas-rule/fabian-klose-decolonization-and-revolution>

Comparative politics regarding elections  
<http://democracyweb.org/elections-essential-principles>

"We dont teach genocide as history but as our life."

Gender Studies at the Primary and Secondary level  
Rwandan Secondary Curriculum Framework  
[http://reb.rw/fileadmin/competence\\_based\\_curriculum/syllabi/CURRICULUM\\_FRAMEWORK\\_FINAL\\_PRINT\\_ED.compressed.pdf](http://reb.rw/fileadmin/competence_based_curriculum/syllabi/CURRICULUM_FRAMEWORK_FINAL_PRINT_ED.compressed.pdf)  
Rwandan Elementary Social Studies Curriculum  
[http://www.reb.rw/fileadmin/user\\_upload/documents/curriculum/primary/social\\_studies\\_english\\_p\\_1-6-2.pdf](http://www.reb.rw/fileadmin/user_upload/documents/curriculum/primary/social_studies_english_p_1-6-2.pdf)  
Article on gender in Rwandan schools  
<https://gemreportunesco.wordpress.com/2017/01/19/gender-equality-in-post-genocide-rwanda/>

### **Conversation 3: Small group of university students and a professor**

The African Generation  
[https://www.ted.com/playlists/423/the\\_rise\\_of\\_africa\\_s\\_next\\_gene](https://www.ted.com/playlists/423/the_rise_of_africa_s_next_gene)  
<http://www.theafricareport.com/International/for-africas-millennial-generation-the-rules-of-engagement-have-changed.html>

### **Ijumaa la Kwanza (First Friday Culture Club)**

The description below is a concept I have been working on since returning to the U.S. This is the scaffolding

of an after school club that could benefit the scholars of our program in a variety of ways.

**Mission:** Expand knowledge and experience of Pan-African societies and cultures.

**Vision:** A diverse, student led organization that explores different facets of Pan-African identities, cultures, and languages.

**Student leadership team:** 5-7 Juniors and Seniors who work throughout the month to plan Ijumaa la Kwanza events.

**Membership:**

*Adults:* Ijumaa la Kwanza will require the service of adults in the school and community. We will rely on adult mentorship in helping the leadership team plan. We will also rely on the knowledge and wisdom of the community through teachers, guest speakers, docents, and financial sponsors.

*Students:* Ijumaa la Kwanzaa will be led by students. Part of each meeting will be spent planning the next meeting. Ijumaa will reach out to all students as a service program of our African-Centered Program. We aspire for an even mix of grades and genders. We will maintain an open membership. However, students will need to sign up and sign in to monthly meetings. Students will be expected to stay throughout the meeting. Behavior within the meeting or during the school day may result in suspension for a meeting or exclusion from a trip or activity. Students may re-integrate themselves into the organization through service.

**Sample Schedule:**

230-245: Fellowship

245-300: Team Builder or Ice Breaker

300-315: Opening/ Present Agenda

314-400: Food: students will make a particular food from a particular culture.

400-430: Guest Speaker (ie: a choreographer)

430-500: Activity associated with Speaker (ie: learn dance steps)

500-530: Brainstorm Ideas for Future Activities

**Known Resources:**

Local African Dance Groups

KU School of African Studies and online dictionaries

Nelson-Atkins

Kansas City Jazz Museum

Bruce R. Watkins Cultural Center

ACPrep Lower Campus