

# Marie Chantal Uwamahoro

## Easy to read life story



HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL  
DAY TRUST

### Key terms:



**Rwanda:** A small country in central Africa.

**Government:** A group of people who run a country making the laws and rules.

**Rebel:** A person who fights against a government.

**Cockroach:** A type of insect.

**Discrimination:** Unfair treatment of someone because of who they are.

**Genocide:** When a group of people are killed because of who they are, for example because of their religion or the group they belong to.

Marie Chantal (known as Chantal) was born in **Rwanda** in 1977. She was the youngest of eight children and had a very happy home.

There were different groups of people in Rwanda; the two main groups were called Hutu and Tutsi. Chantal's family was different from their neighbours – they were the only Tutsi family in a village of Hutus.

The Hutu **government** and police didn't treat the Tutsis the same as the Hutus. It was unfair. There was a **rebel** group fighting back against the government called the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).

At Chantal's primary school, all the other children were Hutus. They didn't include Chantal in their games. She remembers them calling her names such as '**cockroach**' or 'snake'. Even the teachers treated her unfairly – no matter how hard she worked, she had to be the best to get noticed.

When someone is treated differently because of who they are, this is called **discrimination**.

Chantal's father was regularly beaten up, just for being a Tutsi. He was worried about his family's safety, so he sent Chantal to the capital city. She stayed with her brothers Alexis and Kizito.

In 1992, Chantal's father died after being beaten by his Hutu neighbours. Her mother decided to join Chantal and her brothers.

On 6 April 1994, the President of Rwanda was killed. The President was a Hutu and the Tutsis were blamed for his death, even though nobody knew who had killed him. Chantal's brother said 'This is the end of all of us'. They were very scared.

The government gave the Hutus weapons, and told them to kill all the Tutsi people. When a government tries to kill a whole group of people because of who they are, this is called **genocide**.

Chantal's family were woken up in the night by banging on the door. Chantal's mother opened the door and some Hutus demanded to see Chantal's brother, Kizito.

They searched the house, found Chantal hiding, and beat her. Her brothers had been hiding in other houses, but they came back hoping the attackers would leave their mother and sister alone.

Sadly, Chantal's brothers were killed. The Tutsi women thought they would be killed too, but they were told to go back home, and left feeling terrified.

A Hutu neighbour called Edith took Chantal in. Some Hutu people who were found hiding Tutsis were also being killed, so she was being very brave.

When the killers came near, Chantal hid in the bushes. She said, 'We had given up hope of living. When I was hiding I just had to sit there waiting to be killed.'

One day soldiers surrounded the bush. Chantal was very afraid. But they were RPF rebel soldiers and said: 'You are safe'.

The Tutsi rebels took Rwanda back from the Hutu government, and stopped the genocide. It had been happening for 100 days, and 1 million people had been murdered.

Chantal was so happy to find out her mother was alive, but more than 50 members of her family had been killed.

She decided to move to London, and says: 'Moving to the UK, I found a home. It was secure; there was no fear.' Now she has a family and is training to be a Social Worker, so she can help other people.

**Find out more...** Genocide in Rwanda: [hmd.org.uk/rwanda](http://hmd.org.uk/rwanda)  
Other resources for educators: [hmd.org.uk/education](http://hmd.org.uk/education)