

JO INGABIRE

- EASY TO READ LIFE STORY



HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
DAY TRUST



Key words

Rwanda: A small country in central Africa.

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

Cockroach: A type of insect.

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.

Jo Ingabire was born in 1989 in **Rwanda**. Jo, her mother, father, and five siblings were very close to their neighbours. The children all played together in the mango and avocado trees at the end of the road.

There were two different communities of people in Rwanda, called Hutu and Tutsi, but they all lived together.

One day, when she was five years old, Jo's school teacher asked the class to stand with Tutsis on one side of the classroom and Hutus on the other. Jo's parents told her to pretend she was a Hutu, even though she was a Tutsi.

Fighting was starting to happen between the Hutus and the Tutsis. A radio station, set up by the Hutu **government**, said bad things about the Tutsis. It called them **cockroaches**, snakes, lice, rats, hyenas and weeds and played anti-Tutsi songs. Snakes are a danger in Rwanda, and children are taught to kill them and smash their eggs.

Jo's parents were scared and the family moved their mattresses into the hallway to sleep, and put boards over their windows.

On 6 April 1994, the plane carrying the Hutu President of Rwanda was shot down. It was not clear who was responsible, but the government immediately blamed the Tutsi people.

The government gave the Hutu people 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**.

This is what Jo's parents had been scared of, but there was nothing they could do.

On 9 April, six policemen knocked on their door and shot at them with guns. They thought they had killed everyone. Jo's father, brother and two sisters were killed.

Jo, her mother, brother and sister were still alive, but they had been hurt. Only one of their neighbours came to help them. A 14-year-old Hutu girl, who wanted to be a nurse, secretly brought them food and medicine.

Jo and her family had to hide in a locked room in the house and be very quiet so that they would not be found.

Finally, Jo's uncle was able to get them out of the city, and they hid on his farm. The genocide went on for 100 days, and 1 million people were killed.

Jo was lucky to survive. Lots of her family and friends had been killed. Her wounds healed, but she has scars and was left feeling scared and shocked. She had nightmares for many years after.

It was dangerous for Jo's family to stay in Rwanda after the genocide so Jo went to boarding school in Uganda. When Jo was 13, she and her family moved to the UK.

Jo has found that writing helps her to cope with what happened to her. She writes about Rwanda. She works with a charity called Survivors Tribune to help other survivors to tell their stories. She is using the power of her words for good.

Find out more...

Genocide in Rwanda: hmd.org.uk/rwanda

Survivors Tribune: survivorstribune.org

Other resources for educators: hmd.org.uk/educators