

Lesson Five: How have people reacted to the genocide in Rwanda

Stories:

- *Mary Blewitt (founded Survivors Fund Charity to help survivors)*
- *Poppy Sebag-Montefiore (founded Never Again International)*
- Liliane Umubyeyi (survivor who lives in Britain and campaigns on behalf of survivors)

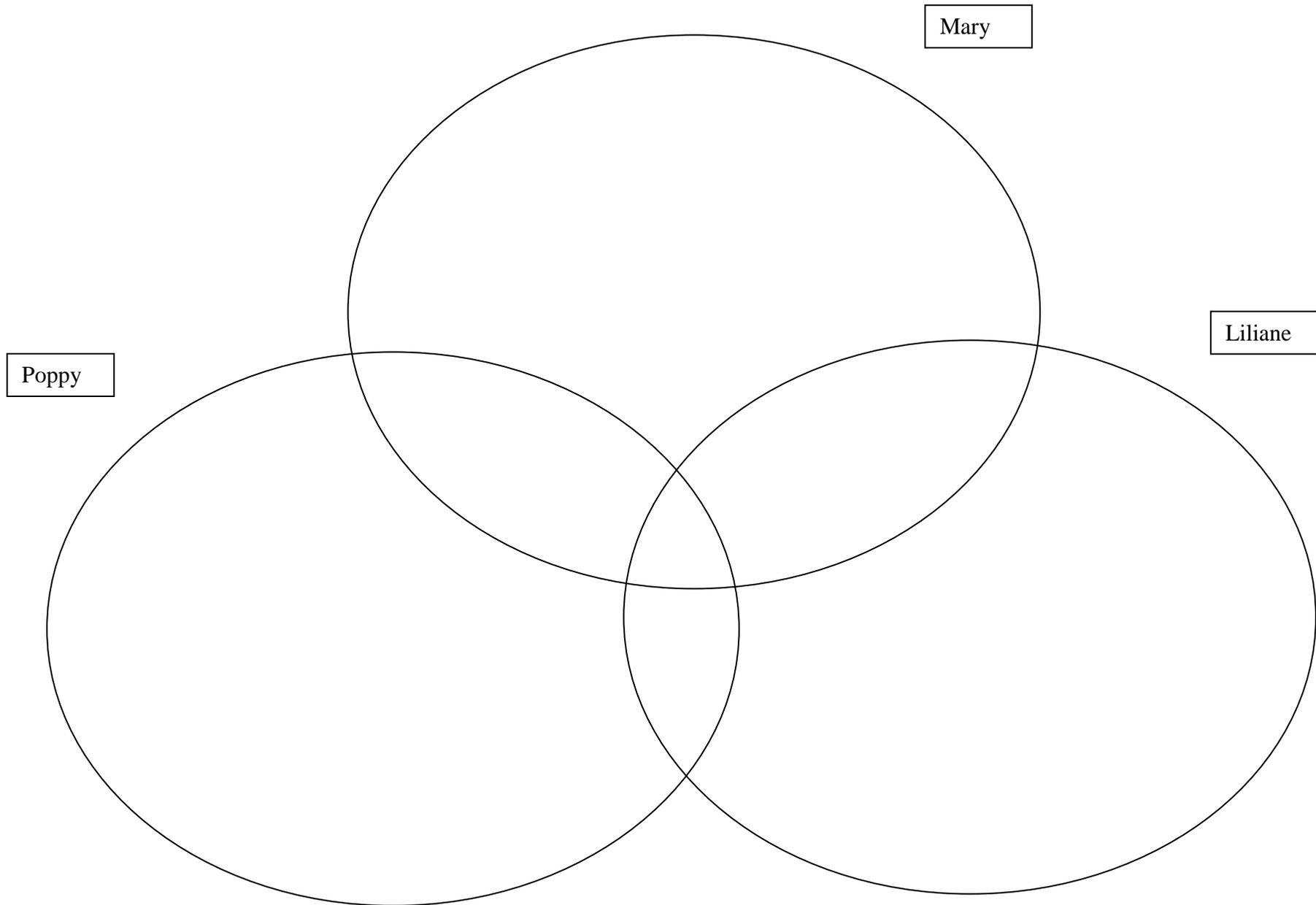
Rationale: Pupils to understand the nature of reactions to the genocide. To generate ideas on how to become active citizens.

Starter: Pupils read case studies of what Mary Kayitesi Blewitt / Poppy Sebag-Montefiore / Liliane Umubyeyi have done since the genocide.

Main: Place numbers from list of actions onto venn diagram with categories a) Mary b) Liliane c) Poppy

Plenary: Pupils talk with a partner about what they might do to show active citizenship / make a difference / show kindness in their own school / community

How did some people react to the genocide in Rwanda?



How did some people react to the genocide in Rwanda?

Look at the sentences below – they are all things that Poppy, Mary and Liliane have done since the genocide in Rwanda. Decide whether the action described in each sentence shows either Poppy, Mary or Liliane remembering the victims of the genocide, educating others about the dangers of discrimination or helping victims – or a mix of two or three. Write the number of each sentence in the appropriate part of the venn diagram

1. Lost close family in the genocide
2. Set up a charity to help others
3. Did something that we all can learn from
4. Saw her family being killed
5. Kindness
6. Takes part in remembrance ceremonies
7. Speaks up for survivors
8. Active citizenship
9. Works in different countries to make sure that genocide doesn't happen again
10. The Rwandan genocide inspired them to act
11. Brings together other people to get them talking and settling differences
12. Has won awards for their campaigning
13. Making a difference
14. Works with young people to help them through their trauma
15. Is someone you can identify with

Using three colours highlight which numbers are actions that:

- Remember the victims of the genocide
- Educate other people about the lessons of the events in Rwanda
- Help the survivors of what happened in 1994

SURF Founder, Mary Kayitesi Blewitt pursues trauma research in New York

New York – 12 March 2009



In January 2009, the Founder of Survivors Fund, Mary Kayitesi Blewitt, stepped down as the Director of SURF to pursue trauma research. Mary sent the following update:

In April 1994, Rwanda suffered one of the most concentrated acts of genocide in human history. Up to a million people were massacred in just one hundred days. Among those slaughtered were almost all my relatives: fifty members of my family. Only my brother's wife, and her two children, survived. I was lucky. I at least know where they were slain. They were at the house of my grandfather. They had always sought refuge there in times of trouble. But this time, there were no safe sanctuaries. Along with other Tutsi families, they were savagely slaughtered in cold blood.

I was lucky, as at the time of the genocide I was living in the UK. Thus I escaped the massacre and the nightmare that survivors face today. Had I been in Rwanda I would certainly have been killed too.

I can think the only reason I was spared was to help those, like I, who are living a legacy of genocide. I set up a charity Survivors Fund (SURF) to make sense of the genocide, and to support survivors to enable them to rebuild their lives, and a sense of humanity and trust. A vital part of my work is to ensure that as many people as possible hear the voices of survivors. Voices that tell the whole truth, that warn us of what man is capable of, that remind us of the suffering that must never again be permitted to happen to anyone, anywhere in the world. In light of events in Darfur, and other regions around the world, this is more important than ever.

Nearly 15 years after the horrific events, the fatal legacy of the genocide endures and situation of survivors is still bleak. This year, I stepped down as Director of SURF, after dedicating that last 14 years of my life to the cause of survivors, to enable me to reflect on my experience. The challenges ahead for SURF are still great. We are now faced with an explosion of post-genocide trauma among survivors, especially extreme anger, generalized aggression, and in some cases self-destructive tendencies, particularly among young people. Living with the haunted memories of genocide since 1994, continues to have a very significant emotional and psychological impact on the lives of survivors.



CELEBRITY starlets such as Leona Lewis, Rihanna, Myleene Klass, Cameron Diaz, and Angelina Jolie were all recently honoured for their contribution to girl power at the annual Cosmopolitan Magazine Ultimate Women of the Year Awards.

But in the eyes of many Liliame Umubyeyi, winner of the Ultimate Campaigner of the year award, was the real shining star at the glitzy ceremony.

Unlike most of the women who won awards on the night, 29-year-old Umubyeyi does not live a life of glamour, dining at posh charity parties where she can use her celebrity status to attract money for her campaign.

A Tutsis refugee who fled from the genocide in Rwanda, Umubyeyi is overwhelmed by her prize. She told the Voice: "I feel great, if I have to put it in one word. Winning Ultimate Campaigner was very rewarding, as it makes me believe that people are now listening and all my hard work is paying off, which means my pain was not in vain.

She added: "No matter how hard I work, sometimes I think I haven't done enough, and haven't achieved the goal I have focused on. This has encouraged me and given me more courage to do more."

She left behind a horror story that would have been enough to break most people. Now a resident of the UK, Umubyeyi is co-chairman for the charity, Survivor Fund, and dedicates her life to helping survivors of the ethnic cleansing which took the lives of 800,000 Tutsis and Hutus.

I stayed with a small band of survivors, many of whom were captured and raped like me, who also saw their entire family being murdered. "It was through this friendship that I became involved in the Survivor's Fund, and I have continued to work with the charity.

"Now that I have settled down in Oxford and I have become more accustomed to my new environment, I can dedicate all my spare time campaigning for awareness of the survivors of the genocide that took place in my country.

"I have not been able to put my mind to rest because I have not yet buried my parents and other family members, and until I do I cannot move on in peace.

"For whatever reason God chose me to live. Unlike those who did not survive I can use my voice to tell the world what happened to people like me.

"I feel a responsibility to help the survivors. There are so many people who are traumatised and suffering. The only thing we can do is to talk about it so people do not feel alone any more.

"The only comforting part about my pain is that I can use my experience to help others."

About Never Again – better stuff than this coming soon from Poppy

Mission

Never Again International connects young people from around the world to generate ideas and action for peace.

History

Never Again International was founded in 2001 at the Institute for International Mediation and Conflict Resolution Symposium in the Hague, Netherlands. In response to the international community's failure to prevent or end the 1994 Rwandan genocide, five students participating in the Symposium initiated a movement to ensure the fulfillment of the post-World War II commitment: "Never Again."

Our Approach

Never Again International enables a network of individuals to work together from around the world through our dynamic and experimental method of international peacebuilding and conflict prevention.

Clustered by location and theme, Never Again members design programs that meet local needs and address causes of conflict globally through:

Facilitating conversations, workshops, debates, retreats, conferences and global exchanges.

Providing forums for the sharing of academic research and personal reflection.

Building bridges between grassroots activism and high-level international decision-making.

Leveraging Internet technology and social networking tools to communicate globally.

