
A Guide for Teachers and Students to Company One Theatre's Production:

# WE ARE PROUD TO PRESENT A PRESENTATION ABOUT THE HERERO OF NAMIBIA, FORMERLY KNOWN AS SOUTHWEST AFRICA, FROM THE GERMAN SUDWESTKAFRIKA, BETWEEN THE YEARS 1884-1915

A New England Premiere by Jackie Sibblies Drury

Dear Educators and Students,

We are pleased to present to you our Curricular Connections Packet for Company One Theatre's production of *We are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as Southwest Africa, From the German Sudwestkafrika, Between the Years 1884-1915* by Jackie Sibblies Drury. We've developed these materials to facilitate your understanding and engagement with the production and we encourage you to adapt the material to suit your needs. *We are Proud to Present a Presentation...* is an adult play with adult language. While this curricular connections packet reflects the adult content of the play, it is intended as a launching off point for your work with students.

Enclosed you will find:

* Introduction
* Interview with the author, Jackie Sibblies Drury
* Background information
* Script analysis and discussion questions
* Lesson plans

If you have any questions, please contact us at stageone@companyone.org

See you at the theatre!

# Table of Contents

# Introduction


It's never an easy task to look back on our history and try to understand why or how certain human atrocities occurred. Thousands of books have been written on the Holocaust, and yet grasping any sort of rationalization is futile. There is no literature in the world that can put into words the "horror or our capacity to casually inflict suffering" (an excerpt from the play). Now it's an even harder task to try and create those words and perform them in front of a live audience. However, in Jackie Sibblies Drury's *We are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as Southwest Africa, From the German Sudwestkafrika, Between the Years 1884-1915,* we see a group of idealistic actors attempting to devise a play on the German rule of Southwest Africa over a span of 31 years, during which over 60,000 Herero and Namaqua tribe members were killed. But as the ensemble wrestles with the hard task of dramatizing the little-known first genocide of the 20th century, tensions mount, and their exploration hits much closer to home than anybody expected.

Several pressing questions stem from the play, forcing us to take a more significant look at the way we create theatre, analyze our past, and talk about genocide. Some of the questions we will attempt to answer and discuss further are:

- What is the practice and process that goes into devising theatre?
- How do you take sensitive material and put it into performance?
- What is Colonialism, really?
- How does the colonization of Africa play a role in the Herero and Namaqua genocide?
- How does something like genocide occur?
- Who are the bystanders and who are the upstanders?
- What can we do to prevent further infractions on human rights worldwide?
- What are we doing to better inform ourselves?

Through background information, script analysis, discussion questions and lesson plans, we will further explore the way *We are Proud to Present a Presentation…* examines these crucial questions.

## Interview with the Author, Jackie Sibblies Drury

Recently, Company One Dramaturg Ramona Ostrowski spoke with playwright Jackie Sibblies Drury about the native challenges of creating and developing a piece with charged subject matter, and the translations it requires across history, time, and space.

**Ramona Ostrowski: Where did the inspiration for *We Are Proud to Present a Presentation* come from? Was it the subject matter or the unusual form that first interested you?**

**Jackie Sibblies Drury**: It was definitely the subject matter, which I came across randomly. I was trying to research a different play, and I googled "black people" and "Germany." I found out that there was a genocide, and I had never heard of it before. So I did a bunch more research, and in *trying* to write a play sort of more directly about that, I think that I didn't write a very good play—I sort of failed at writing a play—it was an impossible task. But that failure, and the struggle to articulate it, became the inspiration for the form of the piece as it exists now.

**RO: What's notable about its development and production history?**

**JSD**: I started researching when I was living in Chicago, right before I started graduate school, and I wrote the first draft as my graduate thesis at Brown. We had a workshop production that I was really proud of. I submitted it to the Ignition Festival at Victory Gardens in Chicago, which is for emerging playwrights of color under 40. At that time, the festival would accept six plays and do a weekend of readings. It was fun and festive. They would then choose two of those six plays for further workshops, and one would then proceed to the main stage, which is really rare. There aren't a lot of open submission processes these days where you might actually get a production out of it. Out of the six festival plays, *We Are Proud* was chosen for production, and that was also where I met director Eric Ting, who is now a friend and a close collaborator. Shortly after that, I was part of the SOHO Rep writers group, and they became interested in the play as well. Eric and I were able to do a very, very different production of it there. And now it gets to go to Boston for another entirely different production, which I'm excited about!

**RO: After you were so intimately involved in the first several productions, the play is now having its own life out in the world. What's that like for you as a playwright, especially for a work that in some ways is quite personal?**

**JSD**: To be totally honest it's super weird, and exciting. I'm thrilled that people are going to see it, and there's always something a little bit disconcerting in it for playwrights, isn't there? I mean, to put on a play is a beautiful thing, but it's also a time-intensive, emotionally-intensive, labor-intensive thing to do. And so thinking about all these people working on something… that I'm not there in the room to support them at all is strange, but it's also remarkable to see different theater artists' interpretation—different direction,

design, and also a different interpretation by performers. And to know that two organizations like Company One and ArtsEmerson have come together for the first time to collaborate on this project—it's really the highest compliment you can get as a playwright, to have people create a successful production out of something that you have worked on so intensively.

**RO: The play's structure is experimental, and places performers and audience in an unusual relationship. What did you learn about the piece as it met its audiences for the first time? Were there surprises in there for you?**

**JSD**: I was surprised by how nervous I was. At the first few previews in Chicago—about a year and a half ago—the responses were pretty polarized, but that wasn't so surprising to me. I learned a lot. Sometimes people didn't know what to do with the script's inherent openness, they didn't know how it aligned with more traditional dramatic works. These points of discomfort are really fruitful for the storytelling. I found it interesting and exciting to think about getting the chance to expose people to a different way to construct narrative, a different way of interacting with the idea of "theatre."

**RO: In the script, the end of the play marks a dramatic tonal shift that you've provided guideposts for, but which is largely entrusted to the director and cast to figure out through rehearsal, as well as night-to-night with an audience. Can you talk to me a little bit about the end of the play? What's the inspiration for placing so much in the hands of your script's collaborators?**

JSD: There's so much about live performance that I respond to that's not necessarily about the words that are being spoken. It's about the stage picture or the mood in the room. As a playwright, it's pretty frustrating because all I get are the words. I think that when I see something that I find particularly moving or powerful, it's often not something I associate with a particular line, but rather an image, or feeling, or series of movements. I wanted to find a way, I hope, that a production or a group of people creating together—if they're excited enough about the play and intrigued and challenged by that openness of an ending—will issue an invitation to the audience. That we might sort of see this person on stage, and empathize together in a room. If that happens, even for a few people, I think that's pretty amazing. The subject matter is so dark, and the treatment of it is so ironic …and then unironic… I was wary of trying to have a button at the end, like "and that's why genocide is bad." The fact is: there's nothing really to say in the face of the most awful thing that we can imagine human beings doing to other human beings. Every neat, clean "ending" just feels like moralizing, and it's my hope that instead, *We Are Proud* will feel as open and complicated as thinking about the big idea can be.

**RO: This piece refuses categorization. It even positions itself as non-theatre—rather, it's a "presentation" about a historical subject that spins wildly out of control. The characters are Actors, played by actual actors, who themselves have had to wrestle with**

**the difficult political and social subject matter on a personal level throughout the rehearsal process. What happens, in your mind, when we try too hard to shoe-horn this performative event into known classifications?**

JSD: This piece doesn't work very well when we attempt to explain all the connections and tie up all of the messiness—to fix it. The play is broken a little bit on purpose, just like the historical (and contemporary) events it describes. I think that the most fertile space in it is where people can enter it and have an empathetic creative response, and also a critical, rational, creative response.

**RO: You mentioned that you've purposely built the play to feel "broken." Can you say a little more?**

JSD: The play *tries* to combine two different events, or two different forms of discrimination. It can't equate them, but it puts them next to each other on the same plate, and the characters of the Actors get confused about it. I hope that everyone in that room gets confused about it too because I certainly feel confused about it! There's slippage of one sort of racial relation into another, there is a build-up, but there's no cause and effect. Because of the subject matter, the equation of the play is not an equation that works. That's what I mean by it being broken. Of course, this is all very cryptic and vague and may actually be slightly pretentious.

**RO: This play often puts me in mind of Sarah Kane's 1995 play *Blasted*, which connected individual sexual violence in a hotel room in Leeds, UK, with the same impulse that lead to the ethnic cleansing of the Bosnian war. You, too, are making connections across otherwise disconnected cultural and historical moments.**

**JSD**: When I was doing research, I discovered that there are various pictures of Herero people from that time. Very traumatic pictures. There's one image of an execution: black men hanging in a tree. I saw it, and it was just so difficult for me to not associate that with lynchings in the South, even though it's obviously a very very different image. It's sort of like a palimpsest (which traditionally was a manuscript page that was washed and re-used, but the ghosting of its original text always shines through). I feel like American racial dynamics are so drummed into me that I see them in places where they actually aren't, but I also feel like that means that they are kind of everywhere. The violence done one place has resonances in another.

**RO: What excites you about the future of theatre right now?**

**JSD**: I think that people crave—people go to theater because they want to learn something new, and they want to think, and they want to empathize with something that is inconceivable to them. Or that's why I go, and I feel like that's why a lot of different kinds of people go. The American Theatre needs to trust that more, but that's where I put my hope.

## Devising: Collaboration and Confrontation

Throughout *We are Proud to Present a Presentation...* we follow 6 actors as they attempt to create a performance that examines the genocide of the Herero tribe through what can sometimes be referred to as "devised theatre" or "collaborative creation." Defining devised theatre, in all of its intricacies and complexities, is no easy task. However, in its simplest form, devised theatre is theatre in which the script originates not from a writer or writers, but from collaborative, usually improvisatory, work by a group of people or a single artist.

There are several different ways to approach devised theatre and every artist or ensemble will have their own ideas of how this type of work should be done. There can be a single artist, or a large group of people working on a specific project. Often times, these projects will begin with strong thematic content and improvisational exercises surrounding said themes. From these exercises come ideas and language that can serve as the backbone for the script, if not serve as the script itself. The end product will also vary, depending on the project and the artists' vision. "Without a playwright, our ensemble faced the seemingly impossible task of creating a play from scratch with only a theme to guide us...While we could turn for advice to famous examples of devising companies, each follows a slightly different formula. There was no single route to get where we were going," says Alexandra Desaulniers, a member of The Theatre Impossible's Devising Ensemble. Despite the lacking scholarship in the area, there are certain principles on devising that most theatregoers accept to be true:

1. Devising is collaborative.
2. Devising relies heavily on improvisation.
3. Devising is a chosen means to create something original for the stage.
4. Devised theatre must include process: finding the ways and means to share an artistic journey together.

*Ensemble Creation Techniques Workshop at The Ghost Road Company*

## Resources:

> Popular professional theatre companies who practice and embrace devised theatre (to name a few):

- Belgrade Theatre-in-Education Company (pioneers in the field of devised/collaborative theatre)
- The Peoples Show
- Dell'Arte International
- The Ghost Road Company
- The TEAM
- Trestle Theatre
- Impossible Theatre Company

> *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook* by Alison Oddey
Excerpt:
"The process of devising is about the fragmentary experience of understanding ourselves, our culture, and the world we inhabit. The process reflects a multi-vision made up of each group members' individual perception of that world as received in a series of images, then interpreted and defined as a product. Participants make sense of themselves within their own cultural and social context, investigating, integrating, and transforming their personal experiences, dreams, research, improvisation, and experimentation." (page 1)

> Essay: "Growing Up, Devising", by Daniel Kelin, HowlRound
http://howlround.com/growing-up-devising
Excerpt:
"Over subsequent summer trainings, I saw how the devising approach provided opportunities for both personal development and issue understanding at every step in the process. There exists a clear trajectory through the project, one that rises very slowly in the beginning phases of the process but then turns quite steep near the very end. That trajectory demonstrates the need for the students to have time to work through their *novice understanding*, shyness, and reluctance to take risk as well as make sense of the issues and how to transform their ideas into dramatic realities."

> "Collaborators Agreement", by Joan Schirle, Dell' Arte International
http://www.dellarte.com/dellarte.aspx?id=285
Excerpt:
"We agree that we respect each other as artists and as people. We agree to show that respect in word and action.
We agree that our intention is to help each other to do the best work possible.
We agree that our intention is to support each other's creativity."

## Script Analysis and Discussion Questions

Actor 6 / Black Woman
Actor 1/ White Man
Actor 2 / Black Man
Actor 3 / Another White Man
Actor 4 / Another Black Man
Actor 5 / Sarah

**In this scene, Actors 5, 4, and 3 attempt to start an improvisational scene in which they portray Actor 6's grandmother. Note: 5 of the 6 actors do not have character names, and are only described by role number, race, and gender.**

*ACTOR 5 becomes Grandma. It's not ok.*

ACTOR 5: Ooooh, chil'.

ACTOR 6: What are you –

ACTOR 5: Come on guys! Let's improv it!

ACTOR 2: Oh hell no.

ACTOR 4: Awesome.

ACTOR 6: Oh, I don't think we need to.

ACTOR 4: We should at least try it.

ACTOR 6: I don't think so.

ACTOR 5: Why not?

ACTOR 3: Because she wouldn't be in charge.

ACTOR 6: I'm not –

ACTOR 3: It's not supposed to be about leading or following.

ACTOR 4: (sung)We're all in this together.

ACTOR 6: I'm just trying to tell you that –

ACTOR 5: (as *Grandma)* Whatchu think this is? Weez in it now. Can't just tell a talk no mo.

ACTOR 4: Come on, we'll support you. Just talk to her.

ACTOR 5: (as *Grandma)* Talk to me girl.

ACTOR 2: Mmn-mm, we aren't doing this.

ACTOR 6: No. No – we can do this. But this is my Grandma, ok? I can't just –

*ACTOR 4 becomes Grandma. Again, not ok.*

ACTOR 4: *(as Grandma)* Oooooh, chil'. Talk to me girl.

ACTOR 6: Uh-uh. We are exploring, but that is just too Tyler Perry for me.

*ACTOR 3 becomes Grandma. Not Ok. But … pretty good?*

ACTOR 3: *(as Grandma)* Ooooh, chil'.

ACTOR 6: Oh no –

ACTOR 3: Mmmmmmm-hmm. You can't play your own grandma, girl.

ACTOR 6: You're right, but my Grandma –

ACTOR 3: *(as Grandma)* Don't 'My Grandma' me. You better let me talk when I am talking, girl. There's Talking and then there's Listeningand when I'm around you better just introduce yourself as Listening.

*Beat. ACTOR 5 jumps and claps.*

ACTOR 5: Yay!

ACTOR 6: Ok. Fine.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Why do you think Actor 6 is so hesitant to go along with the improvised scene? Do you think she is right in her reluctance? Why or why not?

2. In an excerpt above, Joan Schirle explains an agreement between a devising ensemble: "We agree that we respect each other as artists and as people. We agree to show that respect in word and action." Discuss the excerpt from the play as it relates to Schirle's agreement.

3. Think of a time in which you felt offended or uncomfortable by something that was happening around you. What, if anything, could you have done to appease the situation?

# Lesson Plan: Collaboration in the Classroom and on Stage

Objectives:

- Demonstrate cooperation and collaboration in a group
- Identify a variety of sources from which to create dramatic material
- Take and give direction effectively
- Distinguish between effective and ineffective material to be included in a performance piece
- Create original characters and storylines
- Create an original piece of theatre

Materials:

- List of topics of interest (We have listed example topics here, however feel free to use topics being discussed in the current curriculum)
    - The U.S Civil Rights Movement
    - The U.S Civil War
    - The Armenian Genocide
    - The Genocide in Darfur
    - The Rwandan Genocide
    - Anti-Semitism
- Newspaper Articles (Other research tools can be used, such as online articles, books, magazines, etc.)

Length: Two 45 minute sessions

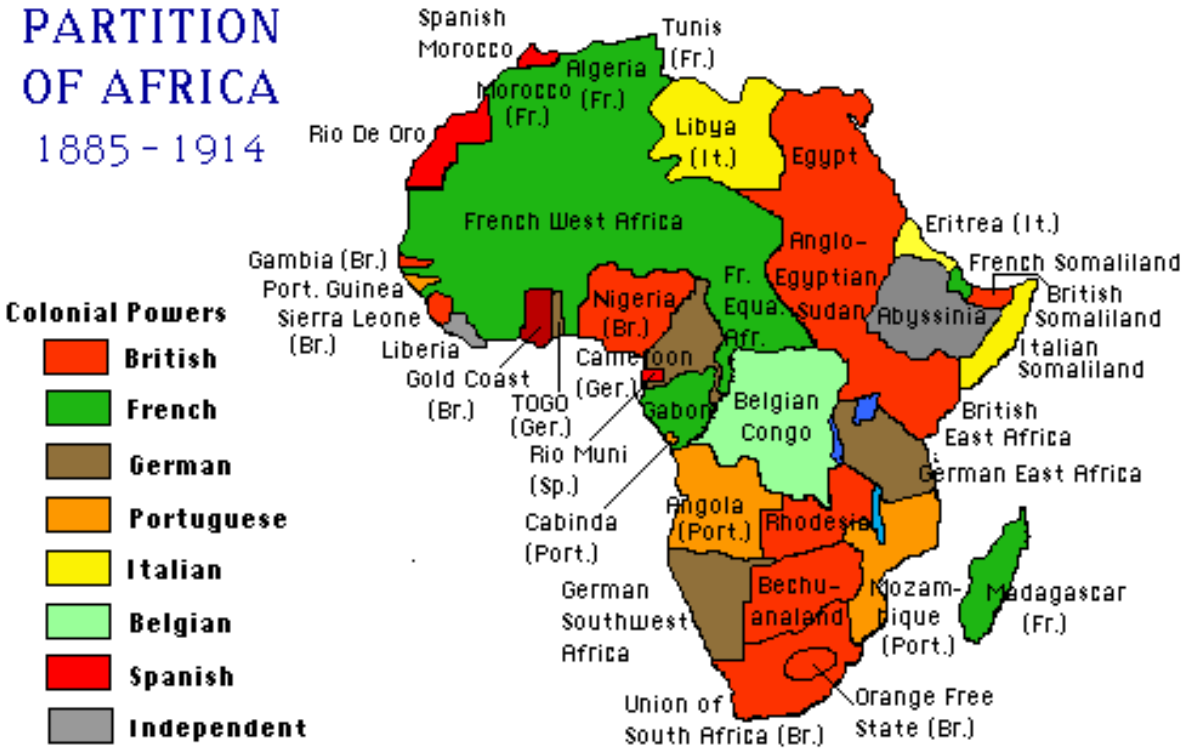
Activity:

1. Pair students into groups of 3-5, depending on class size.
2. Have the students choose a topic from the list above, or a list designated by the teacher.
3. Have the students bring in articles that relate to a topic they have chosen to explore.
4. During the first session, have each group use one or several articles to create a short piece to share with the class. The performance piece could include monologues written by students, tableaux (a depiction of a scene usually presented on a stage by silent and motionless participants), movement, reading of the article, choral speak, improvisation of an event in the article, song, dance, etc. The piece should be no longer than 5 minutes.
5. During the second session, have the students perform their pieces in front of the classroom.
6. Follow up with a discussion:
    - What were some of the difficulties the group faced and why?
    - Did the sensitivity of the material pose as a challenge, why or why not?
    - How did you overcome some of these challenges?
    - What were some of the benefits from working in a collaborative setting?
    - What did you take away from this exercise?

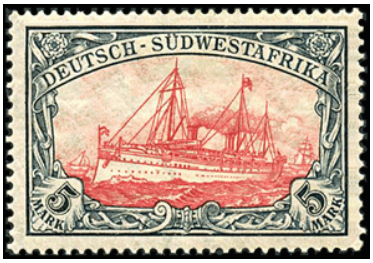
# Colonialism: The Scramble for Africa

In the first scene of *We are Proud to Present a Presentation…* the actors put together a timeline of German rule in Southwest Africa between 1884 and 1915. Their simplified version of German imperial rule in Africa stems from a much larger epidemic known as colonialism. The term colonialism dates back to as early as 3000BC, starting with the pre-colonial African Empires which led to Egyptians, Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans who all built colonies in antiquity: city-states founded from a mother city. The practice of colonialism usually involved the transfer of a population to a new territory, where the arrivals lived as permanent settlers while maintaining political allegiance to their country of origin. In most cases the motivation was to establish and facilitate relations of trade with foreign countries and further the wealth of the mother-city.

The most prolific colonial era was the European Colonial Period from the1500s to the mid-20th century in which European powers such as Britain, Portugal, Spain, France, and Germany established colonies in Asia, Africa, and the Americas. During a time when Europe's balance of trade showed a growing deficit, Africa, in particular, offered Britain, Germany, France, and other countries an open market that would garner them a trade surplus: a market that bought more from the colonial power than it sold overall. This imperial invasion, occupation, and colonization of Africa between the years 1881 and 1914 would later be referred to as "The Scramble for Africa".



Britain cut the largest piece of African cake from Cairo to Cape Town in addition to Nigeria and a few West African regions. The French took an east/west slice of the continent as well as Madagascar. The Belgians took Rwanda, Burundi and the Congo. The Portuguese dominated Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea Bissau well into the 1970's. The Italians took Libya, Eritrea, and Somalia. The Germans added Cameroon and Tanzania before taking over Namibia and committing the first genocide of the 20th century against the Herero and Namaqua. The German flag was finally raised in South-West Africa on August 7,1884 and the territory became known as *Deutsch-Südwestafrika* (German Southwest Africa).




In Jackie Sibblies Drury's play, and in the sections to follow, we examine how the German rule turned into an atrocious infraction on humanity and the ways we deal, or don't deal, with such occurrences.

## Resources:

> "Uganda Rising", a film by Pete McCormack
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pw12KGSj53k
Excerpt:
"Colonization was motivated by the European hunger for African resources. The subsequent exploitation of the African people and the uprooting of their spiritual values by Christian missionaries would leave a permanent European stamp on the continent. The mind set is that barbarians are backward and inferior and for their own benefit we have to uplift them, and civilize them and educate them and so on. The psychology behind it is kind of transparent. When you've got your boot on someone's neck and you're crushing them, you can't say to your self 'I'm a son of a b**** and I'm doing it for my own benefit', so what you have to do is figure out some way of saying 'I'm doing it for their own benefit', and that's a very natural position to take when you're beating somebody with a club."

> "Slavery and the Scramble for Africa", by Dr. Saul David, BBC
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/abolition/scramble_for_africa_article_01.shtml
Excerpt:
"The Berlin Conference began the process of carving up Africa, paying no attention to local culture or ethnic groups, and leaving people from the same tribe on separate sides of European-imposed borders."

> *The Scramble for Africa* by Thomas Packenham

## Script Analysis and Discussion Questions

Actor 6 / Black Woman
Actor 1/ White Man
Actor 2 / Black Man
Actor 3 / Another White Man
Actor 4 / Another Black Man
Actor 5 / Sarah

**In the opening scene, Actors 1-6 put together an overview of German Southwest Africa between the years 1884 and 1915:**

ALL: An Overview of German South West Africa Between the Years 1884 and 1915.

ACTOR 6: 1884

ACTOR 1: Germany is in charge.

ACTOR 3: Sort of. All the tribes are actively not saying they hate us.

ACTOR 2 & 4: Hey Germany. We aren't *saying* we hate you.

ACTOR 6: 1885

ACTOR 2: Agreements are reached with tribal leaders –

ACTOR 1: Germany is totally in charge.

ACTOR 2: Well, some of the tribal leaders.

ACTOR 6: 1886

ACTOR 1: Germany is like actually in charge.

ACTOR 3: Germany is telling other people that they're in charge.

ACTOR 1: Germany is like basically actually in charge.

… [Indicates time has passed]

ACTOR 1: Germany tinkers a little with the law.

ACTOR 3: If you are German and a cow wanders on to your land:

ACTOR 4: It's yours!

ACTOR 3: If you try to take a cow from a German and you aren't a German:

ACTOR 2: You get hanged.

ACTOR 1: Problem solved.

ACTOR 6: 1902

ACTOR 1: Germany tinkers a little more with the law.

ACTOR 3: If you are German and you see land that doesn't belong to a German:

ACTOR 4: It's yours!

ACTOR 3: If you contest a German land claim and you aren't German:

ACTOR 2: You get hanged.

ACTOR 3: If you are German and you see cattle on the land you have just claimed:

ACTOR 4: The cattle are yours!

ACTOR 3: If you steal cattle from a German and you aren't German:

ACTOR 2: You get hanged.

## **Discussion Questions:**

1. Discuss the way that the playwright rapidly and sometimes ridiculously illustrates German Colonization of Southwest Africa. Why do you think she does this and what purpose does it serve?

2. Discuss the ways that colonization can often times lead to violence and murder. Why do you think that is? What purpose does violence serve in colonization?

3. Discuss the ways that we, as a society, can prevent the subsequent violence that stems from colonization, and colonization itself. What kind of policies and regulations could help prevent colonization?

# Lesson Plan: Remembering the Herero and the Namaqua

Objectives:

- Use effective brainstorming techniques
- Identify reliable sources for research
- Demonstrate an ability to think creatively and abstractly about research materials
- Analyze social, cultural, and economic affects of colonization through the lenses of the Herero and Namaqua tribes.

Materials:

- Paper
- Colored Pencils, Markers, Crayons (decorative supplies)
- Research Materials (books, magazines, newspapers, internet, etc.)

Length: Two in-class 45 minute sessions, outside research

Activity:

1. Have the students research the Herero and Namaqua tribes:
    - Languages
    - Religious Traditions
    - Daily life
    - Cultural norms

2. Show students Iranian American artist Sara Rabar's textile flags. *(http://www.sararahbar.com/index.php?page=20)*
Here, the artist takes the American Flag image and infuses it with different symbology. Discuss the flags and Artist Statement with the students. What is the artist attempting to do here?

Artist Statement:
*It's about falling, standing and attempting to survive it all. In the end we are all just visiting and we all come to this world alone and we leave alone. But while we are here we try so desperately to belong to something, to someone and to somewhere. Metamorphosing and transforming for the means of surviving it all, our foundations lay, but our houses have burned to the ground. Building castles in the sky, for a species that cannot fly, brick by limb we tear it down.*

3. Task students with creating a visual representation of the Herero and Namaqua cultural identities by making flags made solely of images. They can use colored pencils, symbols cut from colored paper, but no words.

Flag Template: (http://www.teachervision.fen.com/flag---day/printable/5925.html)

4. Using Sarah's artist statement as guiding inspiration, students should write a 5-10 sentence artist statement representing the cultural identities of either the Herero or Namaqua tribes. They can be abstract if they wish, as Sarah's is, or more concrete, explaining their symbols directly.

5. Students present work in front of class and discuss:

- When researching the Herero and Namaqua, did you find it difficult to uncover substantial information about the tribes? If so, why do you think that is?
- What were some of the things that most stood out to you while researching each tribe, and why?

## Genocide: Bystanders and Upstanders

Genocide is most often defined as the deliberate and systematic destruction, in whole or in part, of an ethnic, racial, religious, or national group. The word 'genocide' was coined by Raphael Lemkin, a Jewish Polish lawyer, following the Nazi destruction of the Jews in Europe. He used a combination of Greek and Latin words: *geno* (race or tribe) and *cide* (killing). Due, in large part, to Lemkin's untiring efforts and campaigns, the United Nations approved the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* on December 9, 1948. Despite the Convention's best efforts to prosecute against crimes of genocide, specifically against Rwanda, Yugoslavia, and Cambodia, there were several crimes against humanity and instances of genocide that occurred before the acceptance of the CPPCG in 1948.

The Soviet Famine of 1932-1933 caused by the government of Joseph Stalin (Highest estimated loss: 8,000,000), the Armenian Genocide from 1915-1923 (Highest estimated loss: 1,500,000), The Hazara Genocide in Afghanistan from 1888-1890 (Estimated loss: 1,500,000), the Assyrian Genocide from 1915-1918 (Highest estimated loss: 750,000), and the first genocide of the 20th Century, the Herero and Namaqua Genocide from 1904-1908 (Highest estimated loss: 75,000), to name a few.


The German military colonized Southwest Africa in 1884 and a combination of factors, not least white pressure on native lands, caused the dominant tribe in the colony, the Herero, to rebel in January of 1904. Crushing these uprisings, led my Samuel Maharero, "took over three years, cost almost 600 million marks, and involved 14,000 soldiers transferred from the German Army." Unused to fighting in desert conditions, the German military was threatened with the loss of 1,500 soldiers, which subsequently led to the "final solution".

The supreme Commander of German troops in German Southwest Africa, Lothar von Trotha, "announced in October 1904 his intention to achieve a final solution in SWA, in which mass death to the point of extermination was an acceptable outcome." In his

*Vernichtungsbefehl* or extermination order, Trotha demands the Herero vacate their homes, or "German territory", and if any are found within the German frontier, they would be shot and killed; women and children were not to be spared. German soldiers forced the Herero into harsh desert conditions, poisoned watering holes, and executed any tribe members who attempted to return. After the war, Trotha explains, "This bold enterprise shows up in the most brilliant light the ruthless energy of the German command in pursuing their beaten enemy. No pains, no sacrifices were spared in eliminating the last remnants of enemy resistance. Like a wounded beast the enemy was tracked down from one water-hole to the next, until finally he became the victim of his own environment. The arid Omaheke [desert] was to complete what the German army had begun: the extermination of the Herero nation."

Despite his optimum efforts to rationalize and justify his actions, it turns out that neither the genocide, nor the extermination order was ordered from Berlin. Not only was no order given, but in the book *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*, authors Robert Gellately and Ben Kierna explain, "...Trotha's *Vernichtungsbefehl* (policy of destruction) was opposed by Governor Leutwein; Chancellor Bulow; the Social Democrats and Left Liberals in the Reichstag, missionaries; even ruthless Social Darwinists like Paul Rohrbach, who was in SWA when the revolt broke out; and finally and belatedly, also by the white settlers there, who did not want their labor supply eliminated."

When such opposition towards the mass destruction of a human race exists, one then has to ask, "Who let this happen?" In the face of such barbarity, there are two groups of people: bystanders and upstanders. A bystander is a person who is present at an event or incident but does not take part or take action to stop it, while an upstander is a person who stands up for something, as contrasted to a bystander who remains inactive. In the following discussion and lesson plans, we will take a closer look at those who took action against the German rule, and those who did not.

## Resources:

> The *Vernichtungsbefehl* or extermination order, by Lieutenant General Lothar von Trotha
https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/4819/asc-1293873-029.pdf?sequence=1
Excerpt:
"I, the great General of the German troops, send this letter to the Herero people. The Herero are no longer German subjects. They have murdered and stolen, they have cut off the ears, noses and other body-parts of wounded soldiers, now out of cowardice they no longer wish to fight. I say to the people: Anyone who delivers a captain will receive 1000 Mark, whoever delivers Samuel will receive 5000 Mark. The Herero people must however leave the land. If the populace does not do this I will force them with the *Groot Rohr* [Cannon]. Within the German borders every Herero, with or without a gun, with or without cattle, will be shot. I will no longer accept women and children, I will drive them back to their people or I will let them be shot at. These are my words to the Herero people.
The great General of the mighty German Kaiser"

> Text of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html
Excerpt:
"**Article 2**
In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group."

> *The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective* edited by Robert Gellately, Ben Kiernan
Excerpt:
"Most historians accept a death rate of between 75 and 80 percent for the Herero (out of an original population of 60,000-80,000), and of about 45-50 percent of the Nama (whose prewar numbers were around 20,000). Official German military statistics admitted that the internment camps, which contained not just surrendering male rebels but also women and children, had compiled a death rate of 45 percent. In addition to the sheer numbers, the commander who set this military policy, Lieutenant General Lothar von Trotha (June 1904-November 1905), announced in October 1904 his intention to achieve a final solution in SWA, in which mass death to the point of extermination was an acceptable outcome."
(Page 144-145)

# Script Analysis and Discussion Questions

Actor 6 / Black Woman
Actor 1/ White Man
Actor 2 / Black Man
Actor 3 / Another White Man
Actor 4 / Another Black Man
Actor 5 / Sarah

**In the previous scene, we see Actor 1 portraying a German soldier who shot and killed Actor 2 portraying a Herero tribesman. This is what follows:**

ACTOR 1: Can I have a minute?

ACTOR 6: Fine. Take a minute.

ACTOR 1: I can't do this.

ACTOR 6: You just did.

*ACTOR 1 takes a few seconds.*

ACTOR 1: I can't – I'm not that person.

ACTOR 2: Neither am I.

ACTOR 6: Can we help Black Man up people?

*ACTORS 4 & 5 help ACTOR 2 up.*

ACTOR 6: You guys just did some amazing work. Really great. But we can't keep stopping like this. We need to stay in it and move or we're never going to figure out this whole genocide thing.

ACTOR 1: No. I can't do this.

ACTOR 6: Yes you can.

ACTOR 1: I'm not – I'm not the kind of person who could have done that –

ACTOR 2: I'm the one that got shot.

ACTOR 1: But I wouldn't have done that if –

ACTOR 6: We all know that. It's just, White Man –

ACTOR 1: Can you stop calling me White Man?!

ACTOR 6: No.

ACTOR 1: I've got a name.

ACTOR 6: I know.

ACTOR 1: And if it was me in that situation, if it was me, I would have let him go. I would have. I wanted to.

ACTOR 6: So why didn't you.

ACTOR 1: Because – because that wasn't what happened. That wasn't what he could have done.

ACTOR 6: That's right.

## Discussion Questions

1. When Actor 1 says that he couldn't let Actor 2 go because "that wasn't what happened. That wasn't what he could have done", what do you think he means? Why couldn't a German Soldier let a Herero or Namaqua tribesman go without shooting him?

2. Imagine that the German soldiers were like Actor 1; that they shot and killed thousands of Herero and Namaqua because they "had to". What choices did the soldiers have? What were the consequences of those choices?

3. Discuss ways that German soldiers could have been upstanders and could have taken action against the Extermination Order. How might History be different?

# Lesson Plan: Stand Up, Upstanders

Objectives:

- Examine primary and secondary sources to learn about the range of choices available to individuals, groups, and nations in response to the Herero and Namaqua Genocide
- Understand the dilemmas facing individuals, groups, and nations responding to genocide
- Consider their own actions when confronted with information about acts of injustice in their community.
- Develop a deeper understanding of the complexity of antigenocide and humanitarian activism.
- Recognize that activists can apply different goals and different strategies as they work to address the same problem

Materials:

- Paper
- Pencils
- Appropriate Research Materials

Length: Two in-class 45 minute sessions, outside research

Activity:

1. Ask students to think about an example of injustice they know about in their community or have heard about on the news. Have students consider why, when people witness an injustice some get involved to make a positive difference, while others either remain silent or actively join the perpetrators? Discuss as a class the following questions:

- What kind of actions could a bystander take to enact positive change against the injustices being committed?
    - Letters
    - Verbal Pleas
    - Legal Action
    - Word of mouth
    - Campaigns
    - What else?
- Discuss the challenges a bystander might face when deciding to take action against injustices.

2. Ask students to research Governor Theodor Leutwein, a colonial administrator of German Southwest Africa who was known for being too lenient with the Herero and who opposed Trotha's Extermination Order.

- First ask students to review the individual's actions. What if that person had made a different choice? How might history have been different? What actions would have been necessary?
- Then ask students to write a persuasive letter from Theodor Leutwein in response to Lothar von Trotha's Extermination Order, in an attempt to stop the order.
- Have students read their letters out-loud in class, and discuss.

## Final Thoughts:

The information, script analysis, discussion questions, and lesson plans examined above, are meant to serve as insight and curriculum to better help students and teachers engage in Company One Theatre's production of Jackie Sibblie Drury's *We are Proud to Present a Presentation About the Herero of Namibia, Formerly Known as Southwest Africa, From the German Sudwestkafrika, Between the Years 1884-1915.*

If you have any questions about the information included in this packet, or about how to get students to see the show, please feel free to contact stageone@companyone.org or srecio@companyone.org.

## Resources:


>*The Specter of Genocide: Mass Murder in Historical Perspective*
edited by Robert Gellately, Ben Kierna

> *Devising Theatre: A Practical and Theoretical Handbook*
By Alison Oddey

> http://howlround.com/growing-up-devising

> http://www.dellarte.com/dellarte.aspx?id=285

> http://ghostroad.org/january-12-ensemble-creation-techniques-workshop/

> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/German_South-West_Africa

> http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pw12KGSj53k

> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herero_and_Namaqua_Genocide#cite_note-56

> http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theodor_Leutwein

> http://legal.un.org/avl/ha/cppcg/cppcg.html

> https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/4819/asc-1293873-029.pdf?sequence=1

> http://www.facinghistory.org/

> http://history.howstuffworks.com/history-vs-myth/centurys-first-genocide1.htm

> http://www.ppu.org.uk/genocide/g_namibia1.html