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Transcript of an Audio-Recorded Conversation in Post-Conflict Rwanda

Participants:

- Ufiteyezu Manzi David **Relation:** Foster brother
- Nyirahategekimanu Marie Josie **Relation:** Foster sister

Facilitator: Bayisenge Françoise

Date: 25/08/2009

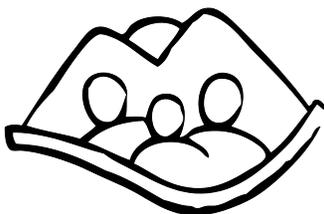
Recording Location: Kigali

Story Number: SFH0079



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Ufiteyezu Manzi David & Nyirahategekimana Marie Josie

Story Number: SFH0079

Short Description: Manzi wants to tell his foster sister/cousin, Marie, the story of his survival during the 1994 genocide, and the fate of their extended family. She listens to details of his extraordinary story of his many escapes from death, and the horrors he witnessed as a young boy. The story describes how his parents' mixed marriage saved him, plus the outreach from persons of both Hutu and Twa backgrounds. Even cows were his salvation one awful day; another time he was only survivor of a bomb blast that killed over 100. Although 'inflating my nose at the roadblocks' helped Manzi stay alive, he reflects on the destructive nature of ethnic conflict. Marie agrees, adding that "...since we have come this far, there is hope for a brighter future."

Tags: Genocide, Gitarama, Orphans, Trauma, Mixed Marriage, Twa

Manzi: My names are Ufiteyezu Manzi David

Marie: My names are Nyirahategekimana Marie Josie

Facilitator: What is your relationship?

Manzi: We were brought together by the genocide and by our parents

Facilitator: Please go ahead (and share your story)

Manzi: I want to share with you of my experiences during the genocide. At the time, I lived with my maternal grandparents. As a first hand witness, I want to share with you the story of how (our grandparents) were killed and what happened during the genocide as I saw it, from the start to the end because I was there.

A conversation between Ufiteyezu Manzi David and Nyirahategekimana Marie Josie

I vividly remember watching grandpa and his siblings, grand aunts and uncles getting burnt alive. Five days later, I also witness the murder of our paternal grandmother. After the genocide, (gets very emotional), we were orphaned and never again did we have the aid of parental guidance and financial support.

Marie: Before you move to how the genocide affected us, tell me exactly what happened during the genocide.

Manzi: (Are you sure) you want to know the details from the start?

Marie: Yes

Manzi: Grandpa and all his siblings were taken up a hill in at Commune Kayenzi, Sector Bitari in Gitarama. They were killed at the government offices of the Sector by a neighbor man who my family had given cattle and land. He took them to the building, called on his fellow *interahamwe*, he set fire wood and spilled petroleum around the building and burnt them all.

Marie: .. And you witnessed all this?

Manzi: Yes, I did. In fact what they (*interahamwe*) did was to burn the men alive and bury the women alive. The children who seemed strong enough to climb out of the mass graves were hacked with machetes before being thrown in. Those who were a little older were thrown in alive. The only reason I was saved is because my father was unknown and it was rumored that he was Hutu. I did not witness my maternal grandmother's murder as clearly I did that of my paternal grandmother. After the death of my paternal family, I traveled to Kigali from Gitarama to find my paternal grandparents with the help of the family godfather who was familiar with my family's history.

Marie: Why did they spare you?

Manzi: They were debating that there was a chance they could kill their one of their own (Hutu) because no one knew my father and he was born in Kigali while mum was born in Gitarama. The distance in between is what prevented them from identifying who he was. My father was working in Onatracom (National bus service). He was not at home and I was unable to meet him so I proceeded to my paternal grandmothers home since I had nowhere else to go. I found her alive and well but the same day they came to kill her.

On this day, I was saved by fleeing cattle. *Interahamwe* attacked our home and my grandmother and I fled towards my grand uncle's cattle shed with our killers pursuing

A conversation between Ufiteyezu Manzi David and Nyirahategekimana Marie Josie

us closely. When we got there, the cows were frightened by the unfamiliar people and noises so they started fleeing as well. My grandmother was captured but in addition to killing us, the *interahamwe* also intended to loot some of these cows. One of them then said to me, 'You stupid boy, go and try to stop those cows since you live here they will be familiar with you.' I ran in the same direction the cows had gone but I never returned. Before I left, I had seen them hack my grandmother with a machete and dump her in a hole at location called CND.

After the genocide, we faced many problems as orphans. We never had any elders to offer us advice or guidance. All other survivors who we could have gone to for consolation and support like elders, friends, brothers and sisters were just as traumatized as we were and could not offer us any advice. In that regard, now that I speak to you as my only surviving family member do you have any questions that you wish to ask me?

Marie: What happened after you survived the night when your grandmother was killed? When was this?

Manzi: Well, I survived but faced other challenges later.

Marie: When was this?

Manzi: It was on 12 April 1994.

Marie: One week after the genocide?

Manzi: Yes, I remember very well that my family (in Gikurama) had been first attacked and killed on the night of April 7th 1994. I arrived in Kigali on the tenth.

Marie: Could you go ahead and tell me what happened next?

Manzi: I ran in the directions of the cows and they eventually stopped because they were familiar with me; I used to herd and feed them sometimes. When the *interahamwe* came, they got very excited and then distracted by all the meat they would get from the cows and started slaughtering the cows. One of them had an afterthought and came back after some of the members of my family who had not been killed. I went and hid in (former president) Habyarimana's forest which was nearby. But this was not safe either because there was a powerful artillery gun stationed across at Habyarimana's hotel that targeted the forest and fired directly into it to flush out refugees. Fortunately, of all the bullets that were fired, none got me.

A conversation between Ufiteyezu Manzi David and Nyirahategekimana Marie Josie

Marie: Let us go back to the *interahamwe* who had the afterthought.. Was his intention to kill you or save you?

Manzi: He came to kill but we had all got some time to hide or escape. There was a young boy who lived at home who was killed.

Marie: Did they eventually track you and our family later on.

Manzi: About 3 days later, around the 13 or the 14th...I can't recall exactly... but most likely the 14th (of April) To give you a background of this incident, my mother was a clothing retailer. She saved all her money under a huge pot at my grandmother's house.

On that day, my father's Methodist pastor called Lazarus rounded up villager and took them to get killed. As they approached the place where they were all to be killed, one of the (hutu) villagers challenged the pastor to spare my mother, '*How can you kill that woman when you prayed with her husband every day?*'

When he heard this, he was touched, decided to spare them and took some of the victims to a nearby home. Pleased that her life had been spared, my mother revealed to the pastor the location of a place where she hid all her money. As soon as he got the money, he called on other *interahamwe* to come and kill her and all her family to make sure that no one would come back to demand the money from him.

I arrived at the very moment when they were being lined up to go and get killed. We were taken to my home so we could all get killed. At home we found our house had been burned to the ground, close to the toilet I saw the body of my brother Kalisa Anthony and my grand uncle Gasiani Gateraho. The lawless on the loan and were being dragged to get thrown into the pit latrine toilet. Once again, we were saved by a man (*interahamwe*) from Ruhengeri who had been financially assisted by my father in the past. He pointed us to a path that we used to sneak out. The Lord helped us to live on everyday miraculously.

Facilitator: Marie, do you have a question?

Marie: What happened after you sneaked out? Did you meet more killers? Was that man from Ruhengeri heroic enough not to reveal that he had sneaked you out?

Manzi: We went up to house which was occupied by a Twa family. They had been told to ran away to this house to '*prevent them from catching the stench of snakes.*' The snakes in question were Tutsis. When we got there, we were found by Hutu's who came and started quarreling over my mother's money. They then instructed that an

A conversation between Ufiteyezu Manzi David and Nyirahategekimana Marie Josie

armed *interahamwe* called Gabriel remain behind to watch us. He was ordered to make sure we did not live that house which was at the base of the mountain in the forest of Habyarimana. We were easily accessible by *interahamwe*. I remember being attacked by an influential *interahamwe* called Gaspard who is now in prison. He was actually a Tutsi who had turned himself Hutu and gone on to become a notorious killer. We assured him that we had been put under house arrest on the orders of an even more senior *interahamwe* and that he would be in danger if he killed us.

Marie: Aside from the referring to the power of the Lord, is there anything you did as an individual that led to your survival? So many people were burnt, killed, hacked to death yet you always survived. Were you brave or special in any way?

Manzi: There was no bravery really. Perhaps I could say that I was able to disguise myself when I went to different areas and pass as a Hutu but in our home area, everyone knew me. I was short and stocky so I easily blended in (with Hutu's) when there was an inspection. I would breathe in and inflate my nose at roadblocks and in public. I cannot lay claim to any bravery, because I was very young.

Marie: When the genocide took place did you know that you were a Tutsi?

Manzi: The genocide took place when I had just completed third grade. In kindergarten I went to school with Kongole's children. He was a very prominent *interahamwe* in Gikondo. I also went to school with the children of Bucyana, the head of CDR in the entire Ngali. So you can see, from Kindergarten I was identified and put aside along with other Tutsis I went to school with. My family was extended family the only tutsi family in that area of Gikondo, we were known as 'Abagangura'; because of that, everyone knew who we were. In class the teacher would often ask for the Tutsis to stand up and identify themselves and I could not escape this.

However, as I told you before when I travelled to areas where no one knew me, I claimed to be a Hutu in order to save my life.

Marie: Did you ever before think that being a Tutsi would turn out to be dangerous?

Manzi: Yes, I remember an incident in 1993 when I went to pray at a Methodist church with two friends a female and a male of mine. And they were beaten almost to death '*because they were snakes!*' From Kindergarten to the genocide, I knew my ethnic group and that we were being killed everyday.

Marie: Tell me how you survived and who you survived with?

A conversation between Ufiteyezu Manzi David and Nyirahategekimana Marie Josie

Let me take you back to the house where we were staying (with the Twa family). We had been given only three days to live in that house and had been told that we would be among the last Tutsis to be killed in Kigali. As the RPF *Inkotanyi*, started to take over Kigali, the *interahamwe* intensified their attacks, a grenade was thrown into our house but miraculously everyone survived. Soon after, the RPF came and saved us. One of the officers told us that we were lucky to be alive because the type of grenade that had been thrown in our house was very deadly.

Marie: Where did the RPF take you?

Manzi: We were taken to Rebero but while we were there, the fighting intensified and we were taken to Gishyushu. From that point on, I lost contact with my family and went to hid in a house in Gishyushu. In this house there were over 100 people but there was a military roadblock close by; One day a bomb was thrown in and everyone was killed. I remember walking out looking back and there was no one behind me. I was the only survivor.

Marie: Did you suffer any injuries?

Manzi: I suffered an injury right here but it was minor.

Marie: You healed immediately.

Manzi: Yes, I healed immediately although sometimes I feel a light pain.

Marie: After the genocide which members of your family did you find had survived

Manzi: My father survived. I later met him and he was fine but shortly after in 1997, he was attacked and hacked by machetes. He is now disabled.

Marie: Why was he attacked after the genocide?

Manzi: They (*interahamwe*) were frustrated because he survived and they were scared that he would bear witness against them in the courts.

Marie: Who else survived?

Manzi: Surprisingly most of my nuclear family survived; however, they all face different and difficult post genocide challenge. My sister for instance was among the group that I told you about which was buried alive. Because of spending sometime buried, she now has heart problems and severe trauma. It gets very serious during the month April and we have to take her far away. Another problem is that we faced many financial and

A conversation between Ufiteyezu Manzi David and Nyirahategekimana Marie Josie

social problems; our property was burned and destroyed so I decided to live independently of my family.

Marie: Where is the rest of your family?

Manzi: Like I said, I have surviving family members but I chose to live on my own.

Marie: Do they live in Gitarama?

Manzi: No, they live in Kigali, Gikondo. Remember what I told you about Kalisa who I found laying dead at our house when it was burnt to the ground? Well his wife and several children were also killed during the genocide. I adopted his son and he is now part of my family. He means everything to me. I now live with him and my companion.

Marie: Could you tell me about life after the genocide?

Manzi: Well, I can say that I am now a parent because of the effects of the genocide. My companion may also have many unanswered questions about my parents and my family. She is here now and I am open to answer all these questions.

Marie: How are you related to this companion?

Manzi: We met after the genocide, we had the same problems. We are not biologically related but we came together like brother and sister.

Marie: Do you have any questions regarding the life you lived together? (question directed at companion)

Companion: We (Manzi and I) met long after the genocide when he moved into the reconciliation village created for poor survivors of the genocide. My question is; did you decide to live on your own immediately after the genocide or did you make this decision after living on your own for a while?

Manzi: I actually did not clarify that very well. On my mother's side, three female cousins survived. On my father's side, eight siblings and I were the survivors of the genocide. When we all eventually found our way back home our house was destroyed. We managed to build another one but it was much smaller and, crowded. I could not share a bedroom with four females. The number was too big to live in one place. I also realized that it was time for me to be a man, since my father was ageing and weak. After I finish primary school I told my parents that I was going out to struggle on my own and make ends meet and that I would support them if I did well.

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Companion: Did you have a place to go when you left home or did you simply move without a sense of direction because you were frustrated with the situation at home.

Manzi: I left frustrated but also determined. I remember leaving around the time I started going to school. My plan was not to return home after going to high school. I would seek employment close to the school and live there as well. While other students would go for holidays, I would simply do manual labor around the school.

Marie: How did this work out for you?

Manzi: It did not work out very well. Having to work to meet my expenses like transport, food and rent stretched me thin and I had to drop out of school. Fortunately, the government of national unity stepped in and gave us free housing which cut down the cost of rent. When you have a place to stay, life is easy.

Marie: How do you buy food?

Manzi: Well it is a challenge because I have no money, no full-time job and no education. I developed some technical skills so from time to time I get short-term manual work which helps me to survive with day-to-day expenses. Sometimes one of my fellow orphans will call me for a day's work and pay me one thousand francs.

Marie: What happens when you don't get this opportunity to work during the day and make one thousand francs? What do you do?

Manzi: Well you know how these things go. Sometimes I come back without any rice or sugar and we go to sleep hungry, hoping that the next day will bring better luck.

Facilitator: Do you have a final word and message that you wish to share with your friend to conclude this discussion?

Manzi: My final piece of advice is that fifteen years after genocide we (Tutsis) are now blessed with opportunities to study and prosper which did not exist before the genocide. Be disciplined and don't be distracted by negative influences because this will not benefit you. It is also important that you pursue your education against all current difficulties because this will give you hope for prosperity in the future. You will be able to reach heights that none of your relatives or friends achieved and this will empower you to be there for them when they need you.

Facilitator: You have given advice to your friend, now could you please also offer some advice to parents and Rwandese in general.

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Manzi: Even though am much younger than most parents, I would like to advise them to pay more attention to the young generation. Sometimes parents avoid the youth because they think we are coming to ask them for financial support yet what we really want is advice and positive ideas from our elders. I also believe that elders should be parents to all children in the community whether they gave birth to them or not they should set a good example and offer them a helping hand when they are in need.

Marie: I have learned many lessons from your experiences and past. I have also gained advice on how to carry myself in the present in order to prepare myself for a future of hope. I am hopeful that since we have come this far, there is hope for a brighter future.

Facilitator: What particular lesson did you gain from his experience in the genocide? Do you have any comments on this?

Marie: I think the genocide was cause by ethnic division and everyone thought that they had to reinforce their ethnic groups. This resulted in killings which also resulted in all the problems we face today. I urge everyone to focus on personal development instead of ethnicity because we are all Rwandese.

Manzi: To supplement what you have just said, I wish to share something else with you. In the past when people met they observed each other's physical appearance height, weight and size of nose (in order to classify them as Hutu or Tutsi). I would like to see this change today. We shouldn't look at each other in this way when we are in public places like churches. We should forget about ethnicity, leave the past behind and remember that we are all descendants of Adam.

Facilitator & Marie: And we should struggle to make sure the genocide never happens again.

Manzi: Yes, we should value life.