

## STORIES FOR HOPE

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• ph: 734.678.5512 (US) / 0788260317 (RW) •  
email: [ppasick@gmail.com](mailto:ppasick@gmail.com)

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

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#### Participants:

- **Mikamagiza Chaste** **Relation:** Landlord
- **Uwayezu Janvier** **Relation:** Tennant

#### Facilitator:

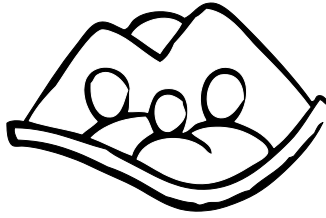
**Date:** August 2009

**Recording Location:** Kigali

**Story Number:** SFH0083

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### (Mikamagiza Chaste & Uwayezu Janvier)

Story Number: SFH0083

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**Uwayezu Janvier:** My name is Uwayezu Janvier

**Mikamagiza Chaste:** My name is Mukamagiza Chaste

**Janvier:** As I said, my name is Uwayezu Janview and this is a mother whose house I rent. We got to know each other, we also became friends and she is like a mother to me. The question I want to ask –I brought you here because I am very to know how you lived. I notice that you are a person who exhibits exemplariness and you have a good marriage. How did you carry yourself as a girl to the point you got married? Was it that you were raised well by your parents, was it your friends, can you tell me in detail?

**Chaste:** Well in detail, everything is given by God. I put God first because He took care of me as a girl and I never got pregnant. Many of my friends got pregnant but God protected me. I also attribute it to the good upbringing from my parents. The other thing is that I was the youngest at home. I never saw any of my elder siblings get pregnant. I also followed this example and built on it. I took it as an example and decided not to get pregnant to avoid embarrassing my family. With regard to other life, I did not go through a bad life. I was a student, went to primary day school and then later I went to a good boarding secondary school and after that I started working at the German Radio. I also worked at the World Food Program and I left my job because of the war. At the time life was good. When the war took place, I became unemployed at home and to this day I don't have a job.

**Janvier:** I have heard how your life was not very good or how it changed because you lost your job. I have another question regarding your life, I hope that (the answer) enlightens me and helps me to prepare for my future. When I observe, I get the impression that you have a very happy marriage. What is your secret to a good marriage? I see that you are ageing together and yet every day I see broken homes, domestic violence, and adultery but when you seem to be doing well. Do you have any special secret that you can share with me regarding your marriage?

A conversation between Mikamagiza Chaste & Uwayezu Janvier

**Chaste:** With regard to my marriage, I got married on 12. 24. 1984, am still my husband and we have three children together, the others died. I am thankful to God that we are still together and there is maybe just one thing I can call a secret since you asked me for my secret. The one secret that one uses is patience. You can see that when people are going to get married, they initially don't know each other, they were born together, they were not raised together, and you don't know their manners – you see Rwandans always know how to appear presentable. I can pretend to be a good person whenever I am with you around you but you don't know what my heart thinks. In reality even siblings don't share the same heart but when you meet your partner, you try to be patient with them and they try to be patient with you because you can't claim that neither of you has flaws. Everyone has flaws that they are born with. In order for you to live in harmony overcoming those flaws, you need to sacrifice something's and be patient with some of their ways as they will be patient with yours. The second secret is when you have problems at home, instead of being silent in anger about them, call your partner and tell them you discuss the problems and find solutions. If you don't discuss it and everyone remains angry individually, you will break your marriage. Discuss challenges that can cause differences in your home. Beyond that you discuss productive initiatives that can develop your home and avoid the counterproductive things. I hope that is enough.

**Janvier:** I think those things you have told me are really essential. As you have told me, if two people live together, they are interests and their thoughts are different

**Chaste:** Even what they eat...

**Janvier:** Yes, even what they eat as you say. They are different in very many ways. As a parent, is there perhaps one good example of a problem you faced that rebuilt you so that in the future when I face a problem, I can also be patient because there are many problems in life?

**Chaste:** An example I can give you is that when I got married, I was not a drinker. I didn't even like alcohol but I moved in with someone who drinks and likes alcohol. It was necessary for me to be patient with it so that I could have a home. I was patient with whatever time he came home despite that I was used to going to bed at 6pm. Whether dinner was ready or not, I was in bed by 6pm but I got to a time when I could not have that but I could also not walk out on my marriage. That is one example I have given you but there are very many.

**Janvier:** That is a very good example. I will also learn to be patient and if my wife isn't acting right, I will not look at this as something new but as something that other people also go through. I have never been married and you have had a chance to interact with many married people -- the other question that I have is that – what is the one thing in marriage that hurts wives the most and what is the one thing that makes them happiest? This is so I will not do such a thing that may hurt my future spouse.

**Chaste:** What hurts the most in marriage is dishonesty – I may trust you when you are not faithful this would not make me happy and when I come to confront you that's when you here problems in homes and vice versa. Not telling the truth hurts. I will give an example, I could marry someone who has a child

**A conversation between Mikamagiza Chaste & Uwayezu Janvier**

out of wedlock and they choose not to tell me. After a while I meet this child when they are grown up and even after I meet the child, my partner does not confess – how would you react to this?

**Janvier:** I would be extremely sad if this happened in my home

**Chaste:** That is a good example but one must try and be patient with all this in order to protect their home. Even if you found this out, you cannot just quit and go back to your parents – no, you remain patient.

**Janvier:** Thank you for your insight as someone who has experience and exposure to this. My other question is what is it that would make a marriage most happy? As youth we take it for granted that having a wife will bring us happiness but this is not the case and when one has not done something they don't know how it is done. So what is it that makes couples happy from your experience?

**Chaste:** The thing that brings happiness first of all is children. Having children brings happiness. Secondly, when you are able to collaborate to raise them it brings happiness to the home. The husband should avoid going to the bar because he comes home and finds the children asleep. When you tell the truth among yourselves, your children also follow the truth and you find that no one is coming from the outside to bring disorder in. People live and eat well, travel but all that does not make people happy like having a good family that was prepared for. You also asked me what bring hurt to the home – arguments and quarrels. If people constantly quarrel, they give their children a bad example but when they cooperate and pray things become good. God blesses people who pray and they also don't quarrel much.

**Janvier:** Thank you very much for the story you are sharing with me regarding the past. The other thing I wish to know regarding the past is that – These days, I see many people abandoning their culture and committing adultery. How did you live to make sure that all this did not happen? What kind of upbringing did you have to avoid all this?

**Chaste:** No, there was never a time when there was no adultery. Adultery has always existed even in our generation as children. But every individual has their own ethics –you make a choice individually not to do certain things. Many people used to approach us for sex but we would find it unnecessary and avoid it. Some would even bring money but I would respond that I cannot trade my life for money. So you make a choice. Do you think in the past we never had under age pregnancy? This proves there was adultery. The difference is that today there is also the deadly epidemic but adultery has exists among humans.

**Janvier:** Perhaps the other question, in the Rwandan culture and other places in the world, it is the norm that people who have behaved themselves well should get married while they are still virgins. In comparison with the past and in your experience, are there people you know whose marriages may have had problems as a result of having sex before marriage?

**Chaste:** I was never friendly with girls a lot to the point where I would know what goes on in their marriage. I don't know why, maybe it is my personality. When I was younger, I was good friends with

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one girl called Deborah in primary school. She passed away. In secondary school I was also made one good friend from Nyanza called Janviere and she was lucky and went to university but I never kept up with her life. But (what you have suggested) happens. Some women get problems because they misbehaved when they were younger.

**Janvier:** Thank you for sharing that with me. I have asked all the questions I had. Thank you for accepting my invitation as a parent.

**Facilitator:** Before you can thank her, -- Mum, the story you have shared is not one that concerns Janvier alone. It is a discussion that concerns all the youth wherever they maybe. There is a level of commitment that you had that does not exist in this generation. Today we have the internet that affects their thinking. Perhaps one question I would like to ask you as an elder and mother who wishes the youth of today to behave as well as they did in the past. What kind of qualities did you possess that helped you to behave yourself appropriately and patiently in the challenging situations you suggested like living with a man who drinks while you don't? Where do you draw this commitment from? This youth you have shared your story with what hope can you give him?

**Chaste:** His hope is that because he is not married, when he decides to do so, he should not go asking questions like "what is that girl like?" because people will lie to him, even the girl himself will not tell. However, you should talk to her and what you share about your likes and dislikes this will give you a chance. It is not good to marry someone who you have not got to know for a long time. You still have time and choice. Take your time to learn the person, what they like, what they don't like so that you don't develop differences. My secret is that God helped me. There is no other secret. I did not get pregnant as a girl, this not because I did not have many male friends. But God protected me and I believed in prevention. As I also mentioned, I had both my parents and they could not be patient with a child who got pregnant. I am the last born in my family and I had never seen anyone of my siblings getting pregnant. This developed in me a commitment not to get pregnant. I hope that I have answered your question.

**Facilitator:** You have answered him. He is not the only one you have answered. You have answered the youth in general. How do compare the youth of today to those in the past.

**Chaste:** The youth of today are difficult – in the past the youth were very humble. I will give you an example of myself. In secondary school, I attended a mixed school. I used to get shy just looking at someone with beards eating to the point where I used to sit on an adjacent facing table so that I could not face where the boys were. However, today this does not matter – youths have phones and the internet, they speak to each other and meet at their pleasure. Even the few who are still so are protected are only protected by God. So everyone is for himself—you need to make your own preference and choices. It is possible because a persons heart is the one which can prevent them from doing something. Even your father and mother cannot stop you from doing

something if you want to do it. If that was the case parents would be punishing their children – but how many of those get pregnant anyway. Parents also make an effort to dissuade their children from

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embarrassing them and advising them but the youth have their own heart and conscience. If they are good youths they will listen but if they are independent minded this won't stop them from doing what they want.

**Facilitator:** Thank you very much. I have a question – this conversation has exposed the behavior of the youth in the past and present. If someone asked you to give this story a title, what would be your answer.

**Chaste:** The story of life.

**Facilitator:** Very often youths like Janvier go through so much that you don't know about but you can tell him something that would make sure he never forgets this conversation you shared. It is also possible for you to have a conversation with him then after a while he cannot remember the details. This is why parents tell their children proverbs. Do you have a proverb that you can share with Janvier?

**Chaste:** The beautiful calf belongs to the white one.

**Facilitator:** The right calf is the white one. What does this mean?

**Chaste:** It means that my good upbringing comes from my parents.

**Facilitator:** What about those with no parents? One of our listeners could be an orphan and they would not relate to this advice.

**Chaste:** You may not get advice from your parents but the child may have someone with whom they live with or takes care of them or is accessible to them. This person can be a source of guidance.

**Facilitator:** Thank you very much mum. Thank you very much.