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

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#### Participants:

- **Mwumvaneza Vincent** **Relation:** Brother
- **Tambo Nelson** **Relation:** Brother

#### Facilitator:

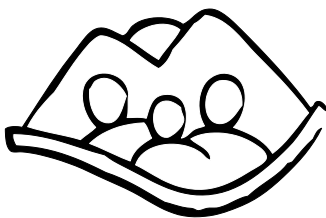
**Date: August 2009**

**Recording Location: Kigali**

**Story Number: SFH0088**

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### (Mwumvaneza Vincent & Tambo Nelson)

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**Tambo Nelson:** My name is Tambo Nelson, I want to ask you, in your conversation with grandfather, could you tell us about the cause and origin of the hatred between hutus and tutsi?

**Mwumvaneza Vincent:** Since you have asked me as your elder (I will answer you), in the past, when you looked at the way Rwandese used to live, we were in harmony. We used to intermarry and respect each other despite the income inequalities. However, after the colonialists came in, they started to create divisions based on these inequalities. For instance, sometimes they would pick out students from wealthy families and let them be the only ones to attend school. This was used as a card to show one section of Rwandese was more privileged than another. They (colonialists) used this as a way to use the less privileged against the more privileged. However, before this we did not really have the Hutus and Tutsi divisions even where they existed, they were based on wealth. A tutsi was extremely wealthy, a Hutu followed while a Twa was what we could call impoverished. After this, when the white people arrived, they are the ones who brought problems. They got those schools and then introduced corporal punishment and blamed it on the Tutsi. They would say, go and plow a piece of land this big and if you failed, you would be given strokes with a cane. Obviously the people who had to dig and get lashed with a cane were the low income earners who were mainly made up of the Hutus. This is how divisions started. People like Gitera started coming up going around telling Hutus to take over the leadership. At the time Gitera had his Ten commandments among them, *'umututsi n'igisebe cyumufunzo'* which meant that a Tutsi was a very bad person.

**Tambo Nelson:** Was Gitera A king?

**Mwumvaneza Vincent:** No, he was a Hutu person who wanted to challenge the leadership at the time with the help of the white people who were present. They were his helpers, most especially the missionaries, head of churches and religions. This is where he emerged from. Gitera spread this (propaganda) until (the King) Rudahigwa said that, 'It is not just Gitera, and instead of killing Gitera, one should kill what is causing him to do what he is doing.' By this he implied that it was the white people who were in his ears telling him things are wrong yet they were right. At this point Rudahigwa came up

**A conversation between Mwumvaneza Vincent & Tambo Nelson**

with a strategy to share the wealth, he decided that wealthy Tutsi who had squatters would give them some of their wealth. This process of sharing wealth also brought confusion because the Bwanakweli's Rudahigwa's relatives and loyalists abandoned him because he was stripping them of their servants. After the period when Rudahigwa was doing this is when he was targeted for assassination. However, it was his own relatives who were targeting him because he had stripped them of their 'arms' or what were really their servants. As for those schools which the white man and brought, they (white people) said that, 'Can't you see that they have the bigger share. They lead you politically and they also are getting a better education.' Rudahigwa refused this and said the school should be closed and everyone should have an equal education. At this point the Hutus had gained power and the whites had started plotting to take over the country. This is when (King) Rudahigwa was sent to Bujumbura and killed. Even after his death things had not become too serious because Hutus and Tutsi came together to fight the white people. In fact the whites had offered to choose and crown the king but this was rejected because the Abiru were (traditionally) responsible for choosing and crowning the new king. At this point however, (King) Rudahigwa had been unfortunate not to have had a child (King) Kigeli was crowned. He was crowned as a youth but he found everything had been planned, propaganda had been spread and what followed was burning of houses. Shortly before this, Hutus would be taken to meetings by the white people. They would be told, 'How come you are not helping us to kill the Tutsi? How come you are not harming them?' The Hutu would say, 'Why should we kill these people? What would we be fighting over? These are the people who raised us and are helping us to survive.' They (white people) said, 'stop being ignorant, you should go and spit in their faces, they will get annoyed and attack you and you will respond. Yet another card they (white people) used to deceive them was, 'Go ahead and kill them, all their cows will be yours.' Because of all the problems (the white people) had made them believe they (hutu): like 'can't you see that you are really poor?' This ideology and the so called 'impoverished' who were not really poor because of the way they worked. Weren't there hutus who they say 'dehutud' themselves and became Tutsis? It is those (white people and hutu extremists) people who started to bring divisions, started burning people's houses, hacking their cows and also my grandfather told me some interesting stuff, that there are even those who used to steal 'firewood', they would steal pots! (laughter). Would you call this poverty? Really it was a case of someone brainwashing another. They would steal potatoes!! What can you call that? Brainwashing. Before this, these people had no problems (with each other) This is what resulted in exile with some of them (Tutsis) going to Uganda. A big number went through Goma and proceeded to what was called Zaire at the time. In Zaire they were beaten and imprisoned. A Rwandese refugee there (in Zaire) was not permitted to have identification documents. Wherever you were caught and didn't possess identification documents, you were easily identified as a Rwandese. This was under Micombero who was president of Zaire (*ed. Micombero was actually president of Burundi*) Micombero was succeeded by Mobutu who brought a bit of change. He came up with a policy to tax everyone for peace to prevail because whoever found you (a Tutsi) would hit you and detain. This is because during Kayibandas regime, he is the one who represented them abroad. This goes without mentioning those who were dying in Rukinga, those who were dying in Tanzania and in the northern region around Murera. They (the people in Murera) did not know much about (how to prepare) maize which the World Food Program distributed, they would cook it and it would kill them. Eventually every Tutsi developed the idea that their enemy was a Hutu and every Hutu

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developed the idea that their enemy was a Tutsi. As the Tutsi suffered in exile, getting beaten and abused, and their children were dying of Kwashiorkor, they created the anger and ideology that whoever was behind all this was their enemy. Such people, especially the old men who met the challenges of the time (felt the brunt of this crisis). Maybe the youth who are born recently do not feel the weight of this because they were born here in Rwanda and other came when they were really younger from Uganda, Tanzania and Congo. But those who left Rwanda as elders, are the ones who have this ideology because of the history that disturbed them, day after day. At this point those who we could call the Tutsi who had fled, also developed a goal to defend themselves. This is how the thought of returning home came about. Before this however they were also those who were called the 'inyenzi'. This word is coming up for a second time but it existed before. The inyenzi of the time, were people who wanted to recapture the country but did not have the means to. They would come and stand at the border, then shoot into the country with an aim to take over the country. Eventually the RPF met and formed their ideas and the vision to take over the country and leadership. They attacked and because they Hutu were still within that nature that they had killed people in the past, they decided to once again kill more people. This meant that they had not learnt any lessons from the past. Instead they retained them in the same mindset that the enemy is Tutsi and yet they offered no evidence of this. Perhaps if they had explained to them sufficiently some who have disagreed and not as many Tutsis would have died as what we saw. In fact that people were really ignorant, only five or six people got educations the rest remained ignorant and spent all day drinking 20 franc worth of 'Urwagwa' (local brew) and other drinks. Really when they (Tutsi) returned, they (Hutu) were told to go and kill because their enemy the Tutsi, meanwhile the Tutsi were also outside saying their enemy was the Hutu because he sent me to exile. This is how the genocide happened cause by what? Bad leadership. Bad leadership by people who called themselves Hutus, Hutus of the north, Hutus from the south etc. They killed them, *'then Rwandese who were in exile returned and when they got here they found that the relatives they had left behind had also been killed. You see this was double anger. There was the initial anger of being sent out of the country then there is the anger of returning after sending your sons to fight for the country, some die and then you find that the brothers you left here have also been killed, your aunties and your uncles too. In reality if it wasn't for the present government Rwanda as a nation would not exist.* If they hadn't stopped it (the killings) and everyone went on to revenge, would there be anything left? When I look at the reality and the people, truly the present government of Rwanda is very different from the first one. If it had been the same as all the others, the returnees from Uganda, Tanzania and all the other returnees had the power to kill every one they found in the country because first of all they had guns and even though others had guns too, they had been defeated. If the others still had strength, they would all have fought and everyone would be dead. But the government stood strong on this. Whatever happened in the past was bygones and now today we have unity and reconciliation.

This is what my grandfather told me about how the Hutus and Tutsis (fell out). Those are the main points

**Tambo Nelson:** What can we do at this point to unite Rwandese especially now that you see some still have plenty of (negative genocide) 'ideologies'

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**Mwumvaneza Vincent:** The way I see things, firstly (genocide ideology) is based on ignorance but the good thing about the government of Rwanda is that it has instituted many organizations to reduce this ignorance and no one is denied the right to pursue an education. Everyone can pass the exam and go on to join a university or secondary school depending on your abilities. Even those that fail, there are local government institutions in place which finance them to pursue an education. The way I see it, now that all people are going to school, that is a first step to eliminate the ignorance (which precedes genocide ideology). The other thing is that genocide ideologies are spread by the charcoal stove. A child is beside their mother as they cook and they will have a discussion like, 'Did you see that Tutsi?' 'Oh that Tutsi, those are the ones who brought us problems.' But this is not the case anymore because children go to school at an early age and they now even go to boarding schools. You can see that this has considerably reduced. The other thing I think is necessary is that there needs to be associations and clubs at every (local government level) from ten houses on to the commune to the schools. What would these clubs teach? They don't only have to go back into history they also need to discuss the differences in mindset and perceptions between the Rwandan of today and the Rwandan of the past. The Rwandan of today is technologically savvy, business focused and international. Today's Rwandan is not the Rwandan (of the past); especially now that we have joined the East African Community which is a big country and not a tiny house where you find one person. I must add that something also needs to be done in the churches and religions because the (genocide) ideology actually originated because all those colonialists you see came under the guise of religion. Right now I feel that if these religion could help us, all of us as Rwandans, they could help us to resolve this problem by saying all Rwandese lets all hear this problem as there are many lines in the bible that discuss it. Another solutions would be intermarriages. People need to completely mix up. Those we call Hutu should get married to the Tutsi and the Twas as well (so that) everyone can be a Rwandan at once; when intermarrying people should not dig too much into each others backgrounds. Even now the government of Rwanda has put most of this in place although there are still those who set things back but we continue to pray that God helps us to achieve all this. This is what I think is the solution.

**Facilitator:** Vincent thank you very much for this conversation and the prophetic advice you have offered Tambo. It shows the trust and that Tambo has got answers for most of the questions he has had as he wished. Perhaps one could ask you, you don't look much older than him (Tambo )but you know the history very well and you had many good discussions with your grandfather but at least 90 percent of what he told you cannot be able to share with Tambo. What is the secret you use to be able to listen to what you are told and understand the advice that your grandfather gave you in very few minutes?

**Mwumvaneza Vincent:** When we stayed abroad, I first thought we were the only Rwandese in the whole world. When I started to understand this better was after the death of Rwigema (Fred, Major General). I started to see my grandfather, my uncles and many other relatives very sad. I wondered who is Rwigema and so what if he died? I was told he is Rwandese. So what? I was told he is Rwandese and this changed my understanding and asked questions. Why do we live here alone yet we there other Rwandese? I was told that we had a country called Rwanda and that's why we were called Rwandese. How did we end up in exile I asked, and was told that white people came and taught us religion and after we accepted it, they taught us ethnicity (divisions). They basically taught us two gospels combined;

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the gospel of going to heaven and the gospel of ethnicity. After this they went behind our backs and approached the children we raised and were godfathers to and taught and asked them to kill us. For instance my grandfather was a teacher; one of his students had been made a local leader of the area in which they lived who saved him. He came to him and said, now look here you man, you taught me so I cannot watch your blood spill. He (the former student) then asked him (grandfather) to hop onto the back seat of his bicycle and rode it across a roadblock manned by Hutu killers. The asked him, where are you taking that one? He said, leave this one for me, am going to kill him from up ahead. Later that night he (the former student) came back and collect my grandfather's two children, my father and my aunt, put them on a bicycle and once again rode them across the road block. Again they asked him, 'What about those ones?' Am taking them to the same place where I killed the other man so that I can put their bones all in the same location. This is how they were saved. Now such a person, if there was a leadership structure in place to support him do you really think he had any (genocide) ideology? After this I learnt to listen to everything he told me. Even me, when my child asks me where were your born, I will answer him, I was born in Uganda. And if he asks me how come we are here? I will have a good reason and story of my return.

**Facilitator:** In brief you saw him to have a valuable age difference from which you could learn

**Mwumvaneza Vincent:** Yes Exactly

**Facilitator:** Or you hoped to obtain that ability he had in him in order for you to be able to share it with your offsprings.

**Mwumvaneza Vincent:** Yes Exactly

**Facilitator:** What kind of faith do you have in Tambo as your young brother, who is here talking to you. What faith do you have that he will take this lessons and share them with future generations.

**Mwumvaneza Vincent:** When I look at Tambo's humility and pursuit for knowledge and the fact that we have had the opportunity to sit down and actually talk... I have talked to him in the past in brief without delving into detail

**Facilitator:** And he paid attention...

**Mwumvaneza Vincent:** Yes, he would always pay attention but I hoped for an opportunity to sit down and actually talk to him in detail and now I have got the opportunity. What I do know is that this conversation we have shared is not going to remain here in these chairs. I am positive that he has listened and will put into action what I have told him. There is a lot that I have shared with him in the past and he has been here for about 11 years so he is not aware of what goes on here. He used to come and ask me about the difference between Hutus and Tutsis. And I would tell him, Hutus and Tutsi issues were part of old politics but when you look carefully... in fact at first I used to tell him that there are no hutus or Tutsis but I would not give him details. Today I was able to tell him why and we are the same people and the cause being colonialism, am sure he has understood.

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**Facilitator:** Tambo, is there anything you feel like asking or you wish to clarify before this conversation can be ended.

**Tambo Nelson:** No, I don't really have any questions. I have got most of all the answers I needed. I just want to thank him for accepting to come here to explain these things to me because I didn't think he would accept it. Beyond that I don't have any questions for him.

**Facilitator:** Vincent, the talk you have given is not only going to be heard by Tambo, I hope that you will allow us to share it with many others who will appreciate this story. Is there anything you may have left out or you feel you need to add? What final advice do you wish to offer other youths like Tambo that need to understand the history of this country and the heroism that it took (to rebuild this country)?

**Mwumvaneza Vincent:** First of all some of the history is written and some other is held by people we call our parents and elders. Instead of getting things at face value, they need to find out what the causes of all these things are. Like (King) Rudahigwa said, 'Aho kwica Gitera mugye mwicya ikibimutera,' [Instead of killing Gitera, kill what causes Gitera to do the things he does.] He knew that it was the white people who were inciting Gitera to do what he was doing because before they came Gitera had no problems at all. Before the white people came, Gitera was working well with him (King Rudahigwa). This is the reason the youth need to investigate and know what the reasons are behind everything. Approach the parents and let them explain these things to you; and not the same parents who are trapped in the past without trying to understand it. Those who take it at face value and claim 'I am Hutu' or 'I am Tutsi' they don't even know where this originated or try to understand it. But today the youth can study and listen to radio until they understand. I urge the youth to study, read books and seek exemplary elders to explain these things to them.

**Facilitator:** Thank you so much for this discussion you have shared with us. I also wish to thank you for taking the time to come out here to share your story with this project, Stories for Hope. I am confident that Tambo from now on will remain close to you. And that he will take pride in seeking more knowledge from his parents and other elders who know better and are willing to share their knowledge with him. Thank you very much.