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

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#### **Participants:**

- Kabandana Louis
- Nkusi Faustin

**Relation:** Father

**Relation:** Son

**Facilitator:** Kalisa Benon

**Date:** 03/09/2009

**Recording Location:** Kigali

**Story Number:** SFH0104

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### Kabandana Louis & Nkusi Faustin

Story Number: SFH0104

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**Faustin:** I have a lot of questions, but I will start with the important ones. I want to ask about some of the things that used to happen long ago. I hear that if a girl was found to be pregnant before she got married, they would throw her in the lake. Compared to today, I see that as violence.

Secondly, I hear that it was the parents who decided for their children who to marry, either based on the friendship they had with the family or if they were of the same clan. I prefer today's system because we make our own choices, we decide our home plans and then extend the ideas to the parents. This is better than that time when people would marry what I can call strangers!

I really want to know what all that was about!

**Louis:** Thank you Nkusi, you have asked a question that many young people would like to know. About throwing girls, it's true that happened. It was an abomination to get pregnant before getting married, that child would be referred to as a bastard, and being a bastard was a curse. They used to say that a bastard would cause deaths of the cows and scarcity of rain. However, if a girl was lucky and her aunties got to know the news before it was spread, they would arrange a quick wedding for her to avoid shame.

For marriages, it's true that families had a big role to play on that part. For example, if we were friends, and you had a son and I had a daughter, our wish would be to see our children get married to each other. That was a signal of a great bond between families. Others would go for wealth, like they would feel proud to see their child getting married to a rich family, so they would easily give in like that. I prefer the system of today too, though it's disadvantageous on the other side. This liberty and freedom to meet sometimes turns out into something dangerous...there are times when

A conversation between Kabandana Louis and Nkusi Faustin

a guy impregnates a girl and then he dumps her. It's very bad, and you have to be careful.

**Faustin:** Why were people of long ago so selective? Your choices were based on clans, I heard that there were some clans that were cursed, is this true? I heard that the curse would be inherited if you married into such a clan. Was that true? I think as long as you love someone you don't consider all that.

**Louis:** That was not true. If you dig deep, you find out that that was said by families that might have been misunderstanding each other. They used that as a tool to cut the interactions between the two, like children who were raised being told that such and such a clan is cursed. It wasn't true, but it would bring about sharing in families that trusted each other only.

**Faustin:** I heard that during that era, all the work was divided according to the sex. For example, home chores were for girls, and boys would go hunting. Also, education was only recommended for boys, and girls would remain home. If you look at what is happening today, the so-called gender balance, there is no specific work for a specific sex. If you compare these, which one is good?

**Louis:** It was the culture! There are some activities that were meant for girls and others meant for boys, maybe according to the bulkiness. But now that we have enough facilities, in many schools there is no need of segregating children. They should all have enough rights. Haven't you seen ladies who are soldiers? Aren't they engineers? If you were to compare, this is the modern way and it is the best.

**Faustin:** Why did people of long ago use parables in most of their talking? Who were the first people to come up with them?

**Louis:** Parables were used by every wise Rwandese! It was an indirect way of telling people things! They referred to different behaviors in societies.

**Faustin:** We no longer have such opportunities of talking to our parents like we are doing now. Parents have become so busy that they can't get even a little time for their children, unlike long ago where you could sit around the fireplace and tell your children stories. You have lived in both generations, what advice can you give to parents and Rwandese in general?

**Louis:** Thank you my son, thank you for raising that issue. It's not the problem of not getting old people to talk to, it's that you the young people are nowhere to be seen. I am sure that when we start telling you about all this history, you don't like it. All you want to do is watch tv, read newspapers, and use all the technological means.

A conversation between Kabandana Louis and Nkusi Faustin

I have sent you to go and tell others too. Come to us, we are ready to give you explanations of everything you want to know about the history of your country. I am assuring you that after this generation, it will be hard to get old people like me! History is dying! Be an ambassador and tell others to come, we will be glad to share with you all we know!

**Faustin:** I believe there is technology that is consuming much of our attention, but we also come up with some ideas and wish to compare them with those of long ago, like proverbs. Is there a problem if we also come up with some?

**Louis:** As long as they have a meaning and you are able to explain the origin. here is no culture that does not like to be modified.

**Facilitator:** Thank you papa, I hope Nkusi is convinced now. I have also appreciated what you have shared with us, I promise to come back for more and more!

**Louis:** It will be a pleasure to receive you, thank you.



