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

Participants:

- Umazikungu Beatrice **Relation:** Friend
- Gashumba Yves Fabrice **Relation:** Friend

Facilitator:

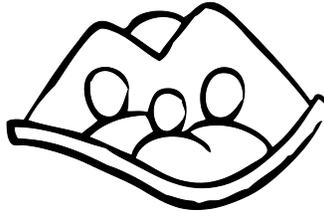
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Umazirungu Beatrice & Gashumba Yves Fabrice

SFH0129

My name is **Gashumba Evy Fabrice**, my nickname is Gisabo. My home origin is here; I was born in Byumba Sector.

Also my name is **Umazirungu Beatrice**, I am a mother, married and I have kids, but more to that I often like to talk to orphans.

Gashumba: Yes, there is a question which I always ask myself a lot. I feel inquisitive and it hurts me, since a long time ago I used to hear that our elders were being killed by machetes, at least nobody was dying because of sickness or because of age. They were killed by machetes because they were Tutsis, and they were being killed by the people called the Hutus. Even It recently affected me in 1994, although I survived I don't have hope that It will not repeat and I also be killed by a machete not dying because of age like others, I always have those doubts.

Umazirungu: Thank you for asking me that question, it's a good and hard question but don't think its bad to think about it, or maybe you are traumatized. It's a question I also asked myself and anybody else can. I want to tell you, although I am older than you I was born and found my elders who knew historical background that existed, but I tried to inquire, talk to people and hear it in schools. It is a problem which was caused by bad historical background. It is exactly the way you stated it, it was always one tribe dying, killed by the other tribe and there was no change, but according to history, it originated from Europeans. According to how I followed up, in Rwanda there were three tribes and they were living in harmony. According to the testimonies of elders I talked to, who died before you were born, the Tutsis were cultivating together with Hutus in an activity which was called SHIKU. So they were sharing everything happily, but when the Whiteman came, he started to divide them telling them that one tribe was clever than the other, one tribe could rule for some certain term they take them over, then rules another tribe, actually the problem was bad historical background. People were taught negatively, I want to finish your doubts. As you see me here, I also faced the same problem, I had a parent who had no parents. Before you were born I used to ask myself the same question, why don't I have my grandparents? When I asked they told me they died in 1959 and others fled when I asked what they did,

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they told me its because of their tribe Tutsis, they were killed by the Hutus. If you think about it today, when we are all mature, you can see there were some people behind, driving them, telling them what to do and assuring them of their support. As for us Africans we think that Europeans are clever than us, in good things and development. An European can come up with bad intentions but because he has brought development you listen to him, even if a Rwandese can be having good intentions you will think the program of the white man is the best. I think the problem began from there because they believed if they have brought us clothes, biscuits, sugar and taught us to pray, even teaching us to hate our fellow Rwandese there is something else profitable they can do for us. I got all of that from history and others I saw them. It continued like that up to the years you were born became mature and saw it yourself, how Hutus were killing Tutsis I cant hide anything from you but its because of low capacity of understanding which was taught constantly and the people who sensitized bad ideology, were many than those who were being taught. They were taught them to hate, kill, tribalism; Teaching them this is your tribe and that is not your tribe, if you do this and that; even if Tutsis were killed there is something Hutus used to say; That Tutsis used to dominated Hutus in hardships during the Kingdom. Even during the killings e they were telling Tutsis, “now do again what you were doing to us, will you ask us to take you on our shoulders again?” For us we don’t know all about these, but all these were teachings they received.

Now the hope I can give you, according to my family or your family; I can say teachings are different. If I remember or compare the former teachings with present teachings, I can assure you 100% that even if you die, you will die a normal death. Again what I can ask from you is to be firm and look ahead for the future. The example I can give you is that; although I didn’t have my grandparents, it happened to me that I also lost my parents in that way, but today I am a mother of my children and my children are happy. They cannot read from me what I passed through, even if I have that grief in my heart, I am sure and have a hope that I can have a generation which is calm and happy. Even if you are thinking of what happened to you before, let me tell you as a mother; you can have children, and if you see them playing they can take away your grief.

Gashumba: You forget them

Beatrice: Yes; not meaning that you can’t become a Father or a Pastor because if you go in that field there are some prayers, or you can be in a community which can make you forget your grief because good things are in future. So that’s how the world is. But mostly what I wanted you to understand is the question you always ask yourself “why”, It’s because of bad ideology and historical background.

I think I have nothing to add on but slowly by slowly I will be adding on as I remember other things I forgot because there are so many things in peoples’ heads.

Facilitator: You have told this child about the Europeans, how people were dying, being killed and there was a government, and the government is there to protect its citizens, what can you tell him on the government which was in power?

Beatrice: I had said it before when I said that Europeans used to favor some and put others behind, those who were favored are the ones who were told what to do; if it is hating Tutsis, and there is no

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government which is open that it will kill citizens and they will tell citizens what happened and as the the governments were taking over, it was always Hutus and this was the same Hutu who was brought up in the negative teachings and would practice what others did or what he was taught, then after sometime there comes genocide.

Gashumba: To my point of view, the journey is still long, as you see me I was disabled, I didn't continue my studies and my fellow age mates completed their education. So all these I was keeping them in my heart, it was my own problem I could not share it with anybody. Although even if I could think of trying to continue my education I would say to myself; why I'm struggling? They will cut me again with machetes after my education, or will take all what I will have achieved, all that made me stay the way I am. Maybe, as you have said; I don't know; it's only God.

Beatrice: Let me tell you; there is a proverb in Kinyarwanda which says "A reason is equal to a millet grain". Your condition is because of what you passed through and bad historical background, I want to tell you one thing; when you remember what happened to you, I know you haven't told me the whole truth; You can be thinking if you can get strength, you can revenge to the people who wounded you or killed your family, I know there is a lot in your heart. I know you can't tell me everything, but as we will continue to talk, you will tell me everything. So, there is one thing I want to tell you; When you are alone thinking about yourself, either in bed; You know these things were done by our neighbors, so if you see your neighbors, the child of your age and say; that child has his parents and has completed his education, but for me nothing, then you start thinking about that family, do they please you?

Gashumba: No

Beatrice: There is one good thing I want to tell you. Make it your homework; "always fight for not remembering negatively."

Gashumba: Yes

Beatrice: If someone gets out of midnight sleep and thinks about something bad that Gashumba Fabrice did to me, always try if someone wakes up in the midnight sleep, should think of something good I did to him.

If you walk on the street, let someone remember you of something good you did to him. Although what they did didn't do them any good, even when you meet them they feel guilt.

So your goal should be acting positively to others, at times if they see you doing good things even to them, they can feel a late regret, but even if it doesn't help you it will help the Rwandese community. If you pass and greet them if you help them to carry their luggage, they will regret why they killed your parents. So you can help the nation a lot by changing the community even if you show it by actions and it expecting it from you.

That can change both the victim and the perpetrator, and you can even meet someone who has a bigger problem than yours, and change him. He can say "if Gashumba can do, why not me"? and even the

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perpetrator can say “Why does he do this regardless of what I did to him, and in the long run he changes.

Gashumba: Without cutting your tongue when I was still studying here at EER in primary five I was studying with a child whose father was a suspect of killing our family, the child had a torn-up uniform, and I had two pairs, so I gave him one, its not even more than three days since I gave it to him than the father was plead not guilty he passed by me on the road where I was seated and thanked me for helping his son and still going on with school.

Beatrice: So were you not happy?

Gashumba: Yes, I was happy because I thought I couldn't do such a thing.

Beatrice: That's what I was telling you, it touched him because he was accused of killing his family in prison while he is helping my son with uniform. The father could have asked himself many questions like; how did he give my son a uniform even before pleaded not guilty, or what did I gain killing his family and my child has no uniform? That was a good lesson. There is another weapon which can help you go through that life swiftly and become a good Rwandese and those who will originate from you; if you add prayers. There is a word of God which says “ God is above every hard and tiring life we pass through’, you can see you don't have parents but you have God. So you can win negative actions by doing the positive ones.

Gashumba: I am going to have an aim of not being counted negatively in the community. There is one child who gave me one verse in the Bible in Isaiah 41:10. It says, "Do not fear because I am your God, I will sustain you and protect you, I will take by my right hand which is my righteousness." Every time I meditate upon this verse. And when I am in trouble I remember these words of God Himself who said He will protect us. I pray that these things would not happen again.

Beatrice: Happening or not happening is the responsibility of people. As you committed yourself to overcome evil by good, this should be the heart of all Rwandans, so that bad things would not happen again. Above other things that comforted you, you will add the fact that God is above everything. He is above hardships, above orphan life, above genocide. From now on, hold on your commitment to overcome evil by good, since you are still young you can continue with that determination and you will see good fruits. Even now I cannot tell you everything, but as we continue to meet, I will tell you more. Let me tell you, though genocide has taken many lives, before genocide death existed. The only difference is that people were killed by their neighbors. Otherwise when God met Adam and Eve in Eden, He showed them a tree and he told them "Do not eat its fruits. The very day you eat it you will die". At that time there were no Hutu or Tutsi. So strive to do good, trust in God; there is another thing I wish everyone could consider: If killers were able to kill your father or mother, who were wise enough to know that they are Tutsis, why did they fail to kill you? That is God. There were two years old children who survived, but 30 years old ones could not escape. Why? Is it by knowledge? By might?

Gashumba: No

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Beatrice: It was the same God who has a good plan for peoples' lives. So do not worry my son. The best is ahead. Come often to see me and we will share more. All bad things pass and we have again kids who call us Dad or Mom. And life starts again and we live by the support of God.

Facilitator: Now you will begin to say that though I lost my family, I found another family that have helped me to sustain the name of my family. The power is in the ability to be married and have a new family, even able to do good for those who have wronged you. That is power. The hope lies in the new leadership which gives to Yves opportunity to rebuild the family.

Beatrice: Actually I referred to that when I said that the teachings given before are different to those given today. We had leaders who saw people flying and dying in 1959 and did not care. They were replaced by others who did not invite people to come back. They also others flying and dying. But today the hope we have is that those who confess the wrong they have done are forgiven. If we the current leadership was as careless as the previous ones, we could have a Hutu genocide.

Gashumba: Yes, and another massacre.

Beatrice: They could say that Hutus will not go to school for 3 years. But instead, they allowed everyone who is capable to study; overcoming evil by good, those who wanted to revenge were discouraged, those who confessed their sin were taught to live with those they offended. That should be your focus; knowing that if you cultivate potatoes you will eat them. Don't say if I start a project, tomorrow I will be killed or run again. Let me ask you to keep that in mind every day. This have been helpful also for me, doing good is always better than doing evil. Before I could spend sleepless nights just thinking about someone I know. And I ask myself: "If someone does not sleep because of what I did to him/her, what will be my reward from God?" Instead of thinking about me in anger and insults, you should think me for good, and that will sustain you.

Facilitator: Yves, Do you have another question for her?

Gashumba: You see she is a close friend, and any time I have a problem I will come to her again and again for comfort. I do not have any troubling problem. I am ok.

Facilitator: Beatrice, do you have any other advice to give to this young man? I hope this is a starting point for a longer friendship and sharing. Do you have anything for conclusion of this conversation he can take as a provision for the future?

Beatrice: I have almost said everything. But the last thing I can tell him is to value the fact that you live. Above any trouble you can face, you are alive. What happened to you can happen to anyone. You do not have to live under fear of machete any more. I see you are a handsome young man and I long to see a blessed family from you. Instead of teaching your children the grudge of those who killed your father and grandfather, you will tell them to come from school with neighbors of the same age. Even if others would teach wrong things behind, but give good things to your family. I really expect a good family from you. If you read the Bible and other stories, you will see that thing like these existed since long time ago. And know that we are passengers on this world, we have another place we will live eternally. The only

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way to prepare better life in that place is to live peacefully on earth. I am very glad for this wonderful talk we have had. I was scared to talk about those issues of killings to someone who has lost his parents. But now I am happy to comfort you with my stories. Let us thank and pray for those who have made this possible. It is a constructive and comforting conversation. Thank you for your good behavior.

