

## 20121031-0043 Habimana Evariste

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Class: 6<sup>th</sup> Year of high school in Teacher education  
Year: 1999-2000  
Subject: History of the war (Genocide) 1990-1994

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The 1994 Rwandan genocide started when I was 15 years old and was studying at a school in a place called Kiduha in Gikongoro Prefecture. By then, I was in my second year of high school at E.S.I Kaduha [Ecole Secondaire Infirmier, Kiduha] where I was studying nursing.

President Habyarimana, Juvenal was killed on the evening of 6/4/1994 and by that date, almost all the students in my school had already proceeded for vacation. However, I and the other students who had remained behind were to leave school for our vacation on 7/4/1994 because we had just completed the second term of the academic year. It had always been a tradition that a bus from ONATRACOM that was to transport students from school at the end of each school term normally came to park in the school compound on the eve of the day when students were to go for vacation because there were very few public transport vehicles operating from where the school was located. On that day the ONATRACOM bus had already arrived and was parked in the school compound.

In the morning of 7/4/1994, we woke up very early in the morning and as we were putting our bags in the bus, Dr. Gasana, Gemus, our school's principal, arrived and requested us to remove all the bags we had put in the bus and return them to our dormitories and we obliged. However, we started sensing that all was not well outside the school compound. After getting into our dormitories, the principal went into the girls' dormitories and requested the dean of students to

tell all the girls and boys to assemble outside at an open space between the girls' and the boys' dormitories. He openly explained to us that "our president was yesterday evening killed after the plane he was in got shot down by people who were out to harm him. Some of the students were in grief while others were never touched by the news. However we were told to remain in the school.

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We remained in the school compound although some students had many unanswered questions. We knew all was not well outside the school compound because we started seeing people outside the compound with each one either carrying a machete, a club, a knife, stones, spears and all other sorts of weapons.

We started talking among ourselves that we are faced with problems and some of the students we were together with started to tell us, "Look, the person that they have destroyed his home at that place is one of your own." That is when we knew that the people carrying the weapons were after Tutsis. At the place we were, Hutu students started grouping themselves together although in small groups and they would look at us without saying anything to us. It was not long before they started warning us and verbalizing their hatred, "you Tutsi!!!."

When we heard the warning, we became fearful more than ever before although we remained quiet because there was nothing that we could do to those Hutu students because we were few. Had we outnumbered our Hutu colleagues, they could have gone outside the school compound to tell their people to come and kill us. We [Tutsi students] were facing imminent threat and had by now known each other and had no option other than to try and calm down our Hutu colleagues by telling them that it is only God our creator who knows the fate of a human being. However, the [the Hutu gang] attacked and killed people at the church in Kaduha that was outside the school compound but not far away from our school.

We truly appreciated our school's principal because he always looked after our welfare. The school used to provide us with porridge that had some sugar in it although it reached a time the sugar got finished and we had to drink the porridge without any sugar in it. We were also served with rice and beans always although the beans had lots of weevils. However, we continued to appreciate and thank God for the food despite having the weevils. Those who never wanted to see the weevils in their food were never forced to have the food.

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Whenever some of us met with [Hutu students], those students would look at us with a lot of spite although we assumed we had not seen their facial expression. Some of the students later contracted cholera among other ailments and the school principal always provided medication to the sick students. However, a male student called Sibomana Isaac from Kibuye died of cholera.

One day, I witnessed two soldiers from Forces Armes Rwandaise arrive at our school. They were bodyguards to Major Mugeniana who hailed from Gikongoro. On arrival at the school gate, they requested Gerome, the school's gate keeper to open the gate and allow them in the school. Gerome told them that he had been instructed not to open the gate to anyone wanting to get into the school. The two soldiers pointed a gun at the gatekeeper and forced him to open the gate and let them in. The gate keeper had no option but to oblige.

After getting into the school, they headed directly into the girls' dormitory and ordered all Tutsi students to get out and they did the same to male students who were in the boys' dormitory. Students who feared for their lives left the dormitories as had been ordered and we left. Any Tutsi student who tried to hesitate to leave the dormitory was betrayed by Hutu students who stared at him or her and it made the student to leave the dormitory. Hutu students then came to witness what was going to happen to us and knew that we were going to be killed. There are those who sympathized with us while others were grateful to what was going to happen to us. The soldier who was carrying a machine gun was of the rank of sergeant and left us standing outside the dormitories to go and bring the school's principal from his house that was within the school's compound. The other soldier who remained guarding us was of the rank of Corporal. He started writing our names including the Commune and prefecture that each one of us [Tutsi] hailed from. In total, we were 35 Tutsi students who had been made to assemble outside and whose names had been written on the list. However, not all Tutsi students left the dormitories when we had been ordered to leave, a couple remained behind and hid under the beds. After our school principal arrived where we had been assembled, the army sergeant gave him the machine gun to and ordered him to shoot us [Tutsi students].

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The Sergeant kept telling the school's principal, "Mr. Principal, you had hidden all these 35 Tutsi's and yet they are the ones who killed [President] Habyarimana." He continued to say, "are you not the one who admitted them [the Tutsi students] into your school to learn!!!, now he is hiding these snakes, Tutsi snakes." The School's principal asked for forgiveness but they refused to grant him his request. We also asked the soldiers to forgive us but it was all in vain. When the soldiers heard the army Major coming, they quickly released us but warned us that they would come back to "take us" [synonymous to killing]. By that time it was around noon and some Hutu students said they wanted nothing to do with those snakes [Tutsi students] and instead went to have their lunch. Some of the Hutu students truly went and had their lunch, however, having lunch was not a priority to us because we were fearful that the soldiers could return any moment to take us and to go to kill us. After the soldiers had left, the school's principal returned and told us that the two bodyguards to that army Major had tried to cheat him that the Major had told them that he was looking for money. The School's principal requested us to go and have our lunch but we declined.

We used to pray to God to save us and always spent sleepless nights fearing that they [killers] will come and take us away. In those days, we were preoccupied with thinking about how we could escape so as to be in areas occupied by Inkotanyi. We held a meeting and knew that the time to escape was ripe. On the day we escaped from school, it was around 9:00pm and students had gone to bed and others were in deep sleep. We were 19 boys and two girls and immediately after sneaking out of school through the fence, it started raining and the girls we were with told us that they will remain at a home that was next to the school. The home belonged to a lawyer who whose wife was a Tutsi. We proceeded with our escape and one of the boys that we were escaping with was from Cyanika and we were being told that Inkotanyi had already reached Butare in Commune Maraba.

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On the day we escaped from school, it was at the beginning of the month of May and we walked throughout the night and at 6:00 am, reached near a secondary school in Cyanika. We then hid in a bush within a forest that was nearby. There were homes around where we were hiding when a woman in one of the homes came next to that homes' fence, she saw us and when we saw her, we hid behind the thicket. She screamed and members of the Interahamwe rushed to where she was and they came armed with machetes, knives and clubs. The woman told the Interahamwe that she had seen Inkotanyi because we were in the company of 3 tall boys. The three were: Shingiro, Jean de Dieu who was very tall, and finally Emmanuel who said that he was going to escape into the forest by himself because he felt that he would have a higher chance of surviving. We dissuaded him but he refused to heed our advice. Earlier, we had all agreed that we should stick together and none of us should go on his own. He left us and I am not sure whether he is alive or dead because I have never seen him ever since.

Those of us, who remained, escaped into the school that was next to where we were hiding. The Interahamwe that had come to the aid of the woman who was screaming started to look for us in order to kill us and only realized where we were when we had just entered into the school compound. The school's principal asked us where we had come from and we responded that we had come from Kaduha. He also asked us where we were going and we told him that we were not 100% sure that we were safe wherever we came from. Around that school there had also been a roadblock to arrest Tutsi who were trying to flee and we were saved from the Interahamwe gang that was looking for us and baying for our blood when the soldiers who were guarding the school told the gang that they knew us and that made the gang to leave.

That school's Principal continued to interrogate us and we told him that our main objective was to escape to safety. He gave us shelter and after 3 days, sent a message to our school's Principal in Kaduha that we were in his school in Cyanika.

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Our School's Principal sent a vehicle to pick us from the school in Cyanika and it arrived at 5:00pm being driven by the Principal of E.A.V Kaduha [Ecole d'Agriculture et Veterinaire Kaduha]. At 6:00pm, we left Cyanika heading to Kaduha and spent a long time on the way because there were so many roadblocks that Interahamwe had erected on the road and we survived being killed at the roadblocks.

We reached E.S.I Kaduha [Ecole Superieur Infirmier Kaduha] at 1.22 am and on reaching the school compound were taken to the Teachers'/Staff room where we spent the night so that we do not mix with the other students. There are students in the school who used to accept us, and others who wanted to beat us (Reggis, Orest, Elisephan).

The following morning, people were called for a meeting. The *Sous Prefet* of Kaduha *Sous Prefecture* said we had left when we were living together in peace and united and we should continue living together as usual.

We continued staying at E.S.I Kaduha till the time the French Army came and took us away. The French Army took us on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1994 and took us to a camp at Murambi in Gikongoro where they were keeping genocide survivors. We stayed in the camp for a while. However, I only stayed there for 5 days. I escaped on the evening of 26<sup>th</sup> June 1994 to join Inkotanyi [Rwanda Patriotic Front] that were in Butare in Commune Maraba. After reaching Inkotanyi, I was enlisted as an R.P.A [Rwanda Patriotic Army] soldier and was in that army from 30<sup>th</sup> June 1994 till 25<sup>th</sup> December 1995. It reached a time I went to Kigali where I met my paternal cousin called Monique. She informed me that out of my 6 siblings, it is only one of my sisters and an older brother who survived the genocide although I had been aware of my family's fate.

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My mother and my paternal uncle were killed in the genocide. My paternal uncle was killed by Iyakaremye Nasphore and Alexis son of Thomas while my mother was killed by Foyibi, Elyvanie, Nyiramikumbi and Yuriya. My father was killed and thrown in a pit latrine at Mariya Kabagenga's home while my mother's body was thrown in the pit latrine at Yasoni Gatsimbayi's home.

My mother's relatives, namely: Mukantebe Laurence, Musabyimana Foyibi and her child Bishiri were taken and drowned in a river at Kirindi. My older brother Jonas Nsengiyumva was killed in Gikongoro while escaping to seek refuge although we do not know the exact place where he was killed. My older sister Mukashyaka Azera died in an internally displaced persons' camp at Kibuye.