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Commune of origin: Masango

Secteur of origin: Nyakogo

Cellule of origin: Sunzu

Prefecture of origin: Gitarama

The secret of Genocide

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The secret of Genocide

It was on Wednesday 20th April 1994 when I, my younger sisters Savio and Mukasana, my mother Mukantabana Spéciose and my other two sisters Uwamahoho Géneviève and Hyacinthe Musaniwabo were forced to flee after getting threats from our neighbors in the cellule we had migrated to which was in Rusizi Secteur in Nyakogo Commune. We fled although the killing had not intensified. A young man from Nyakogo [Commune] by the name Théogène and who was the son of Manasi had told us that people had attacked and were destroying the home belonging to our paternal uncle called Nyakayiro Alphonse. That is when we went to the [Offices of the Catholic] Parish at Karambi. We arrived at the parish at 6.00pm and were chased away by the senior priest called Muyoboke Alexandre. He chased us away saying that there is no place to seek refuge at the parish yet we were in a large group of people.

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It was then that a young man called Stefano who was the son of Rwabilinda from Buhanda took me, my mother, all my siblings, our aunt Gratia together with our maternal grandmother and put us in his vehicle and took us away. He took us to their home in Buhanda and gave us a place to sleep and by then it was 8.30pm. At night, a man called Silikali, who was a member of the interahamwe came and ordered, "Open [the door] or else I kill all of you together with those cockroaches [derogatory terms used to refer to Tutsis]. A young man [who was with us in the house] told us not to open [the door].

In the morning they [the family where we spent the night] gave us a 5 liter container that had tea in it and we proceeded to a place called Gitesanyi in Buhanda, Nyakogo Secteur in Commune

Masango. We left him [Stefano] going to take nuns of the order of Saint Francis of Assis so as to take them to Kabgayi where they can seek refuge.

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After coming from Kabgayi, that is when we met him [Stefano] and he took us to Kabgayi although I was by then together with my younger brother Musonera Dominique and our last born Savio. We thought that they [interahamwe] do not know him [Stefano]. We were together with my mother and two of my sisters together with another younger sister. We went to Kabuga in Rusizi in a Toyota vehicle belonging to [The Catholic] Parish at Nzuki and in that vehicle, I was together with Mukasa, our maternal grandfather and grandmother, maternal aunt Gratia together with her 2 children, including my two brothers-in-law Alex and Gumusenge. When we reached Kabuga which was very close to our home area, we found them [killer gangs] feasting on our cows [cows belonging to Tutsi] and they had machetes, clubs and spears.

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Among the people [we met feasting on cows belonging to Tutsi] was Gérard who was then a Catholic priest and was also a student at Karubanda Major Seminary in Butare. He was carrying a club that had nails in it and was together with Kayonga and they both hailed from Nyakogo in Commune Masango. They [the killer gang] stopped the vehicle that we were in and requested the driver to give them some alcohol because they had a thirst [for alcohol]. The driver responded, “you have thirst yet you are feasting on meat?” When he [the driver] realized that Kayonga was insisting, he gave him 100 FRW. We then continued with the journey because it [hunting down Tutsis] had not yet intensified as roadblocks had not yet been set along the roads. We had to go to Byimana because my [maternal] grandmother and my sisters did not have a national identity card. We left them at Byimana together with my [maternal] grandfather and my 2 brothers-in-law (Alex and Aimable).

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I, my mother (Spéciose Mukantabana), my younger brother (Niyigenga Joseph), nuns [from Byimana], together with my maternal aunt Gratia and her two children Fredinard Rwirangira and Rwirangira Frex left Byimana and continued with our journey. We came across a roadblock being manned by interahamwe when we reached Rwegeramigozi. On that same road there were 2 soldiers and next to the roadblock was a road sign written on “J.O.C”. The soldiers stopped our vehicle and said, “Etienne, where are you taking those cockroaches [derogatory term used to refer to Tutsis], if you do not give us one Mutzing [Mutzing is a brand name of beer in Rwanda but in this instance it is used to refer to a bribe]. We were lucky that they allowed us to continue with our journey. When we reached Kabgayi, we only found a few people who had gone there to

seek refuge. We spent the night at Kabgayi Primary [elementary] school and by then it was on Thursday 21st April 1994. We then stayed at Kabgayi on 22nd and 23rd April 1994 and by that time we were almost dying of hunger.

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It is on 24th April 1994 when Nsinga, the head of the Jesuit brothers at Kabgayi took my family to go and stay at Saint Joseph together with and another family that was next to ours. On 29th April 1994 is when a member of the interahamwe came together with a soldier called Shitani [Devil] to where we were and ransacked us. They pointed a gun at us and said “are you fleeing?” My mother responded “no”. They ordered her to give them 5000FRW and she gave them money before they left.

By then, our grandfather Gakwangali Ladislas fled to Kabgayi from the place where he was hiding in commune Mukingi by walking all the way along the tarmac road. When he reached Rugeramigozi, they [killer gang] stopped him and asked him to produce his national identity card. After giving them his national identity card, they asked, “are you a Tutsi?”, he then responded, “yes”. they then asked, “where are you going to?” he responded, “I am going to Kabgayi to find out whether I can get refuge.”

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That is how they were interrogating him. They used a bayonet to hit him in his anus and he arrived at Kabgayi soaked in blood and met us on 30th April 1994. When he saw the state in which we were in, he returned to Mukingi to inform my Maternal aunt Mukaruhemura Antoinette, my 3 brothers-in-law (Alex, Aimable and Quirizanti), together with my 2 sisters Uwamahoro G  nevieve and Musaniwabo Hyacent   as they were hiding at a home of the relative to the Catholic Bishop who was heading the Catholic Diocese of Nyundo. However, my 2 brothers-in-law (Alex and Quirizanti) returned to our home and found that they [interahamwe] had destroyed all the houses and they [my brothers-in-law] were given refuge by a man called Gasasira. They left their hideout and went to Buhanda because there had been an announcement

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...by the then government at the time that was in power. When they reached Buhanda, they could not be accepted and they decided to go into hiding. They [my two brothers-in-law] hid at Mr Gaston’s home. Later Quirizanti wanted to go and hide in a bar in Gitinda Secteur that was in commune Masango. However, when he arrived at Kabugo which was our home area, he was left to go on his own. When he reached in Kalambi cellule near Karuruna Hill, he came face to face with 3 young men who were members of the interahamwe and they attacked him. He slashed two of the interahamwe although the third member of the interahamwe killed him.

As for Alex, he had gone back to Murama although he later managed to change his national identity card to show that he was a Hutu. He came and met us at Kabgayi and by then I was together with my grandparents, my brother-in-law Aimable, and my older sisters who had also arrived by then [where we were at Kabgayi].

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In the school [that we were seeking shelter], there were approximately 5000 refugees. Among the refugees were my paternal uncles Nzaramba François and Nyakayiro Alphonse together with nearly all their children. Around 11th May 1994, interahamwe came and kidnaped people especially young men and girls [in their teenage years]. Members of the interahamwe normally used to come with lists that had people's names especially those from Commune Mushubati. By then, we had policemen who used to guard the refugees [at Kabgayi]. Among the people [who had sought refuge at Kabgayi] were Bishop Joseph Ruzindana of the Diocese of Byumba together with Arikiskogri Nsegiyumva Vincent who was the Bishop of the [Catholic] Diocese of Kigali. A structure with plastic sheeting was erected when Bishop Nsegiyumva Thadée

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Came to visit on a Sunday. By then Catholic Mass never used to take place for fear that Inyenzi (cockroaches) [derogatory name for Tutsis] could destroy the church if they sought refuge in the church. Later they told the policemen [who were guarding the refugees] to go away. Our fate had been sealed around 13th May 1994 when the [killer gangs] tried to come and abduct and take away people but got defeated. By then, I was 13 years and had to put on a long dress to disguise that I was a girl. By then I used to have eye problems and used to put on spectacles. I stopped putting them on so that I could not be abducted and taken away.

It was around 15th May 1994 when a soldier of the rank of Major in the paramilitary unit [Forces Armées Rwandaise] came and shot a young middle age male refugee and took away many people. Around 18th May 1994, a Mercedes Benz truck/lorry, a bus, and a [Toyota Hiace] minivan were brought to Kabgayi.

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Those vehicles were filled up with many people including pregnant women, old people, children and a few young men because most of the young men had gone into hiding. All those people who were taken in the vehicles had been undressed and were taken while they were naked. They were taken to Ngososeru in Gisenyi so as to show that Gitarama had also done some work [Participated in Killing Tutsis].

Around 20th May 1994, they [killers] came and took away 5 Jesuit brothers. Among those Jesuit brothers that I can recall were Brother Louis who was from Kibuye, Brother Mugabo, and Brother Michel. I do not recall the names of the rest. Other two young men who were taken away were Rukara and another young man from Gisenyi whom I cannot recall his name. They took them and went to kill them at Mpanda in commune Nyamabuye

On Wednesday 23rd May 1994 a few members of the interahamwe came to find out the refugees who were remaining.

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To a greater extent, the only people who had not yet been taken away to be killed and were still alive [at Kabgayi] were children, women and the elderly. They all used to hide and one could only see them in the morning. Girls used to dress like [mature] women and always did all the best they could to hide to avoid being raped. On 25th May 1994, they [army] came to look for Nyakayiro [Alphonse] and her daughter Alice. However, I came face to face with the soldier [who was looking for Nyakayiro and the daughter] who happened to know me. He asked me, “Do you know where your paternal uncle and his daughter are?” I responded, “Kalori, I do not know [where they are].”

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What I know is that they were killed in Rubona. He [the soldier] left very disappointed because he did not get them so that he could kill them. By then, the Bishop had disconnected water that we used to use. Afterwards, interahamwe then told the bishop, “let us kill”.

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It had now become very easy [to kill] because interahamwe had erected a road block at the entrance of Kabgayi’s printing press where they used to kill people. Anybody who used to leave St Joseph [a school], Kabgayi Primary/elementary school or TRAFIPRO which belonged to the Jesuit brothers and which was next to Kamazuru swamp, used to be killed. I heard, “you should take your time to kill them because our school is only meant for Hutu children.” By then Inkotanyi had already taken over Kanombe [Main airport in Kigali] and some members of the interahamwe came to the hospital at Kabgayi to kill us because inyenzi(cockroaches) [derogatory term for Tutsi] were responsible for the mayhem [killing of president Habyarimana].

It was about 30th May 1994 when the Minister of Defense of the self-proclaimed government at the time visited Kabgayi together with his family. By then that government used to operate from Murambi.

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By then, we used to be provided food rations by Burundi's branch of the International Committee of the Red Cross. However, we were slowly dying because there was no water. On 1st June 1994, interahamwe were at Fatuma and preparing to bomb St Joseph [school] where we were hiding. I will not forget the morning of 2nd June 1994 because that is when Inkotanyi [Rwanda Patriotic Front] liberated us at around 10.00am after a two hour fight with Interahamwe that were at Fatuma trying to attack us. By then, Inkotanyi [Rwanda Patriotic Front] had launched their attack on the interahamwe from a place called Kamazuru. Interahamwe feared being overpowered and fled. For us who were still alive, we felt that we had escaped death because we had known that it was our last day before being killed. After being liberated, it is only about 2300 people who came out alive out of about 5000 people who had sought refuge in Kabgayi at Saint Joseph.

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Most of them were women and children and we were all taken to Bugesera.

That is my personal experience during the 1994 genocide that started in the month of April.

I am a genocide survivor from Commune Masango, Nyakogo Secteur, Cellule Sunzu, and I am the son of MUSONERA Gallican and MUKANTABANA Speciose.

Conclusion:

What I can tell you is that I do not know what happened in our Secteur because I was not there [during the genocide] as I was in Kabgayi the way I have explained in this exercise book [in this testimony].

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Written by:

NIYOMUGABO Egide, I am currently a student at E.T.S (Ecole Technique de Save). I am currently in the 3rd year of secondary school where I study Electricity [a program being offered at the school] although I have not completed this academic year and almost joining the 4th year of secondary school where I will study Electricity [a program being offered at the school].

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