

MUKAMANZI & NIYOMUKIZA



Identity and start of the wars:

My name is Zawudjia Mukamanzi. I was 21 years old during the genocide. I had a son and a husband. My name is Niyomukiza. I was born in 1995, towards the end of the genocide. Zawudjia is my mother.

During the genocide, they were hunting my husband, not me. Apart from beating me to ask where my husband was, they didn't beat me because they wanted to kill me. They beat me to ask where my husband was. They also wanted to kill the baby I was carrying on my back. Fortunately, he was not killed. He is now a grown adult, older than my son who was here. I wondered, if I am so worried, how does the person who was under the threat of a machete feel? I thought to myself, "Let me soften a bit and understand the nature of the problem, to care for the person who was injured but not killed, breaking down while still alive, having lost their loved ones." I turn to my thoughts and feel the pain of those who were injured.

Consequences of the wars:

The consequences of the genocide on my children and those of others. Firstly, they live in deplorable conditions, often raised by a single parent or inadequately. People might have planned to buy a car in the year 2000, but they didn't live long enough. Raised by a single parent, the child ends up not studying well. Raising a child becomes difficult: a child might leave school and find nothing to eat because they are raised by a single parent. A single parent is always a single parent. All of these are consequences. Our children did not grow up the way we wanted. You brought a child into the world believing they would study well. Like my son, whom you saw, he is now 26 years old. He should have finished university, but he couldn't study well. All of these are consequences.

Mental health and reconciliation:

I didn't start with the Gacaca courts. I was elected and I declined. I wondered, seeing people beating my husband and others killing people, because I saw it with my own eyes. I saw everything. So, I wondered how I could tell someone to ask for forgiveness. I didn't feel it. But the Inyangamugayo—the honest judges elected—did not prove their integrity because of what they did. The few remaining judges wanted us to work together. Especially in the Gacaca courts, I worked with former Rwandan refugees, exiled elsewhere, who had not witnessed these events. Especially since in the place where I was, I had seen these things happen. I thought, someone told me that any effort denied to the homeland is a lost effort, so why not make my own contribution?

Regarding unity and reconciliation, my children attended secondary school. They joined clubs. The clubs began educating the children, even before we learned to appreciate this process. A child would come home and tell you how they study with a classmate whose parent is in prison because of the genocide. You start scolding them, but then, I found myself training people on unity and reconciliation. Now, when I go to work, I do it with a calm mind. Before, I used to startle. I would startle. There was even a time when I thought I would have heart problems, but now it's gone because I used to startle a lot. When an object fell to the ground, I would startle. But now, I feel like a normal person, and it's God who made it all happen. I prayed a lot and prayer groups prayed for me. It reminded me that there is life after this one.

MUKAMANZI & NIYOMUKIZA



Mental health and reconciliation:

The genocide had consequences on everyone, whether survivors or the children of the perpetrators. The genocide affected the youth. Even in society, it is difficult to bring together survivors and the children of criminals. Uniting at either secondary school or university is challenging. People are divided, some are isolated. It's not easy at all. The hardest part is mingling with others. To mix with someone and think that they are one of the perpetrators is very difficult. But for us who were born after the genocide, it doesn't bother us as much as those who were there before the genocide.

Do you ever discuss the events related to the genocide with your parents?

They don't tell you everything. They speak about it with sadness. But they tell you because it's history, and it needs to be shared so that we are aware. Besides that, whether it's in other places we go, schools, or outside, what people tell you, even if they don't tell you everything, you connect the information and understand what happened before you were born.

Firstly, it breaks your heart; it hurts to see your mother like this, always sad, sometimes even crying. Seeing your mother cry, cry because of events that happened in your absence, is painful. But we try to be close to her, talk with her where possible, try to distract her, tell her funny things, all of that, yes.