



INTERVIEW WITH ROSE RWANGA

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Name of interviewee: Rose Rwanga (RR)

Name of interviewer: Callixte Kabayiza (CK)

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Editorial note:

Transcriber's Note

This interview is that of a Rwandan woman who lived the post-1959-war period. She tells us how [the war-related events] made her, as well as fellow Rwandans at the time, go through losses and separations, and suffer various consequences. She briefly describes the conditions in which they lived during these periods. She reflects on how the persecutions evolved until they culminated in the genocide against the Tutsis in 1994, and on their impacts. The interview also highlights the bravery and resilience of those who went through these difficult times. It shows how they fought, without getting discouraged, to secure a better future. It was easy for me to transcribe the interview,

because I was captivated by the life lessons and the great contributions that some of our elders have made for us.

Translator's Note

I was humbled and incredibly moved to encounter Rose Rwanga through the process of taking care of the translation of her words. She is such an insightful and courageous human being. Her testimony, among other things, allows us to sense how her education and generosity were shared with others, and passed onto her children who are now unfortunately deceased. I wish I could meet her and express my admiration and compassion.

C.K: In your life... We will do this as a simple conversation; when you need us to stop, we will take a break no problem, there is no rush here. First of all, I would invite you to give us your name and tell us a bit about who you are, about your identity. After that, please tell me about your family's identity, origins, and give the names, age, religion of the members.

I'd like to start with you, would you tell me who you are?

A.R: My name is Rosa [Roza] Murorunkwere, Mrs. Rwanga. I'm Rwandan, I was born in Byumba.

C.K.: When were you born?

R.R.: I was born in 1945.

C.K. Do you remember the day and the month?

R.R: August the 3rd.

C.K.: And then, what is your ethnicity? Your parents' ethnicity...?

R.R.: That is...?

C.K.: According to the ethnic groups in Rwanda...

R.R: According to the ethnic groups of Rwanda, in our country... we are Batsobe, Babona, and my mother was a Munyiginya/Umugunga.

C.K.: In Rwanda, they say there are three ethnic groups, there are the Batwa...

R.R: And I'm also a Tutsi.

CK: How were your parents called, again? What was your father's name? What was your mother's name?

A.R: My father was Didas Bayijahe, and my mother Bernadette Nyiratamba.

C.K.: It is difficult to know the age of Rwandans, especially from that time. Could you approximate their year of birth?

R.R.: My father was born in 1922...

C.K.: Asking you the exact dates would be a little difficult...

R.R.: That's indeed not possible...

C.K.: **You don't know either for your mom? And then, what about the brothers and sisters you were born along with? How many boys, how many girls?**

R.R.: There are eight of us. Three boys and five girls.

C.K.: **Were you part of the oldest ones?**

R.R.: I'm my father's oldest.

C.K.: **You were the first born at home. Do you remember the names of your brothers and sisters?**

R.R.: There is Génèreuse Mugarucyeye, Alexis Rumanyika, Maurice Harerimana and Philippe Kagara, but there are other children that my father had in Uganda.

C.K.: **Not from the same mother?**

R.R.: Not from the same mother.

C.K.: **Do you remember them?**

R.R.: I remember their names, I even have the names of their children...

C.K.: **Are the ones he had in Uganda among the eight you told me about?**

R.R.: No, all eight of us are from the same mother.

C.K.: **Apart from these brothers and sisters from Rwanga's house, Rwanga himself, do you remember his date of birth?**

RR: Rwanga was born in 1941, his family came from Kibungo.

C.K.: **How many children did you have together?**

R.R.: Together we had four children, and we stopped because my deliveries were getting difficult.

C.K.: **Can you tell me the names of your children, in order of age? The older boy, what was his name, age, and date of birth if you remember?**

R.R.: However, the one I count as fourth didn't live long enough to get to the genocide, he died earlier.

C.K.: **We'll come back to that later... Could you tell us in a few words how your children followed each other in age?**

R.R.: Those who died during the genocide are: Wilson Rwanga, Degrotte Rwanga, Yacintha Rwanga.

C.K.: **The one who died before is also your child, can you talk about it?**

R.R.: His name is Rwanga William.

C.K.: **As they followed each other, how many boys were there?**

R.R.: By the way, I only had one girl and there were three boys.

C.K.: Yacintha [That's her, the girl]. Briefly, could you tell us how they followed each other in age?

R.R.: William was born in 1969, Wilson was born in 1970 in October, Degrotte was born in 1972, and Yacyntha was born in 1974.

C.K.: Did you get to know your grandparents? Grandfathers and grandmothers?

R.R.: I knew them, but briefly. Because my father was someone who wanted to study, he even started studying at a place called Astrida. So when my grandfather died, he was pulled out of school to become the deputy chef. Can I talk about that too?

C.K.: Yes, you are talking about your whole history, because it is your life, it is your origin, it is your roots, what we call "roots." You can talk about it.

R.R.: So he came, he overviewed a hill, and really led when my grandfather had just passed away.

C.K.: What was your grandfather's name?

R.R.: Bitanuzire, he wasn't baptized.

C.K.: What about your grandmother, do you remember her?

R.R.: My grandmother's name was Nyiramukobwa. She is the one who died recently, just one year before the country was liberated, only one year before the Tutsis came back to the country.

C.K.: You told me that you remembered vaguely your grandfather and grandmother. What is your greatest memory of them?

R.R.: What I remember about them is that apparently I cried a lot as a child, and then my father would ask that I'd be taken to my grandfather's house. Even at night, they would put me on a back carrier and take me to my grandfather's house. Even though it was dark, he would get up and carry me. I remember that. He even had *bracelets* on his legs.

C.K.: Your grandfather?

R.R.: Yes, my grandfather. Then my grandmother said: "This little girl is becoming difficult, you're always going to spoil her..." and he would reply "Leave her alone..." I remember that, even when I was quite small. There are things that we remember forever, even when it happened in our early childhood... Things that we can't forget.

C.K.: That you won't forget... So, you mean they died when you were still little? Your grandfather and your grandmother...?

R.R.: They died when I a young child.

C.K.: Your grandmother, you told me she passed away...

R.R.: She died recently, she was a hundred years old.

C.K.: Your grandfather died early, when you were young...

R.R.: I was still little...

C.K.: They also lived in Byumba, where you were born?

R.R.: Yes...

C.K.: In your childhood memories, how did your grandparents live with each other?

R.R.: They lived well together. However, my grandmother was very strong in character, I would say she was arrogant, from what I could tell.

C.K.: As you could see... You told me your grandfather was a chef?

R.R.: Yes.

00:10: 03

C.K.: Your grandmother, I think she stayed at home and took care of the house...

R.R.: She took care of the household, she monitored the workers, she took care of everything... even if they had the housekeepers... You can't sit around all day.

C.K.: About your parents, how do you remember them, their life?

R.R.: My father was also a strong character. He was straightforward. He cared for the truth, and you could feel it. He said: "You have to go to school." My grandmother was someone who could walk 40 miles to see you at school, to see how you were doing.

C.K.: Who?

R.R.: My grandmother.

C.K.: Your grandmother came to see how your studies were going?

R.R.: And when she arrived, when she saw that I wasn't well --because we were given porridge, and sometimes for someone who wasn't used to it, it could cause diarrhea-- she said: "I'll take you with me." And she'd take me with her, we'd returned home together.

C.K.: Your grandmother...

R.R.: She was taking me away to take care of me. And when we got home, my grandfather was angry. He would say: "These children will not always have the same chance [...to live an easy life]!" Because in Rudahigwa's time, Rudahigwa told them: "Let the children go to study, let the children grow."

C.K.: Your grandmother didn't understand that studying was important?

R.R.: She said: "Bayijahe [Rose's father], you want to leave the milk of all your cows to the shepherds, while my children suffer from diarrhea?!" And the other one (Grandpa) replied: "We agree on many things, but we won't agree on this!" And the next morning, I'd get a ride to school. I can't forget that.

C.K.: That your grandmother wanted to keep you close to her, so that she could take good care of you ...and then that your grandfather refused.

R.R.: He didn't want it, he said: "Let her go, hold on tight. If this bad food kills her, then let be it. But if she doesn't die from it, she'll get stronger for it..."

C.K.: And how did you find your mother?

R.R.: My mother was a calm, gentle person; she let them talk. It's as if she was in charge of entertaining guests. So anything clean in the house was her concern. There used to be what was called *ibitabo* [a kind of façade]... She took care of embellishing them, even though the floor of the house was made of mud, she smoothed it and it was beautiful and clean like what we see in modern houses nowadays. It was all she spent her days doing.

C.K.: She fixed up the house, she took care of the house...

R.R.: Yes, to keep it clean...

C.K.: Your mother was a stay-at-home mom. You told me that your father was taken out of school, so that means...

R.R.: My mother never went to school. She learned capital letters, the letters my father taught her. Because wherever my father sat, and he wanted something from home, he would write, he would send a written message. And he said, "I will not live with someone who cannot read or write." So they hired a man named Gatimbo to teach my mother to read and write.

C.K.: So your father hired someone to teach your mother to read and write?

R.R.: That's right.

C.K.: How do you think they lived together, as you remember?

R.R.: In the eyes of the outside world, they lived well together. Even when they argued, nobody knew. You could hear that they had a quarrel, or whatever, without seeing them arguing. Because it was also a big estate.

In the past, the chiefs' houses were quite large with lots of rooms: space for adults, space for children, and further away, some space in the attics (where sorghum, banana beer, and other things were stored). It was like a kilometer walk, the property of a chief. And each task had someone assigned to it.

C.K.: And since he was a village chief, in your opinion, in your memory, how did he live along with the neighbours, with the people who lived there?

R.R.: In my opinion... Yes, my father was severe, it's true. But you never lacked of anything around him. Even when you were an ordinary folk -- if you had a problem, he took care of it.

C.K.: You told us about your brothers and sisters. That after you were born, in short, you went to school ...and at that time you were still living in Byumba? How long were you there? How many years of schooling did you do there? How was your life there?

R.R.: In Byumba, I went to primary school; I did six years of primary school. There was a high school entrance exam; those who passed the exam continued their studies at the boarding school, either in Save, Nyundo, Butare or Karubanda, I believe...

So with two other girls, Regina and Olive, us three children from the North made it to Save.

C.K.: So you succeeded to go to study in Save... But what did you keep from the six years you spent before at school in Byumba, whether it was from the teachers or your colleagues?

R.R.: What I keep from my early schooling...? We were taught by the Benebikira (religious nuns). The Benebikira are very strict people. I got an education there, but you couldn't be a difficult child. You knew you had to pay attention, do your lessons, otherwise the nun would beat you.

C. K: So in primary school, there were Benebikira?

R.R.: Yes, there were the Benebikira. And on top of that, they didn't like "those daughters of...", how can I put it, those "children of the chief," they said we were impossible.

C.K: Is there a teacher, or teachers, you remember from primary school, whose memory you have kept? For what they taught you... the education they gave you?

R.R.: There was a sister called Sister Immaculée, and another one called Sister Gérard. Those taught well and with love. They spoke to us softly, without bullying. Those I can't forget, they were good people.

C.K.: In the education you were given, whether at school or at home, was there a difference between the education given to boys and that given to girls?

R.R.: The difference is that I was told to sweep. For example, when we came home for the holidays, the girls would sweep up. All over the hill it was the same, the girls were sweeping the yard, cleaning everywhere. As for the boys, they were going to look after the cows, the calves, fetch grass, and so on.

C.K: And your brothers and sisters, did they also go to school? You told me you were the oldest, and that you went to school. Your brothers, did they go to school as well?

R.R.: My brothers and sisters studied, but when 1959 came, they were still small. In the middle were the boys; they went to the boys' school. I had a brother who went to mechanical school in Goma.

C.K.: Before 1959?

R.R.: Before 1959. Then when 1959 came, my brothers went into exile and so did I.

C.K: Let's talk about 1959, now that we're here. Where were you in 1959?

R.R.: In 1959, I was in Kigali, at the school for instructors, in the second year of secondary school.

C.K.: So you went to six years of elementary school?

R.R.: ...and I did seventh grade, prep school.

C.K.: The 7th preparatory, where did you do it?

R.R.: In Save.

C.K.: You went to Save, when you passed your exam... You studied in Save, and then after the 7th preparatory you went to...?

00: 20 : 00

R.R.: When I finished the 7th preparatory class, I think I also did the first year of secondary school.

C.K.: In Save?

R.R.: In Save. And that's when they built in Kigali a high school like the one in Save. It was built by the State. Then we said that us children coming from the North —there was a list— were coming to study in Kigali, yes.

C.K.: So in 1959, you were in Kigali, at school.

R.R.: There you go.

C.K.: And your brothers and sisters, where were they then? In 1959, some were in school...?

R.R.: There are those who were in primary school, the girls. As for the boys, one was in Goma; the other, who was my paternal uncle, but who was raised by my father, was also in Goma. So my sisters were in primary school, and when 1959 came, everyone went into exile, and I ran away too.

C.K.: Can you tell me briefly what happened, what you remember? You were at school, your parents in Byumba... your brothers, the other children are at school too, the youngest are in Byumba... how was 1959? What happened?

R.R.: In 1959, will I talk about the Hutus... The Hutus did not kill the Tutsis as much as they killed them during the genocide. On the contrary, they accompanied us. They went with my father, they helped them drive the herd of cows. We went to the other side of the border, called Kamwezi.

C.K.: So, when it happened, you were at school... I just want to understand, you were at school and then you went back to Byumba.

R.R.: No, we were on vacation.

C.K.: Did it happen when you were on holiday with the other children?

R.R.: We were on vacation, yes... And then the prefect [governor] named Kayijuka came over there at the border of Kamwezi and Mutara. He would make announcements over megaphones and say, "Everybody who's in high school, go back [back to school], and finish your education, you're safe. I'll vouch for it, I'm Kayijuka and you have my word." After only a couple of days, the priests, the so-called "Diocesan" priests, waited for us at the border, saying "Come and study." We had a German priest named Emmanuel.

C.K.: They found you where you were camping?

A.R.: Yes, where we camped on the other side [of the border]. They came to pick us up in vehicles, and we went back to study. That's how I resumed my studies in Kigali.

C.K.: So they came to the border, and you were there with your parents and your brothers and sisters?

A.R.: Yes.

C.K.: The prefect came and said: "Let those who go to school come back to continue their studies", and the priests brought vehicles...

A.R.: Yes.

C.K.: And you returned?

R.R.: Yes, I came back to Rwanda to study.

C. K.: Are there any brothers or sisters you have returned with?

R.R.: No.

C.K.: You came back...

A.R.: Alone, because I was in high school.

C.K.: So the others... the parents...

R.R.: And my little sisters... all of them stayed.

C.K.: They stayed there. Among the boys, and all the girls, the ones you were with at the border, all stayed with their parents...

R.R.: They stayed with their parents because in Ruhengeri people were hunted. Some even were killed. So the boys, as they moved around and heard that there were deaths, refused to return to Rwanda. But I went back to Rwanda.

C.K.: Did the boys study in Ruhengeri?

R.R.: By the way, studying in Goma, and communicating with the Tutsi Bakiga from Ruhengeri, they were aware of a lot of things...

C.K.: They knew...

R.R.: Yes.

C.K.: So you leave them there, you get in the car...

R.R.: That's right. There were others, like one girl called Nyiramongi. Many of us went back to Rwanda to finish our studies.

C.K.: Then having left, where did you go? So at this point in time, 1959, you were fourteen years old.

R.R.: In 1959, I was 14 years old.

C.K.: You were born in 1945, weren't you?

R.R.: Yes, that's right.

C.K.: You were fourteen years old.

R.R.: Then I did my first and second years...

C.K.: So you came back to Kigali, you went back to school...

R.R.: Yes, and I did the third year...

C.K.: During the holidays, where did you live?

R.R.: At the nuns'.

C.K.: In Kigali, the school was run by which nuns?

R.R.: The Bernardines.

C.K.: OK. At the Bernardines... So you come back, do your second and third years (of high school); and during the holidays, you stay at the Bernardines...

R.R.: Many of us stayed there, I wasn't the only one.

C.K.: Along with many others...

R.R.: At the time, teacher training school lasted five years. These years have passed...

C.K.: And you completed them.

R.R.: Yes. After we finished we were told that those who came from the North, from Byumba, had to go to Emmanuel's house. Emmanuel was a German priest, who ran the diocese. So we went to introduce ourselves to Emmanuel.

C.K.: After you were done?

A.R.: Yes.

C.K.: You went to his office?

A.R.: We went to the office.

C.K.: Did he work in Kigali?

R.R.: At that time, he was working in Rwaza. His diocese was a diocese from there, among the Bakiga.

C.K.: Ah! So, you went to your Priest's Diocese.

R.R.: Yes.

C.K.: You went to the North Diocese.

R.R.: Because there was one in the North, one in the Centre, one in Kigali, and one in Kabgayi. There were three White priests.

C.K.: Dioceses...

R.R.: We went there...

C.K.: You went...

R.R.: Then he said to me: "You go and teach in Kinoni." So I started teaching in Kinoni.

C.K.: Which class did you start teaching? If you remember?

R.R.: I started teaching at the fourth grade. The Bakiga children wore clothes without underwear, and when they walked, it made a weird noise.

C.K.: Yes...

R.R.: Then they said: "We are taught by a white woman!" You could see they really were innocent children.

CK: And then during all these years, nobody returned home? No one had seen their peers?

R.R. I'll tell you about that... But by the way, what made them take care of us was that they didn't have teachers. And they wanted people who would educate their children, so that they too could succeed. No one around had gone to school, so they didn't have any teachers. Every person who was supposed to have gone to school wanted to become a prefect, to be a mayor, so to become an important person like that. But few people were interested in teaching. That's why they took care of us.

C.K: So you finish, you go to Emmanuel, he sends you to Kinoni, and you start to teach...

R.R.: I started teaching...

C.K: How many years did you teach there in Kinoni, if you remember?

A.R.: I taught there for maybe five years. Five years, or four, because afterwards after being engaged I went to Kigali, and I left teaching.

C.K.: Okay. After you went to teach, you never heard from your parents?

R.R.: I never heard from my parents. However, we could send letters to our families. But our letters were opened and read before they were sent. There was a white guy named Dijipin who was watching us. When you wrote a letter, they [the authorities] would take it, open it, and see if you had written anything about Rwanda.

C.K.: When you were writing a letter, say...

Are: Let's say, when I wrote to my parents, the letters were opened in a way so we didn't know. And after that they'd close them, and the letters were delivered to us. After they had read everything... so we were being surveilled by intelligence.

00 : 30 : 02

C.K.: How did you know they were opening them?

R.R.: I learned it from a prefect named Donat Gatsirage [hesitating about the last name]. He had a Tutsi wife.

C.K.: He told you that the letters you wrote were read.

A.R.: He said, "Be careful..."

C.K.: So you never heard from your parents, in the meantime.

R.R.: No, I'd given up.

C.K.: In Kinoni, how did you live? Where did you live? Who did you live with? How comfortable did you feel with them? How comfortable were they with you?

A.R.: There was a house for the teachers. There were both Hutus and Tutsis. But the Hutus were fewer in number.

C.K.: How did you cohabit then, with all those women? How did you feel about them? How comfortable did they felt with you?

R.R.: I could see that we lived well together. We had a neighbour called Oto Rusingizandekwe, living about 10 km away, and this man did not show racism. Oto Rusingizandekwe, I don't know if you know him, he's the father of Gatarayiha, he's the father of... his children are all famous people.

C.K.: What was he doing during that period in Ruhengeri? What kind of person was he, back when you were here yourself?

R.R.: Oto Rusingizandekwe, at that time, was Minister of... what was it called again... The Post Office and Communication Minister...

C.K.: He was a minister, and he knew you [teachers]?

R.R.: He would come to visit us. He would come to see us to ask us how we were doing... And we'd tell him that we were fine, no problem, and he'd say, "If anyone has a problem, come and tell me, I'm taking people into my home."

C.K.: Was the salary sufficient? To feed you, to provide for all your needs?

R.R.: In fact we were given 2 500 francs, which was really a lot.

C.K.: It was a lot... So, how did you leave Ruhengeri?

R.R.: To leave... You see, when you get used to a place, you tour around, you enjoy the city (Ruhengeri), or you get together with others to go to Kigali buy nice clothes, etc. We were used to this life. And then, I met Rwanda.

C.K.: You met in Kigali...?

R.R.: We met in Kigali. In fact, men in Kigali [the capital] were known to often marry the educators. These women had been educated, they were said to have good values; in short, they were seen as potential good wives.

So he started dating me, he used to come with other men to visit me.

C.K.: Did they come to see you at school?

R.R.: They used to come to see me at the school. After a while he said, "Why don't you leave this village?" And I said, "If I leave, they'll kill us?" Then he went to the Sûreté to see a person called (I think...) Kanyabigega. He told him my name; "If this person finds

work in Kigali, would there be a problem with that?" And the man replied that no one could prevent us from leaving, that we could, for example, mention that we were getting engaged there. He said: "No problem, if she wants to come to Kigali, let her come." He checked the files, I don't know how they operated... but a lot of people's information were filed even at security.

C.K.: What kinds of files?

R.R.: Files like "personal information." For example: how does Rose Murorunkwere live here? What are her origins? Etc.

Then the security man said that nothing was stopping me from going to Kigali. She's all right, he added. That's how I came to Kigali.

C.K.: To go to Kigali, did you ask for a transfer or did you resign?

R.R.: I quit.

C.K.: You quit your job?

R.R.: I quit my job. By the way, even the priests who were taking care of us had left, only the compatriots remained. Hutus were running the schools.

C.K.: They were the ones who ran the schools...

R.R.: Things had shifted. We could see they didn't need us like they used to. Originally they cared because they didn't have teachers.

C.K.: So you and Rwanga started to see each other. How long did you know each other before you left Ruhengeri? Was it long? Can you tell us about it briefly?

A.R.: At the beginning of our relationship, I had to leave the house that was lent to us. In Kinoni, I was with another girl named Suzanne Kabasinga. Kabasinga was from Ruhengeri [she knew people from the region]. She was engaged to a Hutu, a Muslim, whose name was Mwesuwedi, but Muslims from UNAR. She's the one I left the old place with. We went to a neighbourhood called Ibereshi. And in Ibereshi there lived an old man called Martin Rusabyangonga, a Tutsi, very honest, very honest then! Suzanne asked him if we could stay with him and he agreed to put us up. We moved into his house.

C.K.: In Ruhengeri...?

R.R.: Yes. In Ruhengeri. So I went to Hatton & Cookson [for a job], and I passed the exam and succeeded.

C.K.: Did you do it in Ruhengeri?

R.R.: No, when I arrived in Kigali. It was a white people's company looking for employees.

C.K.: You did it...

R.R.: I succeeded, with another girl called Josephine Mukanyangezi, and that's how we started working.

C.K.: Hatton's...

R.R.: Hatton's.

C.K.: And Rwanga, what was he doing at that time?

R.R.: Rwanga was a technician, an electronic technician. All those things that Mukabarisa [the person behind the camera] is using, he knew how to use them too... That was the beginning of our relationship.

C.K.: When did you get married?

R. A.: We got married in sixty-eight [1968].

C.K.: In 68 [1968]?

R.R.: Yes, that's right, in sixty-eight [1968], the fifth of May.

C.K.: What can you say that you knew about him when you got married? What can you say about him, from the moment you met him, and then when you got engaged?

R.R.: When he was among the other young men in his company, his colleagues often teased him, "Did you look for a teacher? By the way, is she White or Rwandan [Rose was very fair-skinned]?" And that made him proud of his wife, you understand; you could see that he respected me. Anything I needed, he'd give it to me, and we communicated well. But as time went on, the more time we spent together, the more some things changed... but he still respected me, very much.

C.K.: The children you had together, what did you teach them? What kind of education were you giving them? Whether it was the boys or your daughter, how did you do it?

R.R.: My children, I gave them a good education. In Kigali they called me Red Cross.

C.K.: Why?

A.R.: Because I couldn't accept that someone would come to me and ask me something that I could do or find, and let them down. In my children, too, we could see that they had this habit of loving people. My boy, Willson Rwanga, paid the school tuition of a Hutu child, but he would tell him, "Don't tell Mommy." It was this Hutu kid who came to me after Willson died.

C.K.: The one he was paying the school fees for?

A.R.: Yes, because Willson was a technician like his father and had started working. As for Degrotte Rwanga, he was studying at the university, he hadn't finished yet, I didn't know what his character was yet. And the girl, too... I don't know how I can say it... they were honest children, of pure innocence. If a child comes and shares with you; "I met such and such, he told me this..." Like my daughter, she would tell us who she had met, what the person had said or done... I was proud of their upbringing. They confided in me. On that dimension, I thanked God... Alas, they're dead now.

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C.K.: After your marriage, and when you started having children, did you continue to work, did you go back to work, how did you do it?

A.R.: I continued to work until I arrived here [in Montreal]. After HATTON, I was hired at SICLA, and then somewhere else... well, I worked in several organizations.

C.K.: You continued to work, you went back to work, with the children, because you had workers in the house who took care of...

A.R.: We had workers at home, a maid, a servant, a night watchman. I was not one of those people who were asked to do this or that at home after office hours. Occasionally, though, when at night we felt like eating something special, I would prepare it on my own initiative.

C.K.: In Rwanda, was the education given by the father and that given by the mother the same? Was there a difference between the two? What was your role in the children's education, what was Rwanga's role?

R.R.: I was the one who played a big part in their education. My husband, like all technicians --and I am not saying there is something that they are missing-- had some behaviours influenced by his work. Sometimes he would come home with an unpleasant mood because of an unresolved problem in his work for different departments. For financial management, there was something they called an "accounting machine"... When it broke down, they would call my husband, they would look for him until they found him no matter where he was! If he couldn't fix it, it was a disaster. If he went into that state of failure, we were the ones paying the price. That's the attitude of a technician. I often called him "mechanics" to tease him.

C.K.: It was you who took care of the children, it was you who looked after them...

R.R.: I was the one who took care of them, telling them funny stories. Every once in a while [my husband] would tell me, "Do you realize the things you are sharing to the children?" I said, "If my children don't talk to me, who are they going to talk to?"

C.K.: Let's go back to the war that triggered the genocide. Can you tell me briefly how you saw the beginnings? According to what you told me, the war would have started in 59 (1959)? After your parents left, after 59, were there any other clues that you saw that might have been unsafe, that there were serious problems?

R.R.: After President Habyarimana took power, there was a semblance of security. But when things started to change, I could see it coming big time. When I talked to my husband about it, he thought I was crazy. When I asked him why, he replied, "Are you Ngango, Nzamurambaho, Gafaranga [personalities involved in political parties]? Why would the authorities be interested in us?" He was talking to me in front of the kids. I suggested to my children to run away, and they thought I was exaggerating, claiming that they saw no threat: "The Rwandan Patriotic Front is moving forwards in its battles towards us and you are talking about running away?" That's what my family used to tell me. I was panic-stricken, my heart was no longer still; but them, they refused to see reality. It's the misfortune of reasoning with people who are supposed to be educated. If my children were still young, I could have forced them to leave with me. They would not all have perished.

C.K.: So you would have preferred that you all left?

R.R.: I felt we were all going to die. At a certain point, I ran away and went to a Swahili neighbourhood to stay with a cousin.

C.K.: The Swahili district of Nyamirambo? Do you think you really ran away?

A.R.: My people didn't take it seriously. In Katumba's time [a militiaman], the militiamen could come in at any time and ask for this or that person [she gives the example of the name of Monique who is behind the camera]. In this Muslim neighbourhood, the wanted person could go through the breaches in the neighbours' fences, no one would say anything. Then the others said there was no... in this house. The Muslims were compassionate. Some of them had Tutsi women.

The Muslims were compassionate. Some of them had Tutsi women.

It was different with Kiyovu where the Burundians and Hutus insulted us all day long. One day, my children came to see me where I was hiding, on the orders of their father, who requested to asked me if I had been married to Muslims. This is how he death with the situation.

The children told me emphatically, "Mommy, we are begging you, come home, Daddy is not happy at all; let's leave without anymore comments." The Muslim who took me in said to my children: "Go and ask your father to come and see me here tomorrow. Karoli [the husband] responded to the appointment, looking very haughty. The Muslim in question said to him: "Rwanga, when you hear RTLM mentioning your name all day long, are you a rich, interesting personality? Do you own a trailer truck, what extraordinary thing do you have that makes RTLM talk about you all the time? Your long nose, that's why they're interested in you! Look at your children's features. Their mother understands; I pity her more, I pity the mother of these children very much, because she suffers alone." My husband slams the door, lights his cigarette and leaves.

At the time of his murder, what happened? Did they feel sorry for him? After the death of President Habyarimana, my children said to me: "Mom, the fool has just been murdered." Karoli [the husband] left the bistro in the neighbourhood called *Ishyirahamwe* [cooperative] where he shared beer with others and came home exclaiming: "The idiot has just been shot." I said to him, "You too speak the same language as the children? Can't you see we're all going to perish?" He replied, "Dying, why do you think about death all the time?" He didn't understand anything! I'd already been dead for a while. But they all died and I survived. Unfortunately, I don't see any advantage to that. After they had killed my children and my husband, I took the militiaman by the collar of his shirt, and said to him, "Why don't you kill me?" Why do you spare me? He said to me that the death I was suffering was not the least [to endure the death of his own]. He was right. I can't forget that.

C.K.: That's understandable.

A.R.: I can't forget that.

C.K.: It's obvious.

R.R.: You understand that they had different points of view from mine, but I could sense where things were goingt.

C.K.: Their points of view were different from yours....

A.R.: Yes, we didn't see the situation the same way. During the famous war of the '59 [1959] and what followed, Karoli was studying in Bujumbura. He came back in '63 [1963]. When he returned, he found his whole family alive in Buganza, his father, his mother, the extended family; they died later... The old man, my father-in-law, lost about a hundred descendants, his children, grandchildren and others...

C.K.: He was still alive? Did he die during the genocide?

R.R.: No, he died prior to it.

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C.K.: But his descendants...

A.R.: His descendants all died recently [in 1994]. They all lived on a hill by themselves, they were known under the name of their great-grandfather: *the descendants of RWASUBUTARE*. They didn't care about anything because they had never known war; but I had seen everything...

C.K.: What you knew in '59 [in 1959]

R.R.: Indeed!

C.K.: For you, it was as if the violence you had already seen was reemerging.

R.R.: Obviously.

C.K.: Taking refuge in the Swahili district, you seemed to be getting prepared...

R.R.: It was a last resort, seeing that those I was talking to didn't want to listen to me. They were educated, they were making money, but they did not understand the imminent danger. My sons followed me wherever I hid, they came to tell me that they had just received their pays... they wanted to be helpful with their money.

C.K.: They couldn't understand things as easily as you could understand them as a mother.

A.R.: No.

C.K.: And, as you say, you had seen the events of 59 [1959], you saw things coming...

A.R.: I have come to know all the events.

C.K.: If you are comfortable to talk about it, can you tell me briefly how you lived the times after the murder of Habyarimana, after learning this news?

R.R.: After Habyarimana's death, a young man named Nsengiyumva came to tell us that people were going to die. He told us: "Ngango has just died, Nzamurambaho has just died, Gafaranga too (just the names Karoli had mentioned...). People start running away, you should do the same." We went up towards the Holy Family Church. When we arrived at Holy Family, there was a large register. We were each asked for our identity card and we were registered under our names, including everything that came with our identity.

C.K.: Who was registering you?

R.R.: Father Munyeshyaka had appointed someone to do this. The registration table was right in front of the altar.

C.K.: At the Church?

R.R.: At the Church, this gentleman had a register; when we entered, he would received us and begin to...

C.K.: Everyone went in...

R.R.: We'd walk in, they'd ask for our ID...

C.K.: You were recorded with your ethnic group?

A.R.: Yes, and he didn't give us back our ID cards; our cards were given to the militia.

C.K.: Did your whole family go to the Holy Family Church?

A.R.: My children and I left first. No, first we went to the CELA; Karoli stayed at home, he didn't come. So on [April] 12, all the White Fathers left CELA and gave the keys to Father MUNYESHYAKA. We were massacred on April 22nd.

C.K.: At the Holy Family Church?

R.R.: No. To CELA. The abbot went to CELA the day before and ordered the sentry not to return the next day because the priest [Munyeshyaka] had said there would be many visitors. The next day, the sentry slept until late in the morning, or he did not take seriously the order given by the abbot. When the militia came, they found the sentry still there. Father Munyeshyaka was with them and he started insulting the sentry: "Idiot, didn't I tell you yesterday that you're not here today?" He gave the sentry two good slaps. I didn't see that, the testimony came from two young people who were present at the time of the events. That's when they entered the CELA with two trucks (vans). They put my two children and my husband in the truck. I stayed with my daughter Hyacinth and another girl, a niece of my husband. They left. When I saw the abbot again, I said to him: "Father, where have you taken my children?" "They'll be back," he responded. Then Hyacinth said to me, "But, Mummy, do not think the abbot can do something bad to them... They'll be back." Until the last minute, we didn't know what was going on. After a week (I think), we went to the Holy Family Church. Renzaho [the prefect of Kigali] was present. I asked him, "Did you really take my children, did you really go and kill my children? My children, what did they do wrong?! Why weren't Karoli and I taken, we know the Hutus; my children, what did they do to you?" He didn't answer and left. He didn't want to disclose anything.

C.K.: Did you know each other before?

R.R.: Yes, we had a common friend, Rwagafilita, from Kibungo!

C.K.: He didn't find an answer.

R.R.: He had no answer; even later, before my daughter Hyacinth was shot, the prefect [Renzaho] came back, but didn't take action. A militiaman found me sitting in church with Hyacinth. I had strongly begged the abbot to hide my daughter as he had done for

others, but he continued to reassure me that nothing would happen to us, that no one would touch us. The another militiaman arrived. This one exclaimed: "He he he, Karoli's daughter!" He started touching her. I had asked Hyacinth to cut her hair [not to be too remarkable], but she had only cut it a little. That militiaman insisted on taking her. I wanted to talk to him... but then I shut up. Hyacinth refused to leave, she shouted out loud to the church, saying, "I'm not leaving, I refuse to leave..." The other replied, "Take you or kill you, which do you prefer? My daughter says, "I accept to die." "Yes, really?" "I accept death, shoot me, I'm not going anywhere." The boy started dragging her down. My daughter refused to get up... Everyone in the church was sympathetic, other girls were crying... So the militiaman shot my daughter, one bullet here [on one side of her head], then another bullet on the other side. I approached where Yacyntha lay, sat beside her in a bloodbath.

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C.K.: While you were next to Yacyntha, after the shooting, can you remind us of the last words she addressed to you?

R.R.: Yes, she said a few words to me...

C.K.: Can you recall them? I find these words to be of utmost value.

R.R.: While she was bleeding --because when this vein is cut, the blood doesn't stop-- I shouted: "You are dying, you are dying" and... I held her close. She said to me, "Mom, if you survive, take care of the orphans." She passed away. I kept her on my lap. I bathed in her blood for two days.

C.K.: There, at the church?

A.R.: Yes, those are the words my daughter addressed to me. That's what she told me. It seems that she also said this often to girls her own age, that the one who would survive would help orphans. She saw little girls aged four-five whose fathers worked at PNL D. These young children couldn't even find water to drink and spent their days there, and Yacyntha was uncomfortable with this situation. This encouraged her to take care of the most vulnerable.

C. K: There, at the church?

A.R.: Yes, she would run around to get food for these young children. There were cookies handed out to people. She could show up several times to get them to the young children. Voilà... I can't add anything.

C.K.: Nothing more.

R.R.: Unfortunately, I haven't helped any orphans so far, and it breaks my heart. I hope that one day God will help me to assist even only one orphan.

C.K.: If this is her last will and testament, if this is her legacy to you, you will in the end find the means to achieve it.

R.R.: Yes, absolutely, absolutely. We can even help them by encouraging them. When they feel our courage, it's a great comfort to them... That is for sure...

C.K.: When did you leave that church, by what means?

A.R.: Hyacinth was killed on the 17th...

C.K.: What month...

R.R.: On June 17, we left on June 24. What we called the UN... what was it again?

C.K.: That was UNAMIR [United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda].

A.R.: It was UNAMIR that evacuated us.

C.K.: It was taking you...

A.R.: This organization evacuated us to Kabuga.

C.K.: That's how you returned to Kigali afterwards.

R.R.: We returned there after the liberation of Kigali.

C.K.: You stayed in Kabuga and returned to Kigali after it was liberated.

R.R.: Yes.

C.K.: After the genocide, when you came back, where did you settle? How did you try to get better?

R.R.: I told you about the daughter of my sister-in-law who was with me at the Holy Family Church; she survived, either because she joined us late at church or because God had not yet delivered her to the executioners. She entered the church without registering. She was originally from Kibungo and was studying in Kigali while staying with us. She was little known.

C.K.: Little known...

R.R.: She had two surviving brothers; I lived with them in Kabuga, they went to get food, bananas and many other supplies.

C.K.: It is with them that you returned to Kigali.

R.R.: It was with them that I returned to Kigali. We stayed together. The girl's name is Angélique Uwimana. I gave her in marriage later, she currently lives in Belgium. She's like my own daughter.

C.K.: Yes, that's understandable.

R.R.: Yes.

C.K.: We are in 1994, you are trying to rebuild yourself after the genocide. What kind of life did you lead, where did you work...

R.R.: As I was telling you, when you have been an educator, you are known by many people. When I arrived in Kigali, I started with KIPHARMA, a place where I had already worked.

C.K.: You got a job there.

R.R.: I was rehired for three months, I think. But whenever they said they found bones somewhere, I would go [at that time, the survivors were trying to give their loved ones a decent burial]. You see, when you haven't buried your family members, it is difficult. So the lady boss said to her husband, "Does Rosa believe she is going to be in this bone business all the time and receive her paychecks afterwards?" People told me that, and it hurt me.

C.K.: That's understandable.

R.R.: I came to really speak my mind. I wasn't afraid of anyone. I was like a madwoman. I decided to quit the job, I returned all his stuff to the boss. He asked me what was going on with me. I told him I didn't want to hear his wife's remarks. He asked me if I had thought carefully about what I was doing, and invited me to think it over some more, and come back the following day. I left and the next day I came to return the work material back. I said goodbye, I was handed my salary. I stayed at home for about two weeks, then I was told that the Red Cross was hiring and that the employees were well paid there... A woman named Nabosibo --I don't know if you know her, she was the wife of a man named Muhutu-- came looking for me. She said "Sitting in this house will drive you crazy, let's go." We went to the Red Cross. Really the salary was very interesting, we were very well paid.

C.K.: You're hired... you're well paid.

R.R.: We were paid 200 000 francs. I thought the salary was exorbitant, but it left me indifferent. There was a young Hutu girl who came to check me regularly. Each educator had a pavilion of five babies, all the needs of the children had to be taken care of; a baby goes to the toilet in his clothes, so he has to be cleaned, washed and have his laundry done.

C.K.: You were doing laundry...

A.R.: Yes, that's how it worked. She used to come and watch me... without my knowledge. She stopped by very often, supposedly to say hello. The lady who brought me to the Red Cross (Mariya Nabosibo) worked at BACAR Bank; she left when BACAR was restructuring to become FINA BANK. She worked at the BACAR before the war. When she arrived at BACAR after the genocide, she said to a certain Eustache Ndayisabye, who was going to take over the General Directorate: "If there is a favour I can ask of you... please help Rwanga's wife get out of the crèche." He asked where I was. She told him my whole story... and I was hired at BACAR.

During my farewell to the Red Cross, the Hutu girl who was watching me came to talk to me in private; she told me that her daily visits were meant to check whether I was feeding the babies properly, whether I was hitting them... in a word, she was a spy. She had to make sure I was doing my job properly. But, she told me, "We have found in you a good mother." I said, "Even if we're mean, can we really hit babies?" Deep inside, I always had great love for children. I went for this Red Cross job to test myself... I wanted to see if I still had love for kids.

C.K.: Not just a job, but a personal test.

R.R.: A willingness to test myself to see if I still had humanity inside. When the time came, I started working at the BACAR.

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C.K.: After getting a position.

R.R.: Before I started working at BACAR, people around me started questioning my skills; "This old mom never worked in a bank, why was she hired straightaway, what banking experience does she have?" These are people who see you in a job and wonder how you got there. Eustace went to find the owner of the BACAR and told him about me: "I have an old lady next door, she has lost her whole family and remains alone, and I beg you to hire her." The owner of the bank asked for my curriculum vitae, and a few days later he approved of my hiring. They called me *mukecuru* [old woman]. One day he called me and asked, "Are you the one they call Mukecuru?" I said yes. He asked me not to accept Mukecuru's nickname anymore, and that he too would not tolerate being called Muzee [the old man]. That's how I came out of the crisis... very... very... how can I describe it... It was a real crisis, it was a crisis!

C.K.: It was a real crisis and it's understandable, going back to work didn't eliminate it completely but it helped you to meet other people.

R.R.: Meeting other people, exchanging with other helpers, because, for example, you as a priest, when we meet and you address the Word of God to me, when we commemorate the memory of our deceased, it comforts me, it comforts me... Because to remain constantly swollen risks breaking the heart. That gives me great comfort.

C.K.: You told me how you went everywhere where bones were to be found. Were you able to find the ones of your relatives, and were you able to bury them? Are there any you couldn't find?

R.R.: A militiaman released from prison revealed where the bones of the people massacred in the Rugenge area were, so Agnes Bazambanza went to witness the digging.

C.K.: Agnes Bazambanza, who is she?

R.R.: That's Rupert's mother [a family friend]. So she went to look... Well, bones keep their shape! Flesh comes off the bones, but clothes, such as jeans, do not disintegrate quickly. A person can be identified from the clothes he was wearing and from the skull bones. So she picked up the remains and put them away; she picked me up at the BACAR and took me to where the bones were piled up. By observing them carefully, I confirmed that they were indeed the ones of my kin.

C.K.: You recognized them, the children and their father.

R.R.: Boys with their father... While my daughter, I had buried her in my plot at home. I moved her from my home and took her to Gisozi [memorial] knowing that it was truly Hyacinth.

C.K.: You had found her, you had buried her.

R.R.: I buried her myself.

R.R.: Yes.

C.K.: At the moment they are resting in Gisozi.

R.R.: They are in Gisozi with the others.

C.K.: How did you get the idea to come to Canada? How did you manage to get here?

A.R.: The idea of moving to Canada came to me after the government began to release the militiamen. Some of them had provocative speeches. When we ran into them, they could whisper unbearable things to our ears. One day, one of them said to me: "Mrs. Rwanga, we've been released from prison, when will your kin come back?" He was talking like that while we were walking. I couldn't say anything, I couldn't do anything; I was speechless. It's traumatic. Yes... others were walking around the neighbourhood, making the rounds to identify where we lived. This did not encourage us to forget, but continually reinforced the feeling of grief and hatred, a feeling that does not help us to recover. I know we can't get over it, but if we could just get the chance to forget a little bit...

C.K.: We would have peace of mind.

R.R.: One would find a peaceful heart, and forgiveness would be possible for those who desire it.

C.K.: That's what made you think...

A.R.: That was my reason for thinking about coming to Canada; but also, in my first time of service at BACAR, I had heart pains, and from time to time small haemorrhages in my nose. I was given a small credit to go to Kenya for treatments. As a result, I was told that a few blood vessels were barely visible with the risk of breaking one day. I actively pursued a move to Canada. I was assisted by my doctor brother, by my colleagues, and one day I landed in Canada for two reasons: to get health care and to get away from intimidating comments.

C.K.: ...That was so arrogant.

R.R.: There you go, I wanted to be free from that arrogance.

C.K.: You mention your brother. Did you see him again later? After how long? When did you hear from those who had gone to Uganda?

R.R.: I only saw them after the victory of the RPF [Rwandan Patriotic Front].

C.K.: Your mom and dad...

R.R.: They died before the RPF victory.

C.K.: During their exile in Uganda, you didn't... you never heard from them until...

R.R.: No, I heard from them when they came back from exile.

C.K.: That's where you saw each other.

A.R.: Yes.

C.K.: Your brothers and sisters, were they all still alive?

R.R.: No, there were a few deaths actually... one who fell on the battlefield, another who died in Kigali [before the genocide]; he came to visit me and the Rwandan soldiers bat him. They gave him blows to the chest with boots, a lung burst; he died in the hospital in Gishari probably of tuberculosis. The others are still alive.

C.K.: The others are alive. Your sisters are still alive.

R.R.: The girls are there.

C.K.: You also told me about your doctor brother...

R.R.: My doctor brother was very young when he was exiled, he studied abroad, in Kampala, and later in Kenya; now I would say that he is the one emerging in our family.

C.K.: You managed to reach Montreal. Since you are here, very briefly, what kind of life did you lead, who received you since you didn't know Canada? Where have you been, what's been your path?

R.R.: (To go to) Montreal, I was assisted by Rupert and I thank him. He sent me a thousand dollars, and I added another six hundred; at that time, at Ethiopian Airlines, the airfare was 1600 dollars. Arrived in Boston --or is it?-- I found a young man called NGANJI, who welcomed me into his home. The next morning, Rupert and his wife came to pick me up by car at the agreed meeting place.

1 : 21 : 12

C.K.: He brought you here?

R.R.: I got into his vehicle with his wife all the way to Montreal.

C.K.: Had Rupert already written the comic book here?

R.R.: He had written it; and that thanks to this book [the Comic Strip] the border crossing was even easier. It was useful.

C.K.: The comic...

R.R.: The comic book made it easy for me. They asked me if Rupert charged me money, and I told them he's like my son, so he can't cheat me out of money. It's the truth, I didn't get out of the vehicle to cross the border on foot as is customary at the border, no. Rupert and his wife quietly drove me in their vehicle to their house.

C.K.: All the way to his home, all the way to Montreal.

A.R.: Yes. We stopped at the border, we were questioned, and then we drove back here.

C.K.: How long have you been here, how many years have you been here?

R.R.: Five years, I think... Two thousand and one, two thousand and three?

I arrived in two thousand and four, in June. That's right, it will be soon.

C.K.: That's soon, that's right. As for life here in Canada...

R.R.: The life I lead here in Canada is thanks to the Rwandans that I found here, generous people that God sent me. Truly, God does miracles for me that I cannot enumerate, for if I enumerate them all, you would not believe me. I'm asked, "What do you need?" If I answer that I'm short of water, the person comes in with water... lots of water! I often tease when they bring me a whole well!

C.K.: I know that last year you went back to Rwanda, how did you find the country, what impression did you have, do you feel the desire to go back?

R.R.: Rwanda is splendid, many things have evolved, many, many things, the country has developed in all areas. Personally, I wish that the country would also develop in the social field, that the people would achieve reconciliation. I would like to return [and stay for a long time] and with God's help, after obtaining my documents [Canadian papers], I would only come back here for my medical care. I would be delighted; life in Rwanda is very pleasant.

C.K.: Earlier, you talked about medical care, you once told us that you had to go to Nairobi for treatments? Are your test results in Nairobi the same as here? Before that, did you experience any other health problems in Rwanda before the genocide?

R.R.: Before the genocide, I was solid as a rock. I was going up the hill that goes to the Holy Family Church, from the foot of the hill to the top with my children running; people said that I was the same age as my children; I answered that in spite of my age I still felt strong. I had no problem. The changes in my body showed up after the genocide... Yes, after the genocide... anxiety... heart problem, scattered brain, everything messed up, all of that arose after the genocide...

C.K.: After the genocide... did the doctors confirm the presence of such and such a disease, or things that don't go well in your health?

A.R.: I have hepatitis C, my kidneys are bad and so my heart is weak. In fact, all the important organs are affected. But since I respect the diet, I am holding on tight and avoiding a rapid destruction of these organs, if I may put it that way.

C.K.: The rigour of the diet and the medication...

R.R.: Yes... And the drugs...

C.K.: Now I would like to close this interview; we have more or less covered your personal life; would you have anything to add, as a closing word?

R.R.: As a closing word, in Kinyarwanda we say: "*amaraso arasama* [who sheds the blood of others cannot live in peace]." I didn't kill, my people were killed, I'm not healthy either, but whoever killed didn't gain anything. Maybe he has more diseases than I do. I wish for a better world, that everyone understands the seriousness of the evil that is done by shedding someone else's blood. I would rejoice at the thought that we have made great strides towards the love that God demands of us. The love that made the Son of God be sacrificed. That's how I understand it.

C.K.: Would you have anything else to add that we would have forgotten? As I explained to you, this is a dialogue between you and me, you can add what you think

is important to mention, even though I didn't ask a question about it. You talked about the changes you would like to see in social life in Rwanda, what would help to achieve this? What can help Rwanda? Helping Rwandan youth, what can help Rwandans in this post-genocide period?

R.R: In my opinion, good neighbourliness and forgiveness are essential; the forgiveness that comes from the one who feels able of forgiving freely, without being obliged to do so by law.

Listening to our conscience, finding the right words to address others in order to reach the ultimate goal: to be united Rwandans. The youth will take us as a model, they will grow up with a loving heart. Growing up with the Hutu, Tutsi or Twa idea leads nowhere. Let those who can correct this mistake of the past show young people that it is possible to live in harmony.

C.K.: Thank you very much.