



## **INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD BATSINDUKA**

**Archives vivantes des Rwandais exilés au Canada suite au Génocide et aux violences  
antérieures**

**The Living Archives of Rwandan Exiles and Genocide Survivors in Canada**

**Ubuhamya bw'Abanyarwanda bahungiyeye muri Canada Jenoside n'itotezwa ryayibanjirije**

**Interviewee:** Richard Batsinduka (R.B.)

**Interviewer:** Emmanuel Habimana (E.H.)

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**E.H.: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. To start, could you, please, introduce yourself? Tell us your name, your age, your current family situation and your affiliation with the Rwandan community—where are you at currently?**

R.B.: Well, my name is Richard Batsinduka, I'm 55 years old. I don't know in what order to answer the question... My family situation: I have five children and the two that you see here are my nephew and my niece who arrived on October 1 of last year. Two of the children are here and the little girl, Larissa, she's Blandine's little sister—you see Blandine here—Larissa is at school right now, so she couldn't be here. My sense of belonging to the Rwandan community: of course, I don't know if I have a place in this community, due to many reasons. I've participated a lot in many activities and I still participate. I'm a member of the Humura Association. I've been a member of all the Rwandan community associations in this country, in all the places I've lived. I used to live in Quebec City and then I came here, to Ottawa, in the Outaouais region, but also—I've lived elsewhere in Ontario because of work. I've also lived in the Montreal suburbs, in Saint-Hubert. So I've always been part of the community. I feel a very, very, very strong sense of belonging.

**Cameraman: Excuse me, you can look at Emmanuel, it's as if you're looking at the camera.**

R.B.: Okay.

**Cameraman: I think you'll feel more comfortable that way, it's easier.**

**E.H.: Maybe, maybe...**

**Cameraman: Just forget about the camera.**

**E.H.: You can also move it, eventually.**

**Cameraman: I don't want to move it too much because...**

R.B.: It'll be okay.

**E.H.: So, to begin, we will talk about your family background, your parents. I would like to ask you what memories do you have of your parents and what influence each of your parents may have had on you?**

R.B.: I was born in a small town in the Butare prefecture. I was born on a hill called Nkima, very close to Mount Huye. My father worked in the Butare parish for many years. In fact, he had to quit school—he was taken out of school when he was very young because during that time, it was still colonial times, those who showed, say, promising abilities in primary school didn't have the chance to continue their education. They were immediately “taken,” or “recruited” so to speak, by the Belgian authorities and put to work, despite the fact that the goal of being in school is to finish school, at least primary and then secondary school. Witnesses, in particular my former teacher Nayigiziki, have told me that my father was a very intelligent man, and that was a problem. So he started working in the Butare parish at a very young age. He was someone very, very honest, with strong principles, and I appreciated that. My mother was also a very strong woman, but I must admit that my grandmother had a great influence on me. My grandmother was the midwife in the village and I think that over 99 percent of the people born within a 20-kilometer radius from there were “her children.” Everyone called her Grandma.

**00:05:00**

**E.H.: Oh yes?!**

R.B.: And she was a strong woman, principled too, who taught me many things because, as you know, in the Rwandan tradition, being the youngest in the family—and since my grandfather had died in the 1940s—my father sent me to live with Grandma. She used to call me her little husband!

**E.H.: Yes, yes.**

R.B.: You know how we say that in our culture. She influenced me a lot. She was the one that transmitted to me all the knowledge, all I needed to know about my family because I didn't have the chance to meet my grandfather, it was she who talked to me about him. And my grandmother's strength, it—I especially appreciated it in the difficult years 1959–1960, yes, because I remember, for example, that when they were burning the

houses, when they were destroying our households, everyone was fleeing to Ngoma, in the parish there, but grandmother, she sat in front of her pen and she was saying:

*“Ndashaka kureba umwana w'imbwa uza kuntwikira inzu kandi arinjye wamubyaje.”*

**E.H.: Yes.**

R.B.: In French it means: “I’d like to see the little rascal who dares set my house on fire while it was me who delivered him at birth.” And she stayed there. And the people who were attacking the houses, when they saw her, they didn’t dare come near her house. But they were cowards and took advantage of the darkness of the night to burn her house, while she was inside. Fortunately, she had foreseen this and she had gone elsewhere, to sleep in someone else's house that night. I have great memories, great memories of my family... I don’t know if I want to talk about my brothers and sisters just yet...

**E.H.: Yes, that was precisely my next question.**

R.B.: Yes, because—well, I had three brothers and one sister and, unfortunately, they all died, of course—

**E.H.: During the genocide?**

R.B.: During the genocide. All of them, because in the family, of course, it is the eldest in the family who bears the burden because he’s the one who should lead the troops, so to speak. My father—he grew up with the missionaries, because he worked for them and he had this goal—he wanted at least one of the brothers to be a clergy—a religious sister and a priest. We had a brother who was clergy, we had a—

**E.H.: What was his name?**

R.B.: His name was Brother Canisius Nduwumwe. He led choirs in several places, he studied in Nyamasheke, he led the Inkeramihigo choir, they sang many well-known songs. And he won choral competitions. And we also had a—not really my sister, but a cousin, my uncle's daughter, whose name was Sister Françoise Mukamparirwa and who was also killed during the genocide in Nyanza. She was intendant at the Christ-Roi secondary school, and, oddly enough, the person who had ordered this crime was a former classmate of mine, Father Hormisdas Nsengimana. I remember that in our school dormitory, his bed was—in Kansi, at Kansi’s Petit Séminaire—his bed was next to mine. And it was him who ordered the killing of my—of Sister Françoise, my cousin, and also of our former catechesis teacher, Father Mathieu Ngirumpatse, so, that’s to say... So I

was supposed to be a priest because I studied at the seminary. It didn't pan out, but I don't regret it at all. My older brother Vincent—he's the father of these two kids here—I have to say something about Vincent, because in the family, in any family, we can be brothers and sisters, but there is always this one person who is our hero. For me that was him... [big sigh]

**00:10:00**

It was him, we had a special connection, unique, and... [sigh] In 1973, when things started, when, I think, the second wave of refugees, or the third, or the fourth—we left together because we were kicked out of school at the same time; he was also in high school.

**E.H.: Yes. You were in Butare?**

R.B.: Yes, we were in Butare, but he was in Nyanza, I was—

**E.H.: At the Groupe Scolaire high school?**

R.B.: Yes. I was at the Petit Séminaire—

**E.H.: At the Petit Séminaire, yes.**

R.B.: —in Kansi. And then, when we, the young seminarians, arrived in Bujumbura, our former rector, Father Joseph Nyirumugabo, had already arrived there before us. As soon as he reached Bujumbura, he made sure that all those who came from the Petit Séminaire in Rwanda could find a place in the Kanyosha Petit Séminaire in Bujumbura. I got a place in the school without a problem, but Vincent wasn't so lucky. What happened eventually was that in July, after Habyarimana's coup d'état, and since Vincent was not doing anything in Bujumbura and his classmates were going back to school, he decided to return to Rwanda, unfortunately, and that's what happened. My big sister, the only daughter in the family, Godelieve, her story is extremely sad, because she married a Congolese, a Zairian at the time, who was working in a biochemistry lab at Lubumbashi University, and so she moved to Lubumbashi. She lived there with her husband, she had two children, and since there were a lot of—she spent a long time there without paying a visit to the family. In 1996—no, 1986–87, I think—she asked her husband's permission to travel to our family house so that our relatives could meet her children, and the

husband gave her permission. She came with the two children, her son and daughter Eric and Catherine, and she was pregnant too. On her way there, she passed through Bujumbura and I accompanied her to the border because I couldn't cross the border. She then continued on her way. A year later I went to work in southern Africa, in Swaziland. So, while she was home, she had—she found a job with a Canadian NGO and she talked to her husband about it, and her husband said, “Listen, given the economic situation in Zaire, the chaos that reigns here, it might be better that you stay working there, if you are earning better money than here, you can help us too.” She had her baby, Rodrigue, there; the two older ones, Eric and Catherine, started primary and then secondary school. The genocide caught up with them there and that's what's striking: Godelieve was killed, the two children, Eric and Catherine, were also killed in the secondary schools where they were, in their boarding school, and, imagine, the one who survived the genocide is precisely the child she was carrying when she came to visiting home. That boy, whose name is Rodrigue, is now a student at the Butare University. He's a good boy, but he doesn't know his father, and his father doesn't know him either.

**E.H.: His father is still alive?**

R.B.: I don't even know, I don't know. I had the opportunity to meet some people from Congo when I was working in Switzerland, near Geneva, I met some people from Congo and I asked them—because some of them were from Lubumbashi—to tell him what was left of his family, that he [Rodrigue] existed. I didn't hear back from these people, but he managed to trace some of his paternal relatives on Facebook. Basically that's what I can say about my immediate family. Unfortunately, of all the adults, I'm the only survivor and I had the chance to bring here those who were also alive, that is, Jean-Blanchard, Blandine and Raïssa [or Larissa? – translator's note].

**E.H.: We'll come back to the genocide, but before that, I have some additional, more general, information... So, you mentioned the—that you went to the Petit Séminaire in Rwanda.**

**00:15:00**

**I would like to know—well, you mentioned that you had a good relationship with the one who killed—**

R.B.: —my cousin, yes, yes—

**E.H.: —your cousin, but with—so, you had a good relationship—as a student, you maintained good relationships with your fellow students. Was there anything in particular that could be seen as a remnant from the events of 1960 or was it, rather, that students as well as teachers lived in harmony? What do you remember from that time?**

R.B.: At the Petit Séminaire it wasn't—it wasn't really—especially in Kansi, these were, I would say, the best moments of my youth, particularly because of the teachers we had. I had the good fortune to know people who were, I would say, exceptional, like Bishop Alexis Kagame, he was the director of our Petit Séminaire, and Father Boniface Musoni, Father Joseph Niyomugabo who later served as Rector. At the Petit Séminaire in Kansi, it was complete harmony, complete harmony. But, I think something was brewing because of certain individuals. But it wasn't out in the open, it wasn't out in the open until 1994. During the first grades of the seminary, in Save, yes, there were vestiges there of the 1960s, mostly conveyed by—you know the Diocese of Butare included part of Gitarama, a large part of Gikongoro, if not all of Gikongoro, and Butare.

**E.H.: That's right.**

R.B.: And the boys who came from Gikongoro were particularly vicious. You could already see it, during the teenage years, their early teenage years, until they were 17–18 years old, it was by then very, very visible. I remember, for example, a basketball game when Father Martin Kabalira had it in for our classmate. It wasn't just an altercation, we could see that he [the Father or the student? – translator's note] was being mean about it and that was surprising, given the setting where we were, at the Petit Séminaire in Save. But besides this incident, it was more insidious than that because, as you know, there was, in the lower primary grades in Save, a tradition that was not at all a good thing and that consisted of, basically, hazing the new students at the Petit Séminaire from, say, seventh grade preparatory, which was in Cyahinda. The new students who came from sixth grade in the Latin section were the favourite targets for the students in fifth grade in the Latin section—

**E.H.: Yes, yes.**

R.B.: But those who were in fifth grade Latin also protected the kids who came from the same parish as us. But we were realizing more and more, especially in the years between 1970 and 1972, that this protection was happening along other lines, you see, and the other children who were in fifth grade were questioned if they knew of any Tutsi children who would also be coming to the school. And, we believed it was our duty to protect them. Because the hazing, it had taken a rather ethnic turn—

**E.H.: Yes, yes.**

R.B.: And so we protected them.

**E.H.: So the Hutu kids could no longer persecute the Tutsi kids [...]**

R.B.: Yes, yes.

**E.H.: So you, the Tutsi older brothers, were protecting them.**

R.B.: Yes, yes, we protected them. We would ask the kids who came from other parishes to tell us: are there Tutsi kids in seventh grade who are likely to come to sixth grade Latin?

**E.H.: Okay. And we're talking about kids who were how old—teenagers who were how old?**

R.B.: Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, and it was our sacred duty to protect those kids. And we did it, we did it.

**E.H.: And the Hutu teachers—Tutsi...**

R.B.: The teachers—

**E.H.: Do you have a—any memories or...?**

R.B.: The teachers we had at the primary level were people who were more intellectual than really focused—like Nayigiziki, he was a wise man.

**E.H.: Yes, he was a philosopher.**

R.B.: He really was a philosopher. The others I know—I remember Deo Byanafashe, the Nkuisi, and so on. They were people who—no, I never saw—whether they were Hutu or Tutsi—I never saw any such tendencies.

**00:20:00**

**E.H.: Okay.**

R.B.: No. No such tendencies. In the upper school years, when things started—especially at the beginning of the crisis, 1973, you could already feel it because of what happened in Burundi and the Burundian students who were there were particularly...—and we can understand why. They really were [vague] [vague], they didn't accept at all the harmony that prevailed there. But they had to. I remember that when the students from the other schools were chased all over the country, Father Joseph Nyirumugabo, during what was called "spiritual reading," told us: "Know that here you are all brothers. There is no way that students of one ethnic group would hunt down students from the other ethnicity [vague]. If that ever happens, we will close down the school." I also remember something very, very important, namely, that the dean of the school at the time was called Thaddeus. Thaddeus Rusingizandekwe was from Kibeho, he was a priest. So the adjacent schools, like the Butare Groupe Scolaire, learned that in Kansi we were rebels and we didn't want to chase the Tutsis away. They sent a commando. Yes! A commando that was led by a certain Jean—Jean... what was it—his family name is well-known—it'll come to me. He was the leader of other commandos. We knew each other well because at that time I was captain of the volleyball team, which by the way is still going, I think it's still the best volleyball team at the high school level.

**E.H.: Oh really?**

R.B.: The Butare team was called Dynamo and I was the captain at the time, so he knew me. When this commando arrived, they—they went into the schools, it was around 2 o'clock, and strangely, we noticed that the teachers weren't there, while the school had to start, the class had to start. They were already gone. And then we saw two or three vans filled with students carrying knives, machetes and so on. And then they went into the classrooms and said that all the Tutsis had to go out. The other students, my classmates said, "No, don't go out." The Hutus told us not to go out. We remained seated and I—my bench was at the back and then this Jean, came up to me with a knife and put it on my throat and said, "You too, Richard, you can't—can you pretend you're not a Tutsi? Stand up." I got up, but another student was telling me, "Sit down." But listen, the first guy had a knife. So I went out and the whole class was out as well.

**E.H.: So all the students, Hutus and Tutsis?**

R.B.: Everyone was outside.

**E.H.: Mixed together?**

R.B.: Yes. And I was in second period—so in poetry class, we found the students from rhetoric class outside so the first and the third periods too, everyone was outside. The commando was perplexed, he didn't know what to do. And then they were saying, "All the Hutus on this side." Thaddeus, whom I was telling you about, Father Thaddeus Rusingizandekwe, who was the dean, said, "There are no Hutus here." "All the Tutsis, go on this side." And he said, "There are no Tutsis here."

**E.H.: [vague]**

R.B.: Then the leader of the commandos, the commando of [inaudible] said, "Well, then, everyone should clear out!" And we all laughed. [laughs]

**E.H.: [laughs]**

R.B.: That's what he said and everyone laughed, and then Thaddaeus said, "Give us thirty minutes, we'll pack and we'll go." And that's what we did.

**E.H.: Everyone?**

R.B. We all left. We didn't have school that day.

**E.H. Okay.**

R.B. But a few months later, we learned that a certain Célestin of Kiruhura Parish, Ntahobatuye, had been summoned by Bishop Gahamanyi to make lists of students on the basis of their ethnicity. They sent flyers to the schools—or to the parishes, rather—and it was only the Hutus who were called back to school. We were left on the hills and that's when we decided to leave.

**E.H.: It's strange that Bishop Gahamanyi would do that.**

**00:25:00**

R.B.: This wasn't the first nor the biggest blunder that he's done, especially... Anyway, it's a shame, but it is what it is. The truth must be told.

**E.H.: Yes!**

R.B.: But I want to go back to Thaddeus Rusingizandekwe, who later became a priest, a military chaplain, and who returned to his parish in Kibeho and who threw grenades at the refugees in his parish.

**E.H.: So on one side when he was young—**

R.B.: When he was young, he risked his life—

**E.H.: Yeah.**

R.B.: —to protect our community, and when he was a priest, he shot at his flock.

**E.H.: Ah!**

R.B.: So that's why sometimes we ask ourselves the question—

**E.H.: Yes.**

R.B.: Had I been in his place, what would I have done?

**E.H.: What's going on. Yes.**

R.B.: Because when he was young, he was brave. One would think that as a priest, he would have been even more courageous. He would have protected his flock rather than shoot at them. I think he's in prison now.

**E.H.: Yes. Just like Hormisdas that you were also talking about.**

R.B.: But Hormisdas was cleared; he's in Rome now.

**E.H.: So, closing the sidebar [laughs]. So you mentioned that at school there was, after all, a bit of tension, specifically, the systematic hazing of Tutsi kids. And during the summer vacation in 1960, on the hills, you mentioned that they were burning the houses and that they even almost killed your grandmother. And when the hills were peaceful again, in 1960, later on, in 1963, '65, '67, when you were on the hills with the other children, with the others, what was your relationship like with them?**

R.H.: There were ups and downs, depending on the mood of the moment and depending on the events, but we noticed that every time there was a crisis of some kind, it wasn't easy. It wasn't easy because, for example, if there was a crisis in Burundi it affected us on the hills as well. The tensions on the hills between people, in fact, weren't that obvious. But the incendiary speeches of President Kayibanda, for example, were very well received by the Hutu population of the hills, the vast majority of them, not everyone but

the vast majority, liked what they were hearing. So there were moments of tension from 1959 to 1961, and in '63, '64, right?

**E.H.: Yeah.**

R.B.: '66, '67. So all it took was, for example, a raid by the *inyenzi* for things to deteriorate. But not as much as in Gikongoro, though—

**E.H.: Oh yes.**

R.B.: Even if it is only thirty kilometers from us, there were no killings—the people from, say, Bufundu were fleeing to Butare and to our hills—there were no physical killings, but there was tension, the tension was palpable. I don't know—I don't know anyone who was killed on our hills and the surrounding hills of Butare in general, but there was tension. It wasn't at all—we weren't at all at ease during certain times of the year when things happened, like the *inyenzi*'s arrival in the Nshili, or something like that. And if there was a social or an economic crisis and if President Kayibanda said something on the radio—that was enough for people to start sharpening their machetes. But in general, well, it wasn't so bad, the relations between the villagers, the people living on the hills weren't so bad.

**E.H.: Okay. So we're now in 1973, and you decided to go to Burundi, and contrary to your big brother who returned to Rwanda, you decided to stay in Burundi. So you got married and you had children.**

R.B.: I got married here.

**E.H.: Ah! You got married here?**

R.B.: No, I mean in Burundi, I had just finished high school.

**E.H.: Yes.**

**00:30:00**

R.B.: University.

**E.H.: Okay.**

R.B.: I worked there until 1986 and then I went to Swaziland, as I was saying, and I worked there for three years.

**E.H.: Yes.**

R.B.: Until 1990.

**E.H.: Okay.**

R.B.: Then I immigrated to Canada at that time and I got married here in 1995.

**E.H.: Okay, so all your children are here?**

R.B.: Yes, but for some time—so right after 1960–62, I have to say that during the rebuilding of our house, I lived in Matyazo, and I got to know some very interesting people like the beautiful family Mugesera—

**E.H.: Oh yes.**

R.B.: They were very good neighbours.

**E.H.: They were good people.**

R.B.: Yes, yes.

**E.H.: Yes.**

R.B.: So I know this family very well.

**E.H.: That's what is paradoxical and very complex because—indeed, you mentioned Father Thaddeus who was... That's extraordinary.**

R.B.: And more than that, at the Petit Séminaire, I must say that in my class, there were some people who were very well-known, in one way or another: Father Furaha Justin was in my class, Hormisdas Nsengimana, Martin Kabarira, Father Pierre Ngoga who, by the way, worked with my father—

**E.H.: Yes.**

R.B.: —Sebahinde Anaclet, who was called “Shikito,” was also in my class—these were big names during the time of the genocide. They were my classmates, and Thaddeus too. They were, at that time, good guys, but...

**E.H.: While you were in Burundi, did you ever go back to Rwanda to see your family or...? Because you said at one point that it was dangerous, especially when your sister returned to Rwanda.**

R.B.: Yes.

**E.H.: So you didn't risk going back to Rwanda?**

R.B.: I only risked going back at the end of high school, because I wanted to ask my parents for a kind of—let's say—how can I say this?—guidance. Tell them that I couldn't be a priest, for very personal reasons, but also tell them what I had decided to study at the

university. I went back clandestinely. There were some crossing points where you didn't have to go through customs—

**E.H.: Yes.**

R.B.: —you had to find someone who could come—who could cross with you.

**E.H.: Yes.**

R.B.: The markets—there was a very busy market in Kayanza, close to the people of Rwanda who went there to buy food that was difficult to find in Rwanda, especially fish, and that's where I found this one person who allowed me to leave with him.

**E.H.: By car or on foot?**

R.B.: On foot. So we left Kayanza around 5 o'clock in the evening—

**E.H.: Yes.**

R.B.: —and I spent the night at his home. And he was a Hutu—

**E.H.: Okay.**

R.B.: —who didn't know me from Adam, but who hosted me that night and then the next day I went to take—well, I got into a van that was heading to Butare.

**E.H.: Yes.**

R.B.: I think he lived in Nyaruteja. So I reached home the next day. And I had planned to stay there for the summer holidays because the university classes started in September. But an old friend, a former classmate from Save, who worked at the Commune, came to warn me that the security agents were after me.

**E.H.: Yeah, yeah.**

R.B.: So, I had to flee during the night. It was Vincent who gave me a ride on his bicycle.

**E.H.: Oh yes.**

R.B.: Yes, and then I spent the night at the house of Munyantore Léon who was a priest at the time and who lived in Gikore. Then I crossed the border the next day, and when they came at the house to look for me, I had already left the day before.

**E.H.: And your parents, were they still alive in 1994?**

R.B.: Yes.

**E.H.: Okay.**

R.B.: They were killed in '94.

**E.H.: They were killed in '94. And the rest of your relatives—uncles, aunts...?**

R.B.: Not much is left, there's nothing left.

**E.H.: Not many are still alive.**

R.B.: They were all killed. Yes, a few of the women who were married to Hutus may be still alive, but the rest, everyone else, all the Tutsis and their families, were killed.

**00:35:00**

**E.H.: Were you able to return to Rwanda and find the remains—do the final funeral rituals...?**

R.B.: I went back to Rwanda in another capacity—I went back there with a project on conflict resolution training—

**E.H.: Yes.**

R.B.: Because I wanted to give tools to my fellow Rwandans—so they could consider other ways of resolving their conflicts. And of course, I roamed around the land, with my family, because I thought—okay, I went to the hill, on the hill, and the area has become a jungle, even the trails have disappeared, things that I don't even know what they are, are sprouting, new kinds of wild plants that I don't recognize. And so I went there, I was made to believe that my whole family had—that even my father and my mother, were buried in Magonde with the victims from Sovu, from Nyanza—

**E.H.: In a mass grave?**

R.B.: Yes, in a mass grave. I went to pay my respects, and I was urging friends in Montreal who had some influence, perhaps, to ask the Rwandan authorities to give decent tombstones to those people. Apparently, there are between 3,000 and 4,000 bodies in this mass grave. And then Jean-Blanchard came, I spoke to him and it was him who told me that the bodies of my parents were not in that grave, after all, and that they had been burned alive in the house. So, I only learned this last year.

**E.H.: Last year.**

R.B.: The others, my sister and Canisius, were killed in the Butare hospital, I think? [looks at Jean-Blanchard] So, my sister Godelieve and Canisius. Their dad [Vincent, R.B.'s brother – translator's note] was killed when he went to—he was deputy director of SOS Children's Villages in Kacyiru, which was from—with the Belgian Red Cross. It's a

terrible story because, in fact, he had resisted physically, and later he had managed—he was blackmailed, that if he didn't cooperate, they were going to kill him [he points at Jean-Blanchard], he was a baby, well, he was still very young. Vincent had to abide.

**E.H.: We are taught—not only in Rwandan culture but in many other cultures as well—to be stoic, not to show our suffering, especially if you are a man. How did you feel—and even now, when you talk about it—how did you feel when your nephew gave you this news, to hear how—**

R.B.: [A big sigh]

**E.H.: —your parents had disappeared in this way and to return to this loss, after having mourned it?**

R.B.: It's... It's hard to describe, it's actually impossible to describe. In fact, you find yourself in a situation where you would like to know how it happened and then you put yourself in their place and you don't want to know, because that is a detail that my father and my mother... And what about the others? Is it, one wonders, is it worth it knowing the details? But I think it's worth it, you have to go through that. If you know the details—the real ones, anyway—at least that prevents us from speculating.

**E.H.: Yes, yes. So a great deal of ambivalence.**

R.B.: Yes. And I don't think I'm the only one in this situation. The fear of knowing or of wanting to know the truth, and also the need to know this truth.

**E.H.: And how do you feel when you go to Rwanda, especially on the hill where your parents, relatives, uncles and aunts grew up and were killed and when the people you meet there are probably perpetrators of the genocide, the people who killed your parents? What are your feelings towards these people?**

**00:40:00**

R.B.: I didn't have much contact with these people. The first time I met them was when I went there in 1997. I am absolutely certain that they weren't the killers; the killers had already left.

**E.H.: Okay.**

R.B.: Those who are there are not the killers, but their relatives. But my first contact with them made me understand, in fact, the depth of the distress that they have also experienced. I went to see a cousin of mine who was, I think, the area manager. And these people saw me at her house because they were there too—it was the day of the first communion of my cousin’s children. And then when I left, they followed me. [a long silence] So the distance between our house and Butare is only five kilometers and I walked from Butare to our house on the hill, and back again. And they followed me, but without saying a word. The only person I talked to was an old man named Joseph Gatabazi, and when I spoke to him he said, “Richard, we ate the beast with seven—with eight teats...” I didn’t understand what he meant: “We ate the beast with eight teats”—“*igikoko cy’amabere umunani.*” It was his way of telling me that they had eaten the inedible, meaning their dog.

**E.H.: Oh yes.**

R.B.: Given what people had lived through, and what people—other people—had done to these villagers, I asked him about the ones that I already knew had a propensity to kill.

**E.H.: Yes.**

R.B.: And, indeed, they told me that “Yes, there is—yes, he’s gone—I think he’s dead,” things like that. But those who had stayed there were... Listen, they probably were interested observers, but most of them probably didn’t kill anyone.

**E.H.: To think—**

R.B.: But we can say that they are third-level accomplices.

**E.H.: Yes, yes of course, it’s quite complex, huh! When you think of Rwanda—a country that you left when you were very young, right, in 1973, you were barely twenty years old—what is the image that you have of that country? Is Rwanda, for you, a country—what are your feelings, your emotions that surge within you when you think of this name, of this country? When you see the hills of your childhood, when you see images of Rwanda?**

R.B.: It’s completely different, 100 percent different. It’s not my country anymore.

**E.H.: It’s not your country?**

R.B.: No. I feel a sense of belonging because I’m Rwandan. My hill, I know my hill as I know myself, it’s like my own body, but when I went back nothing is left there for me!

But even if you blindfolded me and told me we're at such and such a place on the hill of [inaudible: Rugimbi?], I can lead you to my house. I can tell you when we have come close to a rock and what can be seen on it, and that this or that is to my left—I can tell you all this with my eyes closed, I've played on this hill since I was three years old.

**E.H.: Yes, okay.**

R.B.: I used to poach food from people's gardens, I used to steal fruits here and there, I used to herd the calves with the other youngsters, I used to play silly games with all the children, all over the hill and on the surrounding hills. I know [inaudible] like the back of my hand. But, unfortunately, what remains of all of this? Nothing.

**E.H.: There is—there is a debate going on, even between Rwandans, about who is a survivor. How do you consider yourself in regards to—you know about this debate, don't you?**

**00:45:00**

R.B.: Yes, yes, yes. But I find this debate completely meaningless, meaningless because a survivor is anyone who, had they been present at the time, they would have been killed. I'll give you the example of my nephew Rodrigue: in our patrilineal society, he's not even a Rwandan. His father is Congolese, his big sister and his big brother, who came with their mother, my sister, were killed in high school, in the boarding schools where they were—who can stand before of me and tell me that Rodrigue is not a survivor? Can anyone tell me that? But according to the other logic, he's not even Rwandan because his father is Congolese.

**E.H.: You're right.**

R.B.: Right? His big sister was killed, his mother was killed, his big brother was killed, and someone would come and tell me that Rodrigue is not a survivor because he is not Rwandan? That he's not Tutsi, that he's not even Hutu—it's completely absurd. Second, I think that people sometimes suffer from—quite often, in fact—certain egocentrism that tends to exclude, to put other people outside the definition of survivors. And we define who is a survivor according to our own egocentrism. That's not normal, it's even “insane,” as they say in English. It's unhealthy, it's unhealthy and it's surprising that

someone whose whole family is alive, intact, and despite all the trauma that they've been through, the father, the mother, the seven brothers, the three sisters, everyone is still there and this person thinks he has the right to judge others whether they are not survivors because it didn't happen while they were in Rwanda. I'm the only one remaining of the adults in my family, so some people are questioning whether I am a survivor. Listen, that's completely crazy, these people must have some kind of problem [makes a sign with his hand], it's crazy to try to exclude me or give me points that do or don't qualify me as a survivor.

**E.H.: Clearly, you have reflected on this deeply. And the fact that you're an expert in conflict resolution—and not only conflicts of the past, but current and future conflicts too... I find your thoughts very interesting and it would be important to share those thoughts with other Rwandans, because it is strange, indeed.**

R.B.: I can perhaps understand the narcissistic propensity that pushes people towards egocentrism and makes them define who is a survivor according to their own understanding, limiting the definition to what suits them, but excluding others. And how we can measure the suffering of those who are then positioned outside of these limits of the definition of a survivor—it's completely dishonest, it's even—no, frankly, I...

**E.H.: So you talked about your life at the college, in high school, on the hills. You've met some people who behaved like human beings and others who were more ill-natured, more mean-spirited. And after you arrived here, in Canada, you found a Rwandan community made up of—we continue calling it ethnicity even though these are not ethnic groups, but that's a subject for another debate. But there are Hutus and there are Tutsis. What kind of relationships have you established? How do you feel about the relationships, the exchanges you have with the Tutsis? Can we say—has there been—could there be harmony between the Tutsis, harmony between the Hutus? Do Tutsis and Hutus manage to communicate in an authentic, deep and sincere way?**

**00:50:00**

R.B.: It's very difficult because, you know, the problem—an identity problem is very difficult to delineate. And I can't say either that complete harmony reigns between the different groups, the different identities that we have, Hutus and Tutsis, etc. It's not 100 percent harmony either. And in each identity group there are subgroups that are also created, unfortunately, according to completely new parameters. In fact, there are no ethnic groups in Rwanda, there are only Rwandans. Well, the relations between—within the community are friendly, the interpersonal relations, but when we refer to Hutus, Tutsis, it depends on who you are talking about. Some people are known to be very open to friendly relationships with everyone. And these people are not necessarily welcome in some communities, Hutus for example. Well, what can you do? We're talking about reconciliation efforts, for example in Rwanda, we're talking about efforts to bring together Hutus and Tutsis in the diaspora—there are some Hutus who don't want that, right? There are probably also Tutsis who don't want that. But the vast majority—well, I think it's a question of education, but also of personal willingness to open up to the other. I know, personally, that there is a lot of ignorance on both sides, which produces—people give, so to speak—put labels on others that they don't even know.

**E.H.: Absolutely.**

R.B.: And when we meet a person for the first time, our first reaction is one of astonishment: “My God!” We begin to discover the human face of the other, the unknown other. So what we're lacking is, I would say, chances to meet, on neutral ground, where everyone can express this desire to want to connect with others. This is what we're missing and if such opportunities exist—and they do, for example, the people who go to church to pray, they sing together and pray to the good Lord, but what happens after the Mass? They go back to who they were before. What good is it if we only pretend that prayer can help us to be more mature and wiser?

**E.H.: Even if they do—but the Hutus can pray in their Hutu churches and the Tutsis in the Tutsi churches.**

R.B.: Exactly. You see, it's odd, no, I'm not going to waste my time praying in these circumstances because it's completely—it's hogwash.

**E.H.: Tell me—**

R.B.: But what is even more serious is that there are Canadians, especially Quebecers, who stand behind the factions and are even more extremist than we are!

**E.H.: Indeed.**

R.B.: It's strange!

**E.H.: Hutu "power"!**

R.B.: Oh, there are people among those who are neither Rwandan nor... —and who would cut your throat all the while they keep smiling.

**E.H.: Tell me one thing: a tragedy like a genocide must change a person, in some ways. After the genocide, do you see human beings—not just Rwandans, but people in general—do you see human beings with that same innocence in your vision, in your perception that you might have had before or has something within you changed, after the genocide, in your way of seeing the individual?**

**00:55:00**

R.B.: No, it—I think that I learned, rather, to understand humanity better. Why? Because human beings make choices; and sometimes they choose destruction, right? And, I am not a person to—why wouldn't I make completely aberrant choices, right? So I always lend credibility to human beings. Except that there are individuals who don't want to take responsibility precisely as human beings. When I hear someone say on the radio or on television, "I did this because the devil tempted me." That's—

**E.H.: [laughs] Manipulation!**

R.B.: —that's real bullshit because right next to that person, there's another who has taken risks and who has made other, more constructive, choices.

**E.H.: To protect.**

R.B.: I think that we must give credit to human beings all the while knowing that they are capable of anything, the best and the worst. As I was saying, I spoke of Thaddeus, I saw him at his most positive moments, and I also know him at his worst moments. But in all situations he was the same person. So, I always trust humans, knowing that you have to be careful too.

**E.H.: Being a survivor and living in Canada where you are not facing on a daily basis the possibility of encountering the perpetrators and all the contradictions that follow from that, and all the suffering, and the deaths of people scattered a bit everywhere—do you consider this as a privilege or do you feel the desire, as some people, to say: “This is my country, I must go back!” How do you relate to this?**

R.B.: Whether you're in Canada or in Rwanda, and when you're a genocide survivor, there's not a single free moment when the thought of the genocide does not gnaw at you, day after day, at any time, wherever you are. There hasn't been a single day, it's impossible—since '94, there hasn't been a single day that we haven't thought about the genocide. Impossible, impossible! Yes, well, listen, the ideal for me would be to grow old on the green hills of my dear country—that's the ideal, yes. But one question persists: How can we be sure that there won't be other genocides? [smiling] The reasons that caused the genocide are still there.

**E.H.: No.**

R.B.: Because we haven't reached the very root of the evil and to eradicate it will take generations and generations of education so that we can do something—but we must do something.

**E.H.: Listen, you just mentioned it: indeed, not a day goes by that we don't think about the genocide, whether we are survivors, like you, or whether we are not necessarily survivors in the strictest sense of the term, but we are so by proxy, because when we say that a genocide is a crime against humanity, every sensible person feels that it's a crime committed against the whole of human race. And there are two questions we often ask ourselves. You touched on the first one briefly—maybe you could go back to it... So the first question: How have human beings come to this, to do such things—the unimaginable, the unspeakable, the incomprehensible? And the second question is: What can people who have lived a tragedy like that, a genocide, do to get through this? What path do they take? Where does their strength come from?**

**01:00:00**

**Because often—you know, when researchers, journalists see someone who has experienced tragedies like the genocide, they often think about post-traumatic stress, and they often ask about that—or about depression—but we see people like you, like your nephews here, who don't seem to be, quote-unquote, “*kuba barahahamutse*,” and we see many survivors who are strong—where does this force come from? What keeps people going, what gives them strength? So, maybe that's—what do you want to start with first?**

R.B.: The first question you are asking—How do people come to commit unspeakable acts? Essentially, this is a question about good and evil. How can one choose evil, the absolute evil? In fact... [long silence] When genocide perpetrators are questioned—I've never heard a single one of them, not a single one say that he's committed the genocidal act with joy—they always look for nonexistent pretexts. In fact, these are also strategies of surviving the evil that they've committed. But in the heat of the moment, in the heat of the moment, you have to equip yourself with tools that will allow you to carry out that action. One of the most common such tools is to justify precisely the unspeakable, it's the demonization, the dehumanization of the victim. The very name by which the victims are called—*inzoka*, snake, cockroach, vermin, rat—sanctions an act believed to be legitimate or acceptable or justifiable because one wants to eradicate something considered dirty, bad, dangerous or not acceptable. So if one thinks they're killing a snake, if one thinks they're killing a rat, a cockroach, one thinks that what they're doing is cleaning. That's why it's called “work,” *gukora*, right? *Gukora* is a noble act, work that ennobles the individual; *gukora*, an acceptable act. It's when the heat of the moment passes that one begins to ask the real questions and one looks for strategies of survival after what has been done. So how can someone like that survive and find their humanity? They must first accept, define, name their true actions with real terms. They are—they've committed the irreparable. In fact, when we talk about reconciliation, in general, it's—the person, the individual should first come to reconciliation with himself, because before committing this act, one was a human being. During the act, when one commits the unspeakable, one is no longer a human being. How to return to this humanity? It's not me who'll give it back to him, it's up to him to come to terms with—to reconcile the beast that he became and the human that he was before. It's a personal effort. And after, one

can say, “What I did is unimaginable, do I feel remorse? Do I want to repent? Am I ready to ask for forgiveness? And how can I make the victim understand? If what I say is truly authentic, how can the victim understand that my actions are sincere?” There are very few people, among the killers, who accept to take that step. Whereas the second question, I think it’s more related to—

**E.H.: To the victims.**

R.B.: To the victims! And here too, it is necessary that the victims reconcile first with their own selves, because they have been dehumanized, and so it is up to them to find again their humanity with the help of the existing services that can support them. Here, I think, the authorities, the government, or the authorities more broadly, can play an important role using the existing resources, but also the existing specialized services to which, unfortunately, not everyone has access. You mentioned PTSD. The last time we spoke, you told us that 72 percent of Rwandans—

**E.H.: Who don’t have access to that.**

R.B.: So, first, knowing that you can’t remain indifferent or unscathed in the face of such a thing, and take steps to survive. But some people, in appearance, seem to be functioning normally. It’s a decoy—it’s a decoy because everyone has been affected. How do people manage to give a semblance of normal life? That’s another conversation, but what we need to know is that they’re bluffing. How long will this last? It depends on each person’s strength. Someone who breaks a leg or an arm and who doesn’t go to the doctor won’t always have a broken arm—the arm will heal awkwardly, and he will have to live with that. It’s exactly the same for survivors who are not provided services. You can’t say that what happened has been erased. But we also have the duty to survive, so we have to work hard to survive, not everyone is able to do it, some have given up and have died.

**E.H.: The living dead.**

R.B.: Yes, and even some who have literally died. We had a case in New York, for example, where a young person was found completely frozen in the backyard of a house, he was Rwandan. So there are—it’s extremely difficult.

**E.H.: Hence the importance of maintaining solidarity because there’re many people like that. I like a lot what you just said: that it can’t leave us indifferent, and furthermore, it can’t leave us unscathed, without affecting us on some level.**

R.B.: It's not possible. One can't deny it. Can't deny it. [silence] Because, you see... [sigh] And this also perhaps goes back to the previous question you asked about who is considered a survivor. We have children, these children will have children—can we say that those children are survivors? Absolutely. That's precisely the message that should be sent to people who label others, isn't it? Because if my son asks me, "How come I don't have aunts, uncles, grandparents?"—what explanation do you want me to give to a child who was born in Canada? And what will be his explanation to his own children? I think we should be honest with ourselves and think beyond our own little ego and say, "Yes, it concerns us all." There is not one who is more concerned than others—everyone is.

**E.H.: One thing is striking, and I would like you to share your point of view on this. Rwandans and Africans in general are believers. Rwanda was and remains, without doubt, the most Christian, the most Catholic country in Africa. You have studied at the seminary—what about your faith? Has your spirituality changed or evolved, and in what way?**

**01:10:00**

R.B.: It has changed in the fact that... I remain a believer with all the conviction in my faith that I have always had. I am still a believer. What has changed is my attitude towards the intermediaries between me and God, that's all. And I'm including everyone in this. I think I follow the precepts of what I've learned in my Catholic religion, but I'm also thinking: all the intermediaries between me and God, starting with the priest of the parish all the way up to the pope—I now choose my people. Just because you're wearing a cassock doesn't give you the authority to teach me how to live my faith. The best prayer for me—for anyone—are one's actions, not memorizing the Bible or the— [inaudible] For me, it's not that. Show me how you live in accordance with your faith, the rest is blah-blah. My faith is very strong and that has helped me a lot. But, as I'm saying, the intermediaries between me and God—I now choose my people. In all religions, there are wonderful people. And in all religions too, there are also scoundrels.

**E.H.: And this attitude towards the intermediaries, is it a result of the genocide, or was there a trigger prior to that, when you started questioning— [inaudible]**

R.B.: The first trigger was my Bishop, whom I've told you about. And I have many stories to tell about that—it's not the first. I've seen things that are incredibly difficult to accept. And this coming from someone considered to be pastor of the people. I had the opportunity to meet him on a plane, with Bishop Rubwejanga. Rubwejanga saw me and he recognized me and said, "Hey! How is it going? It's you—" And then he said, "Come to see Bishop Gahamanyi, say hello to him." I said, "No way!" He said, "Why not?" "You know well why not, Bishop." And he said, "I understand." We were three friends before we left for Burundi: François Buseruka, Rubayiza Emmanuel and myself. Before we left for Burundi, we went to seek advice from Bishop Gahamanyi. We all met in Butare, we all went there, we went to his house. When we arrived at the entrance to his place, the concierge told us—we gave our names, we told him that we had come to see Bishop Gahamanyi, to ask him for advice before leaving the country. The concierge went—the Bishop had a two-story house—and we could see him on the second floor, reading the breviary. The concierge went to talk to him. I saw the Bishop going into the—then a few minutes later, the concierge came back downstairs and told us, "I'm sorry, he's not here." "He's not?" "No." "Where is he?" "I just learned that he'd left for Kigali this morning." Okay. We weren't surprised because we knew the kind of man he was. Then, after the concierge came down, we asked for some paper to write a letter. We wrote it together. I won't go into the details of its contents, but it basically said that it was over between him and us, because we saw him in his house, we told him that we had seen him and that's why all three of us had decided to no longer be priests.

**01:15:00**

**E.H.: Earlier you mentioned the importance of talking to your children who are also survivors—the fact that they don't have grandparents, they don't have aunts.**

**Sometimes the kids are given homework from school: go ask your grandparents how they did things in their time, how they were celebrating or organizing weddings, baptisms, etc. Obviously, to these children's parents, who are survivors, this always causes anguish. When you see your children, listening to these horror stories, would it—how should I formulate the question?—as a parent, one may be**

**concerned: “Can the fact that my children know what happened to their parents affect them? Can that follow them throughout their lives? Can it hurt them? But on the other hand, one wonders: “Is it our duty to pass on to our children what we have lived through?”**

R.B.: Well, I think we have the duty to our children to teach them where they come from. It is a past that’s hard to accept, but what can we do? We’re talking about the transfer between generations of what happened. If the theories that, for example in Jewish communities, second-generation survivors still feel the “effects of the genocide,” are true, then it must be true for our children too. Knowledge has to be passed on, it all depends on how you phrase things. Maybe you have to choose a good moment and little by little make them understand what happened. But it’s difficult to avoid creating, in the future, useless extremists. That’s the difficult thing: how to transmit a message that is pure, authentic, real and without creating unnecessary, dangerous extremism, because all extremists are dangerous. So how can we pass on this heritage so that they understand where they come from and in a way that, perhaps, gets them to fight the evil as soon as it begins to appear elsewhere or within others, and without necessarily venturing into extremism. All the while being aware, precisely, of where they come from and what had taken place. That’s what is most difficult. But it’s our duty.

**E.H.: And I think that someone like you who does conflict resolution—it’s a mission, obviously, that we can understand well and we can commit to it and at the same time we realize how hard it is to make others understand this, including the people around us. Among the—this past—you were saying just now: “The country might be a country of horrors, but my wish is to grow old in my country.” So there is a very positive image you keep of this country, despite everything. Is this a way of reconciling with this country which is also a country of horrors?**

R.B.: I think I’m an individual who is part of a lineage. My great-grandparents, my grandparents and my parents made me who I am and they left us something tangible: the [estate?], so to speak. I’ve been there, everything they’ve left us there is intact, it’s wild with vegetation, but it’s intact. I think that growing old there would be a great challenge, to carry on the family line and to pass my testimony, so to speak, on to Jean-Blanchard and the other children.

01:20:00

It would be unfortunate if those who wanted to exterminate an entire nation would be able to say: this used to be the place of so-and-so, the same way we now point to Nyagakecuru's property on the summit of Mount Huye—there are no children, he has no descendants. I am alive, I have to go back home one of these days, and I also think that's what they are thinking [points to his nephews]. I would like to build a house there and grow old in it. But on the other hand, aging without being cut with a machete [laughs]—can that be guaranteed? But all in all, I think it was the best option, to continue this legacy so that it endures, yes.

**E.H.: You have received a really beautiful legacy from your grandmother who gave life, who helped people be born, who was taking care of—she has passed on to you something very profound and that's what you continue doing. It's transmitting this life force, this energy of life to overcome conflicts, to be stronger, to continue living. Earlier, you briefly touched on the many different kinds of mourning, difficult to bear, since it was only last year that you finally learned how your parents had died. And without a doubt, I think mourning like that also connects us to many other bereavements because it's not only our parents that we've lost, it's also friends, it's also neighbours, it's also acquaintances, colleagues and also in some sense the bereavement of a country—a country that is not what we would like it to be. Are we going to get through this? Can a mourning like that... Usually, at a funeral, we perform the burial ceremony and then we have the impression that we have done what needed to be done and we can move on to other things. In the case of the genocide, is it something—is it a process that can be completed? Is it a—**

R.B.: I don't think we can complete this process, because the act of a genocide is written in letters of blood and fire that remain indelible and... We have the duty to remember, but when we think about memory we also have to think about everything that memory entails, if you see what I mean. Life must continue except that life does not continue as we think it would, that's the problem. We live with it, but we make the decision to continue living and that's why we're called survivors. So, the mourning of an entire

people [silence] is unfortunately now part of the identity of an entire people, on whichever side we are, we can't escape that so easily. We can't escape that so easily... If, for example, the genocide of—well, the Jewish people took place primarily in Germany or Poland, in Auschwitz, Treblinka [inaudible] and so on, it didn't take place in Israel, but the duty to remember is everywhere, even in the United States, in Montreal, Canada. Overcoming this means finding in such barbaric, savage act, in the absolute evil, the tools with which to gather the strength that would allow people to go forward, and that's possible. And that's why to say that we can get through and erase [gestures "to erase" with the hand]—that's impossible. But, I think, it's about refusing destruction in the name of moving forward. And of course the fire that can—the energies that can make us progress towards that future, it is precisely memory and all that it entails, so whether we like it or not, that's what we have.

**01:25:00**

**E.H.: I would like to end with two questions. In fact this whole process of—you have thought about it a lot and during our meeting last time, you did a—you initiated a questioning, an exchange on this topic. Unfortunately, time restrictions didn't allow you to pursue this further. And now, the intention of the people who will listen to your interview that you have agreed to make public—it could really help because you have made a first step in that direction. First, you made a distinction between forgiveness and reconciliation. So, I wish we could—that you could talk about your understanding, first of all, of reconciliation. Obviously, for people in Rwanda to be able to continue to live together and build this country, we say: “people need to reconcile.” And indeed, one wonders how can people live in that country after what happened without there being some reconciliation? So when I speak of reconciliation, there are, on the one hand, the current actions carried out by politicians, by priests over and above the population of the victims and also the genocide perpetrators; there are people whose objective is reconciliation. They have their way of doing things. I'd like to hear your thoughts about that first, your point of view on these different ways of approaching reconciliation, and if there really**

**should be a reconciliation—how do you see that? We will talk about forgiveness after.**

R.B.: Well, for me, reconciliation necessarily involves all the actors: the victims as well as the perpetrators of evil. Each actor has a role to play. Meaning: those who have committed the crime must accept that they have done so and must be able to express all the evil they have caused, to name it in full and to assess its depth, its magnitude, and to be able to say that to the person who has suffered.

**01:30:00**

The individuals who have committed the crime must also—must be open to showing remorse, to demonstrate their impossibility to change the past, to assess rightly that what they have done is beyond repair and that they therefore humbly ask for forgiveness; that they express their repentance in front of the victim for what they have done. Before that, of course, as I was saying, reconciliation begins within one's self. You have to recreate and revisit the person that you used to be, right? Before making that step, right? So first you have to recover your lost humanity because before dehumanizing the other, the victim, the perpetrator has dehumanized himself because that's not what he used to be before. To make that step, to recognize the depth and magnitude of the harm that they have caused and to accept that, unfortunately, there are things beyond repair and that to continue living as a nation we must go forward. But irreparable doesn't mean preventing people from living, but proposing ways and means, if only a minimum of reparation, even just symbolic, to show sincere repentance and recognition of the evil that has been done. On the victim's side, too, life must continue and it must continue in a more or less normal fashion. To retreat in narcissistic pain is not a solution either. If the victim recognizes the repentance of the executioner as sincere, if the victim understands that the act of repentance is honest, if he understands that, indeed, no reparation is possible, but that nevertheless we must move forward, if he understands that accepting the executioner's repentance can also make—it helps break open the abscess of resentment, the venom that he has been digesting from the moment the evil was done. I think that being open would help the victim in the process of healing. It would be good for the

victim to open up and accept the repentance of the other, not to skip stages in the process, so to speak, but, at least, little by little, these are... It can't be done in a day, it can't happen in a year, it will take time, but we must let time do its work. That's why sometimes politicians push an agenda that can't be pushed. It's like a small wound, and this wound is internal. If you cut your finger at quarter past ten today, you can't say, "Okay, at three o'clock I have to be healed." These things are... Reconciliation requires both sides, absolutely. We can't either—and this is important—it must be voluntary. Obviously, this also requires education and that, I think, is the great responsibility of our political leaders: to educate the people. But they too must be able to live up to this educational standard because, you see, just because one is a politician doesn't mean that one is educated, about certain notions, at least. One has to have a good understanding of these things to get people to also understand them well. So, then—unlike forgiveness—forgiveness doesn't require the presence of both parties even if reconciliation and forgiveness are linked. But forgiveness—I can forgive someone who isn't present because forgiveness isn't necessarily a gift given to the other; it's a gift that one must first give to one's self because it is in my own interest to break open this abscess and drain the pus that torments me and prevents me from living my life, right? So, I can forgive someone who isn't present and I can forgive someone without telling them, that's not their problem. When I think to myself, "Starting today, I will erase this debt," it's my right to erase it. Okay. I don't know anyone who says that "forgiving means freeing a person from a prison and then realizing that the prisoner was in fact one's own self." So I must forgive first for my own self before I do the same for someone else. We can forgive without reconciling if the person is not there, but we can't be reconciled without both parties being present, that's impossible. That's why the survivors ask the same question: "Who do I have to reconcile with since no one showed up?" That's it!

**E.H.: We saw, in particular, in Germany, after the Holocaust, that sometimes it was the children—seeing that their parents wouldn't ask for forgiveness, it was the children themselves, the descendants of the executioners, who asked for forgiveness.**

**01:35:00**

**How do you see this kind of—does this approach make sense? What is the value of asking for forgiveness by a third person, on behalf of the culprits who wouldn't ask for one themselves?**

R.B.: Okay, if the culprit doesn't want to ask for forgiveness, no one can forgive for him. But if the culprit is not present, and his child asks for forgiveness, this means that through a process of education the child has understood that he can't act, he can't repeat the [parent's] act. One can't forgive through an intermediary while the culprit refuses to accept repentance. For me, that's impossible. If someone says, "What my parents have done—and they didn't have time to ask for forgiveness, but I'm absolutely certain that had they been here... And I'm here on their behalf and I am asking for your forgiveness." In this way, there is at least an assurance that if this individual is asking for forgiveness in an honest and sincere manner, he wouldn't repeat his parent's actions. But if someone says, "Well, we have to finish the work" and his son comes up to me and says: "You have to forgive my father who is in the forests of Congo or elsewhere..." Well, listen, that makes no sense.

**Cameraman: Can I ask a question? Yes, I wanted to ask you just now, when you were talking about reconciliation, how can the executioner recognize that he has been dehumanized, that he has done something dehumanizing, how can this happen?**

**R.B.: —to understand that he has been dehumanized—**

**Cameraman: And that he has again become... What are the means to achieve this? How have others done that, in times of other genocides? Was there—?**

R.B.: Well, there is the effort of personal reflection that needs to be done and to come back to one's own self, to define one's self from before the act took place: "Who was I before?" Because there are three stages: before, during and after. Does the way a person behaves during the action determine the way a person will be after? So he says to himself: "Now I'm a criminal" or he goes into complete denial and always finds excuses for his actions, you see? To justify the unjustifiable, he finds reasons that are difficult to accept, it's like the myth of Cain! So, you see, he's trying to find a valid reason, but it's not working at all, it will never be a genuinely valid reason because it eats him from the inside. That's why we say in Kinyarwanda and Kirundi: "You can run faster than the one

chasing you, but you can't outrun the one who's running within you," you see what I mean? So, how to remove that which is running within you? It is precisely to recognize what it is that is running within you. And before this thing ran within you, was that you? You see? How can I, before making the other two steps, return to that previous state and say, "No, that's unacceptable! I have to return to who I was before and rediscover my humanity." But to go back to this humanity, one must also accept the inhumanity one has attained, either by oneself or by what you have learned from human experience, you see? So, the whole process of repentance begins with a personal conviction, to convince one's self that: "Well, that's unacceptable, I did it, but I wasn't like that before. How can I go back to who I was before? I can't deny what I've done." That's it.

**E.H.: Well, that's it! I wanted you to share your thoughts on this, from your experience. Are there things that—other things that you might like to share?**

**01:40:00**

R.B.: Well, I don't know if there are other things I'd like to share, except that I think that we still have a very, very long journey to go as a nation, and that what we are seeing here, outside of Rwanda, between Rwandans, is only a [inaudible: habit?], in fact, a summary, say, or a simplified form of what is happening within each person, within every Rwandan, elsewhere, in Rwanda or elsewhere. So, wherever we are, we—every Rwandan wherever he is, should be aware that if we ever want to become Rwandans again, we have to go through a very long process of education, of self-education, and to personally make the decision to become what we must become. We must not be forced to do anything, we must first believe in what we want to be.

**E.H.: And that's the goal of this research, precisely, not only to initiate a dialogue, but to bring people together, and not just Rwandans because a genocide is a crime against humanity and that's why our team is multidisciplinary, there are people of different nationalities. Together, we can reflect on that. This horrific event has happened not only in Rwanda, but unfortunately we see that genocides have happened elsewhere as well, and so we need to focus on what we share as citizens of**

**this world and to see what we can do together to prevent this from happening again. When we say that it can't happen again, this must be everyone's will.**

R.B.: Yes and what worries me in this sense— [silence] —is that someone says: “Protect me from my friends, I can take care of my enemies.”

**E.H.: It's not— [inaudible]**

R.B.: Yes, I think it's [inaudible] because in the Rwandan community, in the diaspora, we have, quote-unquote, “friends” who love us to death, and I say “to death”—they are extremists who aren't necessarily Rwandans, who claim to love us, but who only wish our death—who find other reasons to justify the genocide and even those who have committed the genocide are starting to flee. No, it's unacceptable! There are people, non-Rwandans, who claim to love us, but who actually hate us more than those who carried out the genocide. How to justify the unjustifiable—it happened in Rwanda and they are not fools; some of them are politicians, intellectuals, they are people who go to—who explain why it happened the way it happened, and who dare write things that even the devil couldn't imagine: how are we going to solve the problem these people are causing, I don't know. Frankly, I don't know at all. We don't need this kind of people, we don't need them at all—let them take care of their own frustrations and I think that's what drives them to justify the unjustifiable. But they should leave us, give us the chance to move forward in our own way, as we were before, despite all the dehumanizing acts that have taken place. That's all I have to say.

**E.H.: Thank you very much.**

R.B.: Thank you.

**E.H.: Thank you for bringing the children and I think that—it really is a proof of love and a very good education. Because it starts with the people who are close to us, when we are convinced of something—it is first with the people who are very close, and these children who—I am attentive to that and I hope that they will continue the mission that you have begun.**