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### Interview with Noe Rwezangoro & Antoinette Nakizungu

Noe Rwezangoro

Antoinette Nakizungu

Ezra Schrader

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Noe Rwezangoro & Antoinette Nakizungu, translated by Rushimisha Byiringiro, were interviewed in Des Moines Iowa on July 30th, 2022, by Ezra Schrader

[01:36] ES: Where did they grow up?

NR/AN/RB: In Congo, in Uvira. Katanga, that's the village where he [Noe Rwezangoro] was born. A place called Kahololo. They're both in South Kivu.

[02:43] ES: And at what age did they become refugees?

NR/AN/RB: So, they moved from village to village because of war, but to flee the country, to move to Burundi, it was in 2002.

ES: When they were fleeing from village to village - how old were they when that started?

NR/AN/RB: It was in 1998, because of the war. She [Antoinette Nakizungu] just said that even before then, there was like a war, they would move from village to village, but officially leaving the country was in 2002.

[04:00] ES: When they were moving around in the country, how old were they, were they traveling with family, with a large group?

NR/AN/RB: It'll be like a whole village, and leave the village empty. And they were like old when that stuff happened. Because he mentioned 1998 - I remember that story. I was really young but I do remember the story. That's when we moved from a village called Kasanga and that's when we moved to Uvira, which was a city. At that time, we were living in the province of Katanga, and when we moved to South Kivu [Province]. At that time, I was born by then, maybe four or five years old.

ES: Oh, a little kid.

NR/AN/RB: Yeah.

[05:25] ES: What was the event that made them flee to Gatumba?

NR/AN/RB: There was a war in Uvira, and rebel groups were fighting the government or whatever, so for their safety that's when they decided to leave the country, to move to a so-called "safe place."

[06:05] ES: Do they remember what month they left - because this was in 2004, right?

NR/AN/RB: 2002. It was twice. The first one was in 2002, and the second one was in 2004.

ES: So, they left in 2002 for Gatumba, came back to Congo, and then went back. So, do they remember what month it was in 2004 when they went back to Gatumba?

NR/AN/RB: It was in June.

[06:40] And so for the months they were living at the camp before the violence, what was it like?

NR/AN/RB: So, they slept a week, from Congo to Burundi, they slept a week outside in Gatumba for like one week, and that's when UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] came and gave them tents and then blankets, plates and all that. That's when they kind of started life in the refugee camp. So, she thought that everything was okay as a refugee because they had a place to sleep and food. Everything was ok.

[08:13] ES: Can you ask how they would spend their time while they were at the camp?

NR/AN/RB: They would wake up, and go to pray - they had a place in the refugee camp where they would go and pray and all that. They would wake up, and eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner - because they did not have anything else to do in the refugee camp, and for some reason, they thought that they were protected, and kind of safe compared to where they were coming from. So that was the daily activity that they would do in the refugee camp.

[09:36] ES: Was the possibility of an attack ever discussed, did the people who were protecting you ever say what to do in case of an attack?

NR/AN/RB: No. They did not see it coming. Also, she just mentioned that they had securities. They had - there was like Burundian police and UN (United Nations), like all of them were there around to protect them. So, they did not see it coming.

ES: And then after the violence, what was the camp like?

NR/AN/RB: So, the camp was destroyed. After the massacre the camp was destroyed, was burned down. Nobody went back to stay in that refugee camp because it was burned down, it was completely destroyed. So, people died, and the rest were injured. Like my

dad was shot, so most of the time we spent in the hospital getting treatments, and you know.

[11:45] ES: And in those weeks and months after the attack, what were the immediate challenges they faced?

NR/AN/RB: She just mentioned something interesting. Trauma. They faced trauma. Because of what happened - we saw people burned, you know, some people saw their parents, their kids - so people went through a period of trauma thinking of those things and all that. So, it was hard for them. I do remember that because I was there, people faced a lot of challenges, including trauma, people being injured physically, being hurt, a lot of people not having a place to stay, people not having food, and some not having hope in life. So, facing all that stuff after the massacre, was tough to handle.

She's saying that even up to now people are still facing that kind of thing. There are injured people up to now. There are people who are shot - they still face those kinds of stuff. Yeah, those were challenges they faced after the massacre.

[13:55] ES: And in the years since, how has it changed their life? Is there anything in their life that has stayed the same?

NR/AN/RB: The help after the event, what changed was that they don't live close to where it happened. Some of them went to counselors, and not being around where it happened really helped them to forget - not forget, but to not think a lot, to not keep having the trauma or whatever going through that kind of stuff. So, not being close to where it took place really helped them. Also coming to this country, some of them got helped - like they went to counselors and they told them that it happened, that there is life after it happened, so it really helped them, but not all of them. There are people who are still facing those kinds of things today. But they haven't forgotten - there's no way they will forget what happened.

[16:30] Whose responsibility is it to bring justice to the victims of Gatumba?

NR/AN/RB: So, they're saying that who's responsible for bringing justice, they're saying that it should be America, this country, because those who killed us were from Congo and Burundi. They [the attackers] crossed the border in Burundi, and there were some Burundians that were with those rebels that helped them to kill us. So, we can say that Congo is the one that's responsible, at the same time Congo is the one that killed us. So, to go tell them "Give us justice" and at the same time they're the ones who kill us - it doesn't make sense. Also, Burundi. They kill us under their eyes. As she just mentioned, there were police officers there in the refugee camp, but they did not do anything. She

also said that the people that killed us, were Congo and Burundi at the same time. So, to tell them to give us justice makes no sense. So, they think that the country that can help to bring justice to Gatumba survivors is this country - America.

[20:04] ES: Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else they want to add?

NR/AN/RB: She just wanted to add that she was having a kid in the back when the event happened, and they shot the kid, and the kid died, but she survived, so put that in the record, so that they can know the story as well.

He wanted to add that there was a leader of this rebel group, he's Burundian. Right now, he's in the government. He's the one who claimed that he killed us.

ES: Rwasas?

NR/AN/RB: Agathon Rwasas. He's asking to arrest Rwasas, because even up to now he's still in the government, so that's going to put a message to the rest of people - as I said, people are still facing those kinds of things, they're still killing our people. So, if they arrest Rwasas and the rest of those rebel groups, maybe they will fear, maybe they will be like "Something will happen if we keep doing that." So, he just requested that the government of America, or whoever is in charge of it, arrest Rwasas and the rest of them who claimed killing us. They went to the radio station and they said "We are the ones that killed them." I don't know if people told you that but they did say that. So, he just said that if they arrest him, maybe we'll be happy that justice will be done for Gatumba survivors. That's what he wanted to add.

- End of interview -