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## Interview with Nyaruhogaze Nyamuco

Nyaruhogaze Nyamuco

Ezra Schrader

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Nyaruhogaze Nyamuco, translated by Rushimisha Byiringiro, was interviewed in Des Moines Iowa on July 30th, 2022, by Ezra Schrader

[01:27] ES: Where did you grow up?

NN/RB: She grew up in the Congo.

ES: Where in the Congo?

NN/RB: Somewhere called Kanono, it's a village in South Kivu.

ES: What city is that nearest to?

NN/RB: It's close to Uvira, near Lake Tanganyika

ES: The village that you lived in - what was it like, how big was it...

NN/RB: It was a big village.

[02:30] ES: And how old were you when you became a refugee?

NN/RB: She became a refugee when she was already married. She was like old.

ES: And when she became a refugee where did she flee to in the country and who did she travel with?

NN/RB: She went to Burundi.

ES: What time did she go to Burundi?

NN/RB: It was in 2004.

[03:20] ES: And what was it that made her leave for Burundi in 2004?

NN/RB: So, there was a war. She was living in Uvira at that time, and then there was a war, and then she was forced to leave the country.

[03:44] ES: Before the war, why did she move from her village to Uvira?

NN/RB: It's also a war. There was a war in the village, and then they were forced to go to the city because it was kind of safe at that time - Uvira, it was a bit safe. So that's why they moved from the village to the city. Also, when they went to Burundi it was a war. A war came in Uvira and then they were forced to leave the country, to go to Burundi.

[04:37] ES: When she fled from the village to Uvira that first time, was she already married by then? How old was she?

NN/RB: Yes. She was married, and she had kids.

ES: When you fled to Burundi in 2004, that was to Gatumba, right?

NN/RB: Yes.

ES: And when you got there, what was the camp like before the violence?

NN/RB: They were living in tents, and it was at the border for both countries, from Burundi and Congo. So, when they got there, they were not - obviously - living in houses. They were in tents, so that's where they were living.

She just said that when they came to Burundi, they did not have anything. They did not have anything. So - also they did not have money to rent houses in the cities, so that's why they decided to be in the refugee camp in those tents.

[06:20] ES: And there were some people living in the surrounding towns around Gatumba?

NN/RB: Yes.

ES: As I understand, the camp was divided into two sections, with some Congolese refugees on one side and some on the other, right?

NN/RB: Yes.

ES: Before the violence, what were your relationships like with people on your side of the camp, and then with folks on the other side of the camp?

NN/RB: The relationship was not great. They did not want to see them, as in, those other Congolese did not want to see Munyamulenge. There was no such relationship between the two. Even the kids - sometimes they would want to go play but they would stop them

to go play with them because they did not like us, pretty much - that's what she's trying to say.

[08:03] ES: Why weren't the kids allowed to play with each other, why weren't the two sides talk -

NN/RB: The hatred. There was a hatred - from my understanding - they feared that going to play with them, might hurt them. So that's why they would try to put boundaries to stop them to go playing with the other Congolese.

They used to see even our kids and they would grab stones and they just wanted to throw stones at them.

[08:54] ES: After the violence in the camp, what was the camp like?

NN/RB: It was destroyed. It was burned down.

ES: And did she return to the camp right after the violence?

NN/RB: Yes. So that night, she lost four people, her husband and three kids. And even herself, she got shot. So, the next day she went to the hospital, so that's what happened. That night they came and they killed people, and then the wounded people, people who were injured, were taken to the hospital, and she was one of them.

[10:36] ES: What immediate challenges did she face after the violence, like in the weeks and months after the violence what were the main problems in her life?

NN/RB: The problem they faced - you know was obviously losing people, it was big to lose people. Also, the wounds - like physically, as she mentioned she was shot so even facing that - also she just mentioned a country. To lose a country, to feel like you're not in your country, you lose people, you get shot - all those things combined, the only hope they had was God, like they had God in them. But besides that, they did not have a country, they lost a lot of people, they were shot - they were facing a lot at that time.

[12:00] ES: Who was she staying with after the massacre, how did she wind up coming to the United States?

NN/RB: So, after getting shot and staying in the hospital, getting treatment, there was this person who came. The person was helping people like her, so she came and took her and her kids - because she had three kids - so they went to live with that person.

[13:25] ES: Who was that person - was that a family member, was that a government official of some kind?

NN/RB: No, it was not like someone from the family. I think it was someone who was helping people who went through this kind of - it was a person from Burundi, a Burundian, who decided to help people who were in that kind of a situation. So, he's the one who took her out of the hospital with her kids and went to live with them.

[14:16] ES: How did she from Burundi come to the US?

NN/RB: So that person who was taking care of her and her kids, who took her to hospital and brought her back and all that, and then that's when they heard that UN was looking for people - the survivors - to bring them here. So that's how she started the process, like interviews and stuff like that, and that's how she ended up coming with her kids.

[15:27] ES: In the years since the massacre how has her life been different, how has it stayed the same, and has anything helped her to heal and move on?

NN/RB: So, she was lucky, because after the massacre some people were taken to different areas in the country - even in the refugee camp again - but she was very lucky to have that person who took her and her children, and then she was living with them. So, he's the person who helped them because they did not have jobs and all that. So, she's saying she's thankful, compared to other people who were taken to refugee camps again and all that.

So UNHCR [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] is the one that took the rest of the people to different refugee camps in Burundi again. But she was lucky, she was taken to Bujumbura, which is the capital city of Burundi, and she stayed with the person who was helping them.

[17:50] ES: How should justice be done for this massacre, and whose responsibility is it to deliver justice?

NN/RB: So, she thinks that the government is the one that can give us justice, and I just asked her which government - Congo? And she's like Congo has - I don't know if I would say Congo is not able to do it, I think they don't have the willingness to give us justice. Because Congo is our parent like the government is our parent, it should give us justice, but they failed so many times and people are facing the same stuff up to now. So, she's saying that not the government of Congo because, it should be the government of Congo to give us justice but she's saying other countries - like maybe this country, the United States, can help us to give us justice that we deserve - that's what she's saying.

[19:30] ES: Those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else she wants to add?

NN/RB: She just wanted to add that up to now, people are still dying in the same, like - it's something systemic, like it happens year-in year-out. Up to now, our people are still facing the same things that we faced when people died in Burundi. So up to now, people are still facing those kinds of problems. And honestly, people are tired, and they need justice. We grew up in Congo, and we just need justice. We want to be treated equally, as the rest of the Congolese.

- End of interview -