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Interview with Patrick Binsenga

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Patrick Binsenga was interviewed in person on July 14th, 2023, by Keasha Buchana and Chris Davey.

[1:05] KB: Would you like to introduce yourself and tell us where you grew up?

[1:12] PB: My name is Ben, they used to call me Ben, that's why I was saying that my name is Ben Binsenga. I was born in Katanga, in a place called Vyura. Vjura is a known place for the Banyamulenge people. I was born in Vjura but from Minembwe some of my parents shifted in 1986 to I think to North Katanga, it's like a province. So, I was born there in 1988, there was a war in 1998 so we shifted to Uvira, Uvira near Burundi's border. So, my name is Patrick Binsenga, they used to call me Ben Patrick. I did my primary school in Uvira and while I was finishing my primary school in 2004 that's when the issue of those wars started in Uvira so, we left Uvira for Burundi staying in the camp called Gatumba, near the border of Burundi as well.

[2:41] CD: Yes, how old were you when you became a refugee then?

[2:45] PB: I just remember I was thirteen, that is what I remember. Some of the years and months may be off, I can be confused a bit about the exact but thirteen, yeah around there. So, I don't know if I've made it well but that is what I recall.

[3:18] KB: No, you're good. So, when you went to Burundi did you go alone, or did you have family with you?

[3:23] PB: No, I went with my family. We had a vehicle helping us by moving from our place heading to Bujumbura. There was a company called "UGEAF", they are the ones who gave us a truck called "Dyna" to help us move to Bujumbura. The truck was helping us get from Uvira town to the border post, once we were there we were done. So, I shifted with my family, my mom, my big brother, and one young brother, and three sisters.

[4:18] CD: So, do you, if I may ask, you went from Uvira to Bujumbura but to Gatumba first or?

[4:29] PB: To Gatumba, because we left Gatumba once the incident happened.

[4:37] CD: Do you remember when you arrived in Gatumba? When you first went there?

[4:47] PB: I'm not sure about the month, I just think we spent around six months.

[4:53] CD: Oh, you were there a long time.

[4:55] PB: Six or five because the night of the genocide or massacre, it was August 12th, the night of 13th 2004. I think we left Uvira, I think it was April.

[5:21] CD: It was earlier in the year.

[5:22] PB: Yeah, around four months.

[5:26] CD: Was your, so you said your mom and your brothers and sisters, and was your dad around?

[5:35] PB: My dad died, passed away long ago. It was 1996, some issues with rebels and the way we were born, that's the issues. Also, in 1996, there was another war in Lubumbashi, my dad was, he went to, he was buying some - If I can say it's like a material coming from Kalemie to Lubumbashi. Then he was back again at home, so that time when the war came, he was not able to escape it. It is a massacre which happened in Lubumbashi in 1996.

[6:39] KB: So, what made you decide to flee to Gatumba? What was the reason you and your family left Congo?

[6:48] PB: In 2004, there was a war starting in a town called Bukavu. I think you know Bukavu, that is where it started. Uvira there was a bit of peace then, but once they started fighting in Bukavu, it was now coming our way in Uvira, but the starting area was Bukavu. Then the situation was becoming bad due to, remember they are saying the Banyamulenge to Bukavu and the same to Banyamulenge in Uvira, so the issue was the same, "You are not Congolese, it has been a while waiting for this time, so know we are going to kill you." Those words were coming nearby like our neighbors, the ones you know. There were no people like, maybe passing on the road but the ones saying a lot was our neighbour. So according to the power and the effort they have been using, our parents have realized that this is not normal, and we have to move from this place immediately. That is why they started fighting in Bukavu, but the war was coming. You know there is in Bukavu, a place called Pelen, it's in French, Pelen then coming directly to Uvira, so we escaped fled before an issue could happen because anything can happen to you. That's what made us leave Uvira.

[8:48] KB: Can I ask how long you were in the camp before the massacre happened?

[8:54] PB: I'm not pretty sure but I'm estimating around, above 4 months.

(Pause)

[9:02] PB: For my parent, we had a chance to find some donor who gave us some money, so my mum and the little ones, and there were some family members, like young children from my brothers. So, we gave them a big house around the sheetings, that's why in my proper family no one died in the event. I was the only one, my uncle and I, we were the ones who were in the camp that time, that night.

[9:45] CD: So, you're saying your other family members were able to get out?

[9:50] PB: It was around like one hundred meters to the camp from them, yeah, that's where my mom was sleeping with my young sisters, yeah. So, me and my uncle, we were in the sheetings in the camp in the third one, there were lines, did you see the pictures? There were lines, I was in the third one. There were three rows, one, two, three, and then in those rows there was one, two, three, eight hangers. What do you call it? Do you know hanger? Like a sheeting it was long, divide it in rooms, yeah. In every line, there were two or three, then I was on the last one.

[10:38] CD: Did you know, and this off-topic topic a bit, did you know the other people who were in the tent with you?

[10:45] PB: Yeah.

[10:47] CD: I mean before you came to the camp or?

[10:49] PB: Yeah

[10:50] CD: You knew them from before?

[10:51] PB: Yeah, we knew each other. Some of them were our family members since Vyura, that place called Vyura, we fled with them to Uvira. We spent a long time together, we moved again to Bujumbura, then back again to Uvira. You remember that wasn't the first time for us to flee, it was the second one. First, we fled and stayed in Gatumba then we were back.

[11:25] CD: Into Uvira?

[11:26] PB: Yeah, but not that year. Then we fled again in 2004 when that massacre happened.

[11:35] CD: So, you were in Gatumba the year before, the first time?

[11:40] PB: I don't uh - I cannot confirm the time well but we fled to Gatumba first, they said nothing was happening now it's calm down, so we went back again, we stayed for some months, went back again, and fled for the last time.

[12:00] CD: When the massacre happened?

[12:01] PB: Yeah

[12:06] KB: So how do you feel justice should have been served? Has it been served to some degree or not at all? And who do you think is responsible for bringing you all justice?

[Brief Interruption]

[12:40] PB: So, for us, it has been almost many years as you know 2004 until today seriously this is an issue for three countries, if I can say. There was Burundi, the one who received us, we were under the protection of UN, the United Nations, which was in charge of refugees of course. There was also our country DRC, where no one did anything but justice, remember, we fled Congo because they were refusing us as Congolese. Burundi which opened a way for those who want to kill us, wasn't able to do anything to find justice for our side. They want to claim that those are our people, was DRC, DRC should start the investigations and try to find justice for our side because we are Congolese. But remember the issue was that, so they just kept quiet. The third there was the United Nations supposed to be responsible for refugees, but they didn't do anything about them, those people they massacred that day until today. Remember what happened there, was terrible, coming to one place as people sitting somewhere, there was no army, no security guard. So now you say I'm going to start shooting on you guys, spending one hour uh - around two hours, by shooting in another country and you say that you are able to move in that country without leaving or just having some kind of signs of knowing who was doing this. That's not possible. That's what we believe. But because we are not having someone to climb to or discuss with how are you going to help our people, because if someone lives in the country or around in the country, how come they can afford to shoot civilians for a duration of two hours until you are moving to that place and you leave, without even say anything, in French they use "foredero"¹. You go, you shoot and kill people, you spend two hours killing, you have launched an attack in the area you've spent two hours shooting in, you add more weapons, get on the road, and leave. That's not possible unless someone has been corrupt, either the government, or protection given by the government, or our origin countries. So, the issue is there. So, the one to help us was the United Nations. That's what I can see about justice.

[16:38] CD: So, I think it's been nineteen years since the massacre, how has your life do you think been different because of what happened? What maybe has stayed the same?

[17:02] PB: Um, my life, of course, wasn't good enough due to those issues because remember I was growing up, I was another child, living what, I was just wishing to have parents, to be pampered/cared for together with my parents. I mean cherishing or having those kinds of personality with your parents. We didn't get that enough chance because our mother after being a widow wasn't able maybe to -like my mom, she didn't get time to go to school, I mean she needed that opportunity to go to school, which means our survival or subsistence of living on our side was just cultivating or having cattle or you know cows or whatever. So, nothing was left, and we shifted to Burundi. Starting at the camp that's when we have started begging now can we have posho², can we have food you know, can we have those um - maize. So now we are begging, it's like begging if you are sitting, waiting for the United Nations to look for our palm, you understand what's happening. Secondly, there was no school, of course, one you cannot understand if you are not learning, you don't retain, you

¹ Foredero refers to a French word for blacksmith.

² Posho is a corn meal common in East Africa, it is also known as Ugali, the Swahili word for Posho.

will not get anything, you cannot compete and make competition with others, you can't. The ability to think about work or something related, you will not be able cause you didn't learn, you do not have that capacity. The third one, the consequences, we shifted from Burundi to Rwanda, and again we moved to another camp waiting for unga what you call unga or just what do you call it?

[19:23] KB: Posho?

[19:26] PB: Yes, or something to eat, the one given wasn't even enough for the whole family. So, we must divide it by two for us to get cloth, we must divide it by two if we need to eat because there is no other who is going to give us food. The last one was about the camp, the camp is a very very tough place for anybody cause sickness is there, no treatment for anything so all those consequences, until today. That's why we are living like - we are not having a place to live, we can't be able to afford a house, we aren't able to do anything because no place was given, no place to stay, whatever, we can't - we are living in a situation of maybe having relatives giving some food. So far that's what I can say about the consequences caused by moving to Uvira and being a refugee.

[21:04] CD: What has helped you heal after this? Having been nineteen years ago now.

[21:11] PB: Yeah, of course, I had some family members who came to Rwanda before. He got some friends in Europe, through a church called Anglicans, they said we are helping some people, vulnerable people, so we need to give you a scholarship for six years. They are the ones who gave me that opportunity, to go to school. At least I did six years from Senior One up to Senior Six. Starting there I was good at school a bit, which helped me to perform well, and the school was giving me an opportunity to maybe have a small job at school once I finished. The third one, I got a small job in Busagara District, working as a tax collector which was helping me have a little bit of income around sixty dollars per month, that's where I started from, yeah.

[22:30] CD: So, you say that education has helped you heal?

[22:34] PB: At least, yeah. Once I got that sixty, I was able to find food for my brother, then I was keeping that sixty until I got one-hundred eighty. I was able to go to a university in Butare called the Catholic University of Rwanda then I was paying my school fees yeah, for tuition and whatever. But for them, the consequences you were asking, I wasn't able to get the first term and I wasn't able to pay the next term. There was using a small paper called Sheto³, you know that one? It's like a small cutting, like if they cut here, they say for this semester we are using green, so they write Patrick or Ben has paid this semester. If for me, I was remaining for the last one and now they've shifted to the yellow one and maybe I'm having the red one for the last semester. When I started writing for the exam so that I could do it quickly before they came checking about the payment, unfortunately, I wasn't able to

³ Sheto refers to a sheet of paper used to track school payments.

finish the exam as a consequence of not having money. So, I got out. I came for the second chance exam and retook, almost all my university I did retakes, not because I was not able to pass my exams but because by the time of the exams, I was not ready with the payment. So, they give a chance to those who have not paid. Remember I have to wait another month so that I can have one hundred and twenty, then I pay, now I am able to do the retake until I finish my university for four years. I did commercial accounting.

[25:07] KB: So, you told us that your family was living outside the camp, did you have friends or other people that you knew that were killed in Gatumba?

[25:19] PB: A lot. They are many, very many. Do you have names? Do you have a list of those who were killed?)

[25:30] KB: Do we have a list of people that were killed?

[25:33] CD: Yes

[25:36] PB: I think in those, I know around forty - forty percent of those one-hundred and sixty people, yeah. Actually, I was with one called Ascofe, Ascofe was one of my best friends, we went with him to church, and we spent around three days praying, once we were back in the camp. That day I think was the fourth one, so we were...I was sleeping with my uncle, I left that sheeting to the first one, the first sheeting was for young people, like our age, then I met my friend Ascofe, his brother called Kambaza, another one called Mihinge, people like that, some of them are in America but of those who died they are many. I saw them dying, those called Afrifuza, Ndebaneza, the family of Minyata, I was with them, where I was sleeping, like that place you are sitting (*refers to interviewer sitting across him*), I was across. An uncle called Miyati, got out outside of that sheeting because remember on that day we used to hear some noise of guns, you know. So even if we had some, it doesn't mean that we are going to run, no. We would sit, sitting calmly, waiting a bit, we thought some people were coming to take out Burundian cows, which were around the camp. We thought they'd come to steal cattle, so we sat. Now the soldier, that guy was a soldier back in the day, you know the soldiers you hear of back then, says the shooting we are hearing seems to be coming towards us. This is not good. He was the one who decided to get out of the sheeting we were in when I was together with him, he went to the sheetings in between, telling them "Escape escape, this is not the normal shooting." This is not normal, please run. He did that telling people in the sheeting "Run, run, run." He started with the first sheeting, ours was the third as I told you, he ran through. On his return, they heard him coming back and shot him immediately near our shelter, he screamed in agony saying "Oohh." His son called Ndebaneza wanted to go and help his father, but his mother stopped him, saying, "No please, move away, don't move." He decided to go and help his father who was in agony and was also shot and died at the scene. The same scenario happened to another gentleman who was commonly known by his nickname Kadafi. He also came out of the tent when he heard them yelling outside and impatiently came out to give help to just move to, at least try to call his

dad and brother and bring them into the sheeting down but they shot him immediately as well. There are a lot, in that sheeting a lot of people died.

[29:38] KB: If I may ask, how were you able to survive?

[29:42] PB: I can say the way I survived was like a miracle. Those people constructed and put in place a strategic plan of killing everyone without leaving behind any survivors. If I say, you see (demonstrates using cutlery), that's how the sheetings were. The door was in front, you see, then they come in front and make a line, a long line, they shoot. Because of grace, they was the first, they was the last line, and I was in the second line behind. During the shooting, remember sheeting, sheeting you can understand, it's like someone telling you I'm going to shoot you, please can you try to hold your shirt then try to protect yourself. That's not possible. Only God did to me like that because they were able to kill everyone, everyone, but only God protected me. I was in the third sheeting, they shot, the man called Munyati, the one I was telling you about who died, Pastor Munyati, he was the one telling people to escape. As he came back, they shot him through the front sheeting and his older son too who was around. Now for me, they threw a grenade in our sheeting. So, remember it was room, room, room, room. In one room, none woke up/got up, that grenade put me to sleep what we call "kugwa igihumure", I don't know what you call it in English.

[31:50] KB: Unconscious?

[31:52] PB: Yeah unconscious. A bit, I spent - I do not know how many minutes I spent there, so when I woke up, I found Uncle and another guy who lived up, they already left, so I was by myself on the mattress. The way I told you the sheeting, how sheeting was, the only position was laying down, you just lay down. Around the mattress like this, there were like bullets, and you see them, it's not a story, you see the firearms, but you just lay down, praying, praising God, everything. When I woke up and realized I was by myself and that the sheeting was hit, and torn - they tore the sheeting. That's when I then made the decision, to run a bit, get out, and run. I went out through the sheeting they had torn, and they immediately shot us, and of those I got out with, two died instantly. When I returned to our tent, I heard them approaching us as they had started from the tents farthest from ours. I decided to shift and told myself, let it be so, I am going to get out, run away, and see how I can escape. Later on, when I tried to run, I failed before I could even pass the first sheeting. The first one was around maybe one hundred meters, to get to the other side. If you are able to run those one hundred meters, now you can survive. So, we stayed there with those called Kambaza, you will hear me talk about him a lot. We say that now we are going to run. "Yes, yes", we sit down, we pray, asking "Forgive me, forgive me", you know how we do that. Now we are going to run. They shot us and we are back again for the second time. We entered with wounded people and Kambaza was shot in the arm. We had to help one of those wounded by tying his arm to stop hemorrhage. We then said, there is no turning back, instead let's go...so that we do not return to this sheeting one side that was fine. To say you will go back to the sheeting could not work, one side was on fire already because remember they had poured some kind of fuel on the tent. We decided, there was no way - like to be burned in the

sheeting yet we have legs, we can run and instead of maybe staying in the sheeting to be burnt with that fire. That's when we decided. We were around fifteen, we were going to get up and run together. Remember all those stories I am telling you of, we are lying down discussing. If we get up now, the sheeting was torn, it was torn from the bottom up. So now we hit the sheeting, then we run. If maybe someone is being shot, please don't stop that was our...

[35:35] KB: Strategy?

[35:37] PB: Yes. Strategy for running. One of my friends, the one I told you, we were together, doing everything, choir, practices, whatever since we were here. He didn't even do two steps, there were two, the one called Ascofe, I'll show you a picture, he is called Ascofe. He didn't go past there. It has happened, there's nothing else, we decide to proceed. There is one guy called Sebaziga, he was the one I continued running with him, he used to - right now he's in a refugee camp. So, we did not stop. In those one hundred meters, remember I told you one hundred meters from the camp to the first house, maybe eighty. Then when we got there after that, they saw us, and those others heard people who they had hit, and then turned to the other side, to able to shoot us. I and those boys I was running along with, unexpectedly stumbled in a hole and fell down, the hole had a certain kind of shape. We climbed out and when they started shooting, we fell down again immediately. The bullets were lighting because the bullets are red-hot at night, and we saw lots of them when were still lying down, and later on, we stood up. So, from the camp, where maybe we said we might survive that was the scenario. But you see, we proceeded around three hundred meters, to make sure we were safe from that area. So, we decided now to start welcoming other people, telling them, helping them, if you're wearing some cloth you tear it so that we can wrap those who are injured. I had two people who were injured, including a guy called Kambaza, we wrapped and treated him as well as others, and we stayed there for two hours. As the shooting slowly lessens as they (the perpetrators) flee and are also leaving, that's when we heard about the ambulance. When we heard the ambulance, now we said maybe those are people coming from Bujumbura, maybe they are coming to help or something else. That's when we came from that place to now meet with friends and family. While I was there, I wasn't able to stay because I had two injured persons, so I took them to the hospital, in that ambulance around 5 a.m. So, my parent wasn't able to see me in the camp, and those who were able maybe to flee and leave the camp, they didn't see me. I had taken wounded people to Bujumbura⁴, at a hospital called "Prince Louis Rwagasore Hospital", which was the biggest hospital by then. So, they couldn't find me, yet I had been with him (the injured person(s)) for around maybe four hours, they were thinking I was also dead maybe I was burned, and they are not recognizing my body. So, they saw me coming and thanked God, that's how I survived...yeah.

[brief interruption]

⁴ Bujumbura is the present-day capital of Burundi.

[40:15] CD: So, you talked us through what happened at the camp and the ambulance and getting treatment, what challenges did you and your family experience at that point after the massacre? Like in the days and the weeks afterward?

[40:37] PB: Uh, remember some of our families' stuff and materials were in the camp, everything has been destroyed. We decided immediately to move from that place, to find another camp again. So, we shifted to a camp called Ngagara, where there were some family members, so we stayed a bit there until we got an announcement saying that there were some kind of buses or trucks, they were going to help people to go find refugees in Rwanda. As you are asking, remember, there is no food, there is no cloth, there is nothing. They didn't only kill people in the camp, remember they went even in the houses, they knew houses, even our friends and family living around the camp, because maybe they were having some small money to rent a house. They left those houses and fled that night. So, there was nothing to start with, still asking for a place of living, asking for cloth, it was very bad on our side until we found a vehicle moving from Burundi to come to a refugee camp in Rwanda, called Nyagatare, in a district called Rusizi right now, the former Cyangagu...yes.

[42:30] KB: So, how would you describe the atmosphere in the camp before the massacre?

[42:37] PB: The atmosphere was good because remember even though I was a child apart from enjoying and playing, of course, I used to also have fun with other kids. So, remember I can only say that after taking porridge, I just go to play- play football. Life was at least for us, depending on the ages, for us it was good. We were not concentrating, maybe asking, "How long are we going to stay here, how about school, how about food, how about everything?". No, we were too young to do that. You remember around the camp, there was another camp of the ones saying they are Congolese originals, all I can say, Bafurwiro, Bashi, there was - it was almost I think fifty meters between the two camps. One of my family members was staying at that camp, imagine if I say fifty, you can see the other side (demonstrates) and there to the parking, if I can, or one hundred, let me say one hundred. So, no one was left in that camp, they even got out and watched what was happening to us, because no one was going to say anything to them. They knew those were Bafurirwo, Babembe, whatever, staying in these specific camps and those were for the Banyamulenge. No one, even my brother, one of my brothers, I mean from another father, he is of our dad, he was there. They waited and finished while they were watching, just imagine that someone in the parking would not be able to say anything.

[45:07] KB: What was the camp like after the conflict?

[45:13] PB: After the conflict, it was very bad, because remember people - they didn't shoot most people to kill them, no. Maybe they shot you in the leg, blood, you keep bleeding, your muscles, you can't move. You just stay by crying, until the fire of the sheeting started now coming down. Many were burnt, because they were shot in a way where they were unable to move but they are alive. That means if we saw people coming to our aid at that time if we were able maybe to find people to assist us or help us, it would help. They shot those others,

and we could have saved more lives, some were shot either in the leg or in the chest and were bleeding excessively, but unfortunately, there was no one to stop their hemorrhage, no one was treating them, and no one was stopping the bleeding. That fire then came down and burned one as they saw, they heard their burning. That's what happened. Then waking up in the morning, you can just imagine how- imagine seeing people, someone burned with the sheeting, you can't recognize the faces of some. Some of them were able to move, I mean some of those people who died, were able to move from the first sheeting, you just run the second one, the third sheeting until, it was like eight, to the last one, that was a big position for those people who were killing. They shot them here and burnt them there, so they could not identify their relatives because dead bodies were scattered everywhere around the tents. Then you see one is here and the other, and it's confusing. Imagine now, early in the morning, you see people burning because of the fire was raging. I do not know if you ever check pictures, maybe videos. It was very very bad, yeah, if I can say.

[47:37] CD: So, what do you feel still needs to be done in order for justice to be achieved or for justice to be done for what happened at Gatumba?

[47:55] Interruption: Shows us a picture of his sheeting at the camp.

[47:55] PB: Sorry I was just going to show you something. This was my sheeting (shows picture), so I was here. Those are two children, I was fleeing with those two but unfortunately, I wasn't able to move them from this one - here there is another one, they are only two, to the last one. Those children, I wasn't able to, so one of my colleagues I used to tell you about, we were always together, called Ascofe...uh, I will show you, I will share with you the picture where we got out to the last sheeting and saying we are not going back again, so he wasn't able to move. So now you are asking...

[48:42] CD: Right, maybe I've seen these pictures before but it's really helpful for you to put yourself in them.

[48:52] PB: Yeah, I have drawn how it was, how we fled, how - if you were able to move maybe from the first one to the last one. If you are able to move now to the last one and those one hundred meters, now you can be safe. So, on my side, if I can say, you will find - you see like if I can show you on this picture, this was the last one (demonstrates through the picture), if you are able to move - you see here those are the places we used to cut sheetings and now run. So, the coming soldiers were coming through this side (points to place in the picture)

[49:37] CD: To the end of that sheeting?

[49:39] PB: So, these are the lines, those are lines, you can see the sheetings, also it was grouped like three, three, three, around nine on the line to another line. So that's how it was. So, I just remember those children. Here (points to a place in the picture), remember I told you there is a grenade, the grenade I told you was killing all the families, without even mother, children, all of them, no one was able to just wake up.

[50:19] CD: So those pictures are just the ones on Google?

[50:22] PB: Yeah, they are on Google. I was just looking -I have it, they are the one um - I have the one for Ascofe which was like the last sheeting, many people were dying there, many people. Remember dying here doesn't mean like you are weak or...I remember there was one uncle who was shot once he was in the army, so he just left the wheelchair, climbed like this, and he was able to survive. Even the men we knew had strength, they ran but didn't make it, but an elderly person, an old woman, or an old man made it. I don't know but by chance.

[51:38] CD: So, I can go back over that, thank you for sharing those pictures. So, what do you feel still needs to be done in order for justice to be achieved or for justice to happen?

[51:50] PB: Um, the first one is to say maybe thanks to everyone's effort for helping our brothers and sisters who were shot. Remember we went to Bujumbura hospitals; they treated them very badly. I can say maybe they were their skills, maybe, if I can say, but once we get justice for them, they went to the United States and the country received them and helped them, about maybe to treat them, take care of the wounded and injured people, so that they don't get disabled hands nor have their aims broken. So, giving to our family members life according to how they were or were looking, it was one thing I can say on that justice. At least we are grateful justice was rendered by treating some of our brothers and sisters, we do appreciate having treated their hands, and legs, and getting healed somehow. They did well on that. On justice, there are a few people who have written books. You know some people; I've read on the internet, and they've written books. We've heard interviews being conducted in America about also about some lawyers or other people doing some interviews to understand how we survived badly and continually experienced problems. That is the only thing we could say they-to say at least maybe even if it has been around maybe twenty years, we hope that justice will work out. Because if someone can go on the radio and claim how he was part of them, the rebels that did it, but he is still in Bujumbura, everyone knows him, he is part of the government. So Domitien Ndayizeye who was the president at that time, he came to our place together with those others, but he didn't do anything. Even if you come in the morning and start an investigation, you wouldn't think twice finish about how they were hit, shot, and killed. At least if you are getting some people, like relatives/brothers/well-wishers to come and help us, saying maybe to radios and websites, explaining what happened. One day we hope that it will go well, and we will get justice, at least it gives us hope for faith that maybe we will get justice, yeah. But right now, there is nothing of substance that we see. Congo does not recognize those people, we were killed before their eyes, you know the definition of genocide, do you get it? That was genocide. Even though there is a process to be called genocide, it was systematic. We were leaving in the same camp, Congolese called Bafuriiru, Congolese called Banyamulenge, they chose to kill Banyamulenge. Everything, if you go into the details that specify the word genocide, let's not even say genocide but massacre, it's not even recognized as a massacre officially. Now you see the UN was present until today. That is the reason why we are always worried because

governments like Burundi, Congo, and the United Nations are doing nothing. We only say thanks because they helped our people get out, they gave them an opportunity to go and get treated, and they gave them hope for another life. But in terms of justice, they sorted out nothing as justice has not yet been served to victims until today. We are claiming, and we are planning again to - right now we are planning to go to Burundi, this coming month (August 2023). It will be my first time going ever since the massacre I will go to commemorate with Burundians, who are community members, so I am planning to go there with Karara (a fellow survivor). So, we go there together for the first time since that massacre happened.

[56:55] CD: Why is it important for you? I'm guessing you feel like it's important to go back.

[57:01] PB: Uh, I think um, I'm sorry to say this. I wish I could do anything to like construct or give ideas to our parents or friends who are in the US, who have maybe power to construct a good memorial for our lost people. So, one of the intentions to go there is to see how is the "urwibutso"⁵, I mean the massacre memorials, site, how is it looking. Remember if we constructed good ones, we could give even pictures, information, details, everything because we have reference in Rwanda, we know more about the Rwandese genocide which happened in 1994, so we need also to make like good creations. Because maybe if someone is coming, maybe we just take time and read. Now we have some people who know very well English, who are able to come from America, write, and compile those pictures, we have pictures, everything we have it. But remember - remember, if someone is going to look for what happened in Gatumba they will go onto Google, find maybe a post of my friend, you post, I post, they are different. However, in the event that they go there themselves, you just see everything. You have someone there if you're planning a visit, officially one, maybe we prepare someone to explain in detail by using those pictures. My idea to go there is also to see what we can bring or do as survivors in Africa, of course in Rwanda and Burundi, but of course, we don't have money. I'm pretty sure that the ones that are in America, if we pass on that thought to them, Gatumba Foundations, they can support it. And it's not something very difficult, if someone is able to construct a house as one if we do it as a community, and of course Banyamulenge in general, we can make it. The only issue we are facing now is last time the commemoration wasn't like open, it was like hiding, that's the issue we are facing until now. We are like hiding, um the government, you know if - it happened, they have to accept it, maybe sending local governments to come saying that maybe this thing will not happen, whatever, we'd love that, but remember also commemoration is an issue. We can't do like you know how they march, how do you call that one, open demonstrations about pictures, like flyers, by saying "never again", we can't. We wish at least to do that, calling people, saying that we will do a humble walk of just putting some banners, you know, writing maybe "Never again to the massacre of Banyamulenge, they are people like you," maybe whatever. No one chose to be born like this, no, no person decided to be born in this way. Everyone was just born and found those are the parents, yeah. So, in general, I can say that my visit is like that. The second is of course after many years, you have to go back, and you give honor to them. For those who were able to have life, I mean at least I thank God that

⁵ "Urwibutso" is the Kinyarwanda word for memorial.

even though it happened like that, they are those who escaped. The target for those people was to kill everyone, but I am here, as a survivor and I'll be there as a survivor.

[Interruption: consultation for questions]

[1:01:57] KB: So, can you tell us how you feel about telling/sharing your story with us and if it has helped or how you think it will help you?

[1:02:06] PB: I've been giving testimonies and stories about what happened in Gatumba in 2004. I think we around three, four, here in Rwanda, so normally every time we do commemoration in Rwanda, I used to go and say it, so now I can feel like my heart is at rest, yeah. I just feel like at least I spoke; I went to the radio before; it's been a while. Now because you are speaking on it, interviews, and other things, conversing with others, it leads to your heart being at rest. But even still when the event (commemoration) approaches, you begin to think. When you take time and think, to kill someone, who hasn't abused you, a child, and kill the parents. Right now, those are the consequences we are facing. If I'm not having a vehicle, if I'm not having a house, if I'm not having any kind of property if I'm not having maybe something. I lost my parent, the parent that birthed me, like my father, when I was six, at six you don't know anything, you know his image, but you don't know him. That affection of a parent was not an experience for me, but we thank God. You know they planned to do something big, to finish us. The Lord alone has plans for you, the Lord watched over us at that time and gave us other opportunities that I told you about, like landing maybe here or doing school here in Rwanda, having a country like Rwanda to receive us and accept us, giving us documents and like taking others as Rwandan residents, also we thank God for that. If they were not able to do that, right now things would be worse. However, we thank God that at least we got a chance for school, and for family, of course, we are still living with the trauma of what happened there, but there is no other way, we have to accept it, yeah. But remember, if someone is killing you, you did nothing, you don't know him, you're just a child like that. They kill your parent, and that alone leads you to take time, and think about "Why me", you can even say that "Why me?", "Why?", you really feel that. When you say please mum can I have money for school, there is no money. Until you leave school, you go find a job, you find some small money, you call your uncle, your uncle says I'm going to get maybe if you are asking one hundred dollars, he says to you, I can find two-I mean twenty, and maybe you find twenty, now you have forty, you need sixty. You survive in that kind of life, that's why I am telling you that, at least there is no noise of guns in our heads, we have security here, that's why we hope that, even in the days to come, it will go well. For us when we speak on these things, we are at rest knowing no one is coming after us while here. If someone sees me on the road, driving maybe a car, even if I'm the driver, they will see me as a normal Rwandese living, even though I have a big or hard background, but at least I try to come down and it works.

[1:06:32] KB: True. Thank you so much for sharing your story with us, we are very grateful for that.

[1:06:43] PB: Thank you very much as well and let me take this opportunity and I thank you too because, it's very hard, very hard. Humanity, something about humanity, you know you can kill twenty people or do something bad for more and more people. Once you get in the vehicle moving from this side to another one, you have an accident, and you die. However, people, their humanity is still low, so these things you and this well-wisher (referring to Professor Davey), even if he might not understand me⁶, it is difficult. It is like advocating for voiceless and hopeless people, to speak on behalf of what has failed someone. That's why I say thank you for your service, thank you for everything you are doing for people to know what happened to the people of Banyamulenge. Since long ago, this story has been about things that happened to our grandparents, and how they tried to survive. I am trying to have a club here in Rwanda, I am planning to have a club for - I have a club for children who lose their parents (orphans) in DRC. I also have a club for helping maybe, you have an opportunity to come to Rwanda, not having cloth, you're not having anything, you need assistance in Rwanda, I do that one, it's the work I do. So, to see people take time and do this kind of research to help people, so they can know and understand what happened, it pleases us. I wish I could maybe have the capacity to write books, like these ones, books where people are writing, publish, generally publishing a lot of books. However, when we see someone stand up, take action, and involve themselves, we appreciate it, and we thank God. So, thank you very much for everything, that's what I can say. Um only God can save and help us, there is nothing we can do. But it will be a success once, we see and hear justice for the people, won't it be a success for you too? So, thank you and we do appreciate it.

[1:09:41] KB: Thank you too.

[1:09:42] PB: In this time maybe you could be walking, doing whatever stuff, making more money, but taking time and you come, especially coming in these countries - Burundi, Rwanda, DRC for this purpose. That's why I said, I had a lot of things to do and that's why you see me receiving a lot of calls, but I said no, I have to respect it and come so thank you very much.

[1:10:10] KB: Thank you so much too.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

⁶ Interviewee was speaking Kinyarwanda at this point.