

Mama Rose's Testimony:

"Thank you for being here. I **survived** in this building. It was April 7th, and the night before the President was killed. They began hunting **Tutsis**, and all **Tutsis** tried to **hide** themselves. I was a wife - I had two children. On April 10th, they cut my hands with machetes and killed my two kids. I was one of the few left alive after the **genocide**. I stayed in a Catholic Church until May 1st. I am here briefly - I know - to help people learn."

After they cut her hands, Mama Rose thought she would die. She had no medical care. It was too hard to cross the border, so she stayed in the bush for 3 months. She lost so much blood; she lost her sight. She was dying. The government army gave her medical care and took her back to her house again. There, she found her husband who also survived the **genocide**. They were the only two to survive from both families. Her husband's family had been burned alive in their house. She was 28 years old. Mama Rose knew the men who cut her and killed her children. They were church members and neighbors.

Q: Do the **perpetrators** still live here? How do you live together?

A: From 1994 - 2005, the **Gaçaça courts** tried people. Some **perpetrators** repented. If the **perpetrators** confessed and asked for **forgiveness**, they were **forgiven** and sent back into society. If they didn't show any remorse, they were put in jail.

The government teaches people how to **forgive**. The government army showed them how to **forgive**.

In the past, people were taught to hate **Tutsis**, but now things are different.

Mama Rose is not afraid of the **perpetrators**. She is happy. They share everyday life.

Q: Is it hard to **forgive**?

A: Yes, it was hard. It is hard to see kids on the street the same age as her own babies, but the church taught her to **forgive**. She loves to pray; she feels strong. She has a good house - next door to the person who killed her babies. However, she and her husband have two new children, and she doesn't want them to learn hate. She shares everything with her neighbors (except her underwear). The government visits to check to see how people are getting along.

Commented [1]: survive (survivor)
hunt (hunter) - 1
Tutsi
machete - 1
genocide
bush - 2
perpetrator
Gaçaça court
repent - 1
confess - 2
forgive (forgiveness, forgiven)

Theogene's Testimony:

Theogene was 6 years old during the genocide. He came from a family of 10, but he was the only one to survive. When the **genocide** began, his family went to the church for safety. The older people tried to close the doors in the sanctuary, but the **Hutus** had big guns and grenades. They broke the windows and broke down the doors. Many people died and fell on him. That is how he survived, under the dead bodies. For many hours, he stayed there, but he couldn't breathe and there was lots of blood. Later that night, the wild dogs came in. The noise woke Theogene up, and he ran into the hills. He was all alone. However, he remembered his dad had a Hutu friend, so he ran back near his home to the Hutu friend. The Hutu friend said no, he couldn't risk hiding Theogene... So Theogene ran home to **hide** behind the house in the bushes. Later that night, the Hutu friend came to his house with food. This went on for a long time. When the soldiers came by Theogene's house, he was curious since he had never seen soldiers. They found him, but luckily, they were the "good guys." The soldiers took him to their camp, and he stayed there for several nights. Then, he rode in the Chief's car into Kigali. Theogene was placed in an **orphanage** where he found many kids in the same situation as him. He stayed in the **orphanage** for 7 years, until the government closed all **orphanages**. This was "the way of his life until now."

Commented [2]: sanctuary - 1
Hutu
grenade - 1
hide - 2
orphanage (orphan)

Questions for both Mama Rose and Theogene:

Q: Did you attend **gaçaca** court? Did you **testify**? Was it hard?

A: Yes, for both.

Theogene: At the beginning, it was hard. He wanted to fight the men who testified, but it got easier.

The lesson to learn from **gaçaca** is to ask for forgiveness, admit you killed and say where you **buried** the bodies. After the **confession**, the **survivors** can **bury** the bodies of their family members. Theogene feels better now. There is no more heavy thing weighing on him. It has reduced in time...

Q: Mama Rose, did you tell your two new children about the genocide?

A: Yes, the children are taught about **genocide** in school. They come home with many questions, so they all now know each individual's story. She has already forgiven the **perpetrators**.

Q: Mama Rose, have you found the bodies of your two children?

A: Yes.

Q: Many people were Catholic and sought refuge in the Catholic Church during the genocide. Was it hard to go back to the same church after?

A: Yes, because all of the memories return. It was decided to keep this church a church after the genocide (not all churches were rebuilt in the same sites - some are memorial sites now). Mama Rose is not Catholic anymore. She now attends another Christian Church.

Q: Did Theogene/Mama Rose receive care after the **genocide**?

A: Yes, lots of people did. They received care from the government, doctors, and non-profit organizations outside the country.

Mama Rose: Some people **deny** or still have problems when they do remember. The government provides counseling, the Red Cross helps; they all help when there are problems.

Q: Did people move because it was too painful?

A: Yes, many can't ever return, but Theogene lives in his home village now.

Q: Why did Theogene return?

A: He lived in the **orphanage** with lots of kids his age; there was lots of laughter. Afterwards, Theogene felt like he had to return to his family land. He has a new home, but he keeps his family land.

Q: Theogene, do you still keep in touch with the Hutu friend who fed you?

A: He died a few years ago from disease, but Theogene is still friends with his children.

Q: Was there schooling provided at the **orphanage**?

A: Yes, but then it closed. Theogene was 13-14 when the **orphanage** closed.

Q: What happened to the really young kids when the **orphanages** closed?

A: Only 5 kids Theogene knew of were not able to find families.

Mama Rose: Many women were raped during the **genocide**. They were infected with HIV/AIDs. They died, but some gave birth first.

It worked itself out. Some mothers lost their babies during **genocide**, so they adopted the orphans. Mama Rose adopted one child - he/she is in college now. Mama Rose loves him/her like her own.

Commented [3]: testify - 1
bury - 1
refuge - 1
memorial site - 2
deny - 1

Q: How does Mama Rose's heart hold the teaching to forgive?

A: Mama Rose: Forgiveness comes from everyday teaching, from the church and the government. The government treated people equally; they gave every family a cow, both the **survivors** and the **perpetrators**.

*Q: Did that anger you, the government giving things to the **survivors** and **perpetrators** equally?*

A: In Rwandan culture, we share everything.

Q: What is important for us to know?

A: Theogene: "As myself who lived through **genocide**, you need to love each other." Theogene thinks the **genocide** happened because there was a lack of love. Never again.

Mama Rose: When they see people like us come in, it helps them. When they talk about their history, they get stronger.

Q: What is your favorite thing about Rwanda?

A:

- Theogene: 1. President Kagame. 2. The Government Army (because they saved him). 3. All Rwandese.
- Mama Rose: 1. She loves her country. 2. She loves how welcoming they are; they let all people in. They don't put barriers for them to share their stories. 3. She loves that they are all one.

Q: Was it all men who killed? What about women?

A: It was a mixture of both, but mostly the men killed. The women did the counting. They checked all the dead people to see who was killed. The women would tell if a person on the list wasn't there.

*Q: Were women tried in **gacaca** courts too?*

A: Yes.

*Q: Does the government pay families who take in **orphans**?*

A: Not really. However, FARGE pays for education for some children, but families still have to pay for food costs.

Q: What needs more attention to achieve unity?

A: Theogene: When some men come out of prison, they still have the same mindset. That upsets people and brings back bad memories.

"Not all students understand what the teacher says" - Tychique

After prison, the government follows the released prisoners. If they aren't doing well, they will put them back in prison.

*Q: Do kids who did experience the **genocide** have the same passion for unity?*

A: Tychique says YES.

Q: What is the best improvement they have seen in day-to-day life?

A: Theogene: A lot: school, health centers. The government is not above the people. There is a lot of improvement.

Mama Rose: There used to be clear differences between districts. Only leaders came from certain districts.

Before the **genocide**, she couldn't go to school. She can read and write, but she did not learn from school. Now,

everyone can go to school or be a government leader. Be what you want to be. Before the **genocide**, **Tutsis** wouldn't be allowed to pass classes even if they did well in school.

Before the **genocide**, there was almost no electricity. Now, all are almost equal and lots more have electricity.

Q: What about the Twa?

A: They are “abnormal people.” They live in the forests; they were not involved; they were outsiders to the **genocide**. Overall, the Twa are treated like people who are crazy. Now, the government says, “The Twa are people who are left behind in history.” The government brings them into society now - they get school, but they still do crazy things. Since the government programs are equal, the Twa get everything too.

Tychique says, “When a Twa is full, he will burn the rest of his food.” This means, if a Twa has a 50 pound bag of rice, he will eat from it, then throw the rest away. He has no thought or planning for the future.

Q: What is your profession now?

A: Theogene: He volunteers here. He does some small farming. He is searching everywhere.

Mama Rose: She also volunteers here and does cleaning too. When they can, they give her soap as payment (volunteers at the **Genocide** Memorials are not paid).

*Q: Is it okay to marry into a **perpetrator's** family?*

A: Yes, it is very okay.

After a few weeks there, a lady in the center called to me.

Frederick, you have a visitor! Out front...'

Ah, one of my dear hospital friends, I thought, quickly making my way to the front of the building. *Who else would know I am here?*

But then I saw her. Standing there with a basket of bananas, looking around a bit nervously, my mother had finally found me.

She stiffened a bit when I ran toward her, but as I melted into her arms, she collapsed against me in muffled, shaking sobs.

I was home.

We sat down to talk, and she held the bananas out toward me.

So much had changed since she had seen me last. I laughed and shrugged as I held out my arms.

Embarrassed, she pulled the bananas back quickly and slowly broke one off the bunch. As she peeled back each section, tears fell in shimmery streaks on her ashen cheeks.

Handing the banana to me, she began, "I—I had heard that you lost your arms *and* your legs."

"No. no." I laughed again. "I have my legs!" I kicked them wildly from beneath the bench.

She forced a smile, looking down at them, and whispered, "I was just so happy to hear that you were alive."

"I am alive," I agreed.

(Frederick, p.80-81)