

David Bucura=s Autobiography and Personal Testimony

AN INTRODUCTION

My name is David Bucura. I am married to Rachel Bugenimana and God has blessed us with three children of our own-- Dusenge Yves, Senga Yvette and Dinah Nziza, and, three adopted children -- Bazimenyera Emmanuel, Mukayiranga Devotha and Bizimana Theoneste.

I was born in 1966 to parents who were actively involved in the church. I was the fifteenth child born to my mother and the youngest in my family. My parents chose to call me BUCURA, because in Kinyarwanda bucura means the last born or the youngest of the family. I can=t know how they have discovered that they will not have another child, but they did. Now I remain with 4 brothers only and no sister because they were killed during the war of 1994. My parents are also deceased, not by the war.

The 4th of April 1994 the presidential airplane was shot down. President Habyarimana was killed along with the head of the Rwandan army. I call this evening ADescent into Hell.@ This was a tragic evening for me and my family and for all Rwandans. It was also a tragedy for Burundians because the Burundi President Cyprien Ntaryamira died with Habyarimana. They were returning from a meeting of the heads of state of the countries of the Great Lakes Region in Tanzania. This tragedy was the beginning of the Tutsi Genocide and massacres of those Hutu accused of being allies of the RPF. Our country lost many people during the genocide in 1994.

We were living together B nothing had happened before that terrible war. We had no problem with our neighborhood in Gisenyi, one of the provinces of Rwanda; Hutu and Tutsi were no problem. We were all treated as brothers and sisters. I assisted with a lot of marriages between Hutu and Tutsi. I can=t understand where the devils of 1994 come.

We lost many in our families; we lost more Friends -- members of Rwanda Yearly meeting. The Hutu killed the Tutsi; and some Tutsi sought revenge on the Hutu. As a consequence we have many widows and orphans. Every family must help one orphan in our country; but is still very difficult. During the Genocide, I fled from Kigali by foot and I was separated from my wife. She took her own way and I took mine. By the grace of God we were rejoined in Congo after one month. Our first child was born in that situation. That is why we called him Dusenge, meaning Awe pray@.

As Friends (Quakers), we met at Kigali after the Genocide, and we were thinking what to do, how to respond for the dramatic situation. From there, Rwanda Yearly Meeting decided to start a Peace Building and Reconciliation Program. At that time I was one of the leaders of the Friends church, and all churches were accused of having done nothing to stop the Genocide. But, we tried and we had courage to promote peace at that terrible time. We had problems starting this program; we were mocked by people, even accused by people to the government. Eventually the people started to understand that we need peace and reconciliation in our country. The government started the same program and we had a good time to work closely with the government.

In 1988 a team from the USA-- African Great Lakes Initiative (AGLI) came to Rwanda. One of the people on the team was David Zarembka. They explored and had time to visit some places of the country. They were touched by what happened in Rwanda in 1994. AGLI began to help us to continue the program on peace and reconciliation (AVP), and trauma healing. AGLI provides some money for orphaned children, for school fees, and, continues to do many things in Rwanda. Now, Rwanda Yearly Meeting is helped to promote peace by AGLI, MCC, AFSC, and, Quaker Service of Norway.

MY EARLY LIFE

I was born in Christian family; my parents were God=s servants in the Seventh Day Adventist Church.

By the time I was an adolescent. I no longer believed any of the things I had learned at Sabbath Day. As far as I can remember, I had never seriously believed them, but I had attended church because my parents forced me to go. I had tried to do what they wanted when I was there with them. But when I was away from them, I was living a different life. I was pretending to be good when I was at church or with them. When I was away with other young people, I was lying, robbing, fighting, drinking and participating in other bad practices.

Now, as I look back at those years, I see clearly that on one hand I wanted to be perfect in the eyes of my parents, yet, on the other hand, my heart wasn=t changed and I kept doing the worst things. I cannot think of those years without feeling very sad. I lived like this for all of my primary and secondary school years.

I had been taught that going to church was the only way to reach God and to go to heaven. I had been taught that attending Sabbath Day worship is the key for every Christian; without it, a person can=t enter heaven. So I obeyed by going to worship on the Sabbath day, but I wasn=t obeying God. I was doing many bad things which were not pleasing God

MY LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN

In 1989, I discovered what it means to follow God, that it is much more than keeping the Sabbath. I was helped by a Friends Missionary from USA who led a Bible study and who prayed for me. At that time, he was a Headmaster at the school where I was a teacher. Through him, I came to understand that doing good works in church was not enough. I discovered that obeying rules is not the means to heaven; only by accepting Jesus Christ can one go to heaven. Jesus is the only way. I came to know how to live according to the Word of God, not to just attend church on Sundays. I chose to invite Jesus into my heart, by my own choice, not because I was forced by my parents. God forgave all my sins and I started a new life in Christ. I decided to leave the bad habits like lying, robbing, fighting, drinking, and so on. I started to share with my friends and my parents how my heart had changed.

At first my friends and colleagues hated me because I had decided not to be with them--participating in bad things. But, I endured it and persevered. I tried to have a good relationship with them. After some time, they finally discovered that I was sincere and that I truly was now a Christian. I experienced more and more of Christ=s presence in my life. Thus my relationship with Him grew as I sought to serve God day by day. Jesus helped me not to go back to the bad things I had been doing with my friends before. Now I can see how my life has been protected

from many problems.

My call now is to work for peace in my country and in Africa. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. I need to seek peace every where and make effort to live in peace with all people. I have been inspired by my parent=s experience of following and serving God.

When I was adolescent, I began to serve God in choirs, teaching children in Sunday school and leading Bible studies. As long as I continued to serve God, I experienced Christ=s presence in my life more and more. Thus, my relationship with God grew up according to how I performed God=s work day by day until now.

As a married man, the relationship with my spouse has grown very much. I thank God because He has given me a Christian Spouse. Since the beginning of our marriage, we have had a wonderful time praying together and sharing our plans. She has been involved in my ministry since then until today. This is what has made our relationship grow and become successful. She is also involved in the peace building program in Rwanda, including working with on Conflict Resolution with women of the Great Lakes Region

I am happy that my relationship with my children is excellent. Like their mother, my children are involved in my ministry by serving in choirs and teaching children in Sunday school. They participate in our home devotions, prayer and Bible study. They are obedient to me and I love them.

God has directed me into full time Christian Service and being a Peacemaker. Having been born into a Christian family, and then growing in the church and being member of Quakers is the first reason to seek peace in our country, even in Africa. Another reason is that since my childhood God appointed me to serve Him just as my parents were serving Him. They were helping all people -- Hutu, Tutsi and Twa, even visitors. They was no discrimination.

My parents helped us to finish primary school and Secondary school. But, I did my secondary school and University in Congo because it was hard to get a school in my country. Even after my studies I have never worked outside the church. Currently I am studying at Nairobi International School of Theology which meets my needs of working to improve my knowledge and skills in Christian Ministry Leadership. My education will help me to be more effective in my work and allow me to help local church leadership to be more effective. I will help the Christian schools in teaching the leadership because our countries are destroyed by the bad leaders we had. Even the church was destroyed by the bad leaders. I have a burden to work with all churches in the peace building program in Rwanda and in Africa. I still need to grow in my knowledge of peace studies and pray that God will open the door. Unfortunately, we don=t have such training available in Central Africa.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

1988-1989 Teacher in Secondary School at APROSEC

1992-1993 Director of Church T.E.E. Programme, youth leader at the Church in National Level.

1993-1996 Vice / Legal Representative of Friends Church in Rwanda, Headmaster of George Fox Secondary School.

1998-2004 Legal Representative (General Superintendent of Friends Church)
Treasurer of Protestant Counsel of Rwanda,
Assistant Clerk of FWCC Africa Section
Board President - Great Lakes School of Theology (now Friends Great Lake University)

2001-2004 Coordinator of AVP

2001-2004 President of management committee of Friends Peace House.
Pastor of Nyarugenge Church at Kigali City

Other Training:

Peace building

T.E.E

Conflict Resolution

Mediation

Leadership (Haggai Institute)

Church Growth

AVP

Reconciliation