TUGIRE UBUMWE
Let’s Unite!
Teaching lessons from the Rwanda genocide

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By Rupert Bazambanza
TUGIRE UBUMWE
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After the First World War: The League of Nations declared Rwanda - a former German colony - under the administration of Belgium...

The Belgian colonial power and the Catholic Church found three groups within the Rwandan nation...

This is Rwanda, my country of a thousand misty hills. A tiny paradise which turned to hell when genocide struck, consuming a million people in 100 days. I, Rupert Bazambanza, survived the genocide and here I draw and tell the story...

The first group were potters...

The second group were farmers...

And the third, were cow herders...

The colonial power divided the Rwandans by demonstrating that they were different from one another.

The cattle raiser became Tutsi and the farmer became Hutu...

And as for the potter....

Your ethnicity is Tutsi.

And you, Hutu

You are Twa.
The ethnic identity card was introduced in 1931 by the Belgians...

Ethnicity was determined by the father's side only...

In 1959, the hutu majority supported by the colonial power and the Catholic church overthrew the Tutsi monarchy. Many were massacred and thousands fled to neighboring countries...

In 1962, Rwanda obtained its independence and the colonizers were obliged to leave power...

Over the next three decades tensions deepened and ethnic division drove the nation towards a major genocide in 1994. My father was among those massacred...
Meanwhile, in 1979, the Byusa family welcomed their first daughter. Her name was Sylvie...

Seven years later, Sylvie begins primary school....

And you Tutsi!

Mr. Byusa, himself a teacher, refused to separate the students in his class into separate ethnic groups...

I am Tutsi then?

Never in my class!

Because of this, Mr. Byusa was taken away and never seen by his family again...

Continue my battle my daughter!

Sylvie was able to advance to secondary school. But the politics of discrimination had not changed...

The Hutu on one side and the Tutsi on the other! Hurry!

My father was right, we must not separate the students.

I don't like this.
Next time, let's refuse to separate! We are all the same!

On 6th April 1994, a plane carrying Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana was shot down. The President was killed.

Quickly! The Hutu on one side and the Tutsi cockroaches on the other side!

Immediately, Mr. Rwego - a neighbor of the Byusa family - left to get Sylvie at her school to hide her.

At Sylvie's school...

The girls from the Secondary School at Nyanage, Kibuye were killed without distinction, with only a few survivors left to tell the story...

When Sylvie heard the news...

Here we do not have Hutu and Tutsi. There are only Rwandans. That is why we will not separate into two groups.

My dear classmates, I'm sorry that I abandoned you.

After the genocide, Sylvie was the only survivor in her family. She decided to study hard for her future.

To honor your memory and your courage my dear departed, I will become a teacher. Education is the key to ensuring that never again will there be genocide in this world.

With her university diploma in her pocket, she braided her hair...

With a new look, Sylvie began her new life...

* MRND: Mouvement Révolutionnaire pour le Développement (National Revolutionary Movement for Development) Habyarimana Juvenal's political party

* Hutu Power: the MRND had managed to divide the main opposition parties along ethnic lines. Deserters from these parties regrouped around the MRND in a Hutu extremist faction called Hutu power.
At the school where Sylvie teaches, the lasting impact of the genocide on the younger generation can be seen.

We Rwandans have always shared all these values, language, culture and race. That is why we do not have ethnic differences and we had never had them!

During a break from class...

During a break from class...

What's this? We don't have ethnic differences?

Why is it that my family is dead because of its ethnicity?

Why is my father in prison for life for having participated in the killing of an ethnic group?!
I miss my parents!

I miss my father!

What do you mean you miss your father?!

Well?! That's normal, he's not at home anymore!

Me, I am lucky, my family is still there.

The potters have always been regarded as insignificant and ignorant. That is why the genocide did not affect them...

Daddy, I have homework!

Ask your mother that sent you to school! I do not know what that is... homework!

Sorry, I cannot help you. This country has not given us the chance to study like everyone else!

It will be your fault if that school teaches our son to murder! Before schools existed, Rwandans did not kill each other!

The three children realize that everyone was affected...
Suddenly...

It’s because of your racist parents that my family cannot help me!

Hey, I will remind you that my father is paying a high price for his mistake. What else do you want? It is my uncle who saved your life!

Sylvie, the teacher, is passing by...

What is this? My students are fighting!

Stop! Stop!

Hutu! Tutsi!

Have you forgotten that the government has done away with these ethnic identities? We will not allow them to fall into the same racist stupidity.
You disappoint me! Let me show you...

Do you want to use force?

Do not hit us! We will no longer fight each other!

No, I do not want to hit you! We will play.

Who is strong enough to break this stick?

Me! Me! Me!

It was easy to break one stick....

But difficult to break two sticks at the same time...

And impossible to break three sticks for Tugire...

Impossible also for Ubu...

Same thing for Mwe...

A single stick which is easy to break represents each one of you! The unity of the three sticks is unbreakable! That is why, only unity of all Rwandans will be the strength of our nation.
LESSON TWO: CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

Imagine the work force our country lost during the April 1994 genocide! More than 800,000 dead! All victims of racism...

During the Second World War, racism and discrimination cost the lives of six million Jews in the holocaust...

In Cambodia in the 1970s, many people were killed or died as a result of discriminatory policies...

And in the early 1990s, "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia led to the deaths of thousands...

In Darfur, Sudan, mass killings of civilians have taken place. Rwandan soldiers are serving as UN peacekeepers to help protect civilians...

A few individuals who were responsible for these crimes have been judged by international criminal tribunals...

...throughout the world as in Africa...

Others have been judged in their own countries. Here in Rwanda, we have revived our traditional justice system called the Gacaca tribunals...

I saw him myself killing many Tutsi families!

A crime against humanity never dies! There are some people who have been tried in their eighties.

In discriminating against your neighbour, you are ruining your country and the whole world! Choose well. Make the choice to live in harmony.
A few days later...

I have your workbooks here... I would like you to draw me some drawings!

There are many things that we can draw in our beautiful little paradise!

Draw me these clouds! I want to see many clouds in your drawings.
A few minutes later...

Wow, you did some nice drawings!

They say that many images hide in the clouds! I often see these images in the clouds.

Can you find images in the clouds that you have drawn? Any image...

The children start immediately...

And when Sylvie, the teacher, looked at their drawings...

Hey! My students have a big problem!
Kids, can you help me understand your drawings?

What does your drawing mean Tugire?

Our families were friends and neighbors! We hadn’t done anything to you!

Hey, calm down kids! Here no one is guilty.

My drawing shows Ubu’s father killing my family!

And you Ubu, explain your drawing to us!

My drawing shows my father killing my best friend!
And the two children look at each other without knowing what to do...

Children, you should try to make a step towards forgiveness and reconciliation.

Realising that they share the same sad story, suddenly...

Sorry to interrupt your happiness but Mwe also has to explain his drawing to us!

My drawing shows a pupil who is going to kill me at school!

But why would a pupil kill you at school? Is there a pupil who has already threatened you?

No, it is because my father always says to my mother that the schools in Rwanda often just train killers. He says that the genocide was planned and perpetrated by educated people who consider themselves civilised. It is only thanks to my mother that I can even come to school.
Mwe’s Story: Education for a Better Future

That day, the teacher decided to speak to Mwe’s parents...

Mwe, you should know that schooling is the best thing that ever happened for humanity to combat ignorance.

Who is that?

It’s the teacher of our son Mwe.

I never shake hands with people who help produce killers!

I must talk to you. It is very important!
Let me show you something first! Please follow me!

Do you see all those uninhabited hills? Before April 1994, there were many men, women and children. They raised their cows peacefully.

One day, people who studied in your and other schools killed those cow farmers with guns and machetes.

If this is the form of intelligence that you teach in school, in my family we prefer remaining uneducated. Before the colonizers and the schools, Rwandans had never known genocide.

It is a great pity what intellectuals have done for this country, but things have changed! It is no longer these types of intellectuals who lead the country!
In fact, our country has developed a framework for Rwanda’s development called “Vision 2020”. We will need well-educated young men and women if we are to reach the Vision’s objective of a sustainable, knowledge-based economy....

There is no lesson of killing in our schools!

This is the only way to ensure that your children can make a new path in their lives.

Look at what your son has drawn this afternoon! He is scared.

Your ancestor was a pot maker and you are a pot maker! It is time for your son to have the choice to become a doctor, a teacher or whatever he wishes.
LESSON THREE: RESPECTING OUR ENVIRONMENT AND OTHERS

Another day in class...

Being educated doesn’t necessarily mean being civilised! A civilised person respects human rights.

We all have a right to live, that is most important. A civilised person respects and preserves the environment.

That is the reason why our country decided to promote cleanliness and respect for the environment!

We cannot throw things just anywhere any more...

Similarly racism and discrimination are like garbage that must be thrown in the trash can and disposed of...

We also cannot use plastic bags...
UBU'S STORY: JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION

Some weeks later...

Today Ubu's father will present himself in front of the Gacaca tribunal!

The Gacaca tribunals were set up because of the large number of people who participated in the genocide. The country's usual justice system was overloaded. Gacaca tribunals also had a role in uniting the country by way of confessions, testimony and forgiveness between victims and perpetrators...

Ubu’s father was accused of having participated in the genocide by murdering many Tutsi families...

I am guilty and I regret what I did.

To kill innocent people because of their ethnicity did not bring about anything good! It instead distanced me from my family and my friends.

After deliberation by the judges of the Gacaca tribunal...

Because you show remorse, this tribunal has sentenced you to 20 years' imprisonment, instead of a life sentence that you deserve for these murders.
Suddenly...

I ask for your authorization to talk to the accused.

According to your daughter, it is you at the moment of killing her friend.

Your daughter saw you killing her friend and it haunts her.

Take a look at the drawing your daughter made.

Your daughter said you killing her friend and it haunts her.

What is this?

It is not too late for your daughter, you can help her. And this will help her concentrate at school.

I will do everything in my power to make sure that my daughter understands and does not commit the same stuidies.

You can write or speak to her by saying you are sorry for what you did to her friend and the bad example you set for her.
You can read the letter! Please help my daughter.

What a touching letter!

I must transmit this message quickly.

Good morning, I am your daughter Ubu's teacher.

I didn’t see you at the Gacaca trial.

I preferred to stay near my daughter.

Your husband was courageous in asking pardon and regretting his crimes. He even wrote to his adored daughter.

After reading her father's letter, Ubu was very happy and read it to her mother who felt comforted...

It is hard to face the victims of my husband.
The genocide in Rwanda lasted 3 months from April to July 1994. Today, people in Rwanda remember and commemorate the victims during this period...

Hey! Tugire, it is forbidden to sleep in class!

I’m sorry, forgive me!

sniff! sniff! sniff!

Why, are you crying?!

It's today that my family was murdered!
All our prayers are with your family. This day should not be an occasion to feel down! It is an occasion to reflect, to be strong and to struggle against injustice.

Who also lost relatives in the genocide?

Let us observe one minute of silence for our dearly, unjustly departed.

Never Again

This is our goal as of today.

The teacher and some friends of Tugire went to the memorial site where many victims of the genocide lie with Tugire’s family. Afterwards, Sylvie accompanied Tugire home to the orphanage...
LESSON FOUR: POSITIVE FORCES UNITED

One Friday afternoon...

Let the music start!

Immediately the music created a fun atmosphere...

Suddenly the teacher stopped the music...

The children enjoyed themselves very much...

The kids were very disappointed. Their fun was interrupted...

Sorry, but I have to teach you about the source of energy that makes the radio work.

Due to the reversed battery, the radio does not work...

Yet I did not remove anything from the radio.

Look! The batteries at the back of the radio make it work.

You are the batteries of our country. Like a battery, you also have positive and negative forces. When you discriminate against other people you are like a reversed battery. In that way you keep the country from going forward. Only your positive forces concentrated in the same direction will give us peace and development.

Look carefully at what happens when I reverse just one battery.
The water is not deep here! What if we jump this stream instead of walking in the water?

Did you know that it takes a single step to cross the stream? Watch me!

Wow, I succeeded! Now it’s your turn!

Be brave and trust yourselves. You can do it!

Here I go

Ethnic hatred is like a stream that is very deep and dangerous! A stream that swallowed up more than 800,000 Rwandans. Understand that you cannot be partially racist! You must conquer racism and intolerance by a single step! Be courageous and trust yourselves.

Well done! Like I told you, it takes only one step to cross the stream!
However, one day after recess, Sylvie was shocked and disappointed....

Tuzabatsembatsemba means, "we are going to exterminate them."

Mr. Headmaster, I need your help! I found a genocide message written on the blackboard in my class.

Oh no?! Which one of my pupils would write such a thing?

You too?

What do you mean, me too?

Let me show you something!

All of this box is filled with messages of hate seized by teachers

In that case, we have to use the pupils to increase parents' awareness and fight against this ideology. I have an idea...

We will invite all the parents to come and see a play where their own children are the actors. Afterwards, it will be difficult for them to teach hatred to their children who are promoting PEACE

The headmaster accepted the teacher's idea and went to inform the government...

But how?
One afternoon, the play begins in front of the parents...

My liver is hurting! Help me!

My husband is sick!

Don't worry my friend! I know a healer who can take care of your liver better than any modern medicine.

The traditional medicine arrived...

Thank you my friend.

The sick man felt very relieved...

I have recovered

Later, the genocide started and the man participated...

He killed and drank a lot during the genocide...

During the genocide, many innocent people died...

Oh my goodness! Even students were killed during the genocide!
After the genocide, the man fell seriously ill again...

Can you go bring him the medicine?

It's impossible, the healer was massacred during the genocide.

Who is the idiot who killed such a brilliant leader?

My liver is going to burst! Bring me the medicine quickly!

It may have been you! You killed innocent people because of their ethnicity without thinking of what they were contributing to society.

There must be others who know his secret!

Only his family preserved these secrets from generation to generation. Unfortunately, the whole family was massacred.

No one was able to cure the sick man and he died...

What is even more disappointing future generations, our own children, will never benefit from their work.

After the play, the pupils bowed...

Let us live together because we are all Rwandans.
Images of Hope

Some time later...

Children, would you redraw for me the clouds?

This is me as president with my children and my wife!

This is me, a teacher!

This is me, a medical doctor!

Well done, kids! This time, I have made a drawing for you!

Hope
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