

AND

foreword by **Patricia Viseur Sellers**

The Resilience of Rwandan Genocide Survivors of Sexual Violence

LIVE

ON

edited by **Anne-Marie de Brouwer,**
Sandra Ka Hon Chu, Eefje de Volder &
Samer Muscati

photographs by **Samer Muscati**

IN THE 100 days of genocide that ravaged the small East Central African nation of Rwanda between April and July 1994, approximately 1 million Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed, and an estimated 250,000 to 500,000 women and girls were raped, as well as an unknown number of men and boys. Almost all Rwandan women who survived the genocide were victims of sexual violence or were profoundly affected by it, and an astounding 70 per cent of survivors are living with HIV.

And I Live On features searing testimonials from Rwandan survivors of the genocide 15 and 25 years after the horrific events of 1994. Through their narratives and Samer Muscati's powerful portraits, these women and one man bear witness to the crimes committed in their country and to the suffering they continue to endure. The testimonials also showcase the survivors' extraordinary strength, courage and resilience—challenging the stigma they face both as survivors of sexual violence and as people living with HIV. In speaking out, they provide a glimpse into the worlds of survivors living with the genocide's legacy decades after a conflict. Their stories, along with the accompanying text and illustrations, make an indelible impact.

IN THIS BOOKLET you can read the 2008 and 2018 testimonial of Pascasie Mukasakindi. In the 2018 testimonial she gives a true and emotional insight view on how her life, love and health changed the past ten years.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PASCASIE MUKASAKINDI

BORN: July 25, 1959

BIRTHPLACE: Karambo, Gikongoro

TESTIMONIAL: Kigali, 2008

TO THIS DAY, when I think back to the genocide of 1994, a feeling of coldness comes over me and I start to shiver. I remember the freezing house where the *Interahamwe* enslaved me in nothing but my undergarments. But I still wish to share my testimonial with you to help let the world know what happened during the genocide and bring justice to those who suffered. I wish to have a better life. Without people who care about our plight, we will die.

My family has had a long history of suffering. My father used to tell me about the history of Tutsi oppression in Rwanda. In 1959, seven of my uncles and aunts were killed by Hutu, and their bodies were thrown in the Rukarara River, a large river in Gikongoro Prefecture. In 1963, some Hutu neighbours tried to kill my father, a Tutsi, but his Hutu father-in-law hid him on his banana plantation. In 1973, following the *coup d'état* by Habyarimana, we were forced to give a few cows to some Hutu neighbours so that they would not kill us.

In 1990, discrimination against Tutsi got much worse as news spread about former Tutsi refugees who wished to return to the country from Uganda. That year, I was living in Nyanza, in the south of Rwanda, with my husband and my child. Tutsi traders and teachers were killed, and others were jailed. Traders and teachers were among the first to be killed, since the traders were considered rich and the teachers were considered intellectual. Despite these killings, I wasn't afraid myself, since I felt there was no reason to kill me.



Before the genocide in 1994, I was a trader in secondhand clothes, and my husband was a truck driver transporting food all over the country. My husband and I came from the same area and we got married in 1984. We decided to live in Nyanza because my husband's job was there. Where we lived, Tutsi and Hutu shared everything. My mother was Hutu, but my grandmother was Tutsi. I was considered Tutsi since my father was Tutsi. Ethnicity didn't seem to matter to the ordinary Rwandan; it seemed to matter only to the people who wielded power.

A week before the genocide began, I was in Gikongoro, in southern Rwanda, visiting my parents. I saw Hutu forming groups here and there and buying strange weapons. On April 7, 1994, while I was still in Gikongoro, we heard that the president had died in a plane crash. Soon after, we heard Tutsi screaming as their houses were burned by *Interahamwe* militia on the orders of the prefect of Gikongoro and the police. On April 12, 1994, the prefect asked the policemen of that area why they had not yet started to "work" when in other places the police and militia had already finished. As soon as I heard this, I went to a man called Marcel, who was a friend of my parents. My father had given him a cow, which is a sign of great friendship in Rwanda. Marcel was a Hutu and a demobilized FAR soldier, and his wife was a Tutsi, so I went to see if he would hide me. He agreed, and I stayed in their home for two weeks, until the day the *Interahamwe* came to burn Marcel's house because all his in-laws had sought protection with him. During those two weeks I felt very frightened. I stayed in a room with all of the in-laws, and we couldn't do anything. I was waiting for death to come. I didn't know what was happening with my husband and our four-year-old child, who were still in Nyanza.

While the *Interahamwe* were placing dry tree branches around Marcel's house in order to burn it, Marcel told us to run out the back door. Some of his in-laws were killed during our escape. While fleeing, I encountered a group of about fifty *Interahamwe* militia. They detained me near the bushes next to the Gasebeya River and stole everything I had: my bag, my shoes and my watch. I also had a bottle full of milk, and they threw that milk on me, saying that Tutsi were like cats because we all liked milk. A few men tore my dress off, and one *Interahamwe*, named Charles, told me that he wanted to kill me so I could be the hundredth person on his death toll. I was paralyzed with fear. I was so scared I could not think, and I saw death right in front of my eyes.

That group of *Interahamwe* took me to some bushes to kill me. Just as they were about to do so, a man approached and proposed to buy me from them. I think he wanted to rescue me. He offered them twenty bottles of beer and

two hundred Rwandan francs, but the *Interahamwe* said if the man wanted to make me his wife, they would first have to rape me. In the end, they refused to sell me, and they pushed me to the ground, injuring my chest. Afterward, the men raped me, one by one. Even the youngest ones in the group raped me, and they looked like they were no older than thirteen. Almost fifty men raped me in one day. I was too numb to feel anything. I had been abandoned by the Rwandan authorities who were supposed to protect me. After they were done raping me, they shoved a nailed club into my vagina, threw me into a thorny bush and left me in that state. I removed the club very slowly and dragged myself to a nearby river, because I thought the water from the river would help heal me. There, I slept. By this time I thought that my family must have been killed already, and I was waiting for death to come to me also.

After I awoke, I slowly dragged myself to a bush, where I hid for three days. Then I went to the home of an old friend of our family, a Hutu named Charlotte, who gave me a piece of cloth before ordering me to leave her house. She was afraid for her own security, because I was a Tutsi. My family was on a list of Tutsi to be killed as a priority, because we were considered RPF spies. This frightened Charlotte even more. From there, I went to a mountain called Nshyundo, where many Tutsi had found refuge in bushes. I stayed there for a week, until the *Interahamwe* came and burned the whole mountain. Many Tutsi perished in that fire, including my aunts and five of my cousins.

I escaped down the burning mountain to the Mwego River. Crossing it would lead me back to my home in Nyanza. Before the bridge that spanned the river were two roadblocks, though, and around one hundred *Interahamwe* and FAR soldiers. They were staying in that area in houses that had belonged to a moderate Hutu, Minister of Agriculture Frederic Nzamurambaho, who had been killed earlier in the genocide. The *Interahamwe* spotted and captured me. They placed some banana leaves on the ground and ordered me to lie down. Before raping me, they ordered me to perform all kinds of gymnastics, including handstands, which was difficult because I was very weak. They tortured me in so many cruel ways, forcing me to take their penises in my mouth and shoving their penises up my nose. Their sperm fell from my nose onto my body and into my mouth. I wanted to vomit. I felt so stupid, and I could do nothing. They insulted and humiliated me. They told me that I was ugly and dirty and that I stank. No one was there to help me. After they finished, they took me to one of the abandoned houses they were camped in. I could not escape, because they would lock all the doors when they left to do their “work.” I was the only woman in the house, and for two weeks many *Interahamwe* raped me every day, using me as their personal sex slave.

During those two weeks I wanted to die. Instead, I remained in that situation. I was wearing only some ragged underwear. I was really dirty and smelled awful. Since I was there during the cold season, I was always extremely cold. Talking about it makes me shiver all over again.

After two weeks, the *Interahamwe* heard that the RPF were getting closer. They beat me with nailed clubs until one of them said that I was dead and told his peers to leave me there. The RPF arrived a few hours later and took me to an RPF camp in Nyanza. There, they gave me all kinds of treatment. First they washed my entire body, which was very dirty. Then they treated my private parts, which felt destroyed. They gave me food and medicine, including penicillin. Slowly, I started to recover.

The *Interahamwe* militia and FAR soldiers who raped me did not think that I was a human being. My parents, my brothers and my sisters were killed during the genocide, and I don't know what happened to my husband and my only child. I don't know how any of my loved ones died, because we all fled in different directions, and the perpetrators have not admitted how my family members were killed. There has been a resurgence of genocidal ideology in Gikongoro, so people are reluctant to admit the crimes they committed.

I hate all men, and I do not want to hear about them. I feel the *Interahamwe* militia and FAR soldiers killed what I would have become. I am HIV positive. I am not able to work, because I am very weak and constantly ill. I suffer from headaches, chest aches, backaches and pains in my vagina, and I have sinus problems as a result of the men who raped me in my nose. I live alone and have no one to help me, but I am surviving with the help of different organizations, which provide material and spiritual support. I find comfort and love through the support of those organizations and from seeing other widows who have the same problems. It helps me feel less lonely.

Some of the *Interahamwe* militiamen who raped me were imprisoned, but they are now being released. This is not justice. *Gacaca* courts were supposed to bring justice and reconciliation, but they are bringing more tears than smiles. The men who killed me should be better trained on how to treat survivors after they return to society. Soon, I will accuse some of the perpetrators myself in *gacaca* court. I am afraid of testifying against them, but I will not allow my fear to get in the way. Despite all that has happened to me, I can forgive those who ask for forgiveness from the bottom of their hearts.



PASCASIE MUKASAKINDI

TESTIMONIAL: Kigali, 2018

THE FIRST BOOK, *The Men Who Killed Me*, told the world about the genocide and the sexual violence that took place in Rwanda. Yet, in many countries, people do not believe that genocide happened in our country, and there are people who do not believe that women were raped during the genocide. This book gives value to Rwandan survivors and what we have endured. I am lucky that I shared my testimony for *The Men Who Killed Me*; my voice and my words are documented. It touched my heart when I received letters from people around the world who had read my testimony, and expressed love and compassion. These people do not know me, but they still wonder who I am and how I am doing. It makes me feel that my suffering touched somebody's heart. I came to learn that what happened to me can help others. I hope that my strength and courage can be an inspiration to other survivors of sexual violence. Perhaps they can draw lessons from what I have been through. That brings me hope for tomorrow.

I am living proof that things can change for the better. And this is also what I want to show the readers of this book; I am not the person I used to be. I am glad that there is worldwide recognition of what happened to us, and that *The Men Who Killed Me* played a role in accomplishing this. I hope the world will also see how FAR we have come. It has touched my heart that people who are not Rwandans have shown me love and compassion after reading my testimony—something that Rwandans did not show me then.

After what happened during the genocide, I felt like I could never love another man. Otherwise, I would have remarried and had children. But I am not living alone. Since the government gave me land and a house through

the FARG program, authorities asked me in 2012 to take in two orphans for a short while. The two teenage siblings came to live with me, and we all had to make some difficult adjustments. I have come to love them as a parent. They continue to live with me and are all grown up; both have completed university.

Although I love the children, I cannot look into their hearts and know whether they love me, too. It is normal for children to sometimes misbehave toward their mother. But some of the things they do make me feel that they do not love me. One day I came home from the market, and I found that they had built a small house beside my house. I discovered that they had stolen my land documents and gone behind my back to the Land Board to register the land under their names, too. I am not sure whether they returned the authentic documents to me. It hurts me, but there is nothing I can do about it, other than to seek legal advice. I would like to propose to the children that they move into the small house they built and leave me in my own house, so that I can be free again. I am still considering going to the Land Board to dispute their claim of ownership. The children know that I am HIV positive; I think they wish that I would die, so that they can take all of my property. They seem to think that I am a fool. They only pretend to love me. Their love for me is not the same as the love I have for them; it is not the love they could have for a parent.

I am happy with my house, and I do not want to move to a different place. I am pleased with the area, as only genocide survivors live here with the assistance of the government FARG program. It is a safe area and I am on good terms with my neighbours. Everybody just minds their own business; they wake up in the morning, work at their businesses or dig their fields. I spend time by myself at home, and also welcome and visit fellow Solace members who live close by. Together, we discuss the problems we face.

Overall, I am doing fine, but I still cannot forget what happened to me during the genocide. The trauma continues. Sometimes when I am alone, I think about all that I have suffered. I see it all playing in my mind like a movie. I do not think we will ever forget what happened; it will always come back. This is the life we must accept to live. We cannot forget; we just pretend not to remember.

Sometimes it comes when I am at home alone or at night. Then I try to think of some small verses from the bible, and I try to sing and pray in order to keep me from losing myself in re-traumatizing thoughts. And I just try to remember that I am strong. But sometimes I cannot even sing. When these thoughts become overwhelming, I try to visit Solace Ministries to seek com-

fort from Mama Lambert. But the pain... I do not think I will ever forget what happened.

In 2009 I was diagnosed with cancer. After the genocide, I used to feel sick every day. When the RPF soldiers rescued me, I was continuously bleeding from my private parts. They took me to the hospital where I received all kinds of treatments, but the bleeding continued and it was very painful. I was constantly using pads or cloths to absorb the blood. When I passed people on the street, they would say: "What is that smell?" At the hospital, the doctors found that my uterus was damaged because many different men raped me. I went home and prayed to God for healing, and one night when I was sleeping in my bed, I had a vision. I saw someone standing with his hands in the air, and he told me: "You are healed." After that vision, I went back to the hospital, and the doctors discovered that the bleeding had stopped and my uterus was healed. The same thing happened in 2013, when I had a stomach ulcer. At first, it was hard and growing bigger, but after I prayed and asked the Lord to heal me, it healed without any operation.

In addition to the cancer and ulcer, my back continues to ache, and I have a chronic cough and constant headaches. But I am used to living with pain. And when I remember the coldness of the house where I was kept nearly naked during the genocide, I still get shivers; just the thought of it makes me sick and sends me to bed.

To give my life meaning, I have operated several businesses over the years. I had a restaurant, but I had to give it up when the landlord became jealous and evicted me so that another person could rent it instead. Then I relocated my restaurant, but the space I was renting was sold and destroyed to build new houses. So I decided to run a business that does not require me to rent space. Now I go to customers—either in their homes or big stores—and I ask them what produce they need. Then I go to the market and buy the produce they order, and deliver it to them. I have different customers and they all order different items, like tomatoes, carrots, onions and bananas. I would advise any young woman who wants to do business to use her strength and her mind, and to always be reliable and accountable to encourage returning customers.

Because of my business mind, people within the community respect me. They see that I am always running some business, so they think I make a lot of money and they always try to borrow from me. They do not look down on me because of my history; they just think I am a strong woman and that I have everything in abundance.

Nevertheless, at times I do feel stigmatized for being a survivor of genocidal sexual violence. There are people who know me and my history. I feel ashamed whenever I meet these people, particularly those who are connected to the men who harmed me in the past. Through their words, they make it clear to me what they think of me. They blame me for the fact that these men are in prison. I just tell them that everyone needs to account for what they did. But I do not say much to them and I stay quiet; during those encounters I feel ashamed and afraid, so I try to avoid them. I am afraid that the bad things that happened to me in the past will happen again. In those moments I feel ashamed of my history, and I fear that those people might open up old wounds and hurt me again.

This is the reason I do not want this second edition of the book to be published inside Rwanda: the stigma and the way people look upon me. Still, it is better than it used to be; there is less stigma against survivors in Rwandan society now than there was before.

The government continues to work on forgiveness and reconciliation. But despite the progress after all of these years, I do not believe in the justice system. *Gacaca* was the appropriate way for the government to deal with the genocide, but *gacaca* did not bring me justice. If it were up to me, I would have never chosen to bring the *génocidaires* before *gacaca* because their crimes were too severe. By the laws of our country, it is forbidden to kill others, so I cannot take revenge on the killers. But if it were up to me, I would do the same to those who killed my loved ones. Ultimately, I did testify against the people who raped me, and the government imprisoned them according to the law. But if the government then decides to forgive them, there is nothing I can do about it. I must forgive them too, even though it is not from my heart. I still think that I could forgive those who ask sincerely for forgiveness. The problem is that they did not come to seek forgiveness.

During the genocide most of our property was destroyed and stolen, but at first, I decided not to seek redress. I only went to court in 2012, when someone took my father's land. But since that person had a lot of money and many lawyers, I was unable to pursue the case without a lawyer representing me. So I just accepted my loss.

Despite all of the challenges that I face, I still feel empowered; I am strong, and I have hope for the future. In the years to come, if God continues to give me life and strength, I wish to have a new house and my own car. I do not have my driver's license yet, but I will get it as soon as I have the means. I have come a long way, and I will achieve all of my dreams. I want to show the

people who harmed me that they were wrong about me; I want to show them everything I am capable of accomplishing. I want to challenge them.

I am grateful to those who have supported us. I am most thankful to Jean Gakwandi from Solace Ministries, because he has devoted his life to support widows and orphans. He comforted me and showed me that life can go on. I am also proud of my president Paul Kagame; he stopped the genocide. If it were not for him, I would not have met Muzehe Gakwandi, and the members of Mukomeze. I know why I am still alive. It is because of Solace Ministries and Mukomeze. They went out and told the world about us: our stories and our needs. They came and supported me when there was nothing left of me, and helped me step-by-step to where I am now. Every night before I go to bed, I pray. And when I wake up during the night, I pray again. I get a pen and write down the names of the people who were good to me, and then I thank them in my prayers. I ask God to bless them. The reason why I am still alive today is because of these people. I bless them because there are still people in need. I pray that God may give us more people who can support others.



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REVIEWS OF THE BOOK

“If the designation of survivor resonates over the miserable label of victim, then these lives that persist, strengthen, must continue to speak, loudly.”

Patricia Viseur Sellers, Special Advisor on Gender to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and former Gender Legal Advisor for the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda

“Graphically, and without doubt, this book makes the case that rape is no lesser a crime than murder.”

Lieutenant-General (ret) The Honorable Roméo Dallaire

“Survivors choose to tell their stories in the hope that others will hear. These searing testimonials of inconsolable anguish and awe-inspiring resilience will change you forever and spark you to act to honour dignity.”

Dr. James Orbinski, former international president of Doctors without Borders/MSF and author of An Imperfect Offering

“The survivors of unspeakably brutal sexual violence managed to leave their past in the past. They realized it would destroy their future. With incredible strength they managed to live for what today has to offer, not for what the terrible past has taken away. This book tells us how they returned the smiles to their faces and the hope in their hearts.”

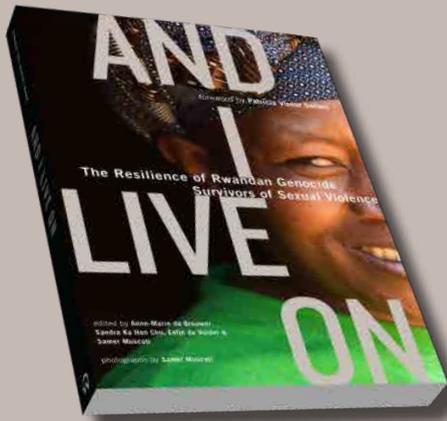
Patrick Cammaert, Assistant Secretary-General, Head of UNMHA

“This book is about moving beyond surviving into becoming victors. It reminds us that while their pain and abuse will remain remarkable, their testimonials and current situation is what resilience and courage mean. This is what the commitment to remember, unite and renew yields.”

Dr. Usta Kaitesi, Acting CEO, Rwanda Governance Board

“*And I Live On: The Resilience of Rwandan Genocide Survivors of Sexual Violence* is an exemplary contribution to genocide studies and advances public understanding of genocide. It is a distinct contribution to many disciplines including genocide studies, sociology, history, conflict resolution and human rights. The book is also a testament to the editors’ and photographer’s vision of the consequential role we all have in contributing to a more compassionate and just world. Pioneering allies to survivors, they serve as an example to us all.”

Dr. Kimberley Ducey, Associate Professor, The University of Winnipeg



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Genocide Survivors of
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