

## **This is the testimony of Reverien, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide**

I was born in Kibungo province in 1986. I am in my third year of secondary school.

When I was young, I thought people were the same, that there was no discrimination. That was not true because people in our country were not equal. When I was growing up, I realized that I had no value. They told me at home that no Tutsi child who had finished primary school could continue to secondary school because a Hutu child would replace him.

At school, some children used to tell us that their parents told them not to speak to the snakes. We were the snakes and we were hated; even the teachers were against us. I remember in primary school, they used to ask our ethnicity. We raised our hands as Tutsis and the teachers beat us. At home, we wept as we asked our parents why we suffered so much and they told us to be patient that it would eventually end.

I remember, it was Wednesday, April 6, 1994. When my mother returned home from the market in Kigali, she told us to pray because our end had come.

The following day, Hutu neighbors came to steal our possessions, our cows and take our money. Across the hills, people were being killed. On Sunday, the 10<sup>th</sup>, the killings reached our home area. We heard a whistle signaling the start of the killings. We immediately ran towards the bush and we stayed there until night.

We were able to find hiding with a man named Ribanje. He refused at first but finally accepted when my mother gave him money. One night my mother and grandmother left the house to search for food. My sister and I were left there alone. We did not see them again.



One time, Ribanje was drunk and he brought a group of interahamwe home with him. He told them that we were hiding in his house. They found us and beat us severely. I remember that two of Ribanje's sons were among them. These men raped my sister all night and I was continually beaten.

It was the April 24 when the RPF reached our region. Rinbanje was afraid and forced us to travel with him to the border. During the journey I lost my sister. I was never to see her again.

I was without any family, without any food. I thought I was going to die of hunger. I used to take dirty food from the trashcans. I escaped by jumping on a van that was leaving to Gitarama. I then travelled on foot to Gisenyi.

Fortunately, I was given refuge by a man named Evariste. He took pity on me and helped me look for my family members who had survived. I found that my uncle, and then discovered my mother and my grandmother were still alive.

Now I study but I have problems paying my school fees. I pray a lot so that God may give me intelligence so that I do well my studies. I ask every one of every denomination to help the survivors, to be near them, speak to them, and help them in any way, mostly by giving support, because it is so important to know people care.

**Today's Reading of the Testimonies marks the 15<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, in support of survivors like Reverien.**