

This is the testimony of Josette, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide

The militias came in the evening and locked us in a house. Then they said they were going to rape us, but they used the word *marry*. They said they were going to marry us until we stopped breathing. That night, my sister told me to get ready because she had already been raped. I had never known what sex was like. The militias went away in the morning and came back in the evening with clothes and machetes stained with blood.

They told us to wash the clothes and machetes—that was going to be our job because they had other jobs to accomplish. They kept doing that: coming with blood-stained clothes, we would wash the clothes, they would rape us at night, and then the next day, they would go out to kill. That was the pattern of our lives.

Every morning they hit us ten times. After hitting us, we got a different man. Eventually my sister said it was too much, that we needed to commit suicide. There was a river close by that my sister heard people talking about. We went to look for it so we could throw ourselves into the river and die instead of living with torture. But when we got to the river, there were many dead bodies floating in it, and we feared going there.

My sister was pregnant at this point. I also realized that I was pregnant. I was so weak that I couldn't even walk. I had too much pain in my private parts, but that did not stop them from continuously raping me. Eventually they cut my sister, and three days later, she died. When I realized she had been killed, I knew I would also be killed. By the time they killed her, her kid was five days old. The baby was also killed.

My uncle didn't welcome me into his house. He asked me who was responsible for my pregnancy. I said if I am pregnant, then it must be the militias since many of them had raped me. He said I shouldn't enter his house carrying a baby of the Hutus and chased me away. I left, but I didn't know where to go.

Later, my uncle told me that I could only enter his house if I agreed to throw away the child. Because of how I was living—the conditions were very difficult—I complied. We left the child in the forest, but as we were going to get into the taxi, I didn't feel comfortable. I went to find my child and put him on my breasts again. My uncle said that if I was taking the child, I shouldn't come back.

I must be honest with you; I never loved this child. Whenever I remember what his father did to me, I used to feel the only revenge would be to kill his son. But I never did that. I forced myself to like him, but he is unlikable. The boy is too stubborn and bad. He behaves like a street child. It's not because he knows that I don't love him; it is that blood in him.

Today's Reading of the Testimonies marks the 15th Anniversary of the Rwandan genocide, in support of survivors like Josette.