



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

I was 17 years old, and a student at a boarding school in Butare.

When the killing started I was forced to leave the school, which by then had become my home. My family fled to a refugee camp in the Parish of Kabyayi. The Parish runs a secondary school. When we arrived we were all put together in one classroom. My mother and young sister were with me.

Every night the killers came with a list of people to kill or rape. It became a daily routine. First they concentrated on educated and smart women. Anyone could be picked at any time, and the men would rape you as many times as they wanted.

One night, two men came to our classroom and asked 6 people to come out: three men, and three girls. I was among them. They ordered the men back into the classroom and kept the girls outside. They shone a torch on us, to see which of us was not so beautiful. They told another girl to go back and kept us two. They ordered us to sleep with them. I was feeling ill, and I asked the man to spare me. He tried to force me but I couldn't sleep with him. He was so furious he hit me and said, because I had refused him at night, he would have me instead in broad daylight tomorrow.

Nearby my friend was screaming. She too had tried to resist but the killer had torn off her clothes and was raping her. After he finished raping her, the two killers exchanged places. The poor girl was raped again. My turn soon came. The man grabbed me and hit me on the head. I passed out, and he left me alone.

I could not evade rape for long. The next day a group of killers came to the classroom, asking for my name saying I was the invincible one. I was ordered to take off my clothes and one killer after another then took turns to rape her.



In the meantime I saw that my younger sister had been brought into the compound too. She was only thirteen. I did not tell my mother what had happened. She already had enough worries of her own.

We endured this form of torture from April till mid June when we were finally liberated. Apart from rape, I witnessed many deaths of people I had come to know during the stay. We protected each other as much as we could. When one died, we tried to keep the spirit of survival going despite the horrific life that we led.

After the genocide, I told my mother what really happened. She said she knew, because she too had been raped. All three of us were tested - my sister, my mother and I - and we were all are HIV positive. There is no more to say.

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