

Lana Mesić

Anatomy of Forgiveness

Interview transcriptions

#1

Francois & Christophe



SURVIVOR: You told me that it was to be a short interview. I don't need long. I chose to forgive because all of the troubles in Rwanda were not brought about by simple farmers, but due to the involvement of the regime that was in power back then. All of us farmers used to live in harmony. It was a long time ago that Hutus and Tutsis discriminated each other. The proof of this is that when the violence came to Rwaniro, our village, it was not neighbor attacking neighbor, but an attack by a group from Gikongoro. We, all inhabitants of Rwaniro, fled together. Later we heard that only the Hutus were allowed to return, and that near Rubaba Tutsis had been killed. Those who had escaped had been killed on their way to Mayaga and Songa. But, before all of this, in our village, we had a good relationship. That is why everybody who has had the courage to ask for forgiveness from the depth of their heart, and who has also admitted that they probably killed one of my relatives (although most of the villagers were killed elsewhere), will receive I from me. Even if they were directly involved in the killings, because they were not solely responsible, because it was the authorities that urged them at the time to do so.

INTERVIEWER: Comparing the time before with the time after you granted forgiveness, do you feel that you benefitted from the act in some way?

SURVIVOR: I really benefit from it because in my head I am at peace. It caused change to happen in my mind. You can imagine that when someone is full of anger he can lose his/her mind, becoming to insane to carry out any job. But after I granted forgiveness I felt peace of mind and I ceased assuming that there were people who were against me, like this one for example. I treat him like a brother, don't you see? I treat him like a brother.

PERPETRATOR: As it was before.

SURVIVOR: Any time I am in trouble, I call him and he comes and helps me.

INTERVIEWER: What do terms such as "Forgiveness" and "Justice" mean to you having experienced such sad events?

SURVIVOR: "Forgiveness" and "Justice"? The two are not the same. Sometimes justice does not help the person who was wronged. The outcome of a court case can be influenced by external factors which are not even related to it and then there are the cases that are derailed by corruption. Once you have willingly granted forgiveness however, you are satisfied once and for all. I do not know if I have explained it very well.

INTERVIEWER: Will you please tell me your name and why did you ask for forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: My name is Sinzikinamuka Francis. This person used to have two siblings and a child. Initially, we fled together and then when his younger brother returned home, I was there when he was killed. I am not the one who killed him but I made a promise to myself to tell him who killed his brother if he ever came back, which he did. When he asked me why I did not save him, I told him that I could not because it was by order of the authorities. All I could do was to promise to appear before a court of law, name and denounce the killers and ask him for forgiveness because his brother was killed in my presence. I pleaded guilty to the crimes during the trial, and when he asked me why I told him that I did so because I witnessed this crime but did not save anybody. The killers also asked him for pardon.

INTERVIEWER: Do you feel like you have benefited from being forgiven?

PERPETRATOR: I have benefited from it a lot. I was sincere when I asked him for pardon. We also agreed that there should be no mistrust between us. What is more, when I prepare drinks for my neighbors to thank them for working on my farm,

which is a tradition of ours, I invite him to join us. He also invites me to have a drink with him too. When we go to the pub, we always drink together and share an entire bottle between us. Anyhow, since being forgiven my mind is at rest and I feel peaceful.

INTERVIEWER: So, taking your experiences into account, what do you perceive "Forgiveness" and "Justice" to be?

PERPETRATOR: "Justice" comes from outside. "Forgiveness" can only be granted by the victim. Like there are people who return to crime, there are also those who only superficially grant pardon. In both cases no change occurs. There are also those who will not admit that they are guilty for their crimes; in these case it is up to the justice courts to appropriately sentence people who refuse to give testimonies of what they had witnessed.

#2

Francois & Epiphane



INTERVIEWER: Will you please tell us your name and why did you prefer to ask for forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: My name is Ntambara Francis. Because of genocide perpetrated in 1994, I was in prison because I participated in the killing of the son

of that woman, I came close to her and I asked for forgiveness as I was feeling disturbed in my mind, I could not leave it alone without asking her pardon. So I went to see her and asked for forgiveness then she granted me pardon and together we came before Gacaca court (transitional justice, designed to promote healing and moving on from the genocide crisis) and I officially asked pardon. We are now together members of the same group of unity and reconciliation. We share in everything, if she needs some water to drink I fetch some for her, there is no suspicion between us, whether during the night or under sunlight, we have no problem we continue to live together it is in this context I asked her pardon and now we live in harmony.

INTERVIEWER: After asking pardon, how do you feel?

PERPETRATOR: I now feel peaceful in my mind, I feel clear. We give each other a helping hand for the work in the fields, and together with some friends we often join her in her farm and help her, we share sorghum porridge or banana juice. Now I can sleep peacefully, I used to have nightmares recalling me sad events I have been through but now I am okay. And when we are together we look like brother and sister, no suspicion between us that is how we are now.

INTERVIEWER: What about justice and reconciliation?

PERPETRATOR: Justice and reconciliation are things which have helped me a lot. We believe in justice. It made us come in public as we were convicted of crime that we acknowledged, justice have helped us in the process of acknowledgement of the crime we carried out and now we have no problem about our justice system.

INTERVIEWER: Will you please tell us your name and why did you prefer to grant pardon to that young man?

SURVIVOR: My name is Mukamusoni Epiphane, the reason why I forgave that young man, he has committed a severe crime against me because he killed my son.... (Chase away these children, let them go to school they are doing nothing here, they just want to listen to our conversation)

INTERVIEWER: Why did you prefer to grant pardon?

SURVIVOR: That person killed my child then he came to ask me pardon, for me it was like the devil had haunted people so that they massacred other people, so for me I did not think for a long time in my heart because himself has acknowledged his crime, I immediately granted him pardon and he was happy and I felt happy too. I was pleased by the way he testified to the crime he carried out against me instead of keeping it in hiding because it hurts if someone keeps hiding the crime s/he committed

against you. So he acknowledged his crime and I granted him pardon. He is someone I can call when I need help. When I need some woods to make fire I can call him to cut some for me.

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel after granting pardon?

SURVIVOR: After granting pardon I felt clear in my heart, because he did not do it by himself, he was haunted by the devil, I granted him pardon without cherishing grudge, now I treat him as my own son, when I tell him to cut fire woods for me, he does it and when I am ill he stands by my side.

INTERVIEWER: So in your opinion, what is the use of granting pardon in human relationship?

SURVIVOR: Granting pardon is very useful because when you see someone who committed a crime against you, you look at her/him as if you no longer consider her/him as a criminal. And also when s/he looks at you s/he treats you like a friend. Before when I had not yet granted him pardon he could not come close to me, I treated him like my enemy. But after I would rather treat him like my own child. If I come close to him I am not afraid at all, he even has a son who often comes in my house to chat with my grandchild the one I showed you, and they share shoes, there is nothing bad in granting pardon.

#3

Anastase, Protaine & Isaie



PERPETRATOR: I asked pardon because I perpetrated the genocide crime as we were urged to do it by the bad government which was dubbed "Saviors". After being convicted I was sentenced to imprisonment, and when I was in jail I repented, I pleaded guilty and acknowledged the crime I committed. Then I was called before the court of law to be tried, since in jail I did not get the opportunity to meet all my fellow to ask them pardon, so I pleaded guilty and acknowledged the crime I committed in their presence before the court and they granted me pardon even before when I was released from jail; although we have killed many among their relatives in a wicked way, the total number we killed were 28, we tortured them and chained them up. Then the trial was suspended. There were some bigger figures involved in this case who tried to corrupt with money, the trial was abandoned once until we were asked to appear before Gacaca court. When I appeared before Gacaca court, I knelt down and asked pardon, and I went to their houses too to beg for pardon, although we killed many members of that family, some of them managed to survive so I went to see them, I knelt down before them and begged for pardon they assured me that they granted me pardon, then I was happy and felt happy for that family. Nowadays I pay them visit and vice versa. They use to invite me in their wedding ceremonies and I answer to their invitation; I also invite them and we share in everything.

INTERVIEWER: What is the benefit of being granted pardon for you?

PERPETRATOR: I benefited a lot from being granted pardon. I was carrying a heavy burden and could not move forward. But after being granted pardon I was happy, because before I was afraid that if I happen to be released from jail they would kill me too the way I had killed their relatives, but I was surprised and very happy when I was free and being granted pardon although I had killed such a big number of their relatives, I was able to seat down by their side and chat with them, I pay them visit and they pay me visit too and together we build one family, it makes me feel very happy.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think about justice and forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: Forgiveness is better than justice, in my opinion if I should have not been granted pardon by these people I would face life sentence or 30 years in prison but because of their pardon I spent 6 years in prison. It means that the pardon they granted me was very useful to me more than justice because if I had to spend 30 years in prison I would be sad and sorrowful. But now I have a family, I am married and I have children thanks to them. Their pardon made me achieve all that I have now.

However truly speaking some of the authorities who involved us in these crimes are abroad but others, who until now remain wealthy, were with us in prison but they refuse to plead guilty. That is a big problem. But these brothers and sisters granted me pardon and I confirm that God who is in heaven will provide them with awards because I am not able to raise their relatives I have killed. I say that the pardon they granted me is an act of God, only God inspired them to do it for me and they will be awarded in heaven.

INTERVIEWER: Why did the members of your family prefer to grant pardon?

SURVIVOR: We preferred to grant pardon because he explained how the issue of killings perpetrated against our community was, we could not identify the killers, he is the one who told us who they were then we were able to find out where our relatives bodies were buried and he told us what they went through, we felt better and somehow free of pain, then he accepted to plead guilty, we came before Gacaca court and he showed us the perpetrators, we could not refuse to grant him pardon since he was begging for it, that is the reason why we forgave him.

SURVIVOR 2: The way we grant pardon was driven by the fact that our relatives had been killed and we could not locate where their bodies were buried, when your relative dies and you cannot even find out where his/her body is you feel painful because you cannot bury it yourself with dignity, this man helped us to locate where their bodies were thrown, that is the first reason we forgave him.

INTERVIEW: After granting him pardon, how do you feel? What did you benefit from it.

SURVIVOR: Before we met him we could not move forward, he showed us the truth, we were not quiet in mind but since he informed us about what our relatives went through, the way they were killed and who killed them, we felt peaceful in our mind and could accept our situation and this should have not been possible if we would have been told what happened, that is what I benefited from it. My brother can give you his opinion too.

SURVIVOR: That brought relief to us, we are now able to work peacefully in our farm, we feel like other fellow citizen because he told us the truth, we are quiet.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think about justice and forgiveness?

SURVIVOR: Justice has been very important because it helped those who were tried in courts and justice

also did not forget our situation as survivors we feel supported and our complains are heard, we have been educated in one way or another on how to handle the consequences of the hard life we have been through in the past then we are able to feel uplifted and this enables us to edify others because our justice helped us to make a step forward, long live to our justice.

SURVIVOR 2: Justice is better than forgiveness because even if there was no justice, forgiveness could not exist. In my opinion justice must start and may be forgiveness may come after. No one can ask pardon of a crime s/he did not commit or something that has not been clarified. So justice starts and forgiveness comes after.

INTERVIEWER: There is a funny question I need to ask you at the same time, imagine if you are hired to set up a forgiveness machine, how could it be?

SURVIVOR: A forgiveness machine? First of all I can tell people that granting forgiveness is the first thing that makes someone feel unburdened in hearts and in brains more than staying merciless. Granting forgiveness is more comforting and makes someone feel better and human. That is my opinion.

PERPETRATOR: For me I can travel all around where people who deny the genocide and the genocide ideology are found, and teach them and then ask them to plead guilty and ask pardon explaining them that what they did is wicked and I would travel around in Rwanda and abroad, it would depend on the means at my disposal and tell to the world that the genocide that happened in our country is evil, it is a heavy past which the future generation will regret forever, that genocide must be prevented by all means, and every Rwandan who participated in genocide has to ask sincerely pardon not in dribs and drabs, but convincingly and may be forgiven if possible.

SURVIVOR: In general any machine is handled by human beings. If there is no one to ask pardon no pardon can be granted. If there is someone who asks you pardon you grant him pardon according to the way one asks pardon and to the way one grants pardon.

INTERVIEWER: Thank you very much.

#4

Cansilde & Dominique



INTERVIEWER: Let us start by you. Will you please tell us your name and why did you prefer to grant him pardon?

SURVIVOR: My name is Cansilde Munganyinka, I live in Simbi Sector in Mudodorongarama Cell. The reason why I granted him pardon is because I had married a man from Hutu tribe but we had no child together. After I gave birth to seven children, but the members of families refused to recognize them and they started to harass me, I was traumatized until I blow up the top and became insane; I used to walk in the street naked. Then after Gacaca courts came about and when I tried to attend any Gacaca court session, the crisis of insanity arose, they were obliged to suspend the session. And when I got to health center it was unprecedented disorder, no one could be consulted but me so nuns tried to take care along with other survivors, they stood by me in hospital and at home. But my family refused to recognize my children since they were mixed with some who were from Hutu tribe; I was too traumatized and became really foolish because of my own family members. This man who is standing by my side now had been too wicked against me. Little by little he started to look how he could come

close to me but I rejected him, after I became too foolish and was even unable to tell one person from another, I used to accept only nuns by my side. And when I recovered consciousness this man came again by my side but I chased him away. Finally nuns asked me to return home with my seven children but my family did not accept because they were mixed with Hutus, then I placed them into the care of neighbors as if they were livestock, I remain with one young daughter then I was brought back home by the Executive secretary of the sector Mr. Gasana assisted by Kanoyire, Kinyangwe and Simeon they protected me at home. This man kept on coming close to me when I was recovering consciousness step by step, he used to pass-by, and I still chased him away repeatedly. Then AMI intervened and started to educate us and taught us to avoid rejecting someone who comes close to us, and this teaching was instilled in my mind. Then I wished I liked to invite that man fortunately he came by his own and we chatted, he begged me pardon, he confessed that he was bad to me he said : I pleaded guilty and asked pardon, I was sentenced to imprisonment now I come to beg your pardon then after I asked him if he was saying that from the bottom of his heart or if he wanted to be close to me in order to kill me; he swore that he would not kill me but all that he wanted was being in good relationship with me. I told him that I was unable go to church, to market, to Mpanda or to a pub far away (at that time I was still consuming alcoholic beverage) because I was afraid of him and afraid of people like him too. Then I asked him that if I granted him pardon I would not be afraid anymore and would move around like anybody? Would I be cured from traumatism? Would I take my children who were homeless back to my home village which was since then empty because neither Tutsis nor Hutus were living in it since everybody had been killed. Look , I have now nothing to feed my children, nothing to clothe them, are you going to raise my children. Since they have no shelter are you going to build a house for them? When they chased me I went to live in Cyizi trading center and I became a homeless, I was starving in the street and had no clothes, my head was bleeding when I was shaved with a knife which is kept in church, I was living in the bush and in dens, look at my leg I was hit on it and now and it is painful when I am weeding or when drying the harvest under the sun sometimes it used to swell and I became traumatized and insulted Hutus wishing them to feel the same pain I was feeling. After I had a broken heart and I was feeling worried inside of me and my breast was about to burst, I could not feel peaceful in my family in-law, my children started to disturb me, I was unable to pay their school fees, then I turned back to this man Dominique I told him that in order to grant him pardon he had to prevent me to be buried with my children, I told him that I was

speaking to God begging him to dig the grave in the living room so that I could be buried there in their midst to prevent them to be devoured by hyenas, but Dominique told me that people were any more like hyenas that they would join their efforts and build a house for my children. When I was then chased from the house with my children, Simeon promised me to go and beg for a shelter for me to the priest. When arrived there, the priest told him that I had been sentenced by Gacaca court and he asked him if he had saved any assets to feed my seven children in the future. The priest sent him away arguing that he had been refused access to finance and since the simple house could cost one million and five hundred thousand he said that if he managed to get that sum he would build a shelter for me. Then Simeon got in contact with AMI and was given iron sheets for the roof of the house, but I was unable to get the rest of the materials needed to build a house. Then I went to see Dominique because he had promised me a helping hand in order to raise my children. I told him that I had been given iron sheets for the roof of the house but I needed yet timbers for the roof structure and adobe bricks to raise the walls. Dominique told me that he would come soon with a group of fifty people; I doubted a lot if the small man that he is, Mr. Dominique would really find such a number of people, was he going to compensate them, was he going to pay them money, or was he going to manufacture adobe bricks for me, what was he going to do, I did not know, but I told my child who was living with me that Dominique promised to build a house for me, but meanwhile Gasana had brought back all my children to live with me. My child replied me that I was wrong when saying that Dominique were going to build a house for me, the reason my child cherished was that Hutus only could destroy houses but were unable to build one. My child said that it was smoke in my eyes to believe that Hutus would build a house for me. I went back to see him and he told me that he would bring the people he had promised for the building works the following Thursday. The following Thursday when some people from AMI including the man called Fils with three others had started to manufacture adobe bricks for me at that time I saw Dominique coming with some survivors and former prisoners who perpetrated genocide they were spreading everywhere in front of the house their number was more than fifty, then I did not know how it happened I started to call the name of Jesus many times, I cannot explain how the traumatism I was suffering from left me, I do not anymore disturb my children since the walls of my house started to be raised up I have started to feel better. Now I can go to genocide memorial to pray for my relatives, I do not anymore disturb nuns although they used to bring me food at the health center together with

another woman who survived the genocide but I could not recover from my illness, now I confess I have been cured by AMI and the Hutus. Even if we talk about Hutus in general but all Hutus are not in the same basket, they are some who are kind. And also when I talk about the former prisoners during the time they spent in jail they have been educated and they are now kind. Now I am still with my children, and if one of them needs to get married I will never discriminate the in-laws. All these words are coming straight from my heart, before I was unable to rest or to sleep, I was like a dry stick, now I feel peaceful in my heart and I share this peace with my neighbors. Now I can go at Dominique's house and seat on his bed and share his food with him. Long time before Hutus were put in jail they used to say that we collected some water we used to clean bones and gave it to them so that they could drink and we too we used to say that they consumed blood of victims they had killed, but all these words are not uttered anymore. Now I feel quiet and peaceful, when my house will be completely finished everything will be okay. Before I used to hate Hutus and I wished I poisoned them or cut them into pieces with machetes but I do not anymore hate them, now I have asked God to forgive me for that, it is a long story that I can tell all day long until tomorrow, I am still handicapped but the severe handicap was in my heart, when the pain on my leg arose I could not let my neighbors alone in their work in fields, nobody could be consulted at the health center but me. But now when the pain starts I remain quiet and behave like anybody. Now I am not able to work in my fields, I cannot bend my back to sort out the crop. Recently my husband died, when I was to the bedside of my orphan child, I got the news the following day when I had been discharged from the health center. By the moment I have a good harvest of sorghum grains. All this is the work of the people who killed my relatives; they cultivated my fields for me. They do all the jobs for me because they know that they made me become handicapped and I cannot do anything, they have built a house for me, it is a very long story

INTERVIEWER: What do you think about forgiveness? Tell us first your name

PERPETRATOR: My name is Ndahimana Dominique, I live in the District of Huye, Simbi sector, Mugori Cell. For me since the day I thought of asking pardon I felt unburdened and relieved because I had lost the humanity because of the crime I committed but now I have regained my humanity and I am like any human being. Of course I sometimes think of what I did in the past but everyone can now notice that I feel relieved and that I have been granted pardon since I begged for it.

#5

Wish to remain anonymous

INTERVIEWER: Why did you ask pardon?

SURVIVOR: To tell you the truth I am not the one who asked pardon but instead this woman who is by my side asked me pardon. During the genocide, this woman was tortured, her husband and her children were massacred, that is why she got angry then she was thinking that any Hutu, whoever s/he is a criminal. But at that time I was the local leader of this cell, it was called Mpanda Cell. And when it came to collect food assistance she used to put falsely in her mind that I had reduced the quantity intended to be given to her and she was angry with me and then she tried to bring me before the court, but she did not accused me of being a killer but of being a looter, she pretended that I looted cows belonging to her brother but I won the trial however she was still angry with me. After sometimes she meditated upon it and invited me saying that she had something to tell me. She said that she had done evil to me, she mentioned that she plotted against me in order to get me in jail then she said she needed to ask me pardon and reconcile with me. I accepted and told her that in the former time we had good relationships and it was good then I granted her pardon since she had asked for it. Recently when we assembled after the trainings provided by AMI had instilled our mind, she spoke out and asked for pardon before the assembly. She said: I ask pardon in public because I did evil to someone. She explained all that she had been doing. As for me I succeeded to hide some persons fleeing persecution and in search of protection. So she is the one who asked me pardon

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel after being granted forgiveness?

SURVIVOR: Look, my children were killed along with my elder sister and my relatives. I used to go aboard my brother's car and get to Kigali to hunt my relatives' killers. I was thinking that if we caught them we were going to kill them on spot because they had wickedly tortured us. I had lost my mind and was feeling insane. It is true this man was the local leader and I was suspecting him to reduce the quantity of food assistance intended to be given to me. I did not like him then I plotted against him in order to get him in jail. Since I was unable to find

out who had looted our herd of cattle I was looking around for it like a foolish. But soon after before AMI came about I came to my senses and I went to ask him for forgiveness. Then when we had been already in contact with AMI I came close to him and spoke out that I persecuted him for no reason that it was because of anger and sadness I was feeling that I wished he were in jail, I hated every Hutu and I was fabricating charges to condemn them. Then I brewed banana wine and I invited him to come in the camp of displaced persons where I lived in Cyizi in order to be reconciled with him. Then we straightened our relationships in the presence of his friend who came along with him. As he was aware that I did evil to him he accepted to grant me pardon. Recently AMI united us and we met in the group of unity and reconciliation. We became one then I told the staff of AMI and the trainees that I asked pardon to this man because after the 94 genocide I did evil to him, I harassed him for nothing because I never saw him looting our herd of cattle but it was someone else who looted it; so now we are united by AMI, we are always together during trainings, we give each other a helping hand for the work in the fields, we are members of the same groups in AMI, we share everything, and this is the benefit we got from AMI.

#6

Verdiana & Jean-Pierre



INTERVIEWER: What is your name and why did you prefer to ask for forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: My name is Karenzi Jean Pierre. I preferred to ask her for forgiveness because I committed a crime of killing against her. My conscience was not quiet and when I came across her I was very ashamed. And after being trained by AMI about unity and reconciliation, I went to her house and asked her for forgiveness. We had been together during the trainings provided by AMI, and she granted me pardon. Then I shook her hand because that is the way it is. So recently as the proof of the pardon she granted me along with other people, she told us that she needed to move from where she lived to dense settlements of households "umudugudu" as it is required by the government. As we were gathered in groups we joined our efforts and went to assist her to build a house and to move in it. She was given iron sheet to cover the roof, but we had no money enough to buy her doors and windows. Until now we are in good terms.

INTERVIEWER: Have you ever been in jail?

INTERVIEWER: What do you think about justice?

PERPETRATOR: I consider justice like something that has settled conflicts. Because any person accused of crimes appeared before the court and then was tried so that the victim should receive justice, and any person convicted of crime had to understand that the impunity was the thing of the past and that the repetition of the offence had to be avoided.

INTERVIEWER: What is your name and why did you prefer to grant pardon?

SURVIVOR: My name is Nyiramana Verdiana, I was born in Cyendajuru cell but now I live in Mugoyi Cell. I used to come across Karenzi Jean Pierre and I looked at him as the killer of my relatives. He killed my father and my three brothers, he did these killings along with other people but he came alone close to me and asked me pardon. He told me first the full story of how it happened then I decided to grant him pardon since he asked for it. Nowadays he pays me visit and vice versa, he assisted me in building a house along with other people gathered in a group composed of former prisoners, now my house has a covered roof but windows and doors are still lacking. I preferred to grant him pardon because he asked me for it from the bottom of his heart, so at that time the training provided by AMI about humanity had already convinced me that granting pardon makes someone feel relieved.

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of forgiveness after granting pardon yourself?

SURVIVOR: After granting him pardon my heart was unburdened. Before when we used to bump into

each other I did not want to talk to him. I was afraid of him, as now I have granted him pardon things have become normal and in my mind I feel clear.

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of justice for you?

SURVIVOR: Justice had made us to move forward from very hard times. Before everybody was afraid of everybody but justice came and united us; that is the advantage of justice. All cases were tried in public and we were able to find out the killers of our relatives we did not know them before, justice is very good and for me nothing can be compared to justice.

#7

Deogratias & Caesarea



INTERVIEWER: What is your name and why did you prefer to ask for forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: My name is Habyarimana Deogratias, the reason why I asked pardon is that when I was still in jail we lived a very bad life and then President Kagame stated that the prisoners who would plead guilty and ask pardon would be released. I was among the first ones who pleaded guilty and asked

the government pardon then I was granted pardon. It was also necessary to ask pardon to the victim I did evil deeds once I was outside of prison. And when I was out I became afraid but fortunately AMI came about and provided us with trainings separately: perpetrators on one side and victims on the other side. We were taught how to ask and how to grant pardon. At the end we came together and receive the training together. We appreciated that methodology. That is when I started to come close to mother Mukabutera Caesarea to ask her for forgiveness as we had been trained, and when she granted me pardon, my heart became relieved and I felt unburdened, all the things I had in my heart that would impede me from feeling better the moment we ran into each other that made her to look at me like a wicked man faded away. For the moment if I meet her we greet each other as you saw that. And she brewed some wine she invites me and I do the same. In brief there is no more suspicion between us. I cannot ignore her and go to sleep if she happens to cry for help I will rescue her and vice versa. We share everything during ceremonies, there is no problem. So now I enjoy the pardon she granted me.

INTERVIEWER: What is the difference does you feel between before and after you were granted pardon?

PERPETRATOR: Before I was too worried and very sad but now after I feel peaceful and I have to live in good relationships with my neighbors and with all my fellow citizens and help each other.

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of justice for you?

PERPETRATOR: Justice is unity and peace. When you appear before court, you are sentenced according to the crime you have committed and if you plead guilty, you are sentenced accordingly since you made your case easy to try. You are treated mercifully. That was the way it happened about our case. They had to check first the documents reporting our guiltiness we pleaded and then one would be tried according to what was written in those documents thus one could benefit from mitigating circumstances. But if you pleaded guilty but wrongly you had to be condemned without taking into account any extenuating circumstance. Now they are still many individuals who are still in jail since 1994 because they refused to tell the truth. They tell lies. But if you say the truth about what happened for example, this mother could not know if I was involved in the killings of her children but I told her what happened, and my case was being judged considering my statement and I was forgiven then I begged her for pardon and she forgave

me before the court. So in my opinion the justice system is functioning normally.

INTERVIEWER: What is your name and why did you grant pardon?

SURVIVOR: My name is Mukabutera Caesarea. Without saying many things and even telling lies if we had not been in contact with AMI, we should have not granted pardon at all. Because the human heart had already ceased to exist, and many among us had experienced the evils of war many times and at the end I was asking myself what I was created for. Why are people fighting between them? Any war we have to repeat the same process of forgiveness and sometimes you forgive because you have no choice and you keep your mouth shut. Then when AMI came about, it provided us with trainings and dragged us into the bath of humanity and showed us the consequence of bad governance even the individuals who asked for forgiveness were accusing the bad governance. And that is true because the person you were close to changed from white to black immediately and you were unable to recognize him while you used to share everything with him, he took machete and cut you into pieces. Before AMI came about when I looked at someone like this man or any other it is just an example I felt afraid that he was coming back to kill me and when he looked at me he said: that it was your regime, now they are going to exterminate us, they are going to get us in jail, they are going to take revenge on us. So there was suspicion on both sides, nothing good was between us. Now we are aware that we are all Rwandans but this awareness came from many trainings and it took time at the end we realized that we are all Rwandans and the genocide was due to bad governance that opposed neighbors, brothers and sisters one against another, now you accept and you forgive, but I insist that this was the outcome of education about humanity, if not so I would be considered as a liar.

INTERVIEWER: What is the benefit you got from granting pardon?

SURVIVOR: Before my conscience was not quiet, it was requiring me to revenge my relatives. The internal voice used to tell me: it is not fair not to revenge your beloved one. How can I look at the killer living peacefully? But after granting pardon the heart remains quiet, and one can undertake some project to move forward in development instead of staying worried every day, the person you have forgiven becomes a good neighbor that you can call for help, instead of keeping running away one from another. One benefits from security and development. We join together in the same associations and progress together, one feels peaceful and think good about future.

#8

Evasta & Godifield



INTERVIEWER: Why did you grant him pardon?

SURVIVOR: I granted him pardon because of the teaching I got from the trainings provided by AMI, so I realized that he asked for forgiveness from the bottom of his heart.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get to the level of granting pardon notwithstanding the education from the trainings you received?

SURVIVOR: He asked me forgiveness from the bottom of his heart and then I became clean otherwise I used to hate him. When he came at my house and knelt down before me and asked for forgiveness I was moved by his sincerity and I granted him pardon with joy.

INTERVIEWER: What did you benefit in your life from granting pardon?

SURVIVOR: I felt clean in my mind, now if I cry for help he comes to rescue me. When I face any issue I call him and he addresses it. Before I used to be afraid of him but since we forgave each other I have no problem about him.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think about justice?

SURVIVOR: Justice is complementarity in order to become one without any difference between us and between our brothers and sisters. My name is Mukanyandwi Evasta, I live in Mugoboro village, Nyabirama cell

INTERVIEWER: What is your name and why did you prefer to ask for forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: My name is Mudaheranwa Godifield and I live in Nyamirama. The reason why I asked her for forgiveness is that I did evil deeds against her: I burnt her house, I attacked her in order to kill her and her children, but God protected them and they succeeded to flee and to escape. At the end I went to jail and when I was released from jail. I started to run away from her and hid myself. I was afraid that she would make me return to prison but she did not do that. Then AMI came about and started to provide us with trainings. We joined together then I decided to come close to her and ask her for forgiveness, I had been wicked against her. When I met her she granted me pardon. That is why I greeted her before you.

INTERVIEWER: Have you been in jail?

PERPETRATOR: I have been in jail for 9 years and half. I was released when the President requested prisoners to plead guilty and ask for forgiveness in order to be released. I did it.

INTERVIEWER: What did you benefit in your life from being granted pardon?

PERPETRATOR: Although I did evil to this mother I go to her house and greet her and ask her how she is doing that has cleaned my heart, and I vow that I will never repeat that type of offences.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think about justice?

PERPETRATOR: Justice has settled things in a good way. If you take a look to the past time and imagine the things we have been through, the situation is not the same anymore. I believe and congratulate our justice. To be in good relationships with your neighbor and to be able to talk to the person to whom you did evil deeds, we thank God.

INTERVIEWER: This is a funny question, but if you set up a forgiveness machine, how could it be?

SURVIVOR: What I can do is wishing him peace and hug him once more in front of you.

PERPETRATOR: The forgiveness machine would be very good. I can first of all commend the President

of Republic and congratulate the persons to whom I did evil deeds, and feel happy for this mother and hug her once more. We are neighbors.

#9

Fainah & Camille



INTERVIEWER: I have two or three questions I want to ask to everybody. I start with you. Why did you prefer to ask for forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: The reason why I asked for forgiveness is because I committed an unthinkable crime, and I preferred to ask for forgiveness the people against whom I did that crime.

INTERVIEWER: Did you benefit in your life from being granted pardon?

PERPETRATOR: The situation changed a lot in my life. Soon after I was released from jail I could not appear in public, I was very ashamed of crimes I committed. But when AMI came about, it helped me to be together with other people in the community, I was no more afraid .

INTERVIEWER: What do you think about justice and forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: Justice and forgiveness are the

words that I understand very well because if justice was not there I could still be victim of injustice. I congratulate our justice system because it helped me a lot.

INTERVIEWER: So were you innocent?

PERPETRATOR: No, I was not innocent; I was sentenced to imprisonment because of the crimes I committed. Then I have been given justice, I pleaded guilty and I asked for forgiveness.

INTERVIEWER: You committed a crime and you were put in jail, isn't it?

PERPETRATOR: Yes , justice has granted me pardon that I had asked for.

INTERVIEWER: What do you understand about forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: For me forgiveness is what I have been given after I had committed a crime.

INTERVIEWER: How did you get to the level of granting pardon to someone who did evil deeds to you?

SURVIVOR: At the beginning it was not easy, but thanks to the teaching I received from the trainings I attended and what I saw that other people had been through, it finally became easy for me because of the education I received then I was able to grant pardon to the person who did evil to me in 2007. He was my neighbor then he explained what he also had been through, he told me the truth, I was able to forgive him.

INTERVIEWER: What is the difference between the time before and after granting pardon?

SURVIVOR: I talk about him because there are still some people who have not yet asked me for forgiveness, so for him my heart became unburdened he is now my friend, if I have a job to assign to someone I call him first, so my heart cherishes no grudge for him, I am quiet, I have no problem.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think about justice and forgiveness?

SURVIVOR: For me I see the difference between justice and forgiveness. If in justice people asked for forgiveness and were granted it and released from jail, there may be one who was released and did not deserve to be free. But if someone is released by the justice and besides asks sincerely for forgiveness to the victims in this case forgiveness becomes supplementary to justice

and the perpetrator and the victim live together peacefully.

#10

Francine & Olivier



INTERVIEWER: What did you do to him and why did you ask for forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: I committed the genocide crime, I witnessed the killings and I was among killers, so I had been told that her family members have been killed. After I was arrested and put in jail. In 2007 I was brought before the Gacaca court and I asked for forgiveness and I was forgiven.

INTERVIEWER: Were you neighbors?

PERPETRATOR: Yes we are neighbors.

INTERVIEWER: What did you benefit in your life from being granted pardon if you compare between the time before and after?

PERPETRATOR: I feel happy because I was released; jail is not a good place to live in, I thank her for her kindness. What I feel about her as a close neighbor is a good feeling because I have no problem with her, if she cries for help I will not hesitate to rescue

her, and if she assigns me any job I will carry it out so we can feel united.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think about justice and forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: Justice and forgiveness are good things, because if there is no justice people could face injustice and people would persecute each other. Forgiveness also is something good. When one asks for forgiveness one is forgiven it makes one feel happy and become quiet.

INTERVIEWER: What forgiveness means to you?

SURVIVOR: Forgiveness is something good according to the person who did evil to me, we tried to settle our conflict, there are some people who have not yet asked for forgiveness, but this one came close to me and I granted him pardon and he knows I am sincere, I have a good relationship with him there is no problem.

INTERVIEWER: How many members of your family have been killed? How many survived?

SURVIVOR: We are three individuals who survived. Those who were killed are many, around ten.

#11

Rose & Artemon



INTERVIEWER: Why did you grant pardon?

SUVIVOR: Thank you, many members of my family were killed first in my own family, then in my family in-law and many relatives

INTERVIEWER: Restart.

SURVIVOR: My name is Burizihiza Rose. I was born in a family composed of 8 members all of them were killed, my parents, brothers and sisters, my in-laws, it was a big family. But after all I have been through during genocide, I have been raped. I realized that the government was releasing prisoners convicted of genocide crime from jail and the elderly but for me I felt very bad. And when Gacaca came about some of them accepted to plead guilty and asked for forgiveness for some their sentence was reduced and they were sentenced to carry out community service. So those who carried out community service were reintegrated in the society, and are those who came to ask me for forgiveness but I could not accept them. Then after I attended different trainings organized by AMI, but I was against their teaching. I also attended some trainings organized by IBUKA (Remember=Survivors association) on how to prevent traumatism and on conflict resolution. I realized that I was concerned by all these topics because I was suffering from traumatism due to genocide consequences and I also was in conflict with people. After those trainings I gained the capacity so that I could transmit a tangible message to Rwandan society, and the policy of our government of unity urges people to live in harmony. Some of the people who asked for forgiveness were sincere. Among them there is Mr Artemon then I felt that I had to come to ask for forgiveness excuse me I mean to grant pardon to those who asked me for it. There are not many who asked me for forgiveness but anyone who takes this step I grant him pardon. Imagine that AMI also was involved in reconciling perpetrators and victims. AMI was teaching us saying that "what binds us outweighs our differences", they taught us about heavenly power and humanity we have to share among people. It is in this context that I decided to release the pressure when I realized that I was destroying myself. I understood that when I am filled with peace in my head I have to share with other people. That is the way I perceive that process. But truly speaking before these trainings, I had refused to grant pardon to many people who begged me for it. But now if someone asks me sincerely for forgiveness I forgive her/him.

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of forgiveness for you?

SURVIVOR: For me granting pardon to someone who begged me for it is relieving my heart, you feel like

you released a good gift, in your heart you become peaceful and you can share this peace with other people. Another important fact about peace is that when you pray and believe in God there are many things we realize I do not pretend to be angel who never sins but as long as we live in everyday life when we ask God to forgive us for example when we pray and ask God to forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. So when you do not forgive you cannot be forgiven we understand that forgiveness is found in every field of life and forgiveness is helping me to relieve my heart so that I can move forward to the better future. Thus if you do not have peace in your heart you cannot share any with other people so I can only share peace when I have it and within peace there is forgiveness.

As you have noticed, if I had no peace and if I had not granted pardon, that man Artemon should never touch me. I could never allow that, no Hutu could come close to me. But since I granted pardon from the bottom of my heart to any person who asked me for it, I felt my heart unburdened you have seen it I greeted him and we touched each other, so forgiveness is something good in Rwandan community but also anywhere else. Forgiveness straightens the conflict between two sides. This means that I cannot bump into Artemon's child and look at him/her with jaundiced eyes or vice versa because I have granted pardon from the bottom of my heart and he had accepted it.

#12

Dafrose & Elias



INTERVIEWER: What is your name?

SURVIVOR: Mukagakwaya Dafrose

INTERVIEWER: Will you please tell us in brief what happened to you during genocide?

SURVIVOR: During genocide I lost 10 members of my family including my husband. We managed to survive because we fled to Gikongoro in the former Karama commune. I was with my two daughters.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you prefer to grant pardon?

SURVIVOR: These people were my neighbors, especially this man; it seemed as if we were living in the same house. He used to help us in everyday domestic labors, and then he sought refuge in the neighborhood he was killed there.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you forgive them?

SURVIVOR: I forgave them because they were not wicked before genocide. We have always been close neighbors and we share everything. Even if when I had a journey I used to call for example this one to carry my luggage and accompany me.

INTERVIEWER: What do you think about forgiveness and justice?

PERPETRATOR: Forgiveness and justice are two very good things because they enabled us to meet people to whom we did evil deeds and now we live again together as human being we did not even deserve to be forgiven but with an understanding heart they accept to grant us pardon as we had begged for forgiveness. For example I came and asked for forgiveness to this old mother and to the government and she granted me pardon. Now I have no problem with her. We realized that the policy of unity advocated by the current regime is favorable because it enabled us to live together with survivors.

INTERVIEWER: How do you feel after being granted pardon comparing to how you were living before?

PERPETRATOR: After being granted pardon the situation changed because before we could not even greet each other I was always feeling very ashamed and guilty of what I did for her but since she granted me pardon I have no problem with her, I feel quiet in my heart.

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of forgiveness for you?

PERPETRATOR: I was in jail and I decided to ask for forgiveness and I was forgiven for me it was the

answer I expected.

INTERVIEWER: Considering what you have done, did you forgive yourself?

PERPETRATOR: Of course I have forgiven myself because I can never repeat the evil I did before

INTERVIEWER: What is your name and why did you prefer to ask for forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: My name is Ndahimana Elias. I preferred to ask for forgiveness because I witnessed the killings they were evil deeds so I spoke out the truth and I asked for forgiveness.

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of forgiveness for you?

PERPETRATOR: When an individual commits a crime and the government realizes that this individual ought to be punished but can be forgiven somehow s/he can be granted pardon. Thus forgiveness is something good because it enables an individual to change.

INTERVIEWER: Considering what you have done, did you forgive yourself?

PERPETRATOR: I forgave myself because I have been granted pardon I am now clean and now I cannot go through what I have seen in the past, I cannot even open my eyes and look again at the same evil once again it was too wicked.

#13

Celestin & Philippe



INTERVIEWER: What is your name and what happened to you in brief during genocide?

SURVIVOR: My name is Karinijabo Celestin. The members of my family who had been killed during genocide are 77. These members of my family were living in many households; they include my sisters' children, my brothers' children and my own children.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you prefer to grant pardon?

SURVIVOR: I refer to grant pardon because after the genocide had been stopped some associations came about among others AMI which has provided perpetrators and victims with trainings and teaching. It gathered us together and told us that the only way to go forward is to live in harmony; they told us that evil deeds are settled by good relationships. I am among the first individuals who decided to grant pardon. I really forgave many people more than 100 including the one who is by my side. I said that I am not a material man in this world and it is impossible to compensate me all that I have lost.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you decide to forgive notwithstanding the teaching you received but your own reasons?

SURVIVOR: Before genocide I had no problem in relationships with the individuals who did evil things to my family so I had to live again in the same village with the same individuals and I did not want to remain in conflict with them.

INTERVIEWER: If you did not live in the same community would you still forgive them?

SURVIVOR: Yes I would still forgive them because according to my belief as a Christian, forgiveness is the best thing; Jesus forgave those who killed him that is my reference for anybody who goes through the sad situation. And the sad situation is found anywhere in the world, so I would still grant pardon.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you ask for forgiveness as the representative of your family?

PERPETRATOR: Considering what happened I realized that it was unthinkable, we made a big mistake ourselves for sure or we were involved by authorities but the fact is that I could not spend the rest of my life hiding in the bush or remain in an endless conflict so I preferred to follow the commandments of God and I knelt down before the victim to beg for forgiveness so I can be granted pardon, even if I did not play a big role, I needed to show the victim that I am afflicted and laid low by the fact that my family members committed indescribable crimes against his family. So it was

better to show him that I dissociate myself from them in order to build confidence between us.

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of forgiveness for you?

SURVIVOR: Forgiveness normally comes from a heart that loves, and for someone with such a heart nothing bothers his plans and s/he bothers nothing and if any obstacle comes his/her way it becomes easy to remove it. I have an innate and endless love for human beings and I believe in God.

INTERVIEWER: It is a funny question and everybody needs to give a reply, imagine if you are required to set up a forgiveness machine, how could it look like?

SURVIVOR: I don't understand ...a forgiveness machine? For me it is love that must be shared between one who forgives and one who is forgiven.

INTERVIEWER: how could it look like?

SURVIVOR: It is inside the heart, it is love.

PERPETRATOR: The forgiveness machine should reflect anything that is important; it would be useful and would operate on a non-discriminatory basis.

#14

Juvenal & Cansilde



INTERVIEWER: (mumbles the woman who lost everything and the man who did it)
What is your name and what happened to you in brief during genocide? (The number of your loved ones you have lost)

SURVIVOR: My name is Kampundu Cansilde, I was born in Maraba Sector, Shanga cell. During 1994 genocide I had a family of 4 children and a husband. When the war started we all fled the village, my husband set out to Simbi where he sought refuge, and my children and me went to seek refuge in my own family. Soon after, an attack was launched to kill people who sought refuge in Simbi. My husband survived that attack and came in hiding in my family. When he reached in my family our family underwent an attack. It was led by the father of this man because he had seen him sneaking in our household. Then the killers hunted him down from the hiding and killed him, it was on Tuesday. The following Tuesday they came back, as I had two daughters and two sons, so they killed my two sons. They told me that my daughters will serve me as spare children so I was hoping that my daughters were saved. In June, the killers came back and said that they were going to comb all small girls that were still alive in order to wipe them out so that they would not claim any piece of land in the future. I was thinking that I would keep my small daughters, and I counted on them to comfort me in the future. But in June, 12th they took me and them, we were walking on line they were behind us after they left me behind and went with my daughters in the village of my husband and killed them. When I arrived in my own family, I meditated on what I was going through, and then I asked my brother to walk me so that I could check and see where my children were killed and bury them to prevent them to be devoured by dogs. I went there and found that they were thrown in the latrine of our household. I was not able to remove them from that hole. I knelt down and prayed for them along with my junior brother and cover the latrine with soil. When the time arrived to excavate bodies, they were also unearthed and were brought to Simbi where their remains lay to rest.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you grant pardon?

SURVIVOR: The reason why I granted pardon is because I realized that I will never get back my beloved ones I had lost. I was the only one remaining in my household, I could not live a lonely life, I wondered if I got ill who was going to stay on my bed side, and in case I was in trouble and cried for help who was going to rescue me, so I preferred to grant pardon.

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of forgiveness for you in general?

SURVIVOR: For me forgiveness is kindness.

INTERVIEWER: I think it is hard to forgive it requires much energy and courage and until now some people who did evil to you have not yet asked you for forgiveness so can you rate the forgiveness you granted out of ten?

SURVIVOR: The benefit I got from the pardon I granted is that this brother that I forgave,...look I was living in the valley alone while my neighbors had moved to another place, he brought me people to assist me to build a house on a planned settlement even if the works are still underway, that is the proof which shows my sincerity and that he accepted my forgiveness then we are living in harmony.

INTERVIEWER: What is the fact that pushed you to ask for forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: Truly speaking the reason why I asked for forgiveness is because I committed a crime and damaged and looted the property. I had been sentenced to imprisonment for these offences; I had spent 9 years and half in jail. I have been educated to tell good from evil before being released. And when I arrived at home I thought it was good to come close to the person to whom I did evil deeds and to ask her for forgiveness. She welcomed me, and granted me pardon and I promised her that according to the means at my disposal I will try to always stand by her. Recently I joined AMI groups. AMI trained us about mutual love. I was filled with AMI's teaching and even improved it. But I always kept in my mind the person against whom I was wicked and I needed to show her the love I have been taught. That is why I congratulate AMI, it has been able to show us the consequences of what happened in Rwanda. It enabled me to think of evil I did and it was the reason why I begged her, the government, all Rwandan in general and the Almighty God pardon. To go back to the point she mentioned, my own father get involved in doing evil to her and in killing her children. So as long as I have been told I learnt that my parents had behaved in a wicked way, for that I profoundly begged her pardon.

SURVIVOR: There is something my friend reminds me. I missed a bit the point to the question you asked me. Another fact that prompted me to ask for forgiveness is the training provided by AMI that we attended. Through their training I have built the capacity to talk about the subjects that previously I could not introduce in my conversation with other people. That is where I drew energy to grant pardon, I now commend AMI for having enabled me to come close to the people in the community and wipe out the sorrow I had inside my heart.

I congratulate AMI and I talk about it to everybody here and anywhere else.

INTERVIEWER: How far were you able to forgive yourself?

PERPETRATOR: I forgave myself and I asked God for forgiveness and I am peaceful in my heart.

#15

Vital & Francine



INTERVIEWER: What is your name and what happened to you in brief during genocide? (The number of your loved ones you have lost).

SURVIVOR: My name is Mukeshimana Francine. The day all started it was between 02:00 pm -03:00pm when suddenly our household underwent an attack by many people that I cannot tell their number. They were divided into groups, one group surrounded our compound, another entered the compound, they came and took my mother, they hit her on the neck with the machete and she fell down, then they hit the junior sister of my mother named Ignaciana on the neck with the machete, she fell down too. I run away and a young boy from our neighborhood whose name is Marcellin run after me, he caught me and brought me back, when I came back they were cutting my mother and

her young sister into pieces, hitting them with a worn out hoe on the head, they dragged them and throw them in the latrine but they were not yet completely dead, so the killers were beating them with sticks of wood. A man named Kazungu and another named Ndiyane entered the house. Kazungu was hunting down a woman called Anonciata in order to cut her into two pieces but fortunately he did not find her, he came back immediately and joined their efforts to the other killers and pushed my mother and aunt's bodies inside the latrine. So when they invited me to follow them to the latrine I immediately run away, I was helped by the Almighty. I could not run faster than them, because the first time I tried to run I was brought back by Marcellin, but the second time I hid from them in the bush and they did not succeed to find me. I spent the night in that bush.

INTERVIEWER: Why did you prefer to grant pardon?

SURVIVOR: As I had stayed alone without any parent to raise me, I was obviously living side by side with the people who did evil deeds to me. They had been killing and looting around, I was there to see it. But let me skip some explanations and jump to the point, actually forgiveness was not my intention. The time was passing and I attended trainings, at the end of the day I understood that I have to live with people who did evil to me. Those people even started to come close to me and I realized that they have changed at the point where I used to bump into this man and he gave me 200 frws to buy bananas, it was before the time he asked me for forgiveness. I started to see some people coming close to me begging pardon, so I felt that I was not any more alone. Then I decided to be open to them instead of sticking on the deceased people that I had lost, better I lived with those who were still alive, with whom I could share day-to-day problems; for example last time my house fell apart and this man promised to give me a helping hand, he told me that if I get the iron sheets he is ready to help me to repair the roof, I replied him that there was no problem. Due to genocide I remained with many forms of infirmity, so him and his wife sometimes volunteered to help me work in the fields when I am worn out.

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of forgiveness for you in general?

SURVIVOR: For me forgiveness means love between perpetrator and victim.

INTERVIEWER: What is the fact that pushed you to ask for forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: The reason why I preferred to ask for forgiveness is because the crime I committed really afflicted me. So to ask for forgiveness is the only way to enable my heart to find again humanity as I was before, and contribute in building Rwandan society without being in conflict with anyone in a way that I bother nobody and if someone bothers me, the process to follow is to result to the authority. Thus I have to avoid anger which can remind me what I have been through

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of forgiveness for you in general?

PERPETRATOR: For me forgiveness means reconciliation between Rwandans, because the person who granted me pardon did it from the bottom of the heart and me I was sincere when I asked for forgiveness. It means that I made peace with her since I committed the crime of genocide against her, and I also made peace with other people who are found in the same situation where they feel that we committed the crime of genocide against them.

INTERVIEWER: If you rate the forgiveness you have given to yourself how many do you get out of 10.

PERPETRATOR: 10 out of 10.

INTERVIEWER: What is your name and what evil did you do to her during genocide?

PERPETRATOR: My name is Ntasoni Francis, she is my sister, during genocide in 1994, I joined the killers and went to hunt down her children who were my nephews and nieces and killed them. She granted me pardon. When AMI came about, it helped us to make peace, I asked her for forgiveness and she forgave me until now. We found again our brotherhood.

INTERVIEWER: Is she your sister from the same mother and the same father?

SURVIVOR: His father and my father are brothers from the same parents.

PERPETRATOR: We have the same grand-parents.

INTERVIEWER: What is the number of your loved ones you have lost?

SURVIVOR: They three young men.

INTERVIEWER: And what about your husband.

SURVIVOR: He had passed away long time before genocide.

INTERVIEWER: Has any of your children survived?

SURVIVOR: Two young men and two young ladies survived.

INTERVIEWER: What is the difference does you feel between before and after you were granted pardon?

PERPETRATOR: Forgiveness helped me to change, first of I remind you that she is my sister, when I looked at her I was feeling so sad, but since the time she granted me pardon I praise the Lord a lot.

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of forgiveness for you?

PERPETRATOR: Forgiveness means God's generosity between people, since you commit a crime against your sister and be granted pardon by her, it is really God's mercy.

#16

Ancille & Francis



#17

Laurent & Beatrice



INTERVIEWER: Will you tell us what evil deeds you did to her that made you ask her for forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: I participated in destroying her house.

INTERVIEWER: What is the fact that pushed you to ask her for forgiveness?

PERPETRATOR: We have always been neighbors, and when genocide started the individuals have been killed. So the houses that remain without owners we thought it was better to destroy them in order to get wood to make fire. We took their owners for dead. So when I saw him, I needed to tell him that I participated in destroying her house.

INTERVIEWER: What is the difference does you feel between before and after you were granted pardon?

PERPETRATOR: I have the better relationship with her than any other household around. So I had to change and I have never considered her as an enemy, it was just a temptation, as you see a house without his owner and I thought it was

deemed to be destroyed and to use the wood to make fire for cooking.

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of forgiveness to you?

PERPETRATOR: Her forgiveness proved me that she is a person with a pure heart, because they are many people who have been through the same situation and who became enemies while they are brothers and sisters, although I damaged his property we remained united as before, we stayed brothers and sisters even though I offended her.

INTERVIEWER: What is your name?

PERPETRATOR: Nsabimana Laurent.

INTERVIEWER: What is your name and what happened to you in brief during genocide?

SURVIVOR: When the genocide started, our household was the first to be attacked. My husband and my children were killed immediately. So I started to hid from killers in the bush, that is where I was living until I survived now.

INTERVIEWER: Did any other member of your family survived?

SURVIVOR: I have two children who survived with me.

INTERVIEWER: What is the fact that pushed you to forgive?

SURVIVOR: The big role in forgiveness process is played by the heart of the person. When someone comes close to you without hatred although the horrible things happened, you welcome her/him and grant her/him what is looking from you. So I feel happy to be with people in the community, it makes me very happy.

INTERVIEWER: Did the people who kill your family members come to ask forgiveness? Do you know them?

SURVIVOR: They pleaded guilty when their case was tried, other people have come to ask me for forgiveness from the bottom of their heart. I forgave the people who looted my property.

INTERVIEWER: What about the killers? No one came to beg pardon?

SURVIVOR: No one. They only pleaded guilty before Gacaca court.

INTERVIEWER: Were the killers released from jail?

SURVIVOR: Yes they have been released.

INTERVIEWER: If they come would you forgive them?

SURVIVOR: If they make an effort and come, I would forgive them. Persisting in stubbornness is not a good thing; it impedes someone from moving forward. Although I suffer from infirmity due to genocide, but if I am not stubborn life moves forward. So if they come and ask me sincerely I am ready to grant them pardon.

INTERVIEWER: What is the meaning of forgiveness for you?

SURVIVOR: Forgiveness equals mercy. When someone feels inside of her/him forgiveness comes inside of her/him. When you are human you always forgive anyone who comes close to you asking to be forgiven. Unless someone is disturbed in his mind otherwise no one should refer to me.

COLOPHON

Lana Mesić, *Anatomy of Forgiveness*, 2014.
Part of the exhibition *Living Forgiving Remembering*,
Oct 2020 - Jan 2021 at De Kerk/ Museum Arnhem

Graphic Design: Dana Dijkgraaf

Editors note: The people who agreed to be photographed are part of a continuing national effort toward reconciliation and worked closely with AMI (Association Modeste et Innocent), a nonprofit organization. In AMI's program, small groups of Hutus and Tutsis are counseled over many months, culminating in the perpetrator's formal request for forgiveness.

The series was commissioned by Creative Court, an arts organization based in The Hague, as part of "Rwanda 20 Years".

