

## Using Rwandan Video Testimony to Understand the Patterns of Genocide

### BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE: FREDDY MUTANGUHA

*This biography is derived from Freddy Mutanguha's testimony in the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive.*



**F**reddy Mutanguha was born on August 18, 1976, in Burundi, to Aphrodis Sebasoni and Corothee Kandanutsa. His father chose his last name, which means “Someone always generous with people.” In 1978, his father died in an accident in a refugee camp, so his mother decided to return to the city of Mugunda, Rwanda.

Freddy remembers his mother being suspected as an enemy because she lived outside the village and did not use the same language. For two years they lived with his grandfather, Leonard, who had many cows and liked to sing and tell stories (In his testimony Freddy shares how when his grandfather was killed during the genocide, he asked that his cows be killed after him. Everyone in the house was murdered). Freddy played with his sister Rosette, but they were separated when his mother remarried and Rosette remained behind with their grandfather. Freddy and his mother then moved to Mushubati. There, young Freddy remembered the discrimination of a teacher at his school, where his mother also taught. This teacher would ask each day that the Tutsis stand up to be “recognized.” She was only friendly to the Hutus in the class. Despite the teacher’s intentions to separate the two groups, Freddy’s first friend was Hutu Jean Pierre. As Freddy’s mother explained, only politics separated Hutus and Tutsis, and Freddy did not recognize any physical differences. He stayed in this school for eight years and excelled at football. During this time his mother had three more children.

In 1990, it was time for Freddy to take the exams to go on to secondary school, but it was widely acknowledged that Tutsis would almost always fail. According to Freddy’s testimony, it was only when the Ministry of Education changed over to someone more moderate that he was able to pass and attend secondary school. Although Jean Pierre did not attend further school, he and Jean Pierre remained friends, and the campus was a mix of Hutus and Tutsis who would play together. However, starting in 1990, the political landscape changed. Freddy had to show his Tutsi ID card and could no longer do community work or attend meetings.

When the president’s plane was shot down on April 6, 1994, by lunchtime the next day Freddy observed the militia starting to prepare neighborhoods and set up road blocks. His mother recognized immediately the preparation of genocide and sent Freddy to her husband’s first wife’s family. On the way, he ran into one of her sons who told him that both his brother and father were killers, so instead Freddy went to Jean Pierre’s house to hide. Jean Pierre told Freddy he had been looking for him and that “I’ll die with you.” During the day Freddy listened to the Interahamwe’s killings outside the house, but each night his mother brought food to him and comforted him. On April 13, his mother brought him two passion fruits, a special treat, and explained that the money and food they were using to bribe the killers had run out, and that there was no hope for their family. According to Freddy’s testimony, they were quiet together and she told him, “If you survive, be a man.” His parents were killed the next day. When his four step-sisters came looking for their parents at Jean Pierre’s house, they too were murdered and their bodies were thrown into a toilet pit.

Freddy was reunited with his sister Rosette, who had been hiding nearby, and soon after together they moved to Jean Pierre’s relatives the day after his parents’ murder. They lived with the aunt and uncle for two weeks before Freddy felt it became dangerous and had to move. The uncle gave them his Hutu identification card, marking them down as his children, and they left without a destination. They arrived at the home of the *Burgermeister* (principal magistrate) of his grandfather’s city. When Freddy and Rosette asked for papers to cross the borders, the

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#### Freddy Mutanguha (cont'd)

*Burgermeister* said, “There are no papers for Tutsis” and demanded a gun for his son to shoot Freddy and Rosette. It was the wife who stopped her husband, reminding him they were once friends. In the middle of the night, the siblings left.

Eventually Freddy and Rosette talked their way into a Hutu refugee camp, claiming to be looking for their father. They did not receive food and were fearful of being recognized. They eventually heard that 25 miles from the camp, the director of Rosette’s former school would be willing to take her in. So Freddy and Rosette separated for the next several months.

When the genocide ended, Freddy traveled to Burundi with relatives and then back to Rwanda. He returned to school in 1995 and began an association for Rwandan survivors. In 2001, Freddy located the remains of his mother and sister and buried them. Today he is the coordinator of the Kigali Genocide Memorial Centre that commemorates the genocide.