

He was studying to be a priest when he was suddenly caught in a violent nightmare as more than 800,000 people were massacred in Rwanda

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Flies swarm around his face, his brown eyes moist with tears.
Wiping the sweat drizzling down his cheekbones, he quickens his pace.
He and the Red Cross worker race against the vultures circling overhead, and the barking dogs – always those incessant, disgusting dogs – salivating to devour another dead child.

Jéan, he says to himself about the burial, you bring some respect to these kids.
The Red Cross man, he'll spread some chemical, make the child's body turn to powder.
That's better than being eaten by dogs.
"There's too many, too many children," mumbles Jéan De Dieu Hakizimana, the man who would be a Catholic priest, as he moves among the bodies, alive and dead.
"It's terrible, terrible," he says to the white man walking beside him.
"You know why the dogs, the birds, the animals love to eat dead bodies, don't you? It's the salt, you know," he tells Jéan as scientific fact.
More than 800,000 people in Rwanda are slaughtered in 1994 when Jéan abandons his plans to be a priest studying at the Philosophica College in Kibosho, Tanzania.
He rushes back home to try to save his family in his village of Ruhengeri, North Rwanda, running in the opposite direction of approximately 2.5 million refugees rushing to escape.
But he is too late.
His mom and dad were killed, his village burned to the ground.
With every boot print Jéan crushes into the soft orange soil he asks: Why?
With each fly he swats away by his large black hands: Why?
The question chokes inside the hollow of his barrel-like chest.
I was training to be a priest, to love and to care for my people. Why, God, why?
He can't look at the children on the streets.
Why do the kids always die with their hands and their mouths open?
Dead or alive, their mouths are always open. "I'm hungry."
Their hands are always open. "Can anybody help me?"
Jéan, he says to himself, they'll put the chemicals over the body, and the man who would be a priest whispers another prayer.
A corpse holds out his long crooked fingers, and Jéan notices the eyes of the mothers averting his gaze.
The women walk for hundreds of miles, some with two or three children on their hips trying to save the lives of their precious youngsters as they escape from Rwanda to the refugee camps.
But they're too weak to carry the load.

Now I know why the mothers can't look in my eyes.

They left behind the children they couldn't carry and know the birds and the dogs will eat them.

Anger brews within, but he squelches the idea of retaliation or violence.

I hate guns, I can't even take a gun in my hand.

No, Jean, you are a peacekeeper. You devoted your life to love and care for people.

Working as an interpreter at the Lumasi Refugee Camp run by the Norwegian Peoples Aid,

Jéan searches for kids hiding in garbage dumps.

Tutsi and Hutu children ran away in terror as tribal warlords hacked moms and dads and brothers and sisters to death. Jéan finds the youngsters scavenging through rotting food, human excrement, flies and filth.

He shakes his head.

Their hands are open. Their mouths are open. But the 100-day genocide is over now and this time he is able to help.

He holds out his hands to an eight-year-old boy, encrusted with dirt because he hasn't washed in months, pleading with him to come to him.

"Oh, man, look at your fingernails; oh, man, they're so long," he says to the child with quiet reassurance.

The boy smiles shyly.

Jéan gives him food to eat. Then, he washes him and dresses him with clean clothes.

"Oh, you like feeling clean?" he says to the boy. "You like feeling nice, don't you?"

The boy dances.

He cuts his unruly matted hair, the hard, long, curly nails.

The boy yells and laughs, and dances again.

Jéan leans back satisfied: His kids are so happy. They're all dancing!

He laughs too.

Then the children close their eyes and rest. They sleep like babies; they're so exhausted.

About 60 children sleep on the wooden floor in the hall, with no pillows, no blankets, just the floor.

As Jéan works with NGOs helping street kids in the capital city of Kigali, an army captain – sneers at the filthy children. He asks Jéan with disdain: "How do you keep on doing this? These kids are so dirty."

Most people don't want to touch the dump kids because they smell and bugs and lice are crawling on them.

Jéan retorts angrily: "These kids need our love. They need to be touched by human love."

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Jéan works obsessively helping the wounded.

Making an appointment to meet U.S. Ambassador David Rawson, he implores him for money to help his starving, dying people.

The ambassador commits \$4 million on the spot for the program helping street children.

"I'm just a regular person who witnesses terrible things going by me," Jéan says humbly.

He advocates for policy changes in his country.

Politicians, however, doesn't like his outspoken opinions and falsely accuses him of being a spy and an enemy, questioning why he can acquire foreign funds to pursue his humanitarian goals.

He is arrested on June 17, 1995 at 4:45 p.m., jailed, beaten and tortured by the Directorate Military Intelligence in Kigali for allegedly colluding with the muzingos, the white people.

On death row, J an questions his decision not to take a gun and fight.

J an, you pray every day in the monastery, you live like a good man, you live like an innocent man, you help people, you don't murder anyone and now you're in jail and you're going to die anyway.

Every day, he sees men on their way to execution, bodies thrown in a hole.

Why they want to do this to me? Why? he asks. Oh dear God, please give me peace.

He closes his eyes.

Then he feels it.

An invisible hand of peace surrounding him.

OK, God, I'm not afraid to die.

Behind the scenes, the UN Human Rights Commission advocates for J an's release.

Three days later, an aid worker arranges for him to move to Canada as a political refugee.

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J an can't sit still, fidgeting with nervous energy as he rummages through boxes of files in his study.

He turns on his computer, checks his e-mails.

Ah, look at that!

A letter from the eight-year-old dump boy "Niyerora" slips into his inbox.

Hey, he earned a scholarship and is studying in the USA to be a medical doctor.

Smiling, his eyes glisten as he finishes reading the last line in the e-mail.

"I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you, J an."

Witness wants justice

An Abbotsford resident is prepared to testify that he witnessed innocent murder victims buried in a mass burial site in Rwanda.

"I can show the International Justice Tribunal the exact location," said Jean de Dieu Hakizimana.

The murderers are currently running the African country as high ranking political and military officials, said Hakizimana, a University College of the Fraser Valley student pursuing a BA in adult education.

He went public with his allegations after a Spanish judge on Wednesday issued international arrest warrants for 40 Rwandan military officials accused of mass killings following the 1994 genocide.

Hakizimana alleges that two of the men named in the warrant were responsible for torturing him in a military camp in Kigali when he was falsely arrested for being a spy.

In fact, he was doing nothing more than trying to rescue street children out of the area dumps, he said.

He watched, in horror, people tortured, dying and bodies buried and said he thought he was going to die in the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) military camp.

"Every day I saw people killed in the military camp and I know where those people were buried.

They buried them in a big hole. That's where the people disappeared," Hakizimana said.

Spanish Judge Fernando Andreu indicted 40 people for heinous war crimes, announcing he also has evidence implicating the current Rwandan President Paul Kagame.

The judge said he gathered testimony from 22 people, many in exile and witness protection programs, about 173 mass graves.

The foreign ministry of Rwanda, in a press release, requested Interpol and foreign governments to ignore the arrest warrants, denying the charges as false and "bogus."

Hakizimana, meanwhile, said the international community, including Canada, need to hold the Rwandan leaders to account.

He wants the men guilty of mass murders to be convicted and justice to be served.

The UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda is currently trying cases in one of the worst genocides in recent history.

The Abbotsford resident said he can show the international tribunal the exact location of the mass murder burial site, if his testimony is requested.

An estimated 800,000 - one million people were slashed to death with machetes and knives - the majority of the victims Tutsis and some moderate Hutus.

The bloody massacre was triggered when former (Hutu) Rwanda president Juvenal Habyarimana was killed in a plane that was shot down in April 1994.

The Hutus went on a 100-day killing rampage against the Tutsis.

Then, the Tutsi-led rebel movement RPF captured the capital city of Kigali where Hakizimana was jailed in July 1995 and the Tutsis engaged in revenge killings.

The world community did little to stop the slaughter.

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