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**EVIDENCE**

**Thursday, December 4, 2014**

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**Chair**

**Mr. Scott Reid**



## Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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•(1305)

[Translation]

**The Chair (Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC)):** Order, please.

This is December 4, 2014, and I call to order the 48th hearing of the Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Colleagues, this meeting is televised.

[English]

We have with us as a witness today Moses Gashirabake, who will be adding further testimony on the subject of the genocide in Rwanda, looking back 20 years after the fact, and of the long-term implications for survivors and the children of rape.

Mr. Gashirabake, I turn the floor over to you. Please feel free to begin.

[Translation]

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake (Candidate, McGill University Faculty of Law, As an Individual):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and honourable members of Parliament, for granting me this opportunity to appear before you and before this extremely important subcommittee on international human rights.

Again, my name is Moses Gashirabake. I survived the 1994 genocide in Rwanda at a very young age. Professionally I am trained in international human rights policy and leadership. I am currently pursuing common law and civil law degrees at McGill's faculty of law.

Again, I have to say that it is extremely humbling to appear before you today, given that I only became a Canadian citizen about five months ago. I have to add that I am a proud new Canadian citizen.

Before I continue, I would like to mention that my being here today would be almost impossible without the opportunity I had to gain access to post-secondary education. In fact, as I was growing up in Kenya as an undocumented, stateless refugee and Rwandan genocide survivor, I was inspired by *Long Walk to Freedom*, the book by Nelson Mandela. Actually, today is the anniversary of his passing.

Basically, Nelson Mandela said that education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world. I believe that; he was indeed right. Through education, hard work and perseverance, I have been able to change a few things in my local and international communities.

So in the spirit of remembrance and paying respect to the victims of the 1994 crisis in Rwanda, let us please observe a moment of silence.

[A moment of silence observed]

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** Thank you.

It has indeed been 20 years since the Rwandan crisis, and to assume that the effects of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi are less severe today would be a lie. The effects are very many, and it would be impossible to cover all of them in one sitting. From children born of rape to genocide survivors who are left to face unending psychological, social, economic, and various other forms of challenges, the wounds of the Rwandan crisis are still alive and present with us today. They are present everywhere. They are present across the globe. They are present with us here in Canada.

Recognizing the complexity of the aftermath of the Rwandan crisis, I will focus on educational challenges faced by children who survived the Rwandan crisis at a very young age, those who were basically born out of rape, who are young men and women in our Canadian society and across the globe, and of course in Rwanda as well.

The main problem is reduced access to post-secondary educational opportunities for children who survived the Rwandan crisis. The problem is directly connected to social and economic challenges that are faced by other minorities across Canada and internationally.

Reduced access to post-secondary education became a bigger issue in Canada particularly after specialized federal funding programs were discontinued. One good example that I would give, which inspired a huge impact in Canada, is the Canada millennium scholarship foundation. There are many other examples that I could talk about today, but I will focus on the millennium foundation scholarships.

The Canada millennium scholarship foundation was a private, independent organization created by an act of the Parliament of Canada in 1998. It received an initial endowment of about \$2.5 billion from the federal government to provide awards annually for about 10 years.

The foundation distributed \$325 million in the form of bursaries and scholarships each year throughout Canada in support of post-secondary education. The foundation also conducted research into post-secondary access via the millennium research program. Basically, one of the main recommendations was that the survivors of the genocide in 1994 and especially young people who are about 20 to 35 have reduced access to post-secondary education....

The mandate of the millennium scholarship foundation focused on three key areas. One was to improve access to post-secondary education for all Canadians, especially those facing economic and social barriers. Two was to encourage a high level of student achievement and engagement in Canadian society. The last was to create an alliance of organizations and individuals around a shared post-secondary agenda for Canada's disadvantaged communities. Of course, genocide survivors and other minorities could be considered to be disadvantaged communities. Of course, as you move along to Rwanda or other countries that do not have the same economic power as Canada, the problem becomes even more complicated.

Unfortunately, the program was dissolved in 2008 and replaced with the Canada student grants program, which does not target socially and economically disadvantaged Canadians. Today, according to Statistics Canada, seven out of ten young Canadians from minority groups have reduced access to post-secondary education. The problem is not just about being able to pay tuition; it's also about the ability to cover living expenses and other incidentals that come with full-time studies at university.

I like to mention problems, but I'm always happy to suggest solutions. What can Canada do? Well, it's very simple. I think Canada can renew its commitment to the Canada millennium scholarship foundation or a similar program that would allow young people who survived the Rwandan crisis more access to post-secondary education. For example, the millennium bursary program could continue to target students with the greatest financial need, while the excellence award program would be based on merit, including other factors such as leadership, innovation, academic achievement, and community service. It would be a program that recognizes need, because the need part was sort of ignored, and also continues to encourage academic excellence.

Additionally, I think it's very important to tackle the rising levels of youth unemployment which stands at an alarming 13.5% in Canada today. The millennium scholarship foundation or a similar program could also implement or provide funding for young entrepreneurs who do not have the necessary resources.

Canada has been a caring country over the last almost 150 years of its existence. I am optimistic that more efforts can be applied to end the cycle of reduced access to post-secondary education for young survivors of the 1994 Rwandan crisis, because I do believe that providing young people who went through atrocities such as the despicable events of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda would not only contribute to an international understanding, but also a better future for Canada.

I have had the opportunity of being involved in the Rwandan community in the local community in Montreal and I've seen the problem and reduced access because of stretched resources, so people opt to leave school and work as they basically have no other

means. We talk about tuition, but there is also the fact of living expenses.

•(1310)

I will end with those few remarks. I want to thank you for your attention.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

Those were well-timed remarks. Some of our speakers are known to go on at great length and eat up the available time. As a result, we have a little bit longer for our question and answer sessions than would normally be the case. I think we can get away with giving people six minutes each.

Mr. Sweet, I'd like you to start, please.

**Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC):** Thank you very much, Mr. Gashirabake, for being here.

Particularly with your background within the Rwandan community here in the diaspora in Canada, I want to ask you a question which I asked our officials when we first began this study on the aftermath of the Rwandan genocide, particularly with respect to those women who were raped and their children.

I don't know whether you're connected to the diaspora in Canada beyond Montreal or not, but if you are, that would be good as well. Is there an effort within the diaspora in Canada to partner with those particularly in Rwanda who have less opportunity as well as with the Government of Canada to assist them with respect to their psychological recovery from what they've been through and to provide resources on the ground to them?

•(1315)

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** Thank you for that question.

I think there are tremendous opportunities for collaboration and partnership between the local community in Montreal and internationally with Rwanda and Rwandans.

There is an amazing organization in Montreal, Page Rwanda, that has been doing tremendous work. They collaborate extensively with the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies in Montreal. I am myself a graduate of Concordia University and have had the opportunity to collaborate with them on various projects. But there is an issue still with funding. Canada being the country that it is, a country of international human rights and respect for human rights and support in different capacities, I think more could be done by way of funding to support wonderful organizations such as Page Rwanda.

I have to mention that this is a very sensitive topic. There are very many women in the local community in Canada and internationally who are not ready to speak about their own experiences. It's not even just the women, but young people who survived or are victims in terms of having become fruits of atrocities.

I think with more funding and more community and government support, a sort of private-public partnership between Canada and what is happening on the ground, more could be done. We realize that we can have amazing ideas and amazing projects, but normally funding is needed for such things. I've seen that happening, but I think with more collaboration....

I'm very delighted that the Parliament of Canada is discussing this issue. It shows how committed Canada is. As I mentioned, I'm very proud to be a citizen of this country. The commitment is there, so we can work together with what's happening on the ground and with research institutions to do more.

**Mr. David Sweet:** One place where there could be more collaboration.... Well, there are two things that come to mind right away, in light of your testimony. One is whether Page Rwanda, and frankly any of the Rwandan community, has partnered with the Department of Citizenship and Immigration with respect to the sponsorship of refugees.

The other is that one of our witnesses mentioned the shortage of psychiatrists, psychologists, and counsellors. I'm wondering whether there is also a mindset in the diaspora to help those who are indigenous to either educate on the ground or return back home for periods of time, for six months, a year, or whatever, to help to buttress the strength that would be needed for that.

By the way, as I say this, I know it's not just Rwanda; many places around the world have a need for more psychiatrists, psychologists, and counsellors.

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** Absolutely, I agree that there is a stigma behind someone's having to visit a health institution for mental health issues. It's not an issue, as you mentioned, just for Rwanda; it's an issue all across the globe. There is also reduced access to psychiatric help. I think a collaboration between Canada and Rwanda to have psychiatrists who are probably better trained to deal with these issues could create a better outcome for the victims.

One of the most interesting things, as I was mentioning, about post-secondary education.... I've been involved in the community. I am friends with very many young people who are about the same age or slightly younger than I am, who first spoke of their own survival at university while studying human rights. When you're in university, even though you might major in science or other majors, there is usually an opportunity to explore social sciences, and in most cases Rwanda is discussed. Most young people actually became more at ease in speaking about their experiences when they got to have an academic understanding around Rwanda.

It's a little difficult to link the ability to speak about your own experiences based on exposure to academic knowledge of it, but it's fascinating for me to have seen someone who had the opportunity to go beyond post-secondary education, and most of the people who have been able to speak about their own experiences are in that category. Maybe that is an interesting field that someone might be interested in exploring.

• (1320)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Benskin, please.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP):** Thank you for being here. Thank you for sharing your time and your story. I'm going to intrude a bit and hopefully learn a bit from your own personal experience.

If I'm correct, you and your family lived as refugees in Kenya from the time you were six years old until you were around 20.

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** Yes.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin:** What type of support was available to you? You mentioned in your opening remarks that you lived as a stateless, undocumented individual for basically 12 years of your life. What was available to you and your family to help you survive, and first, deal with what was going on and with what had happened to you and to your country, and second, lay the groundwork for being able, frankly, to achieve what you've achieved to this day in coming to Canada?

Congratulations on becoming a citizen, by the way.

Can you shed some light on that experience? What was there to help you?

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** Thank you for that question.

I would say that I was a lucky survivor of the genocide, because in my own family's experience, the reason I am able to be here today is first, hard work by my parents, and second, hard work in school. I was able to win scholarships based on academic merit. Sometimes these tend to be very competitive, and they are given only to a very limited number of students. You find that many who are qualified are probably left behind. I would say my parents insisted on academic performance, even though they themselves had no chance to have access to education because of problems ranging from way back in 1959 when the Rwandan issue began.

One other thing I would mention is that I was probably not a conventional refugee, in the sense that I settled in Nairobi. My dad had previously worked in East Africa, in Kenya. But on the legal side we were not able to become Kenyan citizens.

At the end of high school, when I was 18, after so many years I couldn't be granted Kenyan citizenship. Basically the Kenyan government was not willing to grant citizenship to many Rwandan refugees who had flocked in when the genocide happened. It was a very complicated situation, on a legal basis. It's difficult to understand in Canada, because basically in Canada we have the rule of law, and the law says that if you live in a country for three years and have been a resident there, you either become a citizen or you are sent back into your country. It never happened in Kenya.

I would say it was sheer luck and my parents' encouragement and hard work. My father was in business, so he was able to encourage me in different ways. Unfortunately, my story is not similar to that of so many others who are disadvantaged not only on an economic basis but also from a social perspective. You're basically a refugee, because you feel persecution, but on paper you're not recognized because of different dynamics in the political system.

I would say I was lucky. At the end of high school, unfortunately I couldn't go into a Kenyan university, because I was not a Kenyan citizen and so the government could not grant me my scholarship. But luckily Canada accepted me. I had to look beyond, to Canada, and by way of luck again, I was accepted here. I've been living in Canada for six years. I went through the process as a resident and I became a citizen about five months ago.

Looking back, I can connect that to the fact that if you're disadvantaged in one sector of your life, or in many sectors in the case of refugees—you don't have economic power; you can't go back to your country; your parents lost all their assets in their country and they do not have a stable job; you are sent to a refugee camp in a very remote part of the country—your life is basically almost done.

•(1325)

In Kenya, and for this I must commend the Kenyan government, there is free primary education. It began in...I can't remember the year, but it hasn't been very long, maybe 10 or 12 years ago. But high school and post-secondary education are very expensive. If you don't win a scholarship or you're not a citizen, then you're locked out.

Interestingly, in Canada when you find yourself in a position of socio-economic disadvantage, the same might happen to you. Canada has a good economy, but we have some members of our community, such as aboriginals and racialized minorities, who are categorized and who have economic disadvantages, and sometimes they don't access post-secondary education because of that. Unfortunately, most who come as genocide survivors find themselves at the bottom of the list in terms of economic disadvantage.

It's a very complicated problem, but I think Canada can do much, and I appreciate the committee's doing a study on this.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Unfortunately that uses up all your time, Mr. Benskin.

Ms. Grewal.

•(1330)

**Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Gashirabake, for your time and your presentation.

You are a survivor of the 1994 Rwandan genocide. You are among the people who were there when this tragedy took place, the people who saw the massive killings and who lived with the consequence of them. I understand that you lived most of your childhood in Nairobi, Kenya, as an undocumented stateless refugee, but you have overcome great adversity to thrive academically both in Kenya and now here in Canada.

Mr. Gashirabake, in your opinion, what should be Canada's lessons learned from the international response during the Rwandan genocide?

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** Thank you for that question.

Canada's response at the time, in 1994, was not, probably.... It was not enough, but since that time, I think Canada has done a lot. It's important to note that a Canadian army official who was working under the UN mission did a lot to convince New York at the time to

do something in a pre-emptive manner, but it never happened. It's very sad, because had the telegram been taken seriously, I think we would be speaking of a different.... I probably wouldn't be here today as a witness. But I think we can learn from mistakes of the past, particularly emphasizing prevention. I think the Montreal Institute For Genocide and Human Rights Studies at Concordia is doing just that.

As you mentioned, as somebody who had to overcome so much—I think I mentioned luck, being supported by my parents and being able to overcome so much—I think what Canada needs to do is recognize that a problem still exists, even though it has been 20 years since the genocide, and look at innovative ways to collaborate with existing communities in Montreal. You have many young Rwandans who are very committed to giving back to their own local communities and internationally. I think we could leverage that and create some synergy between Rwanda and Canada just in this country.

I think, bluntly, put more funding toward getting some of the programs off the ground. For me, it's not just funding, but providing capacity in terms of educational opportunities. You're basically teaching someone how to fish rather than just giving them the fish. As I mentioned in the last point, I've seen a dozen groups of young Rwandans in Montreal, in Ottawa, in Toronto who are trying to begin entrepreneurship projects, but again the problem of funding becomes an issue. If you could recognize that this is a category of young people who went through a specific problem and help lift them up, it could create a good net effect for the future.

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** The *gacaca* courts were implemented in order to speed up the process of prosecution and in turn to give a forum for the perpetrators to ask for forgiveness.

Were these courts effective in their methods? If yes, were they successful in the conviction of the many Hutus who fled into the Congo?

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** That's a very complicated question. I appreciate the question.

Concerning the *gacaca* courts, in the Rwandan culture we have always had a situation whereby, if a conflict arises between two parties, the village comes together, and you sit and you resolve the issue. Because there were so many perpetrators and so many victims, on a communal level it was effective. Just as with any justice system, there is always room for improvement, because you rely on witnesses and what people bring on the ground.

With regard to the Congolese refugees issue, that is a very complicated issue that I am grappling with myself. I am doing my best to find information, but it is a complicated issue that might need more preparation to answer.

•(1335)

**Mrs. Nina Grewal:** Do Tutsis generally feel safer and integrated into Rwandan society today, or is there still a kind of racial tension there? Has President Kagame put any checks and balances in place to prevent genocide from happening again in the future?

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** I haven't been to Rwanda since 1994, and in terms of whether or not Tutsis feel comfortable in Rwanda, I would probably not be the best person to comment. But from what I've heard—one of my relatives lives in the country; she moved there a few years ago—a tremendous effort has been implemented by the leadership. There is always room for improvement and to do more, but if you compare the pre-1994 Rwanda to Rwanda now, based on testimonies of people on the ground—and I'm actually hoping to visit the country soon to see for myself—tremendous effort has been made. Maybe you could look at it on a continuum, but sometimes things are very hard to measure and put a figure on.

The sentiment, I think, would be much different, because let's face it; in 1994 you could be killed outright for being Tutsi or for sympathizing with the Tutsis. I think the situation is different. Maybe more needs to be done, but as to how much, I would need more on-the-ground information to provide an objective answer.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Ms. Grewal.

We go now to Mr. Cotler.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler (Mount Royal, Lib.):** Mr. Gashirabake, I want to join with my colleagues in expressing our appreciation for your presence and your testimony here today, and also our appreciation for recalling for us the heroism of Nelson Mandela, the anniversary of whose passing is tomorrow. As it happens, and as I mentioned to you, before the hearing we had an all-party press conference today to call for the release of three imprisoned prisoners of conscience who were themselves inspired by Nelson Mandela.

You noted Mandela's sort of clarion call of education as a transformative change agent. That led you into the concern about the diminished access to post-secondary education here in Canada. I think your call for enhanced resources in that regard is timely, because I've just received, as I believe my colleagues did, a letter from the Minister of Finance, who is now in the process of drawing up the budget and who has asked for input from each of us as to recommendations we might have for the budget.

This notion that you placed before us of the importance of enhancing access to post-secondary education, particularly in view of the diminished access resulting from the suspension of the millennium foundation scholarship, I think would be an important contribution that we could make in our representations to the finance minister.

That brings me to the question on Rwanda. As you may know, while the Rwandan government provides assistance to the survivors of the genocide, it does not provide assistance to the children born of rape. At the same time, the Canadian government, if I may say so, in 2012 terminated its development assistance to Rwanda, I think on the grounds that Rwanda appeared to be enjoying a growth rate of 6%. But this masked the 45% poverty rate in Rwanda.

I have two questions. One, do you believe that Canada should renew its economic or development assistance to Rwanda? Two, by doing that, should it then itself have standing to call on the Rwandan government to assist the children born of rape?

It's hard for us to do it now that we've suspended our own assistance to Rwanda, but we could renew it, and at the same time, in a bilateral way, seek to get Rwanda to renew its assistance to the

children of rape victims. What might be your comment in that regard?

• (1340)

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** Thank you very much, honourable Mr. Cotler, for that important question.

For your first question, yes, I think Canada needs to provide development assistance to Rwanda, because for me it's a humanitarian issue. As you mentioned, despite the fact that Rwanda is enjoying a very high growth rate on the African continent, not just in East Africa, the poverty on the ground is quite real.

On your second question, I think it would be an interesting opportunity to ask the Rwandan government to also provide assistance to children born of rape. I think it's a humanitarian responsibility for a government to look out for its own and to be able to provide that kind of assistance.

In the long term, I think Rwanda as a country is looking to be self-sustainable, which I think is a good vision. They have a vision to be self-sustainable, but in terms of the challenges that exist, I think this would be important.

I also appreciate the fact that you mentioned that for the finance department you would also be putting in a recommendation to increase access to post-secondary educational opportunities in Canada and also abroad. I think more needs to be done, and I appreciate that.

**Hon. Irwin Cotler:** Mr. Gashirabake, you've had a very compelling—if I can put it that way—set of life experiences. You fled and survived the Rwandan genocide. You lived as a refugee in Kenya with your family. You then came to Canada and graduated from Concordia as a model student, and you're now the president of the Black Law Students' Association of McGill University.

I wonder if you could share with us how your experience here in Canada...has that optic influenced your view about the Rwandan genocide and your work with genocide survivors and other refugees?

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** Again, thank you for that important question.

My experience in Canada has been extremely positive. Again, I made mention of how I consider myself to be very lucky, because when I enrolled as an undergraduate student at Concordia, I received a lot of support from my community at the university. When I began taking classes in international human rights, that was actually the first time that I spoke publicly about my own experiences. The more I spoke about them, the more I felt that I was releasing a load that had been with me, and the more I do it, the less severe it becomes.

It's been enriching from an academic perspective as well to be able to be involved in the community in different ways. I think that community engagements, giving back to the community that gave to you, is a very important civic duty. Concordia, I think, emphasized that.

Then one thing led to another. When you're involved in one capacity, it leads to another capacity, and you end up actually forgetting that you're a refugee and a Rwandan genocide survivor. You become a Canadian citizen. It has been quite a positive experience. I would hope that the same journey I went through.... I would say that it's because I had support, and of course financial support I think is the most important aspect of that. My father passed away two years ago, so the support I had from my father is no longer there.

Being able to be here today and serve as the president of the Black Law Students' Association of Canada for me is the continuation of giving back to that community in Montreal, Quebec, and the rest of Canada that has supported me. It feels good, and you actually receive more than you're giving.

For the same opportunities that I had, I believe that with more post-secondary educational opportunities being given, and also with the possibility to be involved in the community, it would create many young people who are going to become great Canadian citizens, Rwandan citizens, and citizens of other countries. Because it's not limited just to Rwanda; we have problems in Syria and many other places, and we have refugees coming to Canada. The way we welcome them, the way we treat them, and the way we provide them with support absolutely speaks a lot to what kind of citizens they're going to become. I think it's important to do that.

• (1345)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

We'll go now to Mr. Schellenberger.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger (Perth—Wellington, CPC):** Thank you for your testimony today.

Do students who receive higher education, such as here in Canada, return to Rwanda to pass on their knowledge? Have you any percentage figures that you may relate to us on how this knowledge is helping those people on the ground in Rwanda?

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** Absolutely, and I thank the honourable member very much for the question.

I have a very good friend who was the first Rwandan to be accepted in the faculty of law at McGill. He graduated in 2011. In his last year of law school, he interned at the Supreme Court in Rwanda.

Lo and behold, about a month ago I also had the same opportunity to go back in the summer. It will mean a lot to me to be able to go back, to look at what's happening, and to contribute, because he came back with so many positive experiences, and I think we need that. As much as I owe a lot to Canada, I also owe a lot to my country of origin, despite the fact that I have not been back since the genocide happened.

Absolutely, it is important for young people to go back. There are not as many young people going back as there should be, but I think it's important to create.... The world is becoming a global village, and the more we share, the more opportunities there are for improvement.

My having been exposed to Canada completely changed my perspective about things like diversity, like ethnicity. Right now, I would say that I am a global citizen, because it means.... I've been in

Montreal for the last six years. Of course, I will not pretend and say that it's a perfect place to live, but it's much better than most of the places I've been to, and we need to share the same experience back....

I have had an opportunity to go back to Kenya. Whenever I go back, I speak about Canada. I like to share the great experiences. Hopefully these can be shared as human beings, because humanity is contagious. I think we are able to learn from one another. In the same way that Canadians can learn from Rwandans, Rwandans and Kenyans and other people can learn both ways.

• (1350)

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** You said that you hope to visit Rwanda soon; you just alluded to that. Are you free to return to Rwanda without fear of harm?

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** That's a good question. The harm that was present for me is no longer there. I have done my groundwork and it's now in existence, and I'm happy to say that I will be honoured to go back.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** Okay.

You spoke about Canada maybe helping out with more post-secondary education. It has been stated numerous times by different witnesses that we are very short of psychologists and psychiatrists. There might be only six in a large community. If Canada were to embark on something like specializing in trying to train some psychiatrists and psychologists who would go back to work in Rwanda, would that make a difference? I'm told that many Rwandans need this help.

Do you know how many people may go out of the country to train as psychologists or psychiatrists—or even in the country—at this particular time when the need is so great for the people on the ground, the residents of Rwanda today? Do you not feel that it would be a great vision to have, to move in that direction to help many people?

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** Yes, absolutely. That would be a great way to contribute directly. It could be a program to bring Rwandan physicians to Canada to study psychiatry, or bring graduates from high school and college programs to Canada to study psychiatry and become doctors, and then they'd go back to Rwanda.

In terms of going back, I think it's a case-by-case issue. When people end up in a place, they can become connected to it and end up staying there. It becomes a personal choice or decision to go back. I've seen the so-called brain drain, where you bring in a group of young people from a developing country and then, when they finish their degrees, they stay here. Maybe we could do some research to see if we could incentivize young people to go back.

I do think it would be an absolutely amazing program. It could also be the same with having Canadian.... Well, unfortunately we probably do not have enough funding to bring in Canadian psychiatrists to share some experiences with existing psychiatrists or those in training.

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** How many universities are there in Rwanda?



**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** In Rwanda currently? I'm not sure of the number. It has maybe improved, although not in a very viral manner. I'm not sure if the quality has gone up or gone down. I have not done that type of research. I think there are more universities than there were in 1994, but I'm not sure about the quality.

I'm more familiar with the situation in Canada, but maybe that's an interesting place for me to—

• (1355)

**Mr. Gary Schellenberger:** I agree with you on the people who come here. My forefathers, some from Germany, some from Scotland, came here way back, 150 years or so ago. We're transplanted Canadians much the same as you are; it's just that I'm six generations from that. So I understand; our people didn't want to go back.

My thinking is that maybe we can send teachers to some of these universities and make sure that those courses for psychiatrists and psychologists can be implemented right in the country. Then those people could help the Rwandans the way they need it.

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** Absolutely. I do agree.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** Mr. Benskin, please.

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin:** You mentioned in your presentation that there's still a reluctance within the community for those who are the survivors, either the victims or the children born of these atrocities, to speak openly. I guess this is the crux of what we're looking at, namely, not only how to help those individuals but also how to learn from that experience so that we can develop methodologies and training for our response to situations in other countries that are happening now.

I'm not sure how large the community is in Canada, but what kind of initiatives are happening within the community to help these individuals to let go, to feel free, to begin to discuss, and to begin to take that load off their shoulders, as you mentioned? What kind of activities or initiatives are happening within the community in Canada, and are any of them being transplanted or worked in Rwanda?

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** Thank you for that question.

I've seen initiatives such as the one I mentioned before with Page Rwanda, our academic fund, and also sort of like a community providing a safe space to express oneself. They also did a project with Concordia to record stories and encourage other people to share their own stories.

Additionally, I've seen interesting potential avenues for the future within the youth. In the last three years, there has been the creation of the Canadian Association of Rwandan Youth in Ottawa, Montreal, Edmonton, and Toronto. We recently had a gala, where cultural expressions were showcased through music, poetry, spoken word, and other interesting avenues. I think that could be an interesting place to tap into sharing experiences.

I haven't seen that happening in the last three years. It has happened more on the academic front, but not as a communal, youth-led initiative. Maybe we could think about that.

As I mentioned, the most challenging issue has been, and continues to be, access to funding. You can have so much in terms of ideas and so many opportunities, but if you do not have the ability to run your programs in an economic sense, then it becomes a bit difficult. I think there is an opportunity to tap into the creation of these associations in different cities in Canada and to encourage other cities to do that.

Basically, the forecast right now is networking for young people, looking at opportunities for different types of scholarships, and sensitizing our young people to look into that. It's also entrepreneurship. I have seen young people who are interested in beginning small businesses, but again, funding is an issue. This is maybe where the committee could come in and encourage these young people, who not only are looking for jobs, but sometimes they have problems finding a job when they finish some of the programs. At the end of the day, university degrees are very valuable, but I've seen some young people who are interested in beginning entrepreneurship ventures.

• (1400)

**Mr. Tyrone Benskin:** I know your focus is education, and that's an extremely important aspect, but I want to quickly get your thoughts from a community perspective.

For those communities who are able to get to Canada but carry the weight of what has happened to them or their families or their country, what would you say are the things that we should look for? What are the things that we should be taking initiatives on in order to help those individuals both heal and transition into a new life here in Canada?

**Mr. Moses Gashirabake:** First of all, I think, is to recognize the fact that these individuals who are coming in have a lot of heavy baggage. In addition they're coming to a new country and are being faced with the potential socio-economic challenges of moving to a new country. Of course, it goes without saying that the Canadian weather is obvious, but that's an aside.

I think that an institutionalized centre for Rwandans in Canada could be established. It would be an interesting place, where people could feel safe. They would have a place to come together and have support. We could have a psychiatrist on the ground. We could have community members who've gone through different experiences, and young professionals and other people who are interested. We could have a program, sessions, and community events for them to come to in a safe place to encourage young people and other people who are coming in to offload that heavy baggage.

I think that the more they offload, the better the chance they have to focus on other things. Mental health problems could impede success in regular life. I think combining all of that would be an interesting way to put together an institution dedicated to Rwandans. In Montreal alone, I think we are speaking of over 5,000 Rwandans on the island. I know there are more if you put it in terms of Ottawa and other cities such as Toronto and Edmonton and across Canada. I think it would be interesting to put up an institution.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

That completes our questioning. We've gone a little over the time, but with the indulgence of the subcommittee, we do have an item of business for which we have to go in camera. Let me now thank our witness.

Thank you very much, Mr. Gashirabake. We'll dismiss you with our thanks.

I'll suspend for a moment while we go in camera, which means that unfortunately, everybody who's not a part of the committee has to leave the room. Thank you very much.

*[Proceedings continue in camera]*

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