

PROFILE OF ZURA KARUHIMBI

Candidate to the Nobel Peace Prize

"You can not die, you can not give up, we'll defeat these evil people."

Zura Karuhimbi



Zura Karuhimbi is a Hutu woman, born on January 1st, 1925, in Rwanda, by Hutu father and Tutsi mother, and she is Muslim although her religious beliefs are influenced by the traditional animism. During 1994 genocide, Zura, who was almost seventy, saved the lives of about 100 Tutsi hiding them in her home in Gitarama, the second largest city in the country, where the number of killings was particularly intense. Zura sheltered not only Tutsi, but also some Batwa (pygmies) and those Hutu who didn't want to participate to the massacres. For three months Zura hid her guests, providing them food from the surrounding fields and providing for all their needs. Unfortunately she was unable to save her husband and son, both Tutsi, killed during the massacres.

Zura has always led a peasant life. She directly lived the experience of colonization and suffered the racial classification, according to which the Westerns arbitrarily divided the population into ethnic groups. She didn't go to school and therefore she is illiterate. Her teacher was the oral culture passed down through generations. Her deepest knowledge is medicine, in the sense of the traditional art of preparing potions and ointments using herbs. Zura made an extensive use of this art during the genocide. In fact, many refugees were hidden on the trees and inside the house to which militants didn't approach fearing this woman witchcraft. Letting her reputation of witch increase, Zura was thus able to keep off the assailants.

At the end of the genocide, Zura has refused money prizes, but she accepted the Medal of Honor by the President of Rwanda, Paul Kagame, an object that she always wears proudly and which she doesn't leave even to go to sleep. Recognition is the greatest reward for her. "I want how things happened to be told; all the awards they gave me and that I'm still receiving mean this to me: passing down the memory and talking about what happened, acknowledging the good that can be done when evil is everywhere".

Today Zura is still living in her home in Gitarama under the constant threat of a retaliation, a revenge. The woman is a potential victim of the *reprisal killings*, targeted assassinations that strike survivors and witnesses of the genocide, who could lodge a complaint with the *gacaca* tribunals which are in charge of judging the war criminals. Her house has been already burnt

once and the risk of further violence is still high considering that Zura witnessed the murders made at the roadblock in front of her home: "Yes , I recognize them and they know it, but I'm not willing to denounce them and they don't know that. I think that God has given everyone a task and mine was to save people, not to condemn them. But the killers, they know that I know, and when they see me their spirit turns restless because they recognize their guilt. Many of the killers have not survived to this tension and have given themselves up, others have committed suicide, others are still free, but they do not have their own peace of mind for what they did and they re-live it every time they see me". Zura was recently recognized as "Righteous" from the Garden of the Righteous of Padua, Italy.

PROFILE OF YOLANDE MUKAGASANA

Candidate to the Nobel Peace Prize

"I do not hate those who killed my family any longer, I want to bring life to those who listen to me and I ask to do the same every day because this is the only way we really give justice to those who died blameless".

Yolande Mukagasana



Yolande Mukagasana was born in Butare in a Tutsi family. At the age of 5 she was wounded during the Hutu revolution. In 1992, anaesthetist nurse despite the exclusion from school, she opened a small private clinic, which was destroyed in 1994. Yolande is a survivor of the genocide. In the massacres of 1994 she lost all her family, saving herself in a miraculous way thanks to the help of a Hutu woman, Jacqueline Mukansonera: her husband Joseph and her sons, Christian 15 years old, Sandrine, 14, and Nadine, 13, died under the blows of machetes. The chilling and moving narration of that incredible story is faithfully rendered in the book "Death Does not Want Me."

Despite her life had been destroyed, Yolande found the strength to go forward and gave a new meaning to her existence engaging herself in witnessing the horrors of genocide: "I could understand the value of life only knowing death. Ever since a strong push inside me told me to be a witness of what happened, a messenger of life, especially among young people. It is still necessary to work with children to build a future without hate, which is not yet eradicated". Yolande has dedicated her life to hand down the memory of the genocide, through her words, her writings, her charismatic presence.

After the genocide Yolande took refuge in Belgium where, in 1999, obtained the citizenship. There she began her work as a writer and activist trying to bring the international attention on the tragedy that affected and still continues to plague Rwanda.

Yolande, who is now the mother of 21 orphans received in custody after the genocide, is the author of some texts that narrate the genocide of Rwanda as "Death does not want me," translated into Italian, Turkish, Norwegian, Danish, Hebrew, and "Do not be afraid to know", translated into Dutch and Portuguese. Her latest book, "The Wounds of Silence", collects the witnesses and photos of survivors, assassins and Righteous: "Making the interviews of the murderers for my book, I was amazed of the fact that they are firstly the victims of their own hate". Yolande is not afraid to go back where the murderers of her family walk free on the street: "Why should I be afraid? Even in Europe the authors of the genocide are allowed to walk freely. And if my death would give a sign of peace, it would be fine. I realize that there can be no forgiveness without justice, nor justice without humanity."

Yolande works today in many educational projects in which she is involved to bring her testimony in the schools in Europe, Africa and in the United States. She is also co-author and actress of the play "Rwanda 94" in which, acting herself, she tells on the stage the atrocities of the genocide. Yolande brought her testimony around the world guest by governments, institutions, associations, universities, schools. She participated at the 6th World Summit of the Nobel Peace Prizes in Rome in 2005 and she has received many awards for her commitment: the Alexander Langer Award in 1997; the Award for the International Understanding between Nations and for Human Rights conferred by the European College of Jena University in Germany, (1999); the Golden Dove Award for Peace given from the Archivio Disarmo Association of Rome; the Woman of the 21st Century for Resistance Award in Brussels (2003); the Honorable Mention for Peace Education by UNESCO in Paris (2003) and finally the Encouragement Award of the American Jewish Community (may 2008). After having founded the association "Nyamirambo Point d'Appui", her dream is to build a school in Rwanda to teach non-violence.

PROFILE OF PIERANTONIO COSTA

Candidate to the Nobel Peace Prize



"I only answered the voice of my conscience. When there is something that has to be done, you just get on with it".

Pierantonio Costa

Pierantonio is the sixth of seven children. He was born in Mestre on May 7th 1939. He studied in Vicenza and Verona and, at the age of fifteen, joined his father, who had emigrated to Zaire. In Bukavu, in 1960, he had his first experience of African warfare and, with some of his

brothers, successfully ferried groups of Congolese refugees across Lake Kivu. When the Mulelist rebellion broke out, Pierantonio decided to move to neighbouring Rwanda which had just gained independence. On May 5th 1965 he obtained his first permanent residence permit to stay in Rwanda and continued to live there, in Kigali, until 1994. Here he married Mariann, a Swiss citizen, with whom he had three children: Olivier, who still lives in Rwanda, Caroline, who lives in Germany, and Matteo who lives with his mother in Brussels. A successful businessman, Pierantonio Costa was running four companies when the genocide broke out. For fifteen years, from 1988 to 2003, he was Italy's consul in Kigali.

Throughout the three months of the genocide, from 6th April to 18th July 1994, Costa did everything he could to rescue first Italians and Westerners together with many Rwandese. Then he moved to his brother's home in Burundi, from where he made a series of trips across Rwanda in a ceaseless attempt to rescue as many people as he could, using his diplomatic privileges, his friendships and acquaintances network and his own money to obtain exit permits from the country for all those who asked for his help. Aided by his son Olivier, he worked beside the representatives of the Red Cross and various other NGOs. By the time the genocide was over, he had lost assets worth well over 3 million dollars and he had rescued almost 2,000 people, including 375 children from a Red Cross orphanage.

During the one hundred days of the Rwandan genocide, Costa acted according to the dictates of his own conscience. He knowingly risked his life, by putting his humanity and his means at the disposal of the others: "In the midst of so much violence and suffering, I just did what I had to do. That's all, but with the constant regret that I could have done something more". Pierantonio Costa's story is told in detail by the journalist Luciano Scalettari in the book "The List of the Consul". The Italian government has given Costa the Gold Medal of Civic Value while the Belgian Government awarded him a similar honour for his courage during the genocide in Rwanda. Recently he has been recognized as "Righteous" by the Committee for the Forest of the Righteous in Milan and by the Garden of the Righteous in Padua.

*Bene Rwanda Onlus
Via Mengarini 41
00149 Roma Italia
Tel: +39 0645491925
Mobile : +39 3771615080*