TRIBUTE TO COURAGE

A new 299 page book from African Rights

The intensity of the violence that exploded in Rwanda in April 1994 was overwhelming.

Many Rwandans who did not condone the genocidal mayhem either felt there was nothing they could do to prevent it or have simply been paralysed by fear. There were those, however, who were armed with unfailing courage and humanity and did something they could to save lives. This book tells the stories of some of the men and women who fought to protect others. Survivors describe their experiences and speak of their feelings for the people who saved them. These are moving records of fear and gratitude, of human triumphs in the face of catastrophe.

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Eight years have passed since the end of the genocide of the Tutsis and the murder of leading Hutu political opponents in Rwanda. While the atrocities committed in 1994 continue to haunt the nation, it is heartening to remember that Rwanda was also the home of people of extraordinary compassion and fortitude. Many of the survivors owe their survival to the generosity, fearlessness and solidarity shown by men and women from different backgrounds, Rwandese and some foreigners. Acts of individual heroism in the face of genocide are the subject of African Rights’ latest book, *Rwanda: Tribute to Courage*, a collection of remembrances from survivors and witnesses of the genocide, told publicly for the first time. The book names men and women who risked their lives to save others and tells the compelling stories of their achievements. These are moving accounts of fear and gratitude, of human triumphs in the face of catastrophe. African Rights is now asking the Government of Rwanda to undertake a new, in-depth and broad-ranging inquiry in order to draw up an expanded official list of genocide heroes, to publicise their deeds and to create a memorial to them.

*Tribute to Courage* reveals the spirit of humanity which was alive through one of the most brutal episodes of recent history. It is based upon personal accounts of how empathy and determination overcame apprehension and self-interest, and constitutes an important record of what one person can achieve against the greatest odds. The events described in this book should be an inspiration in the search for peace in Rwanda and beyond. But despite the passage of time, awareness of them is limited.

African Rights learned the stories told in *Tribute to Courage* in the course of several years of research into the 1994 genocide. We have also heard of many other examples of bravery that require further research and documentation. While it is impossible to determine exactly how many people protected the targets of the genocide, the huge death toll at the end of 100 days indicates that such cases are rare. This makes it all the more important to identify and honour those who took a stand against the forces of genocide, the heroes of the genocide should be remembered in Rwanda and abroad as defenders of human rights and advocates for humanity. They defied the propaganda and pressure that overwhelmed a nation. In paying homage to these few, African Rights hopes to encourage public recognition of all the citizens of Rwanda and the foreign residents who were similarly armed with unfailing courage. This book is intended as the first step of African Rights’ tribute to the unsung heroes of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

**People From All Walks of Life**

The struggle against the genocide—and the attitudes which led to the killings—was lonely and extremely dangerous. But courage surfaced in unexpected places during the genocide and many ordinary peasants or villagers used their limited resources to help others while the educated or the wealthy turned refugees away.
In some households there are generations of heroes. This is true of Frodouald Karuhije whose story is told in Tribute to Courage. His father rescued a Tutsi in Gitarama in 1973, and Karuhije himself saved this man’s daughter in 1994. More often, however, there were conflicts within families, with some members fully committed to the killings and others trying to prevent them. For instance, there are many testimonies about the courage of a priest, Father Baudouin Busunyu, whose father was head of the interahamwe in Karengera, Cyangugu. Fr. Busunyu’s actions also distinguish him from those of several other members of the priesthood in Rwanda at the time. Although many people looked to the Church for assistance when the crisis began, not all the members of the clergy offered solace, and some are known to have collaborated with the génocidaires.

Members of the clergy were most likely to have the means and opportunity to assist the refugees who made their way to parishes all over the country, and several who showed selflessness and devotion to this task are mentioned in this book. Some were murdered alongside their parishioners. They acted according to their faith and Christian values. At the same time, these were unique choices and struggles undertaken in a hostile context. Clergy who hid or helped Tutsis often did so without the support of their superiors in the Church or even in direct opposition to them. The bravery of some priests and nuns was so exceptional that survivors believe they should be recognised as martyrs or canonised.

People from all walks of life showed courage equal to that of the clergy, often at even greater risk. Local officials, for instance, were expected to show wholehearted support for the killings. The genocide depended on their participation and those who refused to take part were immediately under scrutiny. Yet some fervently defended the Tutsis in their community, sometimes paying with their lives. The women mentioned in the book are among the most astonishing heroes. The story of how an elderly, poverty-stricken traditional healer shielded a group of Tutsis with nothing but the strength of her own character might seem like fiction, if those she protected had not lived to tell it. In Tribute to Courage, survivors express love and gratitude to the men and women who struggled to save their lives. Many of them became martyrs, killed with the people they sought to defend. Their deaths are deeply mourned.

Thérèse Nyirabayovu

As midwife for Muhima sector in Nyarugenge, Kigali, Thérèse Nyirabayovu was held in high esteem by the local community. Her decision to give shelter to Tutsis was based on her belief that it was “a duty to save fellow human beings in danger.” Thérèse, who was then aged 67, had no strength but her own moral stature to rely upon. But she was so well respected that when the news spread that she was hiding people, even the interahamwe were reluctant to attack her home.

Thérèse is a widowed peasant farmer with four surviving children who backed her in her efforts to preserve lives. They did all they could to meet the needs of the 18 people who hid at her house at one time or another during the genocide. Thérèse also took food to refugees who were staying at the nearby church of Ste. Famille.

Thérèse was made aware of the risk she was taking on a number of occasions; her home was searched, she was questioned repeatedly, and a grenade was thrown at her house. The danger persisted even after the genocide. While staying in the refugee camps in the former Zaire, Thérèse was under constant threat from the militiamen who had heard of her actions. Odette Mukakarera told of how Thérèse helped her and underlined the gratitude she will always feel towards this remarkable woman.

Thérèse has always been well known for her courage, her generosity and her skill as a midwife. She has always been poor, especially since she was widowed and had so many children to look after. But her poverty never got in the way of her humane impulses.

Thérèse and her children hid us for nearly two months, knowing very well they were risking their lives if anyone ever found us.
Frodouald Karuhije

Frodouald Karuhije saved the lives of 14 Tutsis from the communes of Nyamabuye and Ntongwe in Gitarama, hiding them for more than a month. He acted with determination and ingenuity, even though most of these men, women and children were strangers.

He secretly dug deep trenches on his land, covering them with branches, soil and plants. They were cleverly constructed and invisible to all that did not know of their existence. Frodouald dug his first trench in the belief that his own life would be threatened, having heard the propaganda that the RPF “planned to exterminate all Hutus.” When the nature of the violence became clear, Frodouald used these trenches to hide Tutsis whose lives were under threat. Not waiting to be asked, Frodouald actually sought them out in order to offer them a refuge.

38-year-old Frodouald, from Remera in Mukingi commune says he “was quite prepared to die for those Tutsis who took refuge at my place.” His tireless efforts on their behalf are proof of his commitment. When Phidentia Mukamwiza arrived to join the group on Frodouald’s land, there was only one trench. Realising that there would not be enough room to accommodate them all, Frodouald began digging at 9:00 p.m. and he dug all through the night until a second trench was ready the following morning. Several survivors were surprised that this “simple and straightforward” builder would show so much good will and concern towards people he hardly knew. Like the others who owe their lives to Frodouald, Phidentia will never forget him.

He is a good and courageous man. He was poor himself, but he agreed to hide us and feed us for more than a month and a half. During the genocide Karuhije put our needs above his own.

Dr. Wolfgang Blam

The few outsiders who tried to help during the darkest days of the genocide have a special place in the hearts of survivors. Dr Wolfgang Blam, a German doctor, was one such man. He had lived in Rwanda for many years and, by April 1994, he was in charge of rural medicine for the préfecture of Kibuye and worked in the operating theatre in Kibuye hospital.

Dr Blam speaks fluent Kinyarwanda and is married to Jacqueline, with whom he has a son, born only two months before the genocide. He was seen to be without prejudice, working with, treating and socialising with people of different ethnic and political backgrounds. Dr Blam refused to leave with the other expatriates; he would not abandon his wife, a Tutsi, or his duties. He lived through the terror unleashed upon the people of Kibuye and was a source of strength and encouragement for those he met, showing tremendous care and dedication.

Dr Blam and his colleague, Dr Léonard Hitimana, now a parliamentarian, worked under extremely difficult conditions as the massacres began in Kibuye. Their skills were in demand and they used them to look after Tutsi relatives, friends, patients and refugees. They sought to protect as well as treat the sick and wounded who flooded into the hospital. They also went to Gatwaro stadium to tend to the thousands of people who had come from Kibuye town and the neighbouring communes. Along with other staff from the hospital and the Red Cross, they strove to better the desperate conditions there. Sadly, the refugees at the stadium and at the hospital were the victims of regular atrocities. Death had become inevitable for most of the Tutsis of Kibuye, but the doctors cared for them regardless.

Dr Blam looked after Ann-Marie Mukantabana, then aged 14, who came to the hospital after her family was massacred. She remembers how he used to “beg the interahamwe to leave his patients alone”, adding:

He was totally committed. We survivors will never forget him, even though he is not here now to hear how grateful we are to him. Although he was a foreigner, he intervened to help us when our own brothers were massacring us.
Three young priests devoted themselves to the refugees at the Parish of Mibilizi in Cyimbogo, Cyangugu, an area devastated by the genocide. Fr. Joseph Boneza and Fr. Ignace Kabera, who are Tutsi, and Fr. Dieudonné Rwakabayiza, a Hutu, all refused to be evacuated when the parish came under siege, despite calls from the Bishop of Cyangugu asking them to join him. The refugees at Mibilizi suffered a series of horrific assaults by the interahamwe, and the majority of them lost their lives, but the priests did not waver. Together they showed a unity of spirit and purpose which defied the ideology of ethnic hatred. The priests were aware of the dangers involved in looking after the refugees, but they continued to bring them food, money and comfort, with the aid of a nun, Sister Bernadette.

Because of his prominent role, Fr. Boneza soon became a direct target of the militia himself. As he tried to flee, Fr. Boneza was pulled from the car in which he was travelling and murdered by militiamen. Both before and after Fr. Boneza’s death, Fr. Dieudonné and Fr. Ignace showed that they too possessed tremendous strength and sympathy. Virginie Uwanyirigira was among those who sought shelter at the parish.

I can’t find the words to praise the courage of Fr. Ignace, Fr. Boneza and Fr. Dieudonné highly enough. These priests chose to put themselves in the firing line. Even though the bishop came to take them away, they refused to take the easy way out. They chose instead to help us to resist and struggle to the death against the interahamwe. The worth of these priests is beyond understanding. We have come to the conclusion that they had special qualities which God doesn’t give to ordinary people.

Ladislas Uzabakiriho

Ladislas Uzabakiriho was the councillor for Kinzuzi sector, in Mbogo commune, Greater Kigali. It was due to his efforts that most of the Tutsis in this sector were spared the suffering of 1994. Ladislas succeeded in building a sense of unity among the people of Kinzuzi that was so strong it was capable of withstanding the genocide. He refused to collaborate with the other local officials planning the killings, although he was under intense pressure to do so. He ensured that the Hutus of Kinzuzi fought on behalf of their Tutsi neighbours. The story of this community and its councillor is a model for lasting peace in Rwanda.

Ladislas Uzabakiriho showed foresight and intelligence in his management of the crisis in 1994, he argued against the rumours and propaganda designed to promote the killings and encouraged the residents of Kinzuzi to recognise the evil of the genocide and to defend their sector against it. They did so, but both Ladislas and the other Hutus endured threats and beatings from the interahamwe, leaving some of them permanently disabled. Today, both the genocide survivors, and the Hutus from Kinzuzi who stood by them, are deeply grateful to Ladislas Uzabakiriho for the fortitude and solidarity that he lived by and inspired in others. Ladislas died in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where he had gone during the mass exodus of July 1994. His loss is felt by all in Kinzuzi. Cassien Havugimana, the current councillor, expressed deep admiration and respect for his predecessor, who is also the man ultimately responsible for saving his life.

Ladislas Uzabakiriho was a kind man, able to understand all points of view. He knew how to settle any dispute between people without taking sides. He was a very active man, keen to see progress in his commune, and especially in his own sector. He had united all the residents of Kinzuzi so that the sector was never torn apart by violence. When there were problems caused by social divisions, he was able to solve them.
Father Baudouin Busunyu

Many people threatened by militia violence in Kamembe, Cyangugu, took refuge at the Parish of Nkanka. Sadly they did not find security there, but they did discover a priest who cared deeply about their fate and was prepared to risk his life for them, Fr Baudouin Busunyu.

Fr. Busunyu was constrained in his ability to act independently. He had no control over the resources of the parish and operated in secret, against the wishes of the parish priest and those of members of his own family. His father, Michel Busunyu, was an interahamwe leader who would have been enraged to learn of his activities, while the parish priest had also been won over to the genocide cause. Despite all this, the priest did his best to tackle the threats and problems experienced by the refugees. He offered them sympathy and understanding as well as practical assistance. He worked with a network of priests evacuating Tutsis across the border to Bukavu in the DRC. He walked with the refugees to Lake Kivu and paid boatmen to ferry them to Bukavu, accompanying some of them to their destination to ensure they were safe before returning home. On his way back from one of these trips, Fr. Busunyu was caught by a militia patrol on Lake Kivu. He was beaten up but bribed the militiamen to release him. This incident only strengthened the priest’s resolve and he continued delivering Tutsis to safety until the end of the genocide.

Knowing that his father was a leading militiaman, and sharing the same name, Fr. Busunyu felt it necessary to leave the country with the RPF takeover of power, unsure of what it would bring. However, it was while in the refugee camps in the DRC that he was killed. The genocide survivors who owe him their lives do not know the circumstances of Fr. Busunyu’s death, but they mourn his loss and cherish his memory. Micheline Mukayiranga voiced their sentiments.

Fr. Baudouin Busunyu showed us how God’s work should be carried out. He cared for us in our worst moments and helped those most in need. We Christians of Nkanka are praying that God will accept him among the saints. His courage during the genocide was almost superhuman, as he would have been killed if they had caught him saving Tutsis.

Callixte Ndagijimana

Bourgmestres have control over security in the commune and a responsibility to safeguard residents. But like many local administrative officials, they often became key organisers of the genocide in 1994. Under orders from the government to ensure that the Tutsi population in their area was wiped out, any official found to be resisting the killings was deemed a traitor and punished. Callixte Ndagijimana was a rare example of a bourgmestre prepared to risk his own position and his life to defy the authorities.

His presence ensured that the people of Mugina united against the violence encroaching from across their borders. He acted with strength and commitment in his battle against the interahamwe. He extended a warm welcome to the hundreds of panic-stricken refugees who came from the surrounding region. He gave food and supplies to Tutsis sheltering at the Parish of Mugina, and toured all sectors of the commune to spread a message of peace among its residents. When the interahamwe invaded the commune and divided Hutus from Tutsis, Ndagijimana did not give in. He alone remained with the Tutsis, defending them personally, and with the backing of the communal police force.

Because Ndagijimana exemplified duty and brotherhood, he was ambushed and killed on 21 April. Without his leadership, resistance to the genocide in Mugina crumbled and the massacres of Tutsis began that evening. Concilie Kampire’s husband and children were among those killed at the local Catholic parish.
Callixte died without even leaving a child to carry on his memory. He was so brave. I don ’t think there was anyone else in the whole of Gitarama préfecture who could have done what he did. He gave his life for us. We can only ask the government to put his name among the ranks of our national heroes because he died for love of his fellow citizens and for his country. When we commemorate the loss of our loved ones on 21 and 22 April 1994, we also say prayers to God for Callixte ’s soul.

Father Oscar Nkundayezu

In the midst of a crisis, Fr.Oscar Nkundayezu dedicated himself to the welfare of others. He did not hesitate to risk his own life for those who fled to the Parish of Cyangugu in Kamembe commune. Fr.Nkundayezu was practical and energetic in his efforts to find food, water and medical treatment for the refugees who gathered at his parish.

Although he could not drive, he quickly learnt to do so when it became necessary to distribute food to the displaced people at Kamarampaka stadium, the site of repeated abductions and massacres. He visited them on a daily basis to celebrate mass with them and to keep their spirits up. At the nearby cathedral, Fr.Nkundayezu ’s organizational skills were behind the establishment of a makeshift hospital which was also used as a hiding place for those most at risk; the ruse saved people. Even when all the refugees at Kamarampaka stadium had been settled at Nyarushishi, which was some distance from the parish, Fr.Oscar continued his daily visits. Fr.Nkundayezu ’s single-minded approach was a key factor in the establishment of network in Cyangugu to smuggle Tutsis across Lake Kivu into the DRC. He contributed to fundraising and establishing connections across the border. He persuaded some local people, including a former member of the interahamwe, to transport the refugees to safety. He took some of the refugees to the lakeshore himself and gave them letters of introduction to his contacts in the DRC.

Fr.Nkundayezu became ill some years ago and went to Italy for treatment; he has now returned to Rwanda where he continues to advocate for peace and justice. Béa Mukamusoni recalled how the priest found food for the refugees at the parish, which she distributed. She spoke of Fr.Nkundayezu ’s many virtues. Fr.Oscar is well known for his simplicity and for his opposition to all forms of evil, particularly discrimination. He sacrificed his own needs for those of the refugees; the other priests living at the same cathedral didn’t do anywhere as much. He helps those in need and is not afraid to do so even when there are risks to his own safety.

Félicitée Niyitegeka

At the St.Pierre Centre in the diocese of Nyundo, Gisenyi, Félicitée Niyitegeka was one of the leaders of a community called the Auxiliaries de l ’Apostol (church assistants). A group of Hutu and Tutsi girls were staying at St.Pierre when the violence erupted in April 1994. Félicitée recognised the dangers immediately. She kept a close watch over the girls, guarding them against the threat of attack from outside and ensuring that tensions did not develop within the community. She alone would answer the telephone and open the door so that the presence of Tutsi girls at the centre would not be detected.

Félicitée was successful in isolating the St.Pierre community for some time. It became a haven for refugees too fearful of remaining at home. Many of them were wounded and Félicitée went in search of medicine to treat them. She also began evacuating the most vulnerable across the border into the DRC, but the interahamwe discovered her plans and put an end to this endeavour.

Félicitée was given an opportunity to leave when her brother, a senior military commander based in a nearby military camp, sent a vehicle and an escort of soldiers to evacuate her, but she refused to desert the refugees; the following day, the interahamwe came to the centre to abduct the Tutsi girls. Knowing they were being taken to their deaths, Félicitée insisted on accompanying them. She led them in song and prayer until their final moments; then she too was murdered. The survivors of Nyundo give thanks for her courage and her strength of character. Immaculée Tuyisenge was among the abducted girls, and is a rare survivor of this massacre. She believes Félicitée should be canonised. Immaculée spoke of the lessons she drew from Félicitée ’s teaching.
I saw in Félicitée a mother beyond comparison. Her teaching was irreproachable and her advice unlimited. Félicitée was a real heroine to the point that she even agreed to give up her own life for the people of Rwanda and to die for them. We will always keep the memory of what she did for us in our hearts. We pray that God will welcome her into his kingdom. I personally think she should be proclaimed a Saint.

Gabriel Mvunganyi

Gabriel Mvunganyi was an elderly and deeply religious man who rejected the politics of ethnic division and was resented for this stance even before the genocide. There were few Tutsis in his home area of Ngoma sector, commune Mbogo, Greater Kigali, but when an outbreak of ethnic violence threatened their lives in 1992, Mvunganyi did all he could for them, enabling them to evade capture. Resentment of Mvunganyi for his stand at this time was made worse by his refusal to join any of the political parties which sprang up in the early 1990s and sought to recruit him.

By 1994, the interahamwe were aware of Mvunganyi’s sympathy for the plight of the Tutsis. He was seen as a threat to collective support for the killings. The militia searched his house on a daily basis. Despite this he hid two Tutsi girls for several days. Hostility towards Mvunganyi remained intense throughout the genocide and he was afraid to leave his home. But towards the end of May, he went out with his daughter. On his way home he was spotted by soldiers, who were among the perpetrators of the genocide in the area. They persecuted and humiliated him, then shot him dead. Pascasie Mukarora, a neighbour, spoke with admiration of Gabriel Mvunganyi’s character.

Gabriel died because of his kindness and decency. He was an elderly man known for his honesty, and respected by all his neighbours. He was friendly with everyone regardless of their ethnic group.

Jean Marie-Vianney Gisagara

The leaders of the genocide in Butare and surrounding areas were incensed by the strong stand bourgmestre Jean Marie-Vianney Gisagara took against violence in Nyabisindu, Butare. At the first sign of trouble he intervened to defend the Tutsis of his commune.

Hearing of an attack in Nyarushange sector, he took the police and defeated the interahamwe, making several arrests. Later, he instructed local councillors to resist the demands of the génocidaires and appealed for calm. As the threat to his own life increased, Gisagara must have known that the task he had set himself was both hopeless and extremely dangerous, but he remained firm. Eventually he was forced into hiding, but he was soon found and savagely killed.

As a warning of what would happen to Hutus who tried to extend a helping hand to Tutsis, Gisagara was tied to a van and dragged through the streets of his home sector of Nyanza. Eleven members of his family, including his parents, siblings and wife, were also killed. They were among the first victims of the interahamwe in Nyanza. Following Gisagara’s death, the genocide went ahead unopposed in Nyabisindu. Pélagie Mukantagara, Gisagara’s aunt, hopes that Gisagara’s actions will be remembered by many.

Gisagara was a brave man who kept the people of Nyanza united. Unfortunately the interahamwe got the better of him and murdered both him and his family. His name should be remembered for posterity.
Father Célestin Hakizimana

St. Paul’s Pastoral Centre in Kigali became a refuge for around 2000 people during the genocide. Most of them survived because Fr. Célestin Hakizimana intervened at every attempt by the militia to abduct or murder them.

He was unable to prevent the deaths of all the refugees, but even in the face of powerful opposition he tried to hold off the killers with persuasion or bribes. He stood face-to-face with some of the leading perpetrators of genocide in Kigali and argued that the people staying at his church were not guilty of any crime and did not deserve any punishment.

Fr. Hakizimana took care of the refugees’ physical needs at a time when all resources were in short supply. He brought them food and water, although on one occasion he was shot at as he went to fetch the water. He kept the refugees alive single-handedly. He called for help, but when none was forthcoming he defended the refugees, despite the danger.

Many of the people Fr. Hakizimana rescued had only met him during their brief stay at St. Paul’s, but some of them remember and pay tribute to him each year at the time of their escape. For the survivors of St. Paul’s he more than fulfilled all their hopes and expectations. He remains a source of inspiration and of faith, as Sylvérien Mudenge, a survivor, explained.

He sacrificed his own needs in order to watch over us. The proof is the number of people who were at St. Paul’s who survived. There were more than 1,500. His courage should be praised and news of it spread far and wide. He hasn’t changed a bit. He still has the love, the charity, in a word the heart that he showed in our time of need.

Sula Karuhimbi

A traditional healer from sector Musamo, commune Ntongwe in Gitarama, Sula Karuhimbi, shielded some of her neighbours from the interahamwe and assisted several other potential victims. She is a 75-year-old widow, described by local residents as a friendly and generous woman. Sula, who is generally known as “Mama Domitille”, hid Tutsis on her own property and challenged the militia who came to search for them. She is a farmer and fed the people she hid with the produce of her own fields, housing them in a shelter she had made for the animals.

The fact that she had few resources and looked vulnerable made Sula an unlikely protector, deflecting attention from her house. After a time, the interahamwe came to suspect she was harbouring Tutsis, but she denied it vehemently. She used her reputation as a healer to convince the militiamen that she could command evil spirits and they feared her. Sula turned away the militia on several occasions, braving gunfire and threats.

Since the genocide, Sula has remained a staunch opponent of the perpetrators of the genocide, testifying against them. Sula says she finds it difficult to understand why other people in her community did not make similar efforts to resist the genocide. Hassan Habiyakare found sanctuary at her home. He still visits her regularly today.

She made everyone welcome, even strangers. Karuhimbi found different hiding places for us all, so it is hard to say exactly how many people she saved. I ended up at their house after wandering about all over the place. During the genocide, the Tutsis had no hesitation in fleeing to Karuhimbi’s house. All the people she hid are alive today. I find her an amazing old lady. Her courage during the genocide was unequalled. Very few people could have done what she did.
A shopkeeper from Muhazi in Kibungo, Paul Kamanzi was a rare individual whose loyalty to his friends far exceeded their expectations. A Hutu whose own brothers were sympathetic to the extremist cause, Kamanzi severed his ties to his community and to his family during the genocide. He did so because he was unable to live alongside people who were either involved in the killings or who were not prepared to try and prevent them. Kamanzi felt such deep anger and horror about the genocide and its perpetrators that he wanted to do all he could to distance himself from them. Even death, he believed, would be preferable to living with the people responsible for the slaughter of innocents. It was an uncompromising stance and one that tragically cost him his life.

From the outset, he did all he could to thwart the génocidaires. He informed the Tutsis he knew about the intentions of the interahamwe and tried to find them hideouts. Some stayed in his shop. He looked to his father for support but was rejected. So Kamanzi chose to stay with his friends as a refugee in the commune office. On 15 April, the interahamwe, members of the Presidential Guard and policemen went into action against the refugees; Kamanzi fought alongside them. Kamanzi was shot by the interahamwe as he was trying to escape with the survivors from Muhazi. Kamanzi’s compassion and empathy were so profound that he was unable to put his own survival before that of others. His memory lives on in the hearts of the survivors of Muhazi, among them Jean Rutaysire.

Kamanzi was kind and thoughtful. His behaviour was an example to the rest of us. He cared about everyone regardless of their origins. He showed that when he chose to die for us Tutsis in company with our own boys.

Father Jean-Bosco Munyaneza

In Fr. Jean-Bosco Munyaneza, the refugees at the Parish of Mukarange in Muhazi, Kibungo, found a leader who organised their struggle to survive; a man of God who gave them the courage to face their deaths; and an inspirational human being who was prepared to die on their behalf.

Refugees flocked to the parish in their thousands from 7 April onwards. Fr. Jean-Bosco lived up to their hopes, offering sanctuary, food and spiritual comfort. He worked tirelessly to accommodate and assist them, but could not prevent the attacks upon the parish from 10 April. In the two days that followed, the refugees were to suffer one assault after another with the combined forces of the interahamwe, gendarmes and government officials from surrounding regions ranged against them. In that time, Fr. Jean-Bosco Munyaneza worked hand in hand with his Tutsi colleague, Fr. Joseph Gatere, to organise resistance to the slaughter, resorting to throwing stones at the assailants himself, when all else failed.

He had several opportunities to leave, but would not desert the refugees. As a result he was brutally murdered. The massacre in which Fr. Jean-Bosco died also claimed the lives of most of the refugees at the parish. The few survivors commemorate the deaths of their loved ones every year on 12 April and they make special mention of the priest, whom they believe is worthy of sainthood. Gilbert Nkurayija underlined the nature and meaning of Fr. Jean-Bosco’s sacrifice.

Fr. Munyaneza gave his life for us. He chose to die for us when he had every opportunity to stay alive. He showed the kind of love you don`t often find. He did all he could possibly have done to save us, but in vain. Even then, he didn`t leave us to die alone but stayed with us even in death. We pray for his soul and remember him as we would one of our loved ones who are dead.
Father Jean-Pierre Ngoga

The story of how Fr. Jean-Pierre Ngoga tried to prevent the slaughter of the refugees at the Parish of Kibeho is of a hopeless but admirable struggle against impossible odds. Although as many as 30,000 refugees congregated at the parish, they were unarmed and no match for the thousands of killers, including armed gendarmes, who were determined to crush them. As a Tutsi, and a defiant individual who challenged important local officials and genocide leaders face to face, Fr. Ngoga was under constant threat. He was remarkable in his readiness to disregard his own safety while striving to keep others alive.

Kibeho is in Mubuga commune, Gikongoro but people also fled there from the surrounding areas. Fr. Ngoga made the refugees welcome. When the interahamwe stormed the parish, Fr. Ngoga and the refugees fought back. He had the chance to slip away, but chose to remain. After several raids on the parish, militiamen and gendarmes united to commit a huge-scale massacre on 14 April, eliminating almost the entire Tutsi community of the area. In the aftermath, Fr. Ngoga advised all the survivors to leave the parish and he took some of them with him to Butare in search of safety. He was later discovered there, imprisoned and murdered. Although the circumstances of the priest’s death are yet to be fully uncovered, his defence of the refugees at the Parish of Kibeho was one of the reasons he was hunted down. Fr. Ngoga deserves a place of honour in the history of the Catholic Church in Rwanda, as the survivors of Kibeho testify. Emmanuel Kaberuka listed the priest’s admirable qualities.

He was a very good priest. He never hid the truth, but always said what he thought. He never lost hope. He encouraged us to take on the interahamwe and fight them off. Ngoga sacrificed his life for ours during the genocide, the news of Pierre Ngoga’s death was a great blow for me.

Father Vieko Curic

When the killings began in Kivumu, people turned to Fr. Vieko Curic for help. This expatriate priest from the former Yugoslavia had lived in Nyamabuye, Gitarama for more than ten years, and had long worked to promote development in the area. He was well known and loved by his congregation and his decision to remain in Rwanda during the genocide brought him to the heart of the local community. When most other expatriates were evacuated, Fr. Vieko stood by the people of Kivumu during the worst experiences of their lives. He gave practical and medical assistance to the displaced and enabled some to escape.

Fr. Vieko was outspoken in his condemnation of the violence and continued to preach the values of peace and unity throughout the genocide. He was threatened on several occasions by the interahamwe, but he held firm. In the aftermath, Fr. Vieko demonstrated his impartiality, helping both Hutus and Tutsis to rebuild their communities. The homes and buildings Fr. Vieko helped to fund are still standing in Kivumu today, but sadly the priest himself is no longer there. He was killed in January 1998 in Kigali by unknown assailants. People in Kivumu and elsewhere in Rwanda feel distressed and impoverished by the loss of Fr. Vieko. He was a caring man who touched the lives of the people around him and enriched them. As is evident from the words of Espérance Mujawamariya.

Fr. Vieko spared no effort to help us before, during and after the genocide. We shall always remember his kindness and compassion. We miss him. The other expatriates abandoned the Rwandese, but he did not. That should also be noted and put to his credit. We shall always appreciate him, and we pray for him.
**In Remembrance**

In the intense climate of hatred, fear and suspicion that was manufactured after the death of President Juvénal Habyarimana on 6 April 1994, all norms were subverted. It was no longer possible to identify friends and enemies on the basis of past experience and no one knew whom to trust. The men and women singled out in this book proved themselves worthy of the faith of the desperate people who turned to them for help. They showed love, compassion and integrity, preserving human values as well as lives against the destruction of the genocide. Tribute to Courage contains suggestions for practical initiatives to identify and celebrate Rwanda’s heroes addressed to the people and Government of Rwanda, and to the wider international community. Rwanda needs to acknowledge, honour and to build upon their legacy. The challenges of trying to build a nation at peace with itself demand the application of similar courage in all areas of public and private life. They should also be remembered and cherished by all those seeking tolerance and justice around the world.

The stories in Tribute to Courage are a reminder not only of Rwanda’s forgotten heroes, but also of the many other Africans who, with tenacity and resourcefulness, battle against oppression, human rights abuses, poverty, conflict, hunger or disease. Theirs are often silent victories. These people commonly go without recognition. African Rights has encountered several other such people through its work. We have therefore decided to offer an annual tribute for courage, acknowledging values and achievements of the kind exemplified by the heroes of this book and named in remembrance of one of them, Paul Kamanzi.