

LIVE WESIGE

BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.



Live Wesige (nicknamed Gakuku and Gasahani growing up), son of Zigama Denys and Caritas Mukandekazi, was born in Brussels, Belgium on August 8, 1983. Live had an older brother, Placid Mizero. After suffering physically from an accident in Rwanda, Caritas was sent specially to Europe to give birth to Live. A week after his birth, Live and his family were sent to Kigali, Rwanda, where he was raised. When Live's father, Zigama, was in high school he had changed his identity from Tutsi to Hutu in order to have the opportunity to further his education. At the time, there were several strict restrictions for Tutsis. From then on, Zigama identified as a Hutu and his mother, Caritas, was Tutsi. As a result of the accident, Caritas was bound to a wheelchair and was deemed unable to perform the duties of a mother and wife. As a result, Zigama married her sister, Francine, and they had four children. Caritas eventually left the family to live with her other sister in Rwanda. Before the genocide in 1994, Live and his family lived comfortably. Live did not know about the concept of being Hutu or Tutsi until he was asked in school to state which group he belonged to. During the early days of the genocide, Live recalls witnessing machete attacks, the burning of neighbors' homes, daily massacres, and mass graves. He was constantly in a state of fear. Live's home was attacked several times by Interahamwe militia. Upon the third time, Zigama made a deal with one of the militia fighters who kept the family safe temporarily and helped to plan their escape. Zigama paid him for this protection. On the way to find refuge, Live shares memories of being captured by militia and surviving several near-death experiences. Live, his father, and younger brothers eventually fled to Congo and stayed in refugee camps. Here he describes that living conditions were brutal. With the help of an extended family member, Live was able to leave the camp to live in Kenya with his uncle. Here is where he learned English and Swahili. Eventually, he returned to Rwanda and was reunited with his mother, Caritas, father, Zigama, and his brothers but found that many of his relatives had died. About 10 years after the genocide, Zigama killed Caritas. Live turned to his Christian faith in order to find a way to forgive his father. In the aftermath of this tragedy, Live's family disowned him for forgiving his father. Eventually, Live pursued theological studies in the United States where he further deepened his faith. This interview was conducted on May 15, 2010, in Los Angeles, California.