

Sandra Uwiringiyimana

Sandra Uwiringiyimana was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but throughout her childhood she was forced to flee to neighboring countries along with her family to avoid conflict within the region. In 2004, when Sandra was ten, she and her family fled to a refugee camp in Burundi. Usually they would only stay in a refugee camp for two weeks, but this time was much longer.

Two months into their stay at the refugee camp, Sandra was sleeping when women came in screaming. Screaming that they were under attack. At first no one believed the women, but they were correct. People had come to prey on defenseless families due to hatred and discrimination. Due to problems that had been building up for years.

As Sandra was hiding under a mattress with her younger sister Deborah gunshots rang through the air. They had no idea if their father and two brothers were safe. The boys stayed in a different tent. Sandra and Deborah hid under that mattress until two men walked into the tent they were hiding in. The men said they were there to save them. Sandra's mother, who was hiding in the back of the tent, asked if they were really there to rescue them. The two men reassured her and said that they were.

Sandra along with her mother, sister, cousins, and aunt walked towards the front of the tent. Sandra strayed a little from the group and stayed back. Then, the two men looked at each other, and fired their guns at Sandra's family. At the sound of the bullets, Sandra ran back to the mattress she and her sister had hidden behind before. Then she blacked out.

When Sandra awoke, she had to run. The tent she had been staying in was lit aflame. Scraps of the burning tent were falling from above. Sandra found her way out, avoiding the fire.

Sandra Uwiringiyimana

When she made it outside a man put a gun to her head. They stood there for a moment, but then the man looked at her, kicked her to the ground, and chased after someone else. She was alive.

Sandra ran. She ran away from the camp, away from the carnage and chaos. Eventually she found someone she recognized and they took her to the others hiding place. Sandra met up with her father and two brothers who had both survived. She then found that her mother had survived the two men's bullets by playing dead next to the dead around her. Sandra's younger sister, Deborah, had not survived though. She was killed with her aunt and cousins.

Three years later, in 2007, Sandra's family immigrated to the United States as part of a refugee program. Specifically they moved to Rochester, New York. Once there, Sandra and her family quickly discovered that America was not as amazing as it was in the movies. There is homelessness and discrimination just as it was in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Sandra grew up facing discrimination because of the color of her skin and because she was a refugee. On top of everything else she had to deal with she had to find a way to face the trauma of that horrific night. She managed to find her way through it and started speaking publicly about her experiences.

Sandra worked to share her story through speaking, exhibits, and writing. She advocates for the other refugees who suffered in the massacre and for those who lost their lives in it. She works to help others who are still trapped in bad situations, and she works to help the forgotten.

Sandra has spoken at the Women in the World Summit alongside other powerful voices such as Angelino Jolie, Madeleine Albright, Charlie Rose, and Tina Brown. She addressed the United Nations Security Council and called for them to act on the issue of Children in Armed Combat. She fights for women, girls, immigrants, and refugees.

Sandra Uwiringiyimana

Sandra's story is sad, and what's worse is this is not a single occurrence. People in the refugee camps, whether they be in Burundi, Rwanda, or anywhere on this planet continue to suffer. These awful crimes happen due to hatred. Parents teach their children hatred, and those children will later teach their children that same hatred. It's a cycle that has to stop. A cycle that if continued will destroy humanity. So, love your neighbors, love your friends and family. Forgive those that have wronged you, and stop the cycle.

Bibliography

Primary

Uwiringiyimana, Sandra, and Abigail Pesta. *How Dare the Sun Rise*. Katherine Tegen Books, 2018.

Uwiringiyimana, Sandra, and Abigail Pesta. "My Night of Terror in a Refugee Camp." *TIME*, 16 May 2017, <https://time.com/4778080/how-dare-the-sun-rise-excerpt/>. Accessed 24 February 2021.

"Coloring Outside the Lines." Youtube, uploaded by TEDxSUNYGeneseo, 14 June 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=unI_Tgma4ss.

Secondary

Goodman, James. "Refugee returns to Rochester with inclusive message." *Democrat and Chronicle*, 18 May 2017, <https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/news/2017/05/18/mercy-grad-and-refugee-shares-inclusive-message-rochester-visit/101829632/>. Accessed 24 February 2021.

"Sandra Uwiringiyimana." *HARPERCOLLINS SPEAKERS BUREAU THE PREMIER LECTURE AGENCY FOR AUTHORS*, <https://www.harpercollinsspeakersbureau.com/speaker/sandra-uwiringiyimana/>. Accessed 24 February 2021.