

MULENGE PRESENTATION AT ERB St MENNONITE CHURCH

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Shared By Sibomana Bujambi

Slide 1: Our Story

This morning, I would like to share with you the experience of the Banyamulenge Community at Erb Street – Pastor Tito and Dorcas; Augustin and Perusi, Shinga and Esperance; Innocent & Glory; and their families.

Slide 2: LOCATION DRC

The Banyamulenge community lives in the east of Democratic Republic of Congo,

Slide 3: South Kivu

specifically in South Kivu Province, Fizi territory, Minembwe district and other surrounding areas. Banyamulenge people are mostly seen as the Tutsi of Rwanda, a neighboring country that has political conflicts with the DRC. Historically, the Banyamulenge are a rural people who have farmed the land and raised livestock. Our community speaks Kinyamulenge - a language close to Kinyarwanda and Kirundi.

Slide 4: Migration

According to historical accounts, Banyamulenge settled in Congo between the 16th and 18th centuries, from what are today called Rwanda, Burundi, and Tanzania.

According to the constitution of Congo, everyone who was in what today we call Congo during the division of Africa in 1885 is a Congolese. We were there at that time, and this should not be an issue because we are from somewhere else.

Slide 5: Beautiful photo of Mulenge

How would I describe Mulenge?

Mulenge is a beautiful Place, mountain region with little disease because most of the things that we use are natural or fresh. We eat fresh food, water from rivers and milk from our cows. The only thing we buy from other people is clothing, salt, sugar, and Fanta.

Slide 6: Cattle

Our community is known as cattle farmers. Cattle are key to our culture. We even name our children after the cows. When we get married, we give cows.

THE VALUES OF BANYAMULENGE COMMUNITY

Banyamulenge community shares these important values:

1. Loving each other
2. Uniting ourselves as a community wherever we are and supporting each other.

MEMORIES

We have different memories from our home community, but most of them are related to our values. Most of us, when we think of our homeland, we remember a united community that supports each other and worships God, especially at Christmas and Easter where a lot of churches come together to worship God.

Beside these good memories, there is also another feeling that people from our community have, the feeling of not belonging anywhere, not having a country that treats us as citizens, and the reality of losing children, parents, and neighbors through wars.

Banyamulenge's neighbors in Fizi territory include the:

1. Bashi Community
2. Bafuliru Community
3. Banyindu Community
4. Babembe Community

Slide 7: Forced To Flee

The groups from neighboring communities that attack Banyamulenge.

1. Biloze Bishambuke – independent rebel groups from Bifuliru Community
2. Maimai – independent rebel group from Babembe and Bifuliru Communities
3. Wazalendo is a rebel group supported by the government to defend DRC.

Groups from Burundi that work with these groups against the Banyamulenge.

1. Red Tabara
2. Interahamwe (FDLR the terrorist group) That did the genocide against Tutsi from Rwanda.

Slide 8: Separated from Family

Conflicts between Communities in Fizi Territory

Before we dive into conflicts, we would like to be precise that the Banyamulenge community is a minority and all these communities are against it, except the peaceful Bashi community that cares only about business matters.

The conflicts between these communities started in 1964 when these communities started to steal Banyamulenge's hens, goats and then cows. After going through this, the Banyamulenge community tried to put a stop to the stealing. That is when the surrounding communities started to kill whoever was in their way.

The worst times for Banyamulenge

Here are some historic wars that turned a lot of women into widows, and children into orphans.

1. The **Mulele** war was from **1964-1967**. During this war, all Banyamulenge fled from their home areas to other areas and stayed there for one year. A lot of them died from different diseases because of changing their environment, and not getting enough food.

2. In 1996 massacres in the villages called **IKABERA, Kalemie, Inganji, Byura** a lot of people were killed (some people were taken by **Babembe; and we still don't know where they are today**).
3. In 1998 in Lubumbashi, a lot of people were killed, and the rest were taken to the United States directly without going through the refugee process.

Slide 9: Gutumba

4. On August 13, 2004, 166 Banyamulenge Refugees were selected among other Congolese and killed under UN protection in Gutumba, Burundi, till today there is no justice.
5. The war that we have now started in 2017. This war is the longest that we ever had- and it has been going on 8 years now. Their target is to make sure that every Banyamulenge dies and those who do not die, must leave Congo.

The Problems We Are Facing:

1. Our nationality is denied when we are called Rwandans.
2. We continue to be killed by burning us publicly and shooting us.
3. Our rights are denied, such as voting, getting jobs - the rights enjoyed by other Congolese.
4. Banyamulenge soldiers are being killed by their colleagues.
5. We are victims of hate speeches from the government's leaders who are from those other communities.

Slide 10: Homes Destroyed

6. Our houses, schools, and churches are being destroyed.
7. We are not getting assistance from international organizations because the government does not talk about what is going on in our areas.
8. Because of the war all Banyamulenge are forced to gather in a few places.
9. Our cattle are stolen.

Slide 11: Pray

You may want to know if we are supporting each other as a community.

There are Banyamulenge associations that were created by the diaspora community in Canada, United States, Europe, and Australia to support people who are still living back home, and everyone contributes a little money each month to these associations.

We thank the Erb street Mennonite church for giving us the opportunity to share our story, for supporting us and we ask you to help us pray for the Banyamulenge Community.