

INKURU

Franklin Ndabaramiye to Foreside Community Church, October 20, 2024

The Rwandan Genocide changed the lives of the Rwandan people in un-imaginable ways. The loss that my family and I experienced during the Genocide, became even more intense 3 years later, when there was a return of violence in the area from rebels who came out of hiding from the Congo.

A surprise attack from the Interhamwe forever changed my life, on what was meant to be a normal bus ride for me, as I traveled to visit my aunt and her husband in a distant village. This bus ride, however, led me on a very un-expected journey.

I was only one of many people who experienced tragic trauma and loss during this time, my story is also uniquely my own, in many ways. The loss of both hands to a machete was intended to take my life...but instead led to a life of unimaginable possibilities.

Through this very difficult journey, the loss of my hands required me to begin my life again...to re-learn all of the things that had once been so easy for me. The decision to do so was mine. I could continue to allow others to do everything for me that I wanted to do...or I could figure out a way to do these things for myself again.

I often think of how as a young man, I needed to be reborn in a sense, almost like a baby who needs to learn everything anew. I needed to learn to smile again. I needed to learn to feed myself with a spoon and fork, to figure out how to take a shower with soap, to brush my teeth and wash my own clothes.

My goal was to be independent...to be "able" and not "disabled".

I wanted to learn how to walk and run and play with others. Imagine falling down and not having hands to catch your fall. I had to learn to fall without hurting myself. It took me 4-5 years to learn how to do all of these basic things again independently.

Experiencing trauma provided me with a different understanding of people who have experienced trauma and hardships in their life. Funny enough, it was the loss of my hands that gave me the deep desire to touch the lives of others like me, with understanding, encouragement and love.

In asking myself how I could help others to experience life after such terrible loss...the 3 simple words "Never Give Up" resonated in my heart and spirit

My heart's desire is to inspire and encourage others on their journey to live a life full of possibilities...no matter what challenges stand in their way.

This is my story...and by God's help, I now see my challenges as opportunities allowing me to grow. I hope to help others see this possibility in their own story as well.

I appreciate and am honored to have the opportunity to share more of my life's story with you. The paintings that I share are my way of showing that life is possible after loss, and how God can use and redeem even the most challenging times, leading to a life of joy and un-ending possibilities.

Thank you!