

Peter Verlinden's Wife Marie Bamutese and her Original Home in Bugesera

By KT Press Staff Writer April 19, 2020



Peter Verlinden and wife

It is Friday morning in Bugesera district and windy weather overshadows a commonly harsh scorching sun in the Eastern Province district of Rwanda.

KT Press reporters kick off a 30km journey to one of the District's remotest sectors; Nyarugenge sector located near the border of Rwanda and Burundi.

The sector is very strategic for farming and trade – given the physical trading facilities and farms that straddle the beautiful and scenic hills overlooking neighbouring Burundi.

In fact, when you are standing at one of the hills in Rugasa village, Ngenda cell, you can easily notice movement of people right across in the neighbouring hills of Burundi.

In this visibly busy village, people engage in different activities. The village is home to Ecole Primaire Ngenda – one of the oldest schools in the area.

Despite Nyarugenge Sector being a hospitable place, one of its children opted to completely disown it and not so many know the story of this virulent hater of Rwanda who once called it home.

With several fabricated publications, she misrepresents her native home, falsifies and denies facts about the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi and everything about the post-Genocide Rwanda. Her vitriol can easily be felt reading through her concocted narratives.

In many gatherings, she accuses Rwanda and the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF-Inkotanyi) of killing her parents.

In every life situation, one would choose a different path – focusing on a certain agenda but for many, that path should never be coming up with lies about one's country and negate one of its horrible experiences of mankind like the 1994 Genocide committed against Tutsi.

There is always a bond between a human being and their country of birth, no matter the circumstances, one can't go to the extent of fabricating lies and rewriting history.

Welcome to the world of Marie Bamutese, whose real names are Marina Bamurebe, according to her close relatives in Ngenda cell, where she hails from.

“She changed her names to cover up her past and succeed in her agenda,” said one of the relatives who strongly disowned her activities.

Together with her husband Peter Verlinden, Bamurebe (Bamutese) has published an endless list of articles, interviews and documentaries that deny or trivialize the Genocide against Tutsi. Both are major figures on a denialist platform that claims that there was a Genocide of Hutu in Rwanda, that RPF infiltrated Interahamwe militia and killed both Tutsi and Hutus, while pointing out that not more than 200,000 Tutsis were massacred in 1994.

As the common practice is, genocide deniers often come up with stories to tarnish the image of RPF Inkotanyi and its role in stopping the genocide. Genocidaires and their friends play this card very well, for they know it is the only way to deny the genocide perpetrated against the Tutsi.

In many gatherings and on social media platforms, Bamurebe's husband, Peter Verlinden claims that his spouse's parents were killed by RPF.

He repeatedly says that Bamurebe's father was killed in April 1994 in Ruhango District probably by RPF. In several interviews, Bamutese claims that her mother was killed upon her repatriation back to Rwanda in July 1997.

In 2014, Marina Bamurebe went on to tell her protracted story in a BBC Documentary titled: “This World: Rwanda’s Untold Story”, aired on October 1, 2014. With her husband, they have also co-published a biography of “Bamutese” (Marie, Overleven met de dood) which is rightly classified in the “novel section” in Libraries. This in itself is of great symbolic meaning.

But her story omits the most important part of her real story. She hardly can own her background, the real story behind the death of her father in April or May 1994, and of her mother later in 1997.

To bring out the exact truth from the ground, we travelled to Bamutese’s home village and talked to her relatives and former neighbours, who narrated the untold story that will probably leave Bamutese and her husband exposed for lying to the world through their teeth.



Peter Verlinden and Agathe Habyarimana **Background**

Bamurebe was born in Nyarugenge, Ngenda, Bugesera District on October 20, 1982 (her official date of birth in Belgium).

She was nearly 12 years old when she, with her family, crossed River Rusizi to DR Congo (Bukavu), after the French military from Zone Turquoise made it clear to them that they could not stay; that it was safer for them to leave before the RPF would come.

Born to Tharcisse Sempura, who had a successful career as a high ranking civil servant before switching to a business career, and Beatrice Kabusoro, a mother of 8 kids who ran a bar and restaurant, Bamurebe left her home in Nyarugenge sector during the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi along with her parents – as narrated to KT Press by her relatives who are still living there. Bamurebe and her parents walked from Bugesera to DRC through the Southern part of Rwanda.

In a series of tweets, Peter Verlinden, Bamurebe's husband, said that Bamurebe's father "was killed towards the end of April 1994 in Ruhango most probably by RPF infiltrators, as these agents were spread all over Rwanda."

According to local sources, Bamurebe's father Sempura was suffering from what was believed to be epilepsy. Epilepsy is a neurological disorder marked by sudden recurrent episodes of sensory disturbance, loss of consciousness, or convulsions, associated with abnormal electrical activity in the brain.

As narrated by "Bamutese" in her biography co-published with her husband (Marie, *Overleven met de dood*), on April 24, 1994, Bamutese's family was ordered to leave as soon as possible towards the south.

"Because the RPF will be there soon. Everyone should cross the Rwabusoro Bridge as the military (FAR) would soon bomb it in order to slow down the RPF," they were told.

"Bamutese" and her family then quickly left by foot to the south. After crossing Rwabusoro Bridge, they walked a few hours to a family friend's home (elsewhere in the biography, it is said that the family friend's home was one day walk from Rwabusoro). When everybody left, Bamurebe's father Sempura stayed home in bed, very weak and sick.

According to the Biography, "few days after 24 April 1994, Marie's mother, hearing from refugees that the Bridge still stood intact, she decided to go back home to Ngenda to get her husband. She would be back the next day. Only a few hours later, the bridge got destroyed."

From this episode, gaps start to appear in the Bamurebe's story; most notable is the part where Bamurebe said that a Tutsi friend of the family sought shelter at their house, and one night, Marie's mother and one of her oldest sisters took him through the swamps over to the border with Burundi, and he crossed. On the other hand, when their turn to flee came, they failed to take with them Bamurebe's father who was sick.

The authors of the Biography did not explain how "Bamutese's" mother miraculously transported her husband whom they had left alone sick in bed unable to walk. How did she come with a seriously sick man who could not walk few days before, and loaded with food?

Another implausible story told by Bamurebe, is that of 4 Tutsi kids who went to hide at Bamurebe's house after their mother was killed by Interahamwe on April 7th, 1994. Bamurebe said that they sheltered those kids for the next 2 weeks, until their oldest brother (who had joined the RPF) came back to protect them.

So, how could an RPF soldier leave his unit on the battlefield and go back home to protect his siblings in an area still controlled by ex-FAR and Interahamwe?

A few days after the bombing of the Rwabusoro Bridge which connects Bugesera and Nyanza by the genocide forces, following the capture of Bugesera by RPA on May 21, 1994), Bamurebe and her family fled again, in the direction of the west, towards Gitarama. They settled in an Internally Displaced Camp, in a large school outside the small city of Ruhango.

If one can establish a chronology of events from Bamurebe's autobiography and her husband's tweets, Bamurebe's father was killed towards the end of April 1994 in Ruhango, and yet the family arrived in Ruhango after the destruction of Rwabusoro Bridge on 21st May 1994.

A few days later, following an alleged incident of shootings inside the Ruhango camp, Bamutese's family decided to flee further south to Butare where her maternal grandmother lived.

Once again, her father was too ill to go with them and he remained in the camp in Ruhango. After walking one day on their way to Butare, they sheltered in a school along the way for the night. That is when "Bamutese's" mother decided to go back to Ruhango during the night "to see her husband one last time".

According to the Biography, when her mother returned from Ruhango, she explained to Bamutese and her siblings that "when she reached Ruhango, the camp was being attacked by rebels, firing at the camp from outside, and their father was too weak to leave.

Bamutese describes a dramatic scene where her mother allegedly saw "bullets flying in the air like stars and she had to hide in a ditch and pretended to be dead in order to escape the rebels who were killing everyone."

Basing on the Biography, Bamutese's mother did not tell her children exactly how their father died, because she left him still alive; Bamutese's mother barely had the time to greet him before fleeing and hiding.

Bamutese narrates in her biography that together with her 7 siblings and her mother they proceeded further south and arrived at her maternal grandmother's home (former Nyakizu District, Butare, close to the Burundian border), early June 1994.

A few weeks later, probably mid-June 1994, "around 20 members of her extended family (uncles and aunts) arrived at her grandmother's place. All together, they left to Congo."

According to Bamurebe's relatives who had stayed in Ruhango with Bamurebe's father, as they walked from Ruhango to Butare, Bamutese's father fell down from what they suspected to be his usual epileptic seizures. "We couldn't carry him. We were all running for our own lives. The distance was long so we left him there," said Bamurebe's relative.

On arrival to DRC, Bamurebe's relatives continued to move, they spent months in the camp in Bukavu before returning to Rwanda in 1995.

Return to Rwanda and Bamurebe's first travel to Europe

Back in Rwanda after a brief stay in DRC, Bamurebe and her mother returned to their native Nyarugenge sector in Bugesera district. After spending weeks at home, one of her aunties who is a nun, processed her travel documents to France. She was later joined in Europe by all her siblings, 6 sisters and her brother.

According to Bamurebe's relatives on ground and neighbours whom she schooled with at Ecole Primaire Ngenda, her mother fell sick towards the end of 1997. She later died due to natural causes, relatives told KT Press.

Bamutese's own story of her first travel to Europe is different from her relatives' account. According to the biography and her interviews, after the closing of the Rwandan refugee camps in Eastern DRC in 1995, Bamutese and her siblings together with her mom ran deep into the jungles. At some point she said that for months she lived with a Congolese man as husband and wife in exchange for that man's protection for her mom and her siblings.

Eventually, according to "Bamutese", when the family was evacuated by the Red-Cross from the DRC forests and transported to Goma, her mother advised her to lie that she was an orphan. That was the last time she says she saw her mother who was repatriated from Goma to Rwanda in July 1997, and according to "Bamutese", her mother was killed shortly after arriving in Rwanda, in front of her 2 daughters.

Bamurebe tells her story in a manner that makes her remarkable, but it leaves out her megalomaniac self. She said that during her stay in orphanages in Congo, she lived with a certain Olivia, a close relative of former President Habyarimana.

With the help of a religious brother, in 1999 she travelled to France where her aunt who is a nun lived; but she was intercepted and detained in Belgium because she had a fake passport.

Four months later she was granted the asylum status in Belgium and settled there. She was 17 years old. Her siblings, 6 sisters and a brother, joined her later in Europe.

In a May 2019 interview, Bamurebe said that she is not close to her brother because he arrived after serving many years in armed groups based in DRC as a child soldier, and that he is still seriously traumatized.

Currently, Bamurebe's brother Savio Bajeneza who lives in France, runs several businesses in Bugesera District – courtesy of his cousin's custodianship.

"He even travels back home to see his businesses including commercial houses," a local leader in the area told KT Press.

Genocide denial, fake stories of protecting Tutsi and distortion of facts to vilify RPF

Like so many other genocide deniers who fake stories to trivialize the Genocide against Tutsi or to undermine RPF, Bamutese and her husband Peter Verlinden's allegation that her father was killed by RPF towards the end of April 1994 in Ruhango is fake and ridiculous for so many reasons, but mainly because RPF did not reach Ruhango not until end of May 1994.

Also, using an incident that allegedly happened one night inside the Ruhango camp in April 1994, Peter Verlinden included in the book a paragraph that represents very well the narrative of the "génodaires" and their friends, the purported RPF officers who had infiltrated Interahamwe.

In the book's subtly vicious tone, "Bamutese" and Verlinden told a story of the famous "RPF infiltrators in the Ruhango camp who were caught and killed on the spot. They were carrying jerrycan filled with bullets, firearms in their luggage and walkie-talkies."

Another familiar narrative common to the wide web of manipulations of genocide perpetrators and their friends is the tale of how they almost got killed by Interahamwe.

The false narrative is similar to that of Claude Gatebuke who claims to have miraculously escaped from Interahamwe. "Bamutese" is no exception. In her biography co-written with her husband Verlinden, she said that in Rwanda everyone lived in fear of Interahamwe. Even ordinary Hutus were not safe from them.

It is in that context that during their exodus, Bamutese, a 12 year old girl, miraculously escaped from being killed by Interahamwe who suspected her of being Tutsi, and an alleged accomplice of the enemy, RPF-Inkotanyi.

One can only admire the devotion of Peter Verlinden who continues to look for sympathy from gullible western souls to shed tears while reading this story out of an African survivor, because he knows there is a bunch of naive 'bazungu' who can believe this kind of story that is full of lies and manipulations of truth.

Every single paragraph of Bamutese's experience in Rwanda and in Congo is stuffed with very dubious stories such as the claim of hiding Tutsi kids until their brother came from RPF ranks to protect them, or how their mother accompanied a Tutsi man through the swamps at night to Burundi border to escape the genocide against the Tutsi.

Then the cherries on the cake are the paragraphs obviously inserted by Peter Verlinden to provide a biased context and denialist perspective to the readers in an effort to justify the genocide against the Tutsi.

In the book, Verlinden is at his best, with his usual "academic research or journalistic facts" slogans, which are so obviously prejudiced and revisionist. Only time can tell how long this duo can go on with their manipulation of history.