

UTUZI WIVOMEYE TURARYOHA - Nicole

(The water you fetched yourself is always the best)

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This beautiful citation was proclaimed by a lady who devoted herself to the widows and orphans of the genocide in the village of Imena in Kimironko, called Nicole Pageau. The widows call her Maman Nicole for her big heart and love like a mother. She proclaimed this on the official opening of the Centre dedicated to helping widows and orphans in the village of Imena on March, 25th 2010.

In the celebrations were present where different authorities of the district of Gasabo and the main guest being the Ombudsman of Rwanda, Tito Rutaremara, the eyes of the widows and orphans of Imena were enlightened with joy as they were officially presented their own centre. After the cutting of the ribbon by the main guest, the Ombudsman, all invitees were welcomed to take a guided tour of the premises and see different activities that take place at the centre including a sewing shop, arts and crafts made by the widows, a hall serving as a medical clinic and massages room for old and ailing widows. They were also informed that the members of the Centre have a food bank for them and that the little kids go to school at the daycare run by the same Centre. It is located right in the village and they are provided meals as well. Sick widows have a special diet for them in the food bank. A mechanics school for young adolescents who didn't get a chance to complete high school was also presented as a part of Centre Cesar. Different speeches that were given all centered around one common point which was thanking Maman Nicole who has always done all her best to find help for those widows and orphans until this new centre was built. Also due to the help of Marcelle Forestier, whom everyone calls Maman Bisous (Kissing Mother) due to her way of greeting everybody lovingly. This Maman Bisous has given of her own money to buy a plot in Kigali and construct this new centre which stands now as a beautiful building!

The Executive secretary of the sector of Kimironko, Habimana Robert, on the behalf of the mayor of the district of Gasabo, who was not there due to work reasons, declared: "It's very rejoicing to finally see you set in this beautiful new centre. We will always be with you as usual and we'll always introduce you to different authorities may it be of Rwanda or from elsewhere and invite them to come here and see your amazing achievements."

The president of Centre César made a point to speak of the generosity of Maman Nicole and Marcelle Forestier and gave many thanks to FARG, the fund that has always supported these widows; the same fund that constructed the houses these widows are living in today. She emphasized the good impact of reinforcing security by the government and pointed out that these widows have come from their solitary days and are now able to do something to improve their lives, which is a remarkable improvement.

She also took this opportunity to say that they were waiting for the elections to vote for the one who would assure their security as the country is secure today.

The widows also emphasized the fact that the Ombudsman of Rwanda, Tito Rutaremara, has always been there for them and been a good ambassador advocating for Centre César everywhere.

Nicole Pageau, who coordinates the projects of Ubuntu in Rwanda, said she was very satisfied by the hospitality of Rwanda and Rwandans in particular. She saluted the courage of the widows and orphans of Imena who have now understood that they are the ones to build a better future for themselves instead of opening their arms for donations. She thanked so much the 9 women of the board of directors of Centre Cesar and introduced each and every one of them to those who were present, describing what each does and how they're devoted in their work.

She expressed her joy to finally accomplish the promise she made to the Rwandan Architect exiled in Canada, Cyriaque César, of constructing together with him, a community centre to help vulnerable

people. Unfortunately, he passed away before that centre was built. Nicole had promised him on his death bed that she would build that centre. That community centre is now on the ground and it's named after him "Centre César".

The son of Cyriaque César, Igor César, who also lives in Canada and was present on this day, saluted the progress of the centre and thanked all the figures that intervened in the realization of their projects. He said: "On this day of official opening, again we salute your courage and share with you, dear mothers, the hope that in a near future, together we will be able to reach the goal of self sustainability, and hand over to you, this community centre."

The Ombudsman of Rwanda, Tito Rutaremara, declared: "Nicole got married to Rwanda" meaning that Maman Nicole has loved Rwanda a lot and Rwanda loved her so much that the relationship between them is so tight, like one between a man and a woman who are married.

He told the story of how he met Nicole when she first arrived, and how she wasn't sure of what she had to do to help those widows and orphans, which started from renting a house to serve as a centre to celebrating today her numerous and encouraging achievements. He affirmed that he always sees two important things in the person of Nicole Pageau: one is her big heart full of love and the other one is her endurance in hard situations. He summarized the good achievements of Nicole in three main points: having brought back hope and self esteem to these women, having proven to the widows that the world has not completely forgotten Rwanda and finally she is doing her best to find young ambassadors for Rwanda, who will talk about Rwanda wherever they'll go.

At this last point, he took time to thank the team of students from Canada and their teachers who took their time to come to Rwanda to visit Rwandans and see what kind of life these widows and orphans live.

With a lot of joy, he confessed that he had had an idea of giving a cow to Maman Nicole to thank her and honor her achievements but after hearing that Marcelle Forestier had given her own money for the construction of the centre, he changed his mind and he gave the cow to Marcelle as a sign of love and thankfulness, as it is done in the Rwandan culture. He wished these widows and orphans in Centre Cesar lots of blessings from the Almighty and promised to always be there for them.

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