

# Bahati Mnyaci

My name is Bahati Mnyaci, and I am a Congolese refugee who formerly lived in Zimbabwe but am now pursuing a master's degree in Global Management and Politics in Rome. I am the youngest in my family of 15 siblings in the village of Kazimia, South Kivu Province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. I am grateful to have had certain principles instilled in me at an early age, such as collaboration, devotion, and honesty, to name a few. I am fortunate to have been born into a family whose values emphasized hard effort in order to attain success. At the age of nine, I was playing with my friends on the shores of Lake Tanganyika and my brother was fishing and my sister was doing the dishes, when the sound of gunshots began.

We had no choice but to hide in a cave by the lake in the hope that the shooting would stop. This was not the case; we had no choice but to return home and spend time with our families. When we reached home, we didn't see anybody, but people were racing to the coast where boats were ferrying them to various safe places. My brother, Akenga, my sister, Mwalihasha, and I also followed everyone else to get to a boat that would transfer us to a safe area. We boarded the boat and traveled by sea for several days, until we landed in Mpulungu, Zambia. We were hungry and didn't know anyone as we traveled up and down the street looking for food assistance. In our grave predicament, a kind Samaritan, a truck driver, noticed us and inquired where we were headed. We told him our tale and how we escaped the conflict. He allowed us inside his vehicle and made sure the police couldn't find us until we arrived at Transit camp in Waterfalls, where he dropped us off and ordered us to tell the people living in the camp our tale.

Upon arrival, we were sent to the authorities, where my brother was thoroughly questioned about the difficulties we experienced and how we got this far. After a thorough review of our case, we were given

refugee status in December 2003. It was not an easy life as a refugee, as it was fraught with difficulties due to communication gaps and social and cultural disparities. Despite being in a new nation, I wanted to go to school, but enrolling in one was not simple because there were school fees. I thank God my brother started and flourished in a hand-skill job, which enabled me to enroll in grade three at Marlborough Primary School. Learning as a refugee was difficult because I couldn't communicate, so I was placed in a special class with students who had different challenges. This situation propelled my ability to adapt quickly, and after 3 to 4 months, I was transferred to a regular class. I pushed hard to develop and joined sports teams, and by grade seven in 2008, I was the best athlete at Marlborough Primary School as well as an average student. I finished elementary school with 13 points, which qualified me for entrance to Churchill Boys High School in 2009.

I did not give up when I did not have enough money, as some of my colleagues did; instead, I focused on the objective of acquiring a good education, which was my desire. I joined the school rugby squad and quickly rose to become one of the greatest rugby players at my school. In 2015, I finished my A level with 6 points in commercial studies. Despite the fact that I intended to attend university, there were no means to support my education. In 2017, because of my brother's efforts, I was able to gain admission to Great Zimbabwe University, where I began my honors degree in Business Management. That same year I reconnected with my mother, sister, Louise, and brother, Sumbia.

In 2018, in response to the challenges our community was facing, particularly among young girls and women, I discovered Change Agents Advocacy (CAA), an organization dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of vulnerable refugee girls and

women through advocacy campaigns, leadership training, mentorship, and income-generating activities.

In my third year, I was able to get the Dafi refugee scholarship, which was a true God-send for me. At the same time, the scheme was going through committee elections, in which I campaigned and was elected president of Dafi Zimbabwe. In the same year, 2019, I ran for minister of foreign affairs in the Great Zimbabwe University's school representative council, where I was defeated by a small number of votes. Afterwards, I became an advisor. I finished my studies in 2020, while simultaneously serving as the university rugby captain.

Completing my undergraduate degree was a tremendous accomplishment, but I had a strong desire to continue my studies in a developed nation, and I spent many sleepless hours working on applications to various colleges across the world. I worked so hard that I became accustomed to receiving rejection letters for my applications, but I never gave up hope. In the year 2022, I discovered the university corridor for refugees (UNICORE), a

program pioneered by Italian universities in partnership with UNHCR to provide refugees with the option to pursue their education. I applied to four institutions and got accepted to Luiss University to pursue a Master's degree in Global Management and Politics. It seemed like a dream when I came in Italy in September 2022, and it is now a blessing for me because, having been voted as one of the university student ambassadors, I use the job to campaign for the rights of refugees to receive a decent education. I continue to speak at high-level conferences on the significance of investing in migrant education and the displaced community. Today, I can also send money to my mother using the stipend I receive. I am looking forward to making a significant contribution to the field of diplomacy and humanity, where I will be able to influence policies that will result in constructive change for the betterment of mankind.

My hope for the upcoming summer vacation is to get an internship program in advisory work that will enhance my knowledge and skills. I believe that a journey of a thousand miles begins with one step. My focus is to follow one course until success.