

The Courage for Peace

THEOGENE Ngamije was just a small boy when a simple act of kindness by an Australian peacekeeper changed his life.

Theogene had been separated from his parents in a refugee camp in Rwanda in 1994 and thought his life was over.

“No day was easy,” he said. “I was five or six years old, and most of us were in a refugee camp in Kibeho. Bombings, shootings started happening... I was scared, of course... intimidated and hungry.

“I was seated down, crying, not knowing where to go and... an Australian soldier gave me an Australian national flag – the patch, the one that normally goes on their uniform – and gave me a piece of biscuit.

“He lifted me up, put me on his shoulder and took me to safety, where the other kids were. He saved me and he gave me a different understanding of what soldiers do.”

More than 20 years later, Theogene is now a private in the Australian Army. He shares his story in *The Courage for Peace* exhibition, which opened at the Australian War Memorial on October 18.

Curator Margaret Farmer said the exhibition tells the story of what Australians do to make, shape and keep peace, with themes of courage, hope, partnership and shared humanity.

“*The Courage for Peace* tells the story of Australia’s peacemakers, peacekeepers, disaster-relief workers and capacity builders, who work strategically and courageously to avert tragedy and build peace,” Margaret said.

The exhibition features a number of objects – including a heavily damaged window salvaged from the Australian

 **ABOVE:** Private Theogene Ngamije speaks at a ceremony marking the 70th anniversary of Australian involvement in peacekeeping at the Australian War Memorial. (AWM: 2017.4.235.24)



A new exhibition at the Australian War Memorial tells the story of Australia’s peacemakers, peacekeepers and disaster-relief workers.

Embassy in Jakarta following the 2004 bombing – and focuses on the experiences, reflections and personal perspectives of those individuals who have contributed to Australia’s efforts towards peace.

Their stories are told in a powerful audio-visual production, which is generously supported by Rotary International’s President’s Peace Conference Project Fund, which was created to continue the commitment of advancing peace and working on conflict resolution in troubled areas around the world for over 100 years.

Rotarians have been committed to advancing peace and working on conflict resolution in troubled areas for many decades. Peace and Conflict Resolution is one of Rotary’s six *Areas of Focus*, with the goal of advancing peace through peace-builders.

Australians and New Zealanders are recognised around the world not

only for their willingness to serve, but also for standing up to create a better world in which humanity can live and enjoy the fruits of freedom.

Cities and towns across our nations have prominent memorials that serve as a reminder of the supreme sacrifice our servicemen and women gave as soldiers, peacemakers and peacekeepers.

Our leanings as a human race and our service as Rotarians teach us to look for areas of peace and conflict resolution to help overcome the suffering conflict creates and allow peace builders to achieve their goals.

We must continue to recognise our servicemen and women, who give great courage, mateship and sacrifice to achieve peace and freedom.

The Courage for Peace will be on display for approximately 12 months. •