



# Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

## Official Transcript: Beth Lyons (Part 2 of 13)



<b>Role:</b>	Defense Counsel
<b>Country of Origin:</b>	United States
<b>Interview Date:</b>	3 November 2008
<b>Location:</b>	Arusha, Tanzania
<b>Interviewers:</b>	Batya Friedman Ronald Slye
<b>Videographer:</b>	Max Andrews
<b>Interpreter:</b>	None

## Interview Summary

Beth Lyons highlights the importance of a fair trial for all. She discusses the politicization of ICTR prosecutions, particularly the failure to investigate war crimes committed by the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). She states she has found no evidence of a plan to commit genocide by those accused by the Tribunal, which she views as a key difference between the events in Rwanda and the Holocaust. Lyons reflects on the inequity of resources between the prosecution and defense.

*The transcript of Part 2 begins on the following page.*

## Part 2

**00:00** **Batya Friedman: Then at what point did you learn about the ICTR and something changed such that you came to be here? Can you help us understand that?**

00:10 Well, the question is how did I get here? How I got here is I've always been interested in international issues both as a, from a personal point of view, human point of view and as a lawyer.

00:22 I was aware of various issues concerning lawyers in other countries and I was aware of the workings of the UN, international law, et cetera, et cetera, particularly through the work at the TRC, I became aware of the plethora of, of truth commissions – at that point probably, this was '96, '97.

00:47 At that point, there had been Truth Commissions, or Truth Commission structures in probably 17 or 18 countries, so that as a lawyer, I was always aware of these issues and always, you know, concerned about what was happening internationally because I don't believe that what goes on in my country is the center of the world.

01:09 Unfortunately, what goes on in my country has sometimes a disproportion impact on the rest of the world but, you know, I, I don't have a, a – my perspective is a much more internationalist perspective and this goes back, you know, four decades to, to my, my activism against then the war in Vietnam.

**01:29** **BF: So, and you mentioned then that you participated in the Truth and Reconciliation process in South Africa?**

01:34 Right, I volunteered for a period of time and that, and that, and that's the way I participated, yes.

**01:39** **BF: And, and can you tell us a little bit about what you did there? What your role was?**

01:43 Sure. I was accepted, well actually, the, my first contact with the TRC, I was there for a meeting, a congress of, of my NGO and I was, had the opportunity to watch the opening hearings of the TRC in East London. At that point I met both commissioners and staff as well as individuals who'd come to testify in East London about what had happened to their families.

02:13 I was quite impressed by the process because it, for me, it showed that here was state recognition of what certainly most black and Indian and colored people knew of the horrors and the violence and the oppression of apartheid and the denial of rights to people. But what's important about the TRC was that it was an official body actually recognizing this.

- 02:41 I really wanted to be able to participate and make some contribution. I simply didn't want to go as an observer and I remember at that point talking to a number of individuals trying to find out if there were a place to, to be part of it as an intern. Eventually, I was accepted as an intern in the Research Department in Cape Town under Charles Villa-Vicencio.
- 03:10 I did a little work under (\_\_\_\_\_) in the Legal Department and focused on two issues. One was the, the destruction of state documents by the apartheid regime, particularly in the years during the negotiations around the TEC, ni-, early '90s period, and the second thing I worked on was a very short briefing paper on amnesty and what had been the state reaction to, to amnesty particularly in Latin America . . .
- 03:43 . . . and looked at Argentina, Chile, et cetera, a number of countries where the military juntas had passed fake amnesties, essentially; amnesties to shield people. Later on, obviously these, these amnesties, these legislate amnesties have been revoked. But I got, I was able to look at a number of countries and a little bit of their legislation on the issue of amnesty and, and what it meant.
- 04:11 Because the issue of amnesty and the criteria to amnesty, certainly within the legislation of the TRC, was a very important issue in South Africa and a highly debated issue as well as other aspects of the TRC and its application to both the former an-, former apartheid regime and member-, and members of Vlakplaas et cetera, as well as to the liberation movements.
- 04:37 BF: So then how did you come be here at the ICTR as part of defense counsel?**
- 04:43 Okay, I wanted to do international legal work. I've always done, I've always worked for Legal Aid. What is here is international legal aid and I had one or two colleagues who had told me about the ICTR. I went to the website. I applied to get on the list for ICTR, ICTY, S-, Special Courts Sierra Leone. I think that was all. Cambodia hadn't been organized at that point.
- 05:11 So, and actually I got here because a colleague here had recommended me in a situation where someone was looking for co-counsel.
- 05:21 BF: And when did you come to the ICTR?**
- 05:24 I came in 2004. I was appointed January 2004 at, to represent Aloys Simba as co-counsel. He already had a team in place with lead counsel, investigators, legal assistants. They needed a co-counsel.
- 05:41 BF: And then since that time, you've been co-counsel on other cases as well?**
- 05:45 No, I was on that case 2004, 2005. Judgment was rendered 2005. Then, I went back to Legal Aid because I wasn't on another case . . .

**05:58**      **BF: Mm-hmm.**

05:58      . . . and in February 2007 was appointed as co-counsel in my current case to represent Major Nzuwonemeye.

**06:06**      **BF: Okay.**