

## Official Transcript: Colette Ngoya (Full Interview)



<b>Role:</b>	Translator
<b>Country of Origin:</b>	Cameroon
<b>Interview Date:</b>	13 October 2008
<b>Location:</b>	Arusha, Tanzania
<b>Interviewers:</b>	Lisa P. Nathan Donald J. Horowitz
<b>Videographer:</b>	Max Andrews Nell Carden Grey
<b>Interpreter:</b>	None

### Interview Summary

Colette Ngoya reflects on her role as translator during the early days of investigations in Kigali, Rwanda, and later during trial proceedings in Arusha, Tanzania. She addresses challenges of translating difficult material, such as evidence and witness statements regarding rape and killings. Ngoya also discusses difficulties in translating legal terminology, learning differences between civil and common law systems, and with the Tribunal's system for three-way translation using English, French, and Kinyarwanda. She emphasizes the importance of public education in law.

*The transcript of the interview begins on the following page.*

## Part 1

- 00:00** Lisa P. Nathan: We are interested in your experiences and thoughts on, reflections on your time here at the ICTR and on international justice and on what it's like to be a human being grappling with some of the issues that you've faced here.
- 00:17** LPN: We have been reading and speaking with others about the genocide and this tribunal, and for the people who view your interview now and well into the future, they might not know much about the situation or about the legal system. So at times when I'm talking with you I might ask you things that you think I should already know, but I'm trying to have you explain things so that people in the future understand better.
- 00:49** LPN: I may ask why a lot and that's because I want to make sure I understand. Not that you're not giving a good answer, but I want to fully understand what you're saying. And if you use terms that are kind of technical to your role, again I might ask you to describe them a bit more. And we really want to understand your thoughts and, and how you're thinking about these things. So to begin, would you give us your full name?
- 01:22 My name is Colette Ngoya, Colette Bernadette Ngoya.
- 01:26** LPN: Thank you. And what is your role here at the ICTR?
- 01:30 I'm a translator interpreter but mostly I translate.
- 01:34** LPN: Okay, but you do both.
- 01:36 Yeah, since I came I've not enter, I've, I've not been into the booth, I translate mainly, yeah.
- 01:42** LPN: Okay, but you are trained as an interpreter.
- 01:44 Yeah,
- 01:45** LPN: But you've (\_\_\_\_)
- 01:45 But I've nev-, I've never been, I've never, never worked as an interpreter in the tribunal, yeah.
- 01:50** LPN: Okay, how long have you been at the ICTR?
- 01:55 I came here the 26th of March, 1997.
- 02:00** LPN: Okay.
- 02:01 That is about 11 years ago, yeah.
- 02:04** LPN: And here to Arusha?

- 02:07 When I first came I was in Kigali. And I left Kigali in April 19-, 2001. That is seven years ago. Yeah.
- 02:17 LPN: And when you were in Kigali were you also a translator?**
- 02:21 A translator.
- 02:22 LPN: No interpretation?**
- 02:23 No interpretation.
- 02:25 LPN: And have you had any other roles at the ICTR? Any other jobs?**
- 02:32 No.
- 02:33 LPN: Okay.**
- 02:33 No. I did a little bit of administration in Kigali, yeah . . .
- 02:37 LPN: Okay.**
- 02:38 . . . but mostly translation.
- 02:42 LPN: And what training did you have before you started?**
- 02:47 I'm a trained translator. I, should I tell you where I studied? I studied in Cameroon, I, up to the first degree at the University then I went to Montreal, the University of Montreal where I did translation, Master's Degree in translation and I went back to Cameroon and the interpretation part I did in Buea in, in Cameroon. But I was recruited here as a translator and that is my, my training, yeah. My main training as translator.
- 03:28 LPN: So can you tell me where you were in the spring of 1994?**
- 03:33 I was in Cameroon working. I was working at the Presidency of the Republic of Cameroon in Yaoundé.
- 03:43 LPN: Do you remember when you first became aware of the genocide in Rwanda?**
- 03:51 While listening to the news, of course. We were told that something was happening in Rwanda. I knew about Rwandans because I had a classmate who was Rwandese when I was in secondary school and she was a friend, kind of, so I knew about that country. And when they started talking about Rwanda, I remembered her, but I can't say we really focus on the news.
- 04:22 You know, you know that something is happening but you never really – you don't have the whole picture because the news are not as complete as they are supposed to be. And there were a lot of Rwandans in Cameroon; a lot of them came, so there were programs to help, there were programs at the telev-, national television to try and see. So we heard about it on the news, yeah.
- 04:54 LPN: Did you find – have you ever heard from your friend, from your school friend?**

04:58 When I went to Rwanda I met her. She went back, she got married, and I just met her by chance like that. We had a meeting, a Cameroonian meeting and since she has lived in Cameroon she decided to come and then I met her, yeah.

**05:13 LPN: So you found out that she was okay?**

05:15 She was okay, yeah. She went back and she was okay. As a matter of fact she is okay because she's still in Kigali now, yeah.

## Part 2

**00:00 LPN: When did – or it's maybe why did you decide to begin working here at the tribunal, or first in Kigali?**

00:11 The first of us who came was Justine. She got a contract and she went to Kigali and we were working together so we spoke to each other, I went to see her family and then she told me that there were openings. I sent my application and they decided to take me so I came.

**00:37 LPN: How did you feel about going to Kigali?**

00:40 I didn't know much about Kigali at the time really. And given the situation, you are a little bit scared, you are, you know, you don't know much about it but I wanted to take the challenge.

**00:54 LPN: Can you describe what it was like in Kigali, like one of your first days there? If you can think of a specific day, and what it was like.**

01:08 I had never been to Rwanda of course and Kigali was kind of sad. I mean it's, the atmosphere was not very joyful and we had a lot of work, so you think about working and you know the situation is not a nice one and that kind of state of mind.

**01:39 LPN: So what, when you would go to work in the morning . . .**

01:43 Mm-hmm.

**01:44 LPN: . . . what was it like? Can you describe the office or how many people were there?**

01:50 We were about – I can't remember the number. The tribunal was – there were not a lot of people at the tribunal at the time and some, some of our colleagues had come to Arusha because they recruited them, then the trials opened here and then about half of the tribunal came here. We had mostly the investigators and part of the Prosecutor's office, or I mean the biggest part.

02:23 But some of them came here for the trials. So the, the, the work load, what we were working on was kind of, I mean the news were not good. You know, you would – especially for translators, you have to read everything, you have to learn about what was happening; you have to learn about the raids, the, the killings and this and that.

- 02:53 So from nowhere you get straight into that kind of atmosphere. So, some, mo-, most of the time some of us, we, we used to cry, we used to feel very bad, but that was it. And people were not very joyful around, I mean the Rwandans and that is understandable of course given what had happened. So that was it.
- 03:19 LPN: So what exactly, what sort of things were you translating? When you would go into work for the day, you would be handed . . . ?**
- 03:29 Witness statements. Most of the time. Whatever was happening in the trials, the documents from the trials and that kind of thing. But mostly witness statements, because we were in the Prosecutor's office so we were working on whatever was coming from the field. Yeah.
- 03:56 LPN: And what language would you be translating?**
- 04:00 I translate from English and Spanish to French. But in Kigali, in Kigali of course it was English to French. Yeah.
- 04:09 LPN: So some of the witnesses were giving their statements in English?**
- 04:13 Yes, not, not mo-, not a lot of them but some of them yes. But in any case we had the, the, the translation section is made up of three different units – the Kinyarwanda unit, the English and the French. And of course everything that was said in Kinyarwanda was translated either in French or in English and then we took o-, we took over from there.
- 04:37 So if it was in English, then it came to my section, my unit. If it was in French it went to the other unit of the section. So I was translating from English to French.
- 04:51 LPN: And I imagine you have friends who are interpreters?**
- 04:56 Mm-hmm.
- 04:57 LPN: And they were also working but they had a very – they had a different job. Could you explain what the difference would be?**
- 05:02 Yes, in, in, yes, in Kigali we didn't have the, the, the work of the interpreters is different in Kigali and here . . .
- 05:13 LPN: Okay.**
- 05:13 . . . because there the interpreters were mostly working for the meetings; the meetings of the tribunal. We didn't have trials, we didn't have courtrooms so once in a while we'll have working sessions, we'll have meetings and that is when they translated.
- 05:31 Of course the setting is different because we didn't need, we didn't have all the, the logistics that they have here. You don't need court room reporters, that kind of thing, so it was just in our meetings that they were translating.
- 05:49 LPN: But that – were they interpreting or?**

05:52 They were interpreting during our meet-, yes . . .

**05:54 LPN: Yes, okay.**

05:54 . . . the meetings, yeah. And that is why essentially in Kigali all the tr-, the interpreters were also translators because the workload in interpretation wasn't enough to, for them to be doing only that. So most of the time – but we had two type of interpreters. We had the, the interpreters that came from different countries, English, French, and we have Kinyarwanda interpreters.

06:23 The Kinyarwanda interpreters most of them were trained on the field, that is trained in the tribunal and what they did was go with the investigators to collect the information, to get the statements and bring them back. So most of our Kinyarwanda interpreters, that's what they were doing and then some of them were in the office. They would take over from the witness statements that came in in Kinyarwanda and put them either in English or in French for us to take over, yeah.

**06:56 LPN: Then you would take over and (\_\_\_) . . .**

06:57 Yeah.

### Part 3

**00:00 LPN: So you have worked at the ICTR as a translator for over ten years.**

00:07 Yes.

**00:09 LPN: And what have been some of the challenges of being a translator?**

00:14 One of the most important problems that we encountered is that most of us were not lawyers. Most of us were not lawyers. I am not a lawyer as tr-, in my training so – and you know that the lawyers they have a very particular language; the, the, the idioms, so we had to learn the way lawyers think.

00:44 You had to be able to write a document that a lawyer will recognize as a legal document because if you write it as a lay person, they feel, you know, they have their specific language so you have to, to make that effort. So we had to learn law in a way and at that time the chief of section organized some legal classes. We were giving the training on, you know, not, not in depth but so that we know the language, we know the way they function.

01:20 We had to learn about the civil system and the, and the common law system. Know these things and before you could, you know, be efficient, yeah. That is one of the most difficult things, part of it. But fortunately this is a closed circuit place and so the language is almost the same. Things are most of the time the same thing so if you really put your mind into it you can, yeah.

**01:52 LPN: And once you learn it then there's (\_\_\_) . . .**

- 01:53 Yeah, yeah, you become conversant kind of. It's not too difficult to know what it is but you, you know with time also because at the beginning we didn't have, like, appeal trials. Now we are having. So you go on learning and because it is different, the type of thing you're supposed to work on is not exactly the same thing as in the first instance, yeah, that kind of thing.
- 02:18 So that is the challenge and in the same time it's very interesting because you learn new things, you learn how lawyers think, and – personally I feel everybody should be trained in law. Not in-depth but since our lives is administered in a way, there is no way you can escape law, so maybe – I feel, you know like in the secondary school they should give people some basics knowledge of law because you really need it to function I think.
- 02:51 LPN: So earlier in other, you were mentioning the difficulty when you were in Kigali and I imagine it might have come over as well when you came to Arusha. The difficulty of translating witness statements – the, the descriptions of what happened, what people were relating. How, wo-, would you call that, a challenge to the job or . . . ?**
- 03:17 The, the work of the, a translator in Kigali and in Arusha, now it is the same thing because of the internet and, but at that time we were dealing with slightly different material. That is, we were working mostly on witness statement and whatever the Prosecutor – because at that time they were still doing the, how do you call it, the 'Acte d'accusation,' the indictments. They were still doing the indictment in Kigali.
- 03:49 We were not this far gone into the trial so we were working on the indictment, the witness statement. And when I came here I moved on to the trials document so, but it was more or less the same thing because when you work on the indictment then you know most of the time what the trial is going to be about. So it wasn't too different. After four years you kind of get conversant with whatever they are doing so it wasn't that difficult.
- 04:23 LPN: So as far as the description that you were translating that's – what I was trying to find out is how, how did you handle – you were talking about when you would translate these things, these sad things that were, people were relating and you would just cry. How, how did you deal with that? Like how . . . ?**
- 04:52 Not – we didn't have any specific way of dealing – you know I'm from a community where we gather often so that was helpful in the sense that after working, during the weekend, we would get together. Sometimes talk about it and that was it. There is not – there wasn't much we could do about it because in any case that was the situation.
- 05:22 LPN: Were you aware that that would be the situation before you arrived in Kigali?**
- 05:28 No, I didn't measure how, how bad it was, no. Not really, no.

**05:33 LPN: If you were going to talk with a translator who was going to have a job similar to yours in the future, do you think there's a way to prepare or support them in doing that? Anything you would want them to know about?**

05:54 I suppose so. But no, no amount of, of, of coaching can really give you an idea of what you are going to deal with, you know. Unless you have been there and you sit the person down and you give them examples it's, it's very difficult to, to, to give the extent of what went on here.

**06:22 LPN: Do you think having examples of that might help for people to understand?**

06:30 I suppose so, yeah.

## Part 4

**00:00 LPN: So you've been working here like I said for 11, over 11 years, is there something in your experiences here that you'd like to tell us about before we go on any further? Something . . .**

00:13 No I'd rather, I'd rather answer your questions. Yeah.

**00:16 LPN: Okay, okay. So I'm going to ask you some questions that deal with your, your ideas about the tribunal in your role as a translator. And you were talking about you learned about the differences between civil and common law. You had some classes – or maybe classes isn't the right way to put it, but you had some meetings where people were explaining to you some of the differences.**

**01:06 LPN: Have you – as you've been doing your work and listening to the trials and hearing about them, wh-, what are your reflections on the combination of those two systems of law here for the system of international justice?**

01:25 I don't think technically I'm, I know enough about . . .

**01:30 LPN: Yes I understand ( ) this is not your . . . yes.**

01:33 Yes, yeah, I don't think I know enough to speak in that capacity in such an environment, yeah.

**01:39 LPN: Okay. Okay. So for some of the crimes that have been – the charges and the indictment against some of the defense . . .**

01:54 Mm-hmm.

**01:55 LPN: . . . that have come up, there have been some talking about rape as genocide and there have been – I imagine that in some of the work that you did in Kigali you were hearing the or dealing with the testimony of witnesses who were talking about their experience of rape . . .**

02:22 Mm-hmm.



- 02:23** LPN: . . . during and then you were, and then the, the, those indictments moved forward and different things happened in the different cases.
- 02:33 Mm-hmm.
- 02:33** LPN: Do you have – and I’m not – this is just for you as a human being . . .
- 02:40 Mm-hmm.
- 02:40** LPN: . . . to answer this question, not that you have a, a legal background but in your reflections as a human being, how do you feel those cases were handled? The, the cases that dealt with rape. After reading the testimony and, and hearing about it from the witnesses' point of view and then seeing the cases go through.
- 03:06 I remember that this tribunal is the first place where a, a rape was considered as genocide. I don’t know whether I put it the right way but – and as a woman I think it’s a great thing. And it is also here that for the first time a woman was charged of rape. A woman was charged of . . .
- 03:30** LPN: Mm-hmm.
- 03:32 So I think it’s good, it’s a good thing, is a good progress in whatever the law is doing. I don’t know the technical whatever, but I think it’s a good thing that this can happen. That’s what I can say, yeah.
- 03:53** LPN: By, when you were here did you work – I, I don’t know that your time was together with Judge Kama at all?
- 04:03 Yeah, yeah.
- 04:04** LPN: Do you have any reflections; did you ever work with him directly?
- 04:09 No . . .
- 04:10** LPN: No.
- 04:10 . . . no. But I, when I, yeah, when I came to the tribunal he was here and the four years that I spent in Kigali and the first year that I spent here he was still alive.
- 04:22** LPN: He was still here in Arusha during that time?
- 04:22 Yeah, (\_\_\_), yeah, yeah.

## Part 5

- 00:00** Donald J Horowitz: Well, now you, now you’re getting me. I’m Judge Horowitz and I’m going to ask you a few more questions, also to explain a few things that you answered before when Lisa was questioning you. You said something when, that you were pleased about, that – and I was trying to understand it that for the first time a

**woman was charged with rape. Can you tell me – I didn't quite understand that, what that was – what you meant by that. What was happening?**

00:33 Okay there was a woman minister in Rwanda, in Kigali and she incited young men to commit rapes on women. And because she did it; she monitored it, she ordained it, she was the master of that occurrence, she was charged with rape for the first time.

**01:02 DJH: So, and not only she was charged with rape for the first time, that was the first time a woman was charged with rape (\_\_\_\_). . .**

01:07 With rape over other women, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**01:09 DJH: Of other women, okay.**

01:11 As mastermind of rape. She didn't commit it herself but she strongly incited people to do it.

**01:18 DJH: Okay, I, that, that makes it clear to me thank you. Is, and is she – has she been brought to trial yet?**

01:26 Yes, she, the trial is on now. It's going on and –

**01:27 DJH: Okay. So there's been no result?**

01:30 It has not been concluded yet. They are still . . .

**01:31 DJH: Okay . . . okay. Now, you also mentioned Judge Kama . . .**

01:36 Mm-hmm.

**01:37 DJH: . . . and you didn't work directly with him?**

01:39 No I didn't.

**01:40 DJH: But did you hear about him? And what he, the kind of person he was and what he did here, from, from other people?**

01:46 Yes, he was as, from what I gathered a very good leader. People who worked with him liked him a lot and said he was dedicated . . .

**02:01 DJH: Mm-hmm.**

02:03 . . . a good leader mostly, yeah. I didn't get to – I met him, I met him of course but I didn't work directly with him.

**02:17 DJH: You talked about some times when you were translating and people, and maybe others were translating as well and some, and some people would cry. Do you remember that?**

02:30 Yes, yes.

**02:31 DJH: Did you ever cry when you were translating?**

- 02:35 Yes, I suppose so.
- 02:38 DJH: And I don't need to know the specifics, I mean, tell, tell me about this. What was it that happened; what made you cry?**
- 02:47 It's just, it's just you know you, you put yourself in other people's shoes. You are reading the history of a young girl of about like 16 who – I, I mean I can't go into the horrific details . . .
- 03:03 DJH: Yes, I'm not asking you to do that.**
- 03:04 But she would explain that, how she got raped, how she got kept into a ceiling for months, how people would come ten, five, 15 people would come and rape her one after the other, and sometimes these were people she used to know. One guy would ask her, "Okay let's go out together" she would say no and when this happens he comes and he said, "I wanted to get married to you, you said no, now I will get you for free."
- 03:38 And that would go on and on, I mean horrific details. You, you, you put yourself in those people's place and you feel bad for them.
- 03:48 DJH: Mm-hmm.**
- 03:49 And sometimes when you go to court because it happens to us; you go to court and these people they testify about what happened to them and I would get emotional.
- 03:59 DJH: Whe-, when you . . . of course. And you were not speci-, I mean you were not unique; other, other translators apparently had the same experience.**
- 04:10 Of course but we were working with some people who had all their families killed . . .
- 04:13 DJH: Yes . . . yes.**
- 04:14 . . . we had colleagues who had undergone the, the – who went through the genocide with others. They were working with us, yeah. So once in a while there would be an anniversary of the death of this person and then you will go to support them and (\_\_\_\_), it was a daily life thing. You know, you knew people who went through it, especially in Kigali. We have colleagues who lost all their families.
- 04:42 DJH: So there were R-, Rwandan colleagues, yes.**
- 04:44 Yes the interpreters, the translators, yes.
- 04:51 DJH: And were you prepared in any way or warned befo-, when you came on this job about the possibility of such problems?**
- 05:04 No, not really, no. I knew it was a tribunal and I knew we were going to work on that type of material but you, you can never imagine how far they are going to, yeah – what you are going to face ultimately, yeah.

**05:19 DJH: Yes. Was there – were there any sources at the tribunal to help you, you know, psychological or other resources to help you to adjust to this or to cure, to feel a little bit better or to deal with these problems?**

05:41 At the moment we have a staff counselor. At the beginning it wasn't so. We asked and I think they have a staff counselor now and the lady who took care of gender issues . . .

**05:55 DJH: Yes.**

05:56 . . . when you asked to talk to her she would listen to you.

**05:59 DJH: Let's get a little timing on this. You've been involved here a long time, when did the counselor approximately come?**

06:09 I don't – I can't, I can't say.

**06:10 DJH: I'm told it was maybe about a year ago. Am I correct about that or, or was it before that?**

06:18 I, I don't know because I, I met him in, in rotary. He happened to be in my rotary group and that is how I know him. But I don't know, I really don't know when he came in.

**06:28 DJH: Okay, and the person with gender issues.**

06:32 She has been here all the time.

**06:34 DJH: All the time.**

06:35 Yes, from the beginning...

**06:35 DJH: And . . .**

06:36 And she – I think, it, it happens, she happens to be one of my countrylady but there was somebody before and from the beginning that person was taking care of the witnesses I think so and, yeah. She was taking care of the witnesses mostly and if you needed her I think, but, yeah.

**06:57 DJH: Okay. So . . .**

06:59 You also have – there w-, there is a doctor . . .

**07:03 DJH: Yes . . .okay.**

07:03 . . . a psych-, psychiatrist or psychologist, who used to work with the, the tribunal's prison, he (\_\_\_) . . .

**07:13 DJH: At the prison?**

07:14 Yes . . .

**07:14 DJH: Okay . . . okay.**

- 07:15 . . . but he's available if – but Africans don't function, I, I, I think we, maybe it's, it's, it's – we are not prone to going to a psychologist or psychiatrist, you know.
- 07:30 DJH: Mm-hmm.**
- 07:31 Yeah. So maybe they would have – I can't, I can't say. Maybe they would have provided somebody if people, but we don't function like that, I think.
- 07:42 DJH: Mm-hmm.**
- 07:42 When you have a problem you tend to speak to your, to members of your family, we ask people to sit down and talk about things. You will, you will not see a lot of Africans that will go to a psychiatrist or psychologist. It's not in the – yeah, you don't, we don't have the drive, it's not there yet.
- 08:06 DJH: Yeah. It's not in the culture or the tradition. Okay.**
- 08:09 Yes, yes, yeah. If, if I had a problem, I don't think the first move would be to go to a psychiatrist and talk about it with him, yeah.
- 08:16 DJH: Sure . . .**
- 08:17 I will talk to my mom who would call an uncle; it's not in this culture I think. It's coming but, yeah.
- 08:25 DJH: Did there come a time when these problems whether it was you or somebody else and people had to take off a day or two just to deal with the problems, or they didn't have the energy to go to work in the morning because of these kinds of problems?**
- 08:39 Yeah, when it happened, if it happened. We have in the setting of our leave. You have seven days that you can take off without ha-, having to explain. So whenever, when it happened, you just tell the boss "I'm not feeling well" and that would be it.
- 09:03 DJH: Did, did you . . .**
- 09:04 My personal I mean the, the, the boss of the language section understood that . . .
- 09:09 DJH: Okay.**
- 09:09 . . . because we were really working with that kind of thing and when somebody felt bad she would tell you "Okay go home." And most of us, two or three of us would come talk with you and then, yeah. It happened.
- 09:21 DJH: Did you do that? Did you that; take a day off or time some time off?**
- 09:27 It happened but you know like an afternoon or if you feel bad but, yeah. (\_\_\_\_) than that.

## Part 6

- 00:00** DJH: For you personally when you took this job and when you were here for a while, did you have your own – what was your goal? You know what I’m saying, as to what you wanted to do, to accomplish in your job. Did you have such a goal?
- 00:17 It’s always considered good to work for the UN, so I came to – you know the first idea is “I’m going to work for the UN.” And it is after that that you discover. I m-, I mean it’s more the UN than the tribunal.
- 00:32** DJH: Mm-hmm.
- 00:32 Then you get to the tribunal and you see the nature of work and you want to feel you are useful, you want to feel that you’ve contributed to whatever is happening, you want to think this thing is going to help maybe prevent this kind of thing from happening, so at some point you feel happy to have been part of it. You try to do whatever you can to do it as best as possible. That’s it.
- 01:03** DJH: Do you think you d-, you did a good job? The, the job you would like yourself to do, do you think you did that here?
- 01:13 In my capacity as a translator, yes, because we make it possible for trials to hold, we make it possible for people to understand one another. And you want to think that this helps in making people better, in making bad people fearful. Yeah, you want to think you . . .
- 01:34** DJH: Okay. And that you were part of that.
- 01:36 Yeah, you’re happy to have been – to h-, to have contributed, however small.
- 01:42** DJH: Was there a time you did something that you’re, that’s especially good, you know, that you feel really good about, during the course of your – that you’d like to tell us about?
- 01:53 Yeah, but that was not in the tribunal. We had a group . . .
- 02:00** DJH: Yes.
- 02:00 . . . and we used to work with orphans. We used to, one of our colleagues set up a small unit that she gathered widows and orphans and we would contribute to send them to school. And we sent quite a number of children to school.
- 02:21** DJH: Rwandese children?
- 02:23 Yes, yes, we used to give ( ).
- 02:25** DJH: When you were in Rwanda or when you were here or both?
- 02:27 Both, both, both. When we were in Rwanda we would, we would go to the school, get the school fees, whatever and then, and, yeah.
- 02:36** DJH: Have you followed up and learned some things about ( ) . . .

- 02:37 We're still doing it, yes.
- 02:39 DJH: You're still doing it? Yes.**
- 02:40 Yes, we are still doing it.
- 02:42 DJH: And some of the children, have they done pretty well?**
- 02:44 Because we, we were sent the results, yes . . .
- 02:47 DJH: Oh good, you're sent the results.**
- 02:49 They send us the results of the children.
- 02:50 DJH: Okay. What is this called, do you have a name?**
- 02:54 No, not really.
- 02:54 DJH: Okay.**
- 02:56 It is one of our colleagues. She organizes it and, yeah.
- 03:00 DJH: Who is that colleague; can you tell me who that was?**
- 03:02 I, I have to ask her . . .
- 03:04 DJH: Okay.**
- 03:04 . . . if she says yes I'll call you and tell you.
- 03:06 DJH: Okay. And so I'm going to ask you another question. Is there something you did that you, you're not so happy about, whether it was in your, in a translation or whatever?**
- 03:18 No, not really.
- 03:20 DJH: I'm not asking you for a confession . . .**
- 03:22 No, no, I see what you mean.
- 03:22 DJH: . . . sometimes a day (\_\_\_) you make a mistake and you, you wish you, it were better you know.**
- 03:26 It's not coming up now.
- 03:28 DJH: Okay.**
- 03:28 Maybe if I sit, but no, I don't.
- 03:33 DJH: I, I saw the other day and you weren't doing court work but I, I saw the other day where I was watching a trial and . . .**
- 03:38 Mm-hmm.

- 03:41 **DJH: . . . the defense attorney was questioning the defendant and he asked him a question in English and the defendant was mostly in French. But there was a translation into French and the defendant said, "I understood what he said in English and the translation was not correct."**
- 04:02 Mm-hmm.
- 04:03 **DJH: Nobody argued or said anything and then he repeated, the defense lawyer, repeated it in English again and then at that time then the defendant responded and it was translated again and then he answered the question. Do those kinds of things, I mean if you're familiar with, from time to time happen? How do they, w-, do you know about how that is worked out?**
- 04:30 The, the – okay, I'm not here as a, as a – I haven't worked as an interpreter in this tribunal.
- 04:36 **DJH: I kno-, I know that, yeah.**
- 04:37 Okay, but what I can say is that if you've been to political meetings you know that whenever somebody makes an error they make sure it is the t-, the interpreter's fault.
- 04:54 **DJH: Ah.**
- 04:55 And interpreters are trained to take that. That is, they are trained to – if somebody is, says something that they don't, afterwards they feel they shouldn't have said, usually it is the interpreter, "Why, he didn't understand what I said. That's not what I meant."
- 05:15 So you have a broad back, you take it, I mean it's, it's okay . . .
- 05:18 **DJH: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.**
- 05:19 . . . it's okay. Sometimes it is right, sometimes it is wrong. Interpreters are human beings. But most, more often than not it is not their fault.
- 05:30 **DJH: Yeah.**
- 05:30 They are trained to take that; it's part of the training. Yeah.
- 05:33 **DJH: Mm-hmm. Okay, that's interesting to know. Yes. You were talking earlier too about if you were going to make a suggestion, it was going – one of your suggestions would be that people learn more earlier about the legal, the legal information . . .**
- 05:51 Yeah, yeah.
- 05:52 **DJH: . . . because that's part of your job is to ( ) . . .**
- 05:54 No, it's part of your life.
- 05:55 **DJH: Yes. Oh, okay.**



- 05:56 I wasn't even talking about interpreters. I've always felt that law should be part of curriculum in schools early enough for people to, to, to understand the importance of this, because it rules our life, whether you like it or not.
- 06:15 Unfortunately the three quarters of hu-, the humanity don't know anything about law so you make errors and then you are, you are fined for these errors and, you know. So I think like in my country you, when you get to secondary school you learn English, you learn mathematics and we should have law as well as mathematics. That's my impression.
- 06:38 DJH: Yes, yes. I don't think anybody asked you this in the interview when you say my country. I know your country because we've talked before. Tell us what your country is.**
- 06:50 I'm a Cameroonian.
- 06:51 DJH: Cameroon . . . yes, okay.**
- 06:52 Yeah. I'm from Cameroon.

## Part 7

- 00:00 DJH: Now you did apparently learn a little bit in the course of this about the, the law that is being use-, or the legal system that's being used in the tribunal; a combination of the civi-, the French civil code and the English American Common Law.**
- 00:16 Yeah.
- 00:16 DJH: When – I'm not expecting that you're going to answer me as an expert - but when you learned a little bit about, about the law, did it help you in your work?**
- 00:26 Yes, but I have to say that my being from Cameroon . . .
- 00:32 DJH: Yes.**
- 00:33 . . . makes it that I know because my country is bilingual. In my country we speak English and French. And the English part of the country use common law and the French part use civil law.
- 00:46 DJH: Ha, I didn't know that, that's interesting.**
- 00:47 Yes, yes. So our lawyers – and that is why some of them – a lot of them came here. When they are trained in the university, we have this individual bilingualism which is such that at the university the law course, the, the teacher who's – they, they hire everybody; the English speaking Cameroonian and the French speaking.
- 01:10 And when you are a teacher of law, you teach what you know. So our lawyers came out, come out with a knowledge of common law and a knowledge of civic law. If you are a Cameroonian lawyer, you have to know both in order to get your Degree. So I had

some knowledge; when you go to the university you have your friends and that is how the law is done in my country. So we have both systems.

01:38 So I didn't learn about the systems here as such, but since I didn't have to work with it before I had a very, you know, vague knowledge so when I came here I had to learn the language mostly. While, when you learn the language you learn the concepts of course and that is what I meant.

**01:58 DJH: And that made you more effective as a translator?**

02:00 Of course. As, and as a human being.

**02:02 DJH: And as a human being, of course.**

02:03 Because now I know more about law you know. I know how it is discussed, how to go about it, yeah.

**02:11 DJH: Well, that's very interesting. You're, I'm, you're teaching me now, thank you.**

02:16 Thank you very much.

**02:17 DJH: I guess if, you know, we know unfortunately what's going on now in Darfur and what's going on in Congo and so forth and so on and it may be that someday we will need another tribunal.**

**02:33 DJH: If that was going to happen, what suggestions would you have to make the tribunal better and to make your job the job that – not that you would necessarily be there but a, of a person who does your work – make it a little bit better, make it have a better result, make it a little easier for the people doing the job. And maybe make it more effective in preventing, yeah.**

**03:01 DJH: I know that's a lot of questions . . .**

03:02 Yes, but . . .

**03:02 DJH: . . . but I'm sure you've thought about it.**

03:03 No, as a human being hopefully, I hope there won't be any other tribunal because we don't need that. But in my specific field, I think that now a-, it's already easier for us to translate because we have jurisprudence, the ICTY has – all these documents have been translated, we have – and . . .

**03:30 DJH: ICTY – I'm going to interrupt you – is the International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia?**

03:34 For Yugoslavia.

**03:35 DJH: So they had other documents translated?**

- 03:38 They had, yeah, okay. So by – and it is legal history in the making, because of the fact that this combination of system is happening here. I don't know what is going to come out of it but having done all these translations, already the work is easier because you have jurisprudence to fall on.
- 04:05 Like at the beginning we didn't even – the, the, our statute and our rules of procedure and evidence have been corrected and amended and amended because as we were going along we knew that at the beginning some words were not where they were supposed to be.
- 04:24 Some concepts were translated badly at the beginning, the correc-, some corrections were made. So it's already easier to translate now than it was at the beginning. And these amendments have made it more accurate, the translation more accurate, because when you, when you are a French translator, you tend to fall on the civic system and there are some concepts that exist in the, in the common law that do not exist in there.
- 04:59 And we had to forge translations, we had to work on it and now we have words to say things that we didn't have words to say before. So I think the mere existence of this tribunal has made it easier for a translator to work on that, kind of. And we use a number of technical things like MultiTrans, that is another, I mean some technical documen-, things the, like their software and, you know, that we use to help us translate.
- 05:38 And while doing this, this, the, the, the software or the technical – this help have gone better, have been made better by our working with them because at the beginning we didn't have the, the words, we didn't have the – they were quite empty if I can put it like that. Now they are more accurate, more efficient so I think it's getting easier for a translator to work in this kind of tribunal in this specific field.
- 06:16 I suppose that for lawyers also, the fact that these two systems were put together at some point, you will be able to, to see that this type of thing is better in the civic law and this is better in the common law and how to put it together to have a common system. I hope that is what we are (\_\_\_), getting towards.
- 06:38 I don't know how la-, legal people do it, but for translators I think we have heard a number of concepts that are new and that are helpful that we didn't have in the French language. I mean we didn't put the same words to mean the same things. So we've had new concepts, new words to translate things that we didn't have words to translate before. So I think we've made quite a progress.
- 07:04 **DJH: Good, thank you.**

## Part 8

- 00:00 **DJH: I want to go a little broader now. What would you – what do you think the Rwandans, Rwandese people will get out of this, and what do you hope they will get out of it? As a human being, not just, not as a translator.**

- 00:21 I think that the mere fact, in my opinion, that this tribunal exist is already a lot of progress. Because when I was growing up, where I am from in Africa we d-, we don't, we don't try the bigger people, if I can put it like this. The mere fact that we can come here and try ministers to m-, in my opinion is a, is a great thing.
- 00:54 So I hope we are going to get further and be able to try everybody that is responsible for what anything that is not good for humanity. And the mere fact that we are here, regardless of what the outcome is going to be, the mere fact that this tribunal exist and can try this type of people to me is a big progress in whatever we were doing. So I hope it is going, it is only going to get better. We can only go further, we cannot go backward.
- 01:27 DJH: Yeah. And if you were going to have a tribunal again in the future, to your, to the extent that you would like, how would you improve it, how would you, what suggestions would you make so that the Rwandan people were perhaps even better served or that justice was better served, if you've thought about it.**
- 01:50 (\_\_\_), I don't understand.
- 01:52 DJH: In other words, what would you suggest to do a better job next time, not just for the translators but for the tribunal itself? How could they better serve, not only j-, not only convicting people but helping the Rwandan people move forward?**
- 02:12 What I can say in that wise is that this tribunal happened to all, to all of us.
- 02:18 DJH: Yes.**
- 02:12 I don't think anybody was prepared for what happened here. And it is like anything; when a child learns to walk you ha-, you are bound to make errors . . .
- 02:28 DJH: Sure.**
- 02:28 . . . and I think that it can only get better. This tribunal is not concluded yet, so we are still learning, making mistakes, having some good things like this rape thing and it can only get better.
- 02:42 I think – I, I, I can't say anything in the legal field and this is mainly a tribunal so though I work here it's not my field. But my opinion is that it can only get better. People will learn from the mistakes; we have made a lot of mistakes but we have also achieved a number of good things.
- 03:03 DJH: Mm-hmm.**
- 03:03 And people can only learn from their mistakes. We are already being criticized, which means that the bad sides are being seen but since we are still functioning that means the good sides are being seen also. And I think if there is another tribunal, whomever is implementing, he will look at the bad side of this one and try to make it better.

- 03:23** DJH: I don't mean to put you on the spot but can you give me an example of one of the bad sides and one of the good sides. Yes, I think you've talked about some of the good sides.
- 03:33 I . . .
- 03:34** DJH: What mistake, mistake did – and again I don't want to put you on the spot – but it would be helpful to learn what you think are mistakes or that could be improved. You're a very thoughtful person and I'm, I'm interested in what you think.
- 03:47 (\_\_\_), when, when, when I, I say mistakes it's – as I said this tribunal happened. I mean, we have never gone through this before . . .
- 03:58** DJH: Yes.
- 03:59 . . . so of course (\_\_\_\_\_)...
- 04:01** DJH: And mistakes will be made when that happens, yeah.
- 04:02 Yeah, mistakes will be made. We (\_\_\_\_\_) . . .
- 04:04** DJH: I'm trying, I'm trying to identify what, what you think maybe were some of the mistakes.
- 04:08 I don't know, what can I – I can't think of – you know like this is, you know, you are catching me.
- 04:18** DJH: No, no, no, if you're, if you're not comfortable doing this that's (\_\_\_).
- 04:20 No, it's not, it's uncomfortable, it's that in this situation I can't think of anything right now. No I'm not shying away from it, it's just that I can't think of any, you know, like – I don't know, I, I can't think of anything I can tell you now but like when you translate you see that like some courts have, they, they have made, t-, taken a decision that was like rejected in appeal because the-, there were legal mistakes, there were factual mistakes.
- 04:58 I can't think of any one now . . .
- 05:00** DJH: Mm-hmm, okay.
- 05:01 . . . but there have been mistakes in the courts and at the beginning there were quite a number of them and they have been corrected and we are still making some and . . .
- 05:12** DJH: Right.
- 05:13 I can't think of any specific one now like this but, you know, that's what I'm talking about, yeah.
- 05:14** DJH: Okay... okay... okay... okay. Is there anything else that you feel that you would, that's important because you know ten years from now, 20 years from now, 40 years

**from now, some grandchildren of yours will be looking in a, in, in a, in a film, say "That's grandma, and she's telling me something." What would you, if there's something like that, what, what would you like to say as a person to the future?**

05:50 I would like to see the result of your work.

**05:53 DJH: Okay.**

05:53 You know like I said a number of things and some other people would say other things. They would have looked at the other side of it and it is always difficult to see the whole picture.

06:04 You know you see the little that you are, you are dealing with and there are other things happening in other sections that you are not necessarily aware of or you don't have time to look into. So I think I will really be happy to see what comes out of this. Whatever the grand picture is, when everybody has spoken, what you make of it and that will be helpful.

**06:29 Note: Gap in Interview (Approx. 1 minute in duration) Gaps occurred due to interruptions during the interview, technical issues, or corrupted data files.**

**06:39 DJH: The only thing that I want to say now is to thank you very much for giving us this interview, for giving us the – your knowledge and your wisdom. I think you will have an important effect on the outcome of this. Thank you very much.**

06:56 Thank you and I am looking forward for the result of the work so that I can have a look and know the opinion of others.