



Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: Colette Ngoya (Part 8 of 8)



Role:	Translator
Country of Origin:	Cameroon
Interview Date:	13 October 2008
Location:	Arusha, Tanzania
Interviewers:	Lisa P. Nathan Donald J. Horowitz
Videographer:	Max Andrews Nell Carden Grey
Interpreter:	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 Part 8 begins on the following page.

Part 8

- 00:00** Donald J Horowitz: 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 that 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.