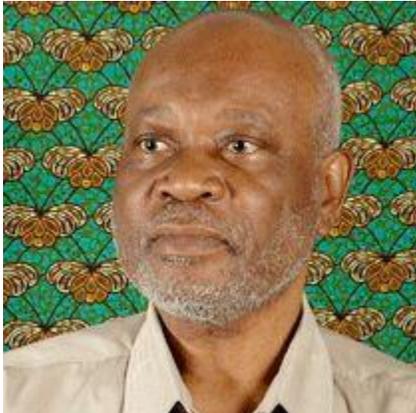




Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: Theo Nkembe (Part 1 of 5)



Role:	Archivist
Country of Origin:	Cameroon
Interview Date:	28 October 2008
Location:	Kigali, Rwanda
Interviewer:	Lisa P. Nathan
Videographer:	Nell Carden Grey
Interpreter:	None

Interview Summary

Theo Nkembe talks about how he has been personally impacted by watching footage from the genocide in his role as an ICTR archivist, noting that images from the tapes haunt him ten years later. Nkembe then discusses the responsibilities associated with preserving ICTR records, reflecting that people often have political motives for seeking access to archival material. As such, security must be a top concern. Nkembe also expresses surprise that so many accused have failed to accept responsibility for their actions.

The transcript of Part 1 begins on the following page.

Part 1

- 00:00** Lisa P. Nathan: To begin, would you tell us your name . . .
- 00:04 Yes.
- 00:04** LPN: . . . your country of origin and your title here?
- 00:07 Yes. My name is Theo Nkembe. I am from Cameroon but also a Canadian citizen. I'm working here as a Canadian citizen. I've been in Canada for many years so from Canada I came here. I'm working as archivist in the OTP here in Kigali.
- 00:32** **Note: Gap in Interview (Approx. 25 seconds in duration) Gaps occurred due to interruptions during the interview, technical issues, or corrupted data files.**
- 00:42** LPN: So could you walk me through your timeline at the ICTR . . .
- 00:45 Yes.
- 00:46** LPN: . . . when you first started to work here . . .
- 00:47 Yeah.
- 00:48** LPN: . . . and what jobs you've had, if you have had different . . . ?
- 00:50 I was recruited here in October 1998, which makes me ten years exactly today in October. In few days I will be ten years working in evidence, evidence as you have seen in Arusha. Evidence unit was created here in Kigali. Kigali was the base at the beginning, so evidence as you know was, is keeping all documentation that we have to send to court that the Prosecutor uses to prove or to support his case.
- 01:33 So that's where I've been working for the last ten years, although I change little by little because when things moved from Kigali to Arusha, so I was assigned the job. I was working with the archives of OTP.
- 01:51 Especially I was, I am in charge of the administration of all missions that are carried out by the investigators – national missions and also international missions. Before they go on mission, when they come back, all these sensitive document archives are kept under my custody. That's most of what I've been doing these years.
- 02:22** LPN: Thank you. Can you go back in time a little bit to 1994, in the spring of 1994? Can you tell me what you were doing at that time, do you remember?
- 02:35 At that time I remember I was in Canada, as I told you and I was working with a private organization and a library system, archiving system. So I was – when we, I had first heard

about the genocide, it was very troublesome for me because I was member of one church in Canada and we involved, is () how we knew that about the genocide in, in Rwanda.

03:12 I heard it by newspaper, tele-, television, radio but we were practically involved in our church to send, to collect money in Canada and send the money here to help orphans, to help widows and so on. So we had – I was, I was really informed about the genocide in 1994. I was in Canada at the time.

03:39 LPN: Do you remember how you first learned about ICTR? How did you come to work for the ICTR?

03:47 Yes, as soon as, as I told you, knowing the genocide and knowing about () information about the genocide, when there was a delegation who, which came from Rwanda to Canada and we managed to meet some people. And I was informed that Rwanda requested the UN to, to start a, a fresh tribunal here and that's the way, that's how I knew that there was going to be a tribunal.

04:28 But I didn't know that I'm coming to work here at that time, so just, it has just happened that I saw that there was a possibility, that I say, "Okay, let me go and help for one year." Because nobody was expecting me to stay more than one year here because of the magnitude of the, the problem. My family could not accept me to, to go, to stay for so long.

04:51 But finally, after one year they renewed my contract. After one year, they renewed my contract and this week I am, I'm ten years old here in Rwanda.

05:01 LPN: So why did your family not expect you to stay?

05:05 Because of they said this () was very dangerous. Pictures that we saw on TV about the genocide were – nobody can support this type of, you know, madness. So, they say. Even they did not agree that I should come, but I said, "Let me go and try to help." As a, as a Christian, I said, "Let me bring my drop of what I can do," and that's why.