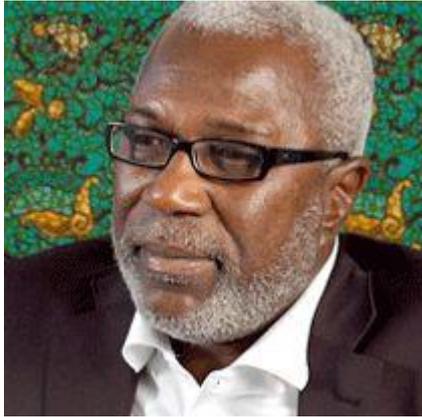




# Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

## Official Transcript: Bocar Sy (Part 3 of 9)



<b>Role:</b>	Chief of Press and Public Affairs
<b>Country of Origin:</b>	Senegal
<b>Interview Date:</b>	30 October 2008
<b>Location:</b>	Arusha, Tanzania
<b>Interviewers:</b>	Lisa P. Nathan Donald J Horowitz
<b>Videographer:</b>	Nell Carden Grey
<b>Interpreter:</b>	None

### Interview Summary

Bocar Sy discusses his responsibilities at the ICTR Press Office and the many obstacles he had to overcome to create an effective media program. Two key challenges included the fact that the ICTR initially saw no need for a press office and the severe limitations on communication posed by an inadequate technological infrastructure in Arusha. Sy speaks about the various methods used by the Press Office to disseminate information about the ICTR to the public.

*The transcript of Part 3 begins on the following page.*

## Part 3

- 00:00 Lisa P. Nathan: Do you also have staff in Kigali?**
- 00:04 Yes, I have staff in Kigali, colleagues in Kigali dealing with the, the outreach programs, specifically. We have an office there called Umusanzu, Umusanzu which mean, I think, reconciliation or something like that. Because you know that part of our mission, part of the mission of the tribunal is to render justice and through rendering justice, try to make reconciliation to those people.
- 00:29 Because you can make justice fine, but if there is no reconciliation that means these things can blow up tomorrow. People can wake up and say, “Okay fine, but it is now my time,” maybe you know to, whatever. It is, is so sad.
- 00:43 That’s why part of our mission is to render justice. The job of the judges and the lawyers, work on reconciliation, part of them also. And (\_\_\_) see a very important part of us, the press information because people should know that justice is done and justice is rendered in a fair way, and from that maybe they can sit together, build something new and start something new, yes (\_\_\_\_\_).
- 01:12 LPN: So you just touched on a few different ways that your office has dealings within Rwanda and you’re reflecting some on the, the sadness, the tragedy that happened there. Can you tell me, reflect back for a minute, what you were doing in 1994 and when you heard about the events going on in Rwanda?**
- 01:39 1994, the tragedy started in April 1994. I was in Paris, at that time I was working for private channel TV called Canal Plus. I think that I was – the first day that I saw what is going on, I was sitting in my living room with my daughter who was at that time four years old, and I was, I was shocked, shocked. I was, I cannot describe what, what I felt, felt the first time that I saw these images coming from – I don’t know how to describe it but it was, it was, I was, I was so shocked, so sad.
- 02:29 I couldn’t imagine that these kinds of things can happen you know, in the, in this 20 centuries. I was, I was, I was not, I was not prepared for that and I think that nobody was prepared for that and especially when you are sitting with your daughter. She was, she was four years old but I think that she, she was – she understood what – yes, what was going on really seeing these people you know, killed with machetes, killed with stones, you know, babies, old people, woman.
- 03:07 And really – that was, that was, that was something, shock. And at that time I didn’t think that I will one day apply to come to work for the tribunal which would have, which mission will be to, to try these “génocidaires” quote, unquote, if you can call them that.
- 03:24 LPN: Can you share that story of how it, how you came to apply here?**
- 03:29 Well, as I told you this, when these things happen I was, I was, I was sitting on my, on my, on my living room. That was where I was, where I was watching this news and, and

also when I, when I was also in the office I, I, I used to share, you know, I would say the feelings with some colleagues asking me, “What is, what is happening there? Is, is, is the world crazy, now? How come these things can happen and nothing, nothing is, is, is done?”

03:58 And, I think that was just by chance because some few years after that in, the year after I think I went to New York. I went to New York for a mission. I went to the headquarter because I had some, some, some colleagues and some friends working there that, that I, that I approached or who, who approached me, yes, saying that, “Oh, it, it could be maybe interesting if you, if y-, if you, if you want to join the department of information,” which is called DPI, DPI, Department of Public Information, that.

04:41 “Why don’t (\_\_\_) – it can make a change for you because you know, you used to work for a, for a national TV.” Because before that I used to work for my national TV in Senegal, that from there that I went in Paris to work for this private channel which is Canal Plus. “That can be, as we say, a place for you because you have worked for the national TV, you have worked for a private TV. It will be interesting for you maybe to work for an international group, group, like you know, Uni-, United Nations.”

05:08 And that’s how I went there, I approached them. But at that time they didn’t have nothing for, for, for me because I think that – when they set this place they didn’t think first of all about information or communication. That was maybe just a, a small part for, for them.

05:24 The most important for them was to set the place with lawyers, with judges, with who else is involved in, in law, but not exactly press people because at that time I think that they were not – they were a little reluctant, you know, about press people.

05:43 They, they, they want to keep them as-, aside because they, they were not very confident with them because they’re not used – I mean, the lawyers are not used really to work with the, with press people.

05:56 That’s why at that time I think that they didn’t think that it will be important for them to improve or to develop an important office of communication here, which, which is, which is now the case. And I approached them and I went to the DPI and met some people there.

06:14 I, I filled a, a form for that, but it tooks long times. And in 1996 they informed me that they have a position here for an Information Officer who can, who was willing, if I was willing to join the place.

06:32 I didn’t know where Arusha was. Yes, I, I knew Arusha because it is – as a journalist I know that Nyerere the former president of this country, yes, had a very important speech here, yes, called “Déclaration d'Arusha.”

06:47 And also I, I was following also this peace process for the Rwanda peace process, you know, remember that. And no, but, but, but I couldn’t imagine that it was so far and it was – how tough. Whatever you know, it, it, it was, it was so difficult to, to, to join this

place because at, at that time coming from, from Europe, coming from Paris you have to travel, which is the case until now, the whole day, I mean you have to travel the whole day.

- 07:17 You leave there at 6 o'clock and join this place at ten in the night and it was not so, so, so easy. And (\_\_\_\_\_) and I, when I came here, my first day I think it was not so easy; there was no office for me. They were not expecting me maybe. I had to sit in the, somewhere in the corridor. The whole day I spent in there, nobody looked at me. We were, we were not so many, maybe at that time we were something like less than fifty people, we were.
- 07:48 And, and at the end of the day I went to see the Chief of Administration who was there. And I asked him, yes, and I told to him, "You know that I'm here, I'm coming from Paris. I'm the new Information Officer, but nobody has welcomed me. Nobody has given me, shown me an office whatever, what is, what is, what is the problem?"
- 08:12 Well, he said he was so busy. "Okay, we will, we will solve the problem there," (\_\_\_\_\_) whatever. The day after that was the (\_\_\_\_\_), and what is very funny is that I, I saw an office which was closed, yeah, the door was closed. Okay, I knocked at the door, there was nobody there and I opened the office, it was an empty office and entered it and I sit. But the problem is that it was not, it was not an office for the press; it was an office for a judge.
- 08:39 (\_\_\_\_\_), when, when the, when the, when the Chief Administra-, Administration at that time saw that, he quickly run in the office, ask me, "Please, please, come, come. Could y-, could you come, could you come out?" I said, "No, no, no, I'm fine, I'm fine here. Don't worry, I'm fine, I have found my way here." He said, "No this is the office . . ." It was not only the office of the, of the judge, it was the office of the President at that time.
- 09:04 Okay, then they find me, at the end of that day they find me an office somewhere and I started working but it was not, it was not really easy. And as I told you, they're not used to press people. The judges deals with confidential, let us say something very, you know, sensitive which is law and which is, which something deal with, you know, the future of people and things like that.
- 09:35 Usually they, they keep the press aside and that was really the case. To have a little information for them, from them at the time, it was a mess – I had to, I had to fight to have the information. Yes, and I remember saying, "Now, listen, I'm here to do a job. If you don't want me to do the job, I can move now. I can just pack my things and go back to Paris, I can do that. You just have to tell me what you expect from me. I mean, everything is secret here. I'm not, I don't know what is going on."
- 10:07 But after, things, things has improved. Yes, (\_\_\_\_\_), yes, things has improved enough to, they, they become you know, more – not friendly but you know, more used, you know, to see me, you know, hanging around, or you know, asking questions because as I said, that's part of my job. If you don't give me the information I can ask also.

10:29      And slowly, slowly we have set that office. The people have joined the team and, and now as you see we have an office here and an office also in Kigali which, which works very, very well, which goes to the field, which goes to the countryside to inform people, on what is going on. They organize, you know, exhibitions there, they organize workshops. They do whatever should be done to reach maximum of people.