



# Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

## Official Transcript: Roland Adjovi (Part 1 of 10)



<b>Role:</b>	Senior Legal Advisor
<b>Country of Origin:</b>	Benin
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<b>Location:</b>	Arusha, Tanzania
<b>Interviewers:</b>	Donald J Horowitz Lisa P. Nathan
<b>Videographer:</b>	Max Andrews
<b>Interpreter:</b>	None

## Interview Summary

Roland Adjovi compares the structure of the ICTR to other international tribunals and describes the ICTR's broad mandate for establishing peace and reconciliation. Adjovi discusses his early aspirations to improve the ICTR. He reflects on a proud moment in the case of Michel Bagaragaza, a case expected to be transferred to Norway but held back because Norway had failed to implement the Genocide Convention into domestic law. This decision prompted Norway to enact new laws, thus improving its legal system.

*The transcript of Part 1 begins on the following page.*

## Part 1

- 00:00** Donald J Horowitz: This is Judge Donald Horowitz and I am interviewing Mr. Roland Adjovi. Would you, Mr. Adjovi would you tell us your name again ( \_ ), pronouncing it correctly and tell us where you are from?
- 00:17 I'm Roland Adjovi from Benin in West Africa.
- 00:21** DJH: Okay, and Mr. Adjovi, Adjovi, ( \_ ), sorry. Your first language is what language?
- 00:30 My first language is French.
- 00:32** DJH: Okay.
- 00:32 I learned English at school and since I joined tri-, the tribunal I have been working in English, so I will try in English but from to time will switch it into French.
- 00:43** DJH: Okay, and that's just fine. And when you do, if you will go a little bit slowly because I can understand some French but I nee-, I ne-, I would need it slow. Thank you.
- 00:51 It will be very slow.
- 00:53** DJH: Okay. Mr. Adjovi, would you tell us a bit about your educational background first?
- 01:01 I did my Law Degree in France what we call DEA, Diplôme d'Études Approfondies. I had a degree in International Law specialized in human right and I did another degree in Political Science applied to Africa.
- 01:21** DJH: Was that also in, in France?
- 01:23 Yes, both are in France.
- 01:25** DJH: Okay, and what year did you graduate from?
- 01:28 Law as well because in the French system you can start law from the beginning . . .
- 01:34** DJH: Yes.
- 01:34 . . . so you don't do anything else. You, you, you start from law from the beginning so . . .

**01:38 DJH: Mm-hmm.**

01:38 . . . I did everything in Law.

**01:40 DJH: And what year did you graduate?**

01:43 Which year?

**01:44 DJH: What year, yes.**

01:45 '97 for the two degrees.

**01:49 DJH: Okay. And after that, what did you do in your career?**

01:54 After that, I spent one year working on a PhD program. Then, the following year I went to Cote d'Ivoire to teach for one year. I returned back to France and taught for three years before joining the tribunal.

**02:10 DJH: Okay. Now, the PhD program, what was the subject area there?**

02:14 The subject was peace security agreement in Africa but I have never finished it.

**02:23 DJH: Okay. And then you said you taught for a year in the Cote d'Ivoire, d'Ivoire.**

02:26 Yes, I taught for one year at the University of Bouaké in Cote d'Ivoire.

**02:31 DJH: And what did you teach?**

02:33 I taught almost everything; constitutional law, human rights, international law and also using the new technology in legal research.

**02:45 DJH: Ah. Okay. And you did that for a year. And was that in a law school at the university?**

02:51 Yes, it was at the Law Faculty of the University of Bouaké but the students were on strike almost half the year and the professor were not very willing to, to continue so I thought that it ( ), it was better for me to go back to France instead of staying in a country which was going completely lost.

**03:11 DJH: Okay, and when you went back to France, you taught for three years, I think you said.**

03:15 Yes, for three years. The first year I didn't have a, a contract, a permanent contract. I was occasionally teaching from one university to the other and mainly

methodology and legal research with new technology. It's only the second year that I was recruited by a university as a permanent staff so I taught for two years there, then I was recruited by the tribunal.

**03:41 DJH: And the, and the university you taught at for two years was named what?**

03:45 Panthéon-Assas Paris Deux, because the university in Paris, they are several and each one of them have a number. That's Paris number two.

**03:55 DJH: Okay, all right. And then you were recruited by the, by the tribunal.**

03:59 Yes.

**04:00 DJH: Tell me how that came about.**

04:04 The story is very simple. I was teaching the jurisprudence of the ad hoc tribunal at the university. I was so critical that the student told me that one day, I should go and work with those tribunal instead of criticizing them all the time. I said, "I will apply and see if they will recruit me. They are not stupid. They will never give me a chance." I was called three months later for an interview and I passed and I'm here.

**04:32 DJH: Okay. Let me go back for a minute before we follow up on your career at the tribunal. In 1994 when the events of the R-, in Rwanda occurred, can you remember where you were?**

04:52 I was at the university in the suburb of Paris learning law. I was in the second year, end of the se-, the second year.

**05:04 DJH: Okay.**

05:05 Honestly, I didn't know much about the situation, why it was happening at the beginning. At least in April, I didn't know much but from May, June I start reading about it ( ), because I have always been interested by what is going on on the continent.

**05:25 DJH: Okay. And so when later you were – what, you applied and you were recruited, was this something that was inside of you that you really wanted to do or was it really as you put it – sort of a little dare by your students?**

05:45 No, it's, it's something I had in my heart because in my view the law is an instrument to change the way our society is built up, so I have always been thinking

of what is the best legal rules, the rules which will better suit for the society I want to live in.

06:14 So for me, working at the tribunal or teaching or working for another organization as far as it's about a rule you choose which you consider as the best for your society. It has always been an objective. I don't know if I'm correct or wrong but that's my life.

06:34 **DJH: Okay.**