



Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: Linda Bianchi (Part 6 of 6)



Role: Appeals Counsel

Country of Origin: Canada

Interview Date: 5 November 2008

Location: Arusha, Tanzania

Interviewer: Lisa P. Nathan

Videographer: Max Andrews

Interpreter: None

Interview Summary

Linda Bianchi explains her work with the Office of Appeals and draws attention to the challenges of remaining objective when working with issues of rape and genocide. Bianchi asserts the need for investigators and prosecutors to receive specialized training to deal with gender-based crimes and in order to avoid the re-traumatization of witnesses during the trial process. She recounts her own visits to Rwanda and stresses the importance of visiting the country for ICTR personnel.

The transcript of Part 6 begins on the following page.

Part 6

- 00:00** Lisa P. Nathan: I'd like to ask you, before we began the interview, you mentioned that you have a, a young child . . .
- 00:05 Yes.
- 00:05** LPN: . . . at home and you were talking about the, the, the weight, just bef-, to the previous question about how it's affected you as a human being. You were talking about feeling more of a, a weight . . .
- 00:16 Mm-hmm.
- 00:16** LPN: . . . basically, in your life because of what you've been exposed to through your work at the tribunal, and yet you have a young child. My hunch is you may have some thoughts about hope for the future, hope for mankind . . .
- 00:30 Mm-hmm.
- 00:31** LPN: . . . those sort of ideas...
- 00:32 Mm-hmm.
- 00:33** LPN: . . . as you think about your child growing up in this world.
- 00:36 Yeah, yeah. Yeah. I mean, w-, the work here, I think and I hope, is going to have an impact so that something like this isn't going to happen again or couldn't happen again. You know, it's a way of s-, I hope, sending a message in that the in-, the work that we're doing, the, the international community is sending a message to say this won't be tolerated.
- 01:09 It's a long way off and international criminal law has its place and there's a lot of different, I think, roles that international criminal law can play towards peace building and justice, particularly transitional justice, reconciliation, and hopefully it will, the work that we do will have a role to play in making life better for everyone.
- 01:41 You know since having a child, I've just become involved in another case and going back to looking at the evidence again and reading the transcripts, now as a mother, reading situations that involved children is so difficult and so traumatizing. And, you know, I just feel like we're so blessed in the West to never have to wonder, you know, will we survive, can I feed my child?
- 02:16 You know, all of those things that you see and perhaps people become desensitized to, for me now, it's sort of a reawakening of very basic fundamentals of protecting children and protecting humans and just making life fair and just across the world. And maybe that's idealistic in, you know, it's what we want, but is it what is possible?
- 02:44 And yeah, I mean I just hope that we are having some impact as we go forward in, you know, global responsibility and global accountability for these sorts of atrocities, that

we will have an impact and things and atrocities like this will happen less and less frequently and people's basic fundamental human rights will become more and more safeguarded. And yeah, I just hope that we are having that effect here. Yeah.

03:25 LPN: S-, so now I'd like you to take as many moments as you would like and think for yourself, reflect back on the interview and is there anything else that did not come out because I didn't ask the right question or something that perhaps you came in with or came up while we were talking that you would like to share with us?

03:49 One thing I, I think I would like to say is you know from my experience from, coming from the West, coming to work in Africa on an African problem, even though it has obviously global ramification and it's an interest that the entire international community (__) should have, I have found working here, the thing that I've come away with is the importance of working with Africans and in particular Rwandans. Having Rwandans be involved in the process.

04:27 We work in our division with many Rwandans and I think it was something that this tribunal came to slowly and it's something that I think was very important for them to come to eventually. And, you know, I think our work has benefited tremendously by having Rwandans involved, you know, from the point of view of bringing justice and seeking justice for Rwandans.

04:59 And as a Westerner, to have the benefit of working with Rwandans in gaining their perspective and their insight into problems or into ways victims or witnesses may approach a particular subject, where if you were from the West, you would have no idea of the cultural sensitivities involved.

05:18 And so one of the greatest things that I'll take away from here is having worked with Rwandan colleagues and, and making Rwandans friends and learning from them. And I think that's something that's really important for the international community to continue as it goes forward with different tribunals and different courts, national prosecutions, of involving the most important and primary stakeholders who are Rwandans and involving them in the process.

05:54 Because one fear that I've always had is that the ICTR is removed from Rwanda and from Rwandans and from their reality of what's going on. And that's one way of making sure that Rwandans do have a stake in a, the work of an international tribunal, particularly when that tribunal is not in the country where the conflict occurred, which is almost always going to be the case because often the country can't support such a tribunal in the wake of mass atrocities and war.

06:31 So it's one thing that I've come away with and at the beginning when you asked me what was I surprised about and what, you know, I've come away with and it's the one thing that I found was really important is to just have Rwandans involved here and be such an important part of the whole process. Yeah.