



# Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

## Official Transcript: Colette Ngoya (Part 2 of 8)



<b>Role:</b>	Translator
<b>Country of Origin:</b>	Cameroon
<b>Interview Date:</b>	13 October 2008
<b>Location:</b>	Arusha, Tanzania
<b>Interviewers:</b>	Lisa P. Nathan Donald J. Horowitz
<b>Videographer:</b>	Max Andrews Nell Carden Grey
<b>Interpreter:</b>	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 2 begins on the following page.*

## Part 2

- 00:00** Lisa P. Nathan: **When did – or it's maybe why did you decide to begin working here at the tribunal, or first in Kigali?**
- 00:11 The first of us who came was Justine. She got a contract and she went to Kigali and we were working together so we spoke to each other, I went to see her family and then she told me that there were openings. I sent my application and they decided to take me so I came.
- 00:37 LPN: How did you feel about going to Kigali?**
- 00:40 I didn't know much about Kigali at the time really. And given the situation, you are a little bit scared, you are, you know, you don't know much about it but I wanted to take the challenge.
- 00:54 LPN: Can you describe what it was like in Kigali, like one of your first days there? If you can think of a specific day, and what it was like.**
- 01:08 I had never been to Rwanda of course and Kigali was kind of sad. I mean it's, the atmosphere was not very joyful and we had a lot of work, so you think about working and you know the situation is not a nice one and that kind of state of mind.
- 01:39 LPN: So what, when you would go to work in the morning . . .**
- 01:43 Mm-hmm.
- 01:44 LPN: . . . what was it like? Can you describe the office or how many people were there?**
- 01:50 We were about – I can't remember the number. The tribunal was not the-, there were not a lot of people at the tribunal at the time and some, some of our colleagues had come to Arusha because they recruited them, then the trials opened here and then about half of the tribunal came here. We had mostly the investigators and part of the Prosecutor's office, or I mean the biggest part.
- 02:23 But some of them came here for the trials. So the, the, the work load, what we were working on was kind of, I mean the news were not good. You know, you would – especially for translators, you have to read everything, you have to learn about what was happening; you have to learn about the raids, the, the killings and this and that.
- 02:53 So from nowhere you get straight into that kind of atmosphere. So, some, mo-, most of the time some of us, we, we used to cry, we used to feel very bad, but that was it. And people were not very joyful around, I mean the Rwandans and that is understandable of course given what had happened. So that was it.
- 03:19 LPN: So what exactly, what sort of things were you translating? When you would go into work for the day, you would be handed . . . ?**

- 03:29 Witness statements. Most of the time. Whatever was happening in the trials, the documents from the trials and that kind of thing. But mostly witness statements, because we were in the Prosecutor's office so we were working on whatever was coming from the field. Yeah.
- 03:56 LPN: And what language would you be translating?**
- 04:00 I translate from English and Spanish to French. But in Kigali, in Kigali of course it was English to French. Yeah.
- 04:09 LPN: So some of the witnesses were giving their statements in English?**
- 04:13 Yes, not, not mo-, not a lot of them but some of them yes. But in any case we had the, the, the translation section is made up of three different units – the Kinyarwanda unit, the English and the French. And of course everything that was said in Kinyarwanda was translated either in French or in English and then we took o-, we took over from there.
- 04:37 So if it was in English, then it came to my section, my unit. If it was in French it went to the other unit of the section. So I was translating from English to French.
- 04:51 LPN: And I imagine you have friends who are interpreters?**
- 04:56 Mm-hmm.
- 04:57 LPN: And they were also working but they had a very – they had a different job. Could you explain what the difference would be?**
- 05:02 Yes, in, in, yes, in Kigali we didn't have the, the, the work of the interpreters is different in Kigali and here . . .
- 05:13 LPN: Okay.**
- 05:13 . . . because there the interpreters were mostly working for the meetings; the meetings of the tribunal. We didn't have trials, we didn't have courtrooms so once in a while we'll have working sessions, we'll have meetings and that is when they translated.
- 05:31 Of course the setting is different because we didn't need, we didn't have all the, the logistics that they have here. You don't need courtroom reporters, that kind of thing, so it was just in our meetings that they were translating.
- 05:49 LPN: But that – were they interpreting or?**
- 05:52 They were interpreting during our meet-, yes . . .
- 05:54 LPN: Yes, okay.**
- 05:54 . . . the meetings, yeah. And that is why essentially in Kigali all the tr-, the interpreters were also translators because the workload in interpretation wasn't enough to, for them to be doing only that. So most of the time – but we had two type of interpreters.

We had the, the interpreters that came from different countries, English, French, and we have Kinyarwanda interpreters.

06:23 The Kinyarwanda interpreters most of them were trained on the field, that is trained in the tribunal and what they did was go with the investigators to collect the information, to get the statements and bring them back. So most of our Kinyarwanda interpreters, that's what they were doing and then some of them were in the office. They would take over from the witness statements that came in in Kinyarwanda and put them either in English or in French for us to take over, yeah.

06:56 **LPN: Then you would take over and (\_\_\_) . . .**

06:57 Yeah.