



Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: Straton Musonera (Part 5 of 6)



Role:	Information Officer
Country of Origin:	Rwanda
Interview Date:	14 October 2008
Location:	Arusha, Tanzania
Interviewers:	Lisa P. Nathan Donald J Horowitz
Videographer:	Max Andrews
Interpreter:	None

Interview Summary

Straton Musonera discusses his experience working on outreach and capacity building programs for the ICTR, including capacity building of the judicial sector in Rwanda. He addresses the special insight and knowledge he has as Rwandan working for the Tribunal. Musonera explains the challenge of working daily with testimony and information about the genocide, yet also needing to retain a certain distance from it to function professionally. He emphasizes the need for an outreach program for courts such as the ICTR around the world, to ensure that people know justice is being pursued.

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Part 5

- 00:00** Lisa P. Nathan: So a harder question perhaps, something that you're not as proud of. Perhaps an area where you wish you had more time to work on or an event that happened.
- 00:13 Yes, yes. I think the first issue is making a tribunal ad hoc. Really, I know that those who set up the tribunal had their opinion but for me, in my opinion, I think that when you set up a tribunal, let it work until the judges and the prosecutor say that now, all the cases are over. But to be limited in time is really, really something that is not really helpful.
- 01:08 And I think I would have wished that the tribunal could continue until all cases are, are finished but I understand also the reasons be-, behind the fact that they would like to have it stopped at a certain time.
- 01:29 The other thing is that I wish the outreach program of the ICTR could continue because communication is not something that you can undertake in one, a communication program is not something that you can undertake in one or two years only.
- 01:53 When you undertake any communication program, you have an objective and the objective is perhaps to change the opin-, either to inform, just informing people or educating people to increase their knowledge or to have those people's behavior changed or mentality or attitude.
- 02:21 And I believe that the outreach program of the ICTR should continue. Should continue in a way that it can help Rwandan population reconcile themselves. It can continue so that Rwandan population can understand what human rights and genocide mean.
- 02:48 And what are the relation b-, between reconciliation, peace and genocide? The-, these are really things that Rwandan people need to understand and to date, I don't really know whether they understand them very well, because we still have some killings of witnesses, killings of survivors and in my opinion, I think that the seeds of genocide are still there and they can be uprooted just in a period of ten or 14 years.
- 03:28 So we need really to work wi-, in the realm of communication, to work hard so that really we can change the attitude of Rwandan so that we can change the perceptions of Rwandan vis-à-vis the other and in this way we will be really preparing a better Rwanda for our children. And really this is the thing, if I can manage to contribute in this area, I will do whatever possible to contribute.
- 04:05** **Note: Gap in Interview Gaps occurred due to interruptions during the interview, technical issues, or corrupted data files.**

- 04:14** Donald J Horowitz: You were talking with Ms. Nathan about the complementary role you would like or you feel the courts in Rwanda and the tribunal, or the international courts should have and I, I, I wanted to get a little more specific if you've thought about it, how, how would they wor-, in your view, how would you suggest that they might work better in a complementary role?
- 04:37 Yes, let me start with an example. Here are the ICTR, the genocide suspect, the accused that we have here, those who allegedly planned the, the genocide in Rwanda, and most of the people who are in Rwandan jail are executioners, the main part of them are e-, executioners.
- 05:13** DJH: So the, the people here are the planners and the higher-ups . . .
- 05:17 Mm-hmm.
- 05:17** DJH: . . . the people there are the ones who performed the acts.
- 05:20 Yes.
- 05:21** DJH: Although I'm sure there's some spill over (___).
- 05:22 Yes, yeah, of course, yeah. And when you look at the, the (___), the scale of sentences in Rwanda, before, they were going from death penalty to acquittal. Today, because death penalt-, death penalty is no longer there, it's from life imprisonment to, to acquittal. And here it's from life imprisonment to acquittal.
- 06:00 But when you look at the two systems, you really realize that they don't really work hand in hand in order to have a coherent complementarity, in order to have reall-, so that someone who is from outside can see really that what is happening in ICTR if it were in Rwanda it would have been – the sentence would have been almost the same or for instance what is happening in th-, in Rwanda if this case w-, had been taken to the ICTR, things would have been close to similar.
- 06:48** DJH: 'Kay. A certain I-, a level of consistency . . .
- 06:51 Yes.
- 06:53** DJH: . . . I think is what you're, you're saying. So that would be an example of that.
- 06:55 Yes.
- 06:57** DJH: Go ahead.
- 06:57 The other thing is that always justice is better rendered when it's seen, and the fact that this tribunal is many miles away from Rwanda, it loses a certain value in the, in the minds

of Rwandans. I understand why it was set up here but it's al-, the best solution would have been to take it in Rwanda where the crime was committed and to have people who committed the crimes prosecuted in front of the victims and in f-, front of the Rwandan population in general.

08:05 This would have had a very, very important impact on Rwandans and many Rwandan, Rwandans would have drawn a lot of lessons from that. But today, nevertheless, even if we have it here, the outreach program tries but it's, it's, it's completely, it's not the same as if we had the court within the country where the crime was committed.