



Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: Justine Ndongo-Keller (Part 9 of 13)



Role:	Chief of Language Services
Country of Origin:	Cameroon
Interview Date:	8 October 2008
Location:	Arusha, Tanzania
Interviewers:	Donald J Horowitz Lisa P. Nathan
Videographer:	Max Andrews
Interpreter:	None

Interview Summary

Justine Ndongo-Keller describes various roles within the Language Services Department at the ICTR, clarifying differences among interpreters, translators and reviewers. She stresses the importance of effective, high-quality translation for the Tribunal's overall success, as well as the significance of review in the translation process. An original member of the language services team, Ndongo-Keller also provides a perspective on the department's evolution. She comments on the personal toll to individuals in language services from extensive exposure to materials about the genocide.

The transcript of Part 9 begins on the following page.

Part 9

- 00:00** Donald J Horowitz: Well, we had a little break and I'm going to come back to a few things that I passed over (___) because I didn't want to interrupt the flow of your conversation. One is, you talked about some of the effects of having to translate the kind of material that, that you do.
- 00:21** DJH: And I wondered if it had any effect, or you would know, on the length that somebody will be an interpreter or a translator here. In other words, what's the average length of time people work, if you know that or, or you can . . . ?
- 00:40** No, I can't give an answer to that with, you know, certainty because some people came, spent three years here and left. Some have been here for ten years, for 11 years. Some, right now, some are leaving because we're closing.
- 00:59** DJH: Yes. That's different.
- 00:59** And, but normally people stay on, especially Africans. You know, those, the Africans. They stay on for diverse reasons and – I could have left, you know. I've had many opportunity to leave but it, it's, you know, Arusha is addictive, you know.
- 01:23** DJH: How is that?
- 01:24** It's, it's funny. You know when we first got here, I was like I, I, "I'm not sure I'll be able to stay here a year," because, I mean, why should I leave, you know, a home where I was very comfortable and come here suffering. Then, you get used to it, you know. You stay, you start liking what you do and, you know, people are friendly because, compared to where I come from, Tanzanians are very soft and very friendly.
- 01:50** Because back home, people are very rough, very welcoming people but you know, they do fight for their right and, you know, tell you what they want to tell you if they had to. Then the, the, the places, you know, you could go to these lodges, the parks, you know. It, it, it had become a nice place to be.
- 02:13** I, personally, I don't like big, big, big cities, you know. If you go beyond a place like Paris it's already too much for me. And whenever I said it people are very surprised because I love downtown Manhattan. You know very much it is a big place, New York. It's a big city to be but left that, that aside is after t-, one or two colleagues who want even to stay behind.
- 02:44** After the tribunal, you know, had closed down, to stay behind because it's green, you know – the mountain, the Kilimanjaro, the lodges. And then it's becoming a, a, a big conference center. Many conferences are being organized here, so for a translator and interpreter, there were some work to do, so, that's it.

- 03:05 But I can't give you an average to say like five years or four years or whatever. Some people came, they even stayed only for a year, and they left. Some people left because they went to Europe. They found a job in some other organization.
- 03:20 **DJH: I was wondering if you had formed any opinion if any of them left because just of the difficulty of the material that they were translating here.**
- 03:27 Some left because it was difficult, yeah. Some just decided that it was too much and they, they left. But most people left when they were offered something else.
- 03:40 **DJH: Okay.**