



Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: M-L. Lambert (Part 7 of 8)



Role:	Associate Legal Officer
Country of Origin:	England
Interview Date:	23 October 2008
Location:	Arusha, Tanzania
Interviewers:	Donald J Horowitz John McKay
Videographer:	Max Andrews
Interpreter:	None

Interview Summary

M-L. Lambert describes her personal relationship with convicted genocidaire Hassan Ngeze, who she worked closely with at the Tribunal. She speaks at length about her responsibilities researching and drafting judgments for Military 1, reflecting on the difficulties of assessing the credibility of witnesses and evidence in a post-genocide climate. She talks about the harrowing evidence presented to the court and recounts the case against Colonel Bagosora who was accused of masterminding the genocide against the Tutsis.

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Part 7

- 00:01** Donald J Horowitz: When the statute beginning this, starting this, empowering this court was drafted, there was, there were a couple of words that stick out for me. One was justice.
- 00:12 Yeah.
- 00:13** DJH: The other was reconciliation.
- 00:14 Yeah.
- 00:17** DJH: Let's talk about justice first.
- 00:19 Okay.
- 00:20** DJH: What's your definition of justice in this context? You're, you're trying to help the court do justice. That's your current job. And even as an advocate, you're trying to help the court to do justice.
- 00:35 Mm-hmm.
- 00:37** DJH: In the, in the context of this court and the facts which surround this court, what's your definition of justice? And I don't mean, you don't have to do it in 25 words or less.
- 00:48 No, I mean . . .
- 00:50** DJH: What is it you're, you're looking to help be part of?
- 00:54 Okay. As an associate legal officer in chambers, I believe that, you know, for my role and for me in my current position, justice involves a meticulous analysis and reasoning of the evidence that has been presented. And when I say meticulous, I mean really engaging with what it is that was presented, and what the witnesses meant and understanding, you know, events that occurred in a foreign country twelve years ago in an environment that is difficult to understand.
- 01:38 And, you know, based on, on that understanding, determining whether it is, in a-, you know, in true accordance with, with international legal principles, whether the accused, however famous or whichever position they may have held in Rwanda, can legally be held to account. And that's the challenge.
- 02:04** DJH: Okay. That's justice in the context of what your job is.
- 02:09 Yes.
- 02:10** DJH: And the job, strictly speaking, the job of the court . . .
- 02:13 Mm-hmm.

- 02:13** DJH: . . . to do. But the judge, the court was also charged with the word reconciliation.
- 02:19 Yeah. And I . . .
- 02:20** DJH: What is that, I, I've looked at that statute a few times now, and I'm trying, myself, trying to figure out what the c-, what the statute means by reconciliation, because lots of people can have different definitions of it.
- 02:33 Of course.
- 02:33** DJH: And what it meant for the court to do. And . . .
- 02:37 Mm-hmm.
- 02:38** DJH: . . . you've clearly looked at the statute, and, and what does it mean to you?
- 02:42 I think that, at its inception, I think the idea that, was that, by holding perpetrators of these crimes to account, that there'd be reconciliation within Rwanda between the Hutu and the Tutsi. I think that was the ideal and the notion to which we were aspiring to, (___) the drafters of the statute were aspiring to. In truth, I feel that the reconciliation part of our work here has been the one that's been most neglected.
- 03:12 Which to me is a shame. I met a Rwandan recently, and I said I was wak-, working for the ICTR, and again I had a preconceived notion that, you know, they would be happy to hear this and that they would think that we were doing great work. But they sort of shook their head, said that they thought the UN were a bunch of crooks, that they didn't do anything to help Rwanda, that now they were spending lots of money to try evil men. And it was taking 12 to, you know, 15 years to do so, and they were spending billions and billions of dollars in the process. And why couldn't that go to Rwandan orphans?
- 03:47 So that a Rwandan citizen would view us like that, I think is a sign of our failing, firstly. Second is that we're in 2008 and, you know, we have a mandate now that's been extended. We'll probably be around until sort of 2011, 2012, no one's quite sure. And as yet, no one – well this is why I agreed to be interviewed w-, with you, because I think this is really important – no one's really sure of what's going to happen to our, to our information legacy.
- 04:21 You know, how we are going to reconcile victims with the perpetrators of their crimes. What, what role we have in that, how we are going to use this historical record that we've spent billions of dollars creating for the, for the good of Rwanda and, and how we're going to give that information back to them. How we can justify to them the billions of dollars spent on this process comes down to how it is that we give them back this information and the ownership that they feel they have of it.
- 04:52 And right now, we're very much removed from Rwanda. I don't feel that we're doing nearly enough outreach. And that, I think the, the historical record of Rwanda is not

being shaped by us, because we're removed from it, bu-, but it's being shaped by the government in Rwanda currently, so that our ability to create a fuller picture and to educate has been stunted by our inaction in that area.

05:23

DJH: Okay.