



Voices from the Rwanda Tribunal

Official Transcript: M-L. Lambert (Part 8 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 8

- 00:00** Donald J Horowitz: If you were going to, if you had the chance, I'm afraid you might. I mean, not you, but somebody might in the future . . .
- 00:07 Okay.
- 00:07** DJH: . . . design a tribunal for another terrible . . .
- 00:12 Mm-hmm. Yes.
- 00:13** DJH: . . . event, what would, how would you design it? Or, what would you do to improve upon what you've seen here?
- 00:23 I think the accused in pre-judgment detention for 12 years is something that would need to be remedied. These trials need to speed up. The fact that they're so slow impedes our legitimacy in the eyes of the international community. And, and therefore, would make, I think, the General Assembly or the international community question whether the expense were necessary.
- 00:52 And perhaps, you know, in favor of perhaps less transparent proceedings, such as the Saddam proceedings in Iraq, which took a year and a half, you know.
- 01:00** DJH: Mm-hmm.
- 01:00 Done, dusted very quickly. So, you know, what is it that we have to benefit? You know, that was what I would hope for a new tribunal of this kind.
- 01:09** DJH: Okay. ()
- 01:10 How I would specifically change that is that, the, the ICTR is a microcosm of the UN itself, and the bureaucracy that we have here is never ending and stunts the work that we do. I myself have had experiences where, you know, as a professional staff member I've not been paid for five months at a time.
- 01:38 I've found it very difficult to have my contract renewed or to have holiday approved. It's just a, a personal experience. I feel that to, to talk more about the administrative difficulties would perhaps be sort of breaching the trust and confidence they have placed in me, but . . .
- 01:54** DJH: Okay. I get the picture on that.
- 01:57 But less bureaucracy and more action, really.
- 01:59** DJH: Okay.
- 01:59 I mean, you know, the people of Rwanda deserve to have these answers a little quicker than they've received them and, as would other victims in, in other tribunals.

- 02:12** DJH: Interesting, because I was talking with somebody a few days ago and we talked about you know the right of the accused to a speedy trial, but you know, victims have a right to a speedy trial too. So that whatever happens, at least they can start their lives – they, they can put it to rest to the extent that they can.
- 02:29 I would absolutely agree with you.
- 02:30** DJH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And reconciliation is not just reconciliation between Hutus and Tutsis, but reconciliation for individuals.
- 02:38 That’s right.
- 02:39** DJH: With their own pain and their own suffering . . .
- 02:42 Mm-hmm.
- 02:43** DJH: . . . so that they can begin to move on.
- 02:45 Exactly right.
- 02:45** DJH: And what this tribunal has done to some extent, but could do a lot better I think is what you’re saying . . .
- 02:53 Mm-hmm.
- 02:53** DJH: . . . is enable that reconciliation with one’s own getting on with life, to happen a little bit quick-, more quickly.
- 03:01 I would entirely agree. Yeah.
- 03:02** DJH: Yeah. Okay. So with all of that . . .
- 03:07 Yes.
- 03:07** DJH: . . . do you have any hope?
- 03:09 I do. I do have hope. I mean . . .
- 03:12** DJH: Tell me about it.
- 03:13 Well, () . . .
- 03:13** DJH: Tell us, (), actually, right now I’m asking you to tell people 50 years from now, your grandchildren, you know, who are going to say, “Wow, she was pretty good.” Yeah.
- 03:22 I don’t know if they will say that, but what is my hope? My hope is for the future, is that despite the failings of our tribunal, despite the fact that we’ve spent so much money and we’ve taken too much time and that we might not have reconciled as much as we could, and that justice might not be as exact or as perceived to be fair as it could be, the hope that I have is that I’ve seen gifted men and women sacrifice a lot.

- 04:00 You know, and work very hard to taking, taking what is, in the last 50 years been, you know, a legal norm, you know, that genocide or crimes of humanity are bad, and taken it from this sort of higher principle to a practical reality. So what they're saying is that we're not going to sit around and talk anymore.
- 04:24 That, you know, these crimes are wrong, and individuals and governments can't be allowed to perpetrate them. But we're going to bleed and sweat to ensure that those are accused of these crimes are held to account in a fair, you know, judicial process.
- 04:43 My hope is that with time, the law will become more eloquent. The international community will be quicker to act and that more people in the position of the accused here, alleged to have done similar things, will be held to account. So that, in essence, we have what the UN has often strived for, which is a safer and more peaceful world.
- 05:09 And that's, that's the legacy of the tribunal. It's a step towards that ideal. And with all its problems, that it is a step forward makes everything else and all our criticisms fall to the wayside, in, in my opinion.
- 05:28 DJH: Very good.**
- 05:29 Yeah.
- 05:29 DJH: Is there anything else you'd like to tell us?**
- 05:32 I would like to say thank you for this opportunity to speak to you. You know, this process has been challenging and emotional and intense, and if I can help in any way share how it could be for someone working in this, you know, extraordinary institution, then I'm very grateful to have done so. Yep.
- 05:55 DJH: Thank you very much.**
- 05:56 Yeah. Pleasure.