

University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign
HIS 596 Congolese Diaspora Views
Transcripts from Interview # 3
March 24, 2011
Interviewee #3 [I3]

This interview was both conducted and transcribed by Margaret Fitzpatrick.

MF: Okay, this is Margaret Fitzpatrick speaking here. I'm continuing with this project, "Opinions About Home Country Transitional Justice and Reconciliation Prospects in an African Expatriate Community in Champaign Urbana." Today is March 24, and I'm, 2011. I'm sitting here in the Champaign Public Library, in one of the study rooms, with Interviewee #3. And we've finished the demographic questions and now we are gonna' move on to the main questions. Uh, question number one: What do you think people in the future should understand and remember about the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

I3 – Yeah. If I have to go straight to the question, people should think of how to bring peace and to stop any kind of um future conflict to other countries, because the conflict doesn't profit to anybody. It just brings destruction I mean destruction and restriction of things that has been built and that gotta go back to zero. Yeah, that's all I can say about it.

MF: Question number two. In your opinion, were women and men affected differently by violence in the DRC?

I3 – To the question, what I can say, when we talk about conflict and the differences between men and women the way they affected I think I can say we all are affected because when it come to shooting, bombing, they haven't made any bomb only for women. They haven't made any guns for women or men only. When it comes to kill, [it's] going to kill both of us the same way. But if I have to talk more, to show the biggest view, of those criminals, is beside those shooting killing, all that, they using another way, they raping women. They raping women not only with their body, but they use guns, knife, after they do all their operation. That's can be more on the side of women.

MF: Okay. In some African countries there have been structured, officially sponsored institutions and programs which have tried to bring about truth and reconciliation after violent conflicts. One prominent example is in South Africa, and there have been others in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. The name given to these institutions is usually a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, or TRC. Question number three: Do you have any experience with TRC efforts in Central and Western Africa such as Rwanda or Liberia?

I3: Yeah, if I have to go to the question, I see you mentioned like 2003. As a student and researcher, I haven't been in Congo about those dates, 2003-2007, I was here. But according to what I know and experience about Africans, entire Africa, we don't love each other. Even though they made this commission of, like it says this Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but I don't trust that, to my own opinion. Why I say that, because Africans betrayed each other. Just they easy corrupted. They can talk about truth, reconciliation, but on the side, they getting paid for just destroying what they have been already built up or signing for. So to my understanding, I don't know a lot about the commission, but I don't trust that.

MF: [4:21, Q4] Um, number four, are you aware that there was a TRC in the DRC in 2003-2007? Were you aware about that?

I3: No I didn't know anything about it, but if there were there, what is the result? There is nothing as a result. We have been attacked since 1997. Troop Kabila's took power of Mobutu's, in May 17, 1997. And then from there until now, there is unsecured people. There is atrocity. A lot of people are getting killed for just free speech. There is no free speech. Nobody can share his own opinion. So there is nothing positive for that commission.

MF: [5:29, Q5] Okay. Um, and then question number five is just related to that, uh, what are your opinions about that process, did you want to add anything of else about that, er?

I3: To the process, there is nothing as a process, because. If there is, they have, you gave a date, 2007, eh 2003-2007. They did nothing as a result. So what is the process. The process was probably they sat down, got together, drink, eat and then after that they just covered their paper and they take off and they keep those papers at their house and office or something like that. There is no process.

MF: [6:15, Q6] Uh, number six, to your knowledge, were women included in that 2003-2007 process?

I3: Yeah, um, I know women are everywhere, because they are the mother. Our mother if I'm alive today, I came from women, and men, some way. And women are our mother, and women, if we talk about women according to the Bible they are like the church so if they can uh, they can uh, women are like, how can I say that's in the Bible, it says Mother, that's French way. I want to try to make it in French, eh, in English A smart mother is the one who builds her house, so if we talk about good house of everything settled even in marriage it is attribute to women, so women is the one who plays big role on everything so for that being on the commission I think they have been there, because they are there. But those women participated to the commission, I'm going to put them on the same side of those men who just went there, sat down, nothing has

been done. And another thing I can say for according to African women, there is no emancipation still.

MF: No emancipation.

I3: No, still. Like I see here, in America, I am interviewed by women, I know they can have some, I'm not talking about in general, probably if I have to go over this percentage, probably 30% are emancipated, 70% are not. There is some part in Africa, or in Congo for example you can see some women still walking breasts, eh, no, no, breasts not covered, they walking with underwear even, I can say lips. So I think the women who participating on this commission were the 30% and then they don't speak up. Enough to have those other women to have those other women who are not emancipated to train them. That's all I can say about it.

MF: [9:07, Q7] Okay. Uh, number seven, do you think another TRC would be appropriate or effective for the DRC? Why or why not?

I3: Um, the TRC. First of all, I can say it didn't do anything. If they tried, they had initiation to do so, but I don't see any result. Because I don't know their mission. I don't know what's they have been planning for. But according to what I read here, Truth and Reconciliation Commission. So if we talk about truth, that means we talk about truthness. So what is the truthness? The truthness for Congo, Congolese {indistinct} attack, the truth is that is about mineral resources. They are raping women. About 70% of women are raped. That's the truth right there. They should talk about those rebellions are just serving powerful, powerful countries, powerful people. They just representative. They just standing there, one name, they put one person there, they give them gun, and then by the time they say there, they can take mineral resources illegally. That's all [it's] about. That's the answer {indistinct}.

MF: [10:38, Q8] Okay. Um, number eight. There have also been other models of addressing the problems of post-conflict societies such as criminal tribunals of top leadership. For example, Jean Pierre Bemba is being tried at the International Criminal Court and we said Belgium, but [someone] said we had the wrong place.

I3: Eh, Holland.

MF: Yeah. Okay, for alleged war crimes.

I3: Yeah.

MF: Sorry about that, committed in the Central African Republic.

I3: All of them, all of them, Belgium, Holland, they're Europe. They all work the same.

MF: In your opinion, would this model be appropriate or effective for the DRC, why or why not?

I3: It can be appropriate, because like Obama said in Ghana, that we don't need a strong man in Africa, but we need a strong law. Speaking for Jean Pierre Bemba, he's just, Jean Pierre Bemba just somebody that uh for me a victim. So all these accusations I seen on I watched on the Internet and t.v. don't seem to be clear to me, why. I know he participated to such crime, but he said his truth to a different country. If they had been talking about Jean Pierre Bemba committed atrocity in the Congo, I would say yes, because I seen Jean Pierre Bemba troupes eating human. And he himself Congolese, yeah they can judge him for that. But for Central Africa, I don't know because I haven't been in Central Africa, but that one is not clear they should make the truthness. Like the TRC commission. They want to talk about truth, truth and uh what it says here, truth and reconciliation. When it comes to CPI, there is no reconciliation, there is law. So, I know he got part of judgment, that he need to be made to him. But, coming back to your, to the question, CPI got a lot of people, it has a lot of people that need to be sued or to be charged, but there is some strong people which they are still free they are still doing their duty, they are still killing. They already mentioned their name. Why there never are no, I know we say, we have sent what is it called, when they send, in fact they call it convocation, you need to come before the judge, they have sent those paper to those people since, but they never been judged. They're still doing, they're still killing. Why not sending, as the power sending people go where they are at. As for their not responding to their call, go grab them from there and take them to the courts. Still waiting for them, or waiting for example Tomas coming to America or Europe at the airport, arrest me. That is not right. They should just go over there. Because whoever is protecting them is criminal. So why do you have to wait. If they don't want to go to there, to those countries, they stay to their country. The justice won't go to them until they die. That's something that I don't agree with that.

MF: [15:11, Q9] Okay. Um, number nine. There have also been other models of addressing the problems of post-conflict societies, such as community level courts for victims and alleged perpetrators. In your opinion, would this model be appropriate or effective for the DRC? Why or why not?

I3: Can you come back to the question, I didn't get that there. [He takes a moment to read the question, which is written out on the pages I gave him before we started.]

MF: I guess it's about a community level, community level court.

I3: Community level court. Yeah. I think community level courts is appropriate according to my opinion, but I would like to go back to the same answer I gave you to some precedent questions, some questions that are passed. My judgment is about the result, what is the result of it. We have Congolese who been suffering, whoever commission can show up is welcome, but what is the result of it. Like I can go to something just as an example, United Nation has made a report condemning those crimes, they named even persons, they put person's names. This man did this.

This man did this. Even according to something coming behind all that in parentheses those people are covered by the United Nations, are those businessmen, they use United Nations airplanes, to go get illegal mineral resources, to go get what's they want. So that all the atrocity, the criminals, all that, it's on the issue of United Nations. They seen that. They right there. That's how they've got, they didn't need no witness, because they were been there. Writing people names, because they know the reality of it. But. What is the result? We march for it. I put my gas to do march. There is nothing can influence the report. The report was positive according to the truthness, but what is the result? Margaret? [He laughs here.]

MF: [18:02, Q10] Okay, um, number ten. How should women and women's issues be included in future efforts to address the legacies of violence in the DRC?

I3: First of all, we got to respect women. That's one of the main thing, respect. They are the mother, they are the mother of Obama. Obama came from women, all that. They are the one who suffer more for us. I am a man. I have a son, he's six years old. The more I care, I care about him, but the job I do to him compare to what his mother do for him is way huge than what I do, most of the time I come for conclusion, introduction, development, changing diapers, I learn from her, she's the one that does all that, she does more than I do, when it come to the house, come to the kids, all that. So we need to give them much respect. If I have to come back to your question, we have to protect the women. In some ways, our women are weak compared to us. Going back to when God created the world, we were the first creature, and then next was women, and we have such stronger, a strong way we can, we have such strength that we can do to help women, so we got work with them, collaborate with them to bring peace in the Congo. That's all.

MF: [20:08, Q11] Okay, um, number eleven. Should the legacies of violence be addressed in the Congolese educational system? If so, how?

I3: Yeah. It should because most of that is where we learn anything, education, that's where we learn everything, so, ,that's where we get mature, that's where we get education, that's where we learn what we doing, and there are, according to homework and other stuff, that's where we get most of our knowledge. So it's going to be okay to educate, to talk about, to put that on our education system, because if I remember, for example, our flag, and all this stuff important for the Congo, for the country, we been taking that as a daily duty, so if we can put that as a daily duty, it part of history, that'd be okay, that'd be okay. From high school, even middle school, all that, going into the high school student. The education system need to put that, yeah, so everybody can learn that.

MF: [21:29, Q12] Okay. Number twelve. Should members of the Congolese diaspora play a role in any efforts to address the legacies of violence?

I3: We playing roles. We play roles. But the problem is do what we doing is enough effort to bring legacies for the violence. [Here the interviewee was misunderstanding the meaning of the word legacies, and I should have corrected this sooner.] That is a question mark right there we have. We been knocking doors like blind people, we going door by door, we seeking help, we seeking a legacy [he meant end or closure] for the violence we facing in the Congo. We don't know who to see. I can go to President Obama. He is the only president when they voted him here, all Africa stand up. I'm not the only one talking about it, I think you seen that on the t.v. All Africa stand up. They stood. And I was volunteer myself for his propaganda. I volunteered myself, and put in my gas, go knocking people door, telling them about his good, because we had a all group of people doing that. But now I won't do that anymore. That's my opinion. My opinion change, because there is no difference. He deceived us.

MF: I think so. [I3 laughs.] Okay. So you campaigned for him and you wouldn't campaign for him again?

I3: No more. [Laughing.] I 'm trying to write even a book for that because African people had hope that things can change because they think that United States, according to politicians, is the leader of the world, so African thinks that as far United States is the leader of the world, white people been in the power. They just treating Africans like slave.

MF: Mm hm.

I3: Even though the world can be changed, but the system never been changed.

MF: Yeah.

I3: For us having a black president we thought he could manage some stuff to bring people equals, like Martin Luther King fought for, like Malcolm X, there have been leaders, like Lumumba, one of our leaders, Lumumba, there are a bunch of them, I cannot be citing them. We black people, I'm black, I talk for them, we humble ourselves because we know we been, we are weak, according to the system. But we like to live with love, together, nobody taking advantage of another it's going to be okay, Margaret, today, if we can have peace in Congo, women not being raped, nobody has been killed, assassination, night visits, all that stuff, none of the African countries. That'd be healthful. Let everybody benefit for them being in the world. Why injustice? That's not important. So, that is just on the side of anything. [He laughs some more.] I have a book that I'm writing, I'm trying to write something according to my influence, I know it has not been shown on anything, but I am a vice-president of the Congolese community. And I have Congolese Americans, I have African Americans who vote. So my words changed their minds, too, according to probably themselves, somehow, they voted for this, this, this. And then a vote might not mean anything, but we want justice. Yeah. [He laughs.]

MF: Okay, that's fine. So, that was

I3: Number eleven

MF: Well number twelve was should the diaspora play a role, and thirteen was if so what could be done. Did you want to add anything about what the diaspora could do?

I3: Yeah. What we can do also is just keep knocking doors, never been tired of, we still gonna be knocking doors, we don't know on whose door we gonna knock, and bring legacy on our problems.

MF: To bring closure, like to end?

I3: Yeah, closure, to end it. Solution. Legacy I think it like a solution, is that that?

MF: No, it's just like a history or something that you inherited.

I3: Yeah, oh, okay.

MF: It's like memories, memories of violence.

I3: Yeah, yeah, okay, memories of violence, I should ask you that question before I even, because the way I was, it was solution, but it's not.

MF: I understand, yeah.

I3: It's not.

MF: Maybe we should use a different word. Okay, number fourteen. Would you see yourself as being involved in such a process?

I3: I am.

MF: Yeah, you are.

I3: I am. I am involved in the situation because I was a cofounder of a human right [organization] called ADLH, Association of Human Rights and Liberty, in Congo. I know. I fought back there. And things that I'm going to talk about, legacy of violence in the Congo, it's not something that I read, or the book. It's not something that I heard on the radio. It is something that I have seen. I'm witness of it. They can say somebody have been raped, I know what the deep action of it is. So I was over there fighting, speaking, with some of my groups, students, and you know whoever try to bring justice, whoever try to speak for others is a target of death. So they chase and want to kill. [His cell phone rings, and I stop taping for a moment for him to answer it.]

Second of the two recordings.

MF: I'm back on here and it's recording. [March 24, 2011, continued.]

MF: [Q15] Number fifteen is, If something should be done, should these efforts wait until the conflict ends?

I3: No, I think we should not wait until the conflict ends. There is a proverb says Whoever want the peace be ready for the war. That means its going to be okay to prevent something Its going to be a good way to end the conflict now than to wait 'til tomorrow 'cause tomorrow might be bigger than what we see today. So that can be done. That can be over.

MF: [Q16] Is there a product from our research that would be useful to you and your community?

I3: The product I can say the question is not clear at all but what kind of product and how can we use the product. I can say for example your videotaping is a product and that video is a product. We want that videotape to be spread all through the entire world so that people can hear and see what we talking about what your research is all about because there is a multiplying way of media to Congolese solutions, but, and to Congolese conflict it has been more than ten years until now, people are still killed, people are raped, but how many death do we have to use or video or "a recourse" [?] to which the number so that the atrocity can stop Because that right now I seen robbers in Libya which I see a coalition of people trying to stop that, stop the government for killing those rebels, so if that's justice, why not in Congo? They should do the same thing to bring a quick solution. A quick solution or let's see of violence in Congo. That could be, but why not ours? Only Libya. Why not? To, my conclusion is, there is something behind it. Because Congo, all those Congolese are suffering, violating women, violation, is just, they just victim, of people's pocket, like the videocamera that you, you are recording me now, it is, suppose we have a sign of Congo on it, because there is Coltan for that, yeah. And its coming from Congo. And it's a bloody Coltan, it's a bloody camera that you have on your hand. It's a raping, raping product you have on your hand. But where and how many product. That can be a question that I can ask you until you ask me, how many product, do you have to use for that, how many? We don't know. Just like I said before, we walking around like a blind people and where we going and where the solution can come for us. Why not the solution for us? People are raped. I seen Hillary Clinton went there, "Oh, there's nothing that," to take people like us, like me, a bunch over here, who lives abroad, not people who live in Congo because they corrupted and they fear of death, you tell the truth, they come after you tomorrow. But I'm here, I won't be scared to tell the truth. I can show and know where problem are. As for respect there, they need to collaborate with diaspora. They need to collaborate with us. We got family there, and the family can tell us where the problem is. And then we can go there. They won't do nothing to me because they didn't do nothing to Hillary Clinton, they won't do nothing to me because I'm suggest, suggest how they call it people whose going with him on a research on an inspection or something like that. But you go there yourself to research you going to see nothing just the cover Not the next page. That's all I can say

MF: Okay Q17 Do you have any questions you would like to ask us. Not that I have the answers.

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I3: Yes. The question I can ask you is, I know I been on a lot of interview, t.v. interview, I've been on it, and I know I never been scared of what should I say. My family member have been victims and I'm strong minded. I have been a cofounder of a human rights and what's going on in my country is very, very bad. And we need solution, badder than what we see in Libya today because over there 8 million people died but in Libya 4 million now, so is that Libyan, their more important life or body or color than Congolese who have lost their life who have lost their son family who have been killed not just killed but they cut your throat, they cut your head they use stick big stick bamboo to stick on a sexual part and how could we speak for it its nothing that we hiding, its nothing that we creating, its nothing that we making, its truth. The TRC, if you have one of the big member of it, what is the truth of that, where we at all that, 2002 to 2007, what they did, what is their report, United Nations, where we at with their report, we want to get the response. the world is treating Congolese like they dumb there is nobody smart or there is nobody can speak for them, there is nothing. right now they're supporting Rwanda Brundi They're behind them, getting their percentage at war, those people are killing raping our women killing stealing our mineral resources why is that why is that we need a solution I don't know if the Congolese solution will come from this or your video. We don't know. Your research, congratulations on that research but what I'd like is we do something, we need something to come back for it. You spend time to interview all these people you got here. I spend my time, I should do something else, but to come here talk to you about it, but I need to see what comes after it. The world will not end today, not tomorrow, but God only Himself knows. We can be powerful, we can be whoever we are, but it more powerful with God. So I need a justice to be clarified. Yeah.

MF: Okay, thank you. Is there Anything else you would like to add? Maybe any question that I didn't ask that I should have asked? Or just anything else that you would like to add?

I3: Um, I think you ask a lot of questions and then I enjoyed the interview. What I can add is just I'm going to congratulate you for the idea because that's one of the things we wishes we can have more people like you guys doing research on the Congo. That means there are other people who thinks of Congo, Congolese, I mean, in general, women and men. You've been up there emancipating. So we need our family, I mean women to be emancipated, too. They need to be on the big truck driving. I want to see them talking for themselves defending themselves, going to school higher level, not just stay at home cooking, taking care of the kids, while over here we share. It's like turns. Today is my turn, tomorrow will be the mother. I need that to be done in Congo. We always talk about we Bantu. Bantu means, you know, that's how they call us, our culture and ethnics. But the world have been changed. I need our leader to listen, to get that, world have been changed. We have to look at women like our partner not our slave our partner.

We share idea, how to lead the family how to lead the business, how to lead the country. We need to look at them like that, not having in your government one lady, so you put her right there, so, that means all women, she's defending all women, no, she just somebody that you trained and there is she's not even speak for others. We need somebody who can speak for others like I seen in Brazil. Now there is a woman president. Why not in Congo, woman president?

MF: Why not in the United States?

I3: Why not the United States? Why not? I want to see that. I want to see that. We want to see the big change. Obama talked about change. Africans trusted that change. The Change word means a lot. That can be economic, that can be stopping violence, that can be stopping raping. You need a woman go get marriage, go talk to a woman gentle, she said okay, yeah, she said no, leave her alone, don't force her, because you got a gun, or you stronger than her. No. That's all I have, Margaret. [He is laughing.] I talk a lot. If I get a chance, I talk a lot. But I think that one is enough for now [laughing].