

University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign
HIS 596 Congolese Diaspora Views
Transcripts from Interview # 5
April 2, 2011

Interview conducted by Abbey Adesope and Rebecca Vaughn

Interviewer- Ok so it's recording. Ok so were moving to the section B the main questions. So for the first one, um... What do you think people in the future should understand and remember about the conflicts in the Democratic Republic of the Congo?

Interviewee #5- People should understand that the um...the conflict that we are having is because of our soil, because of the wealth that we have in our country. I think we as a Congolese people, we don't know how to exploit it. That's why other people from outside of Congo are trying to take advantage of it and they are fighting for it. That's why we still have conflict. So the, I think the Congolese people should stand up now. I think it's time for us to stand up. It's been too much, Yes.

Interviewer- Ok...umm. For question 2, In your opinion, were women and men affected differently by violence in the DRC?

Interviewee #5- Yes!

Interviewer- Ok

Interviewee#5- I would say they were affected differently, physically. Women were raped, beaten up, cut in pieces. Men, most of the time were killed. They didn't really make them suffer as women. Cause, for example, I will give an example. There were slice of breast of a woman during uhh, the rape. He's the person raping and then cutting up the person. That's in human, yea that's not human.

Interviewer- Umm so in some African countries there have been structured officially, officially sponsored institutions and programs which have tried to bring about truth and reconciliation after violent conflicts. One prominent example example 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. Do you have any experience with TRC efforts in central and western Africa (such as Rwanda or Liberia)?

Interviewee #5- I don't have any experiences but they always talk about it but nothing is being done. The same thing is still happening. Now Liberia, they are going to war. And so far Rwanda is getting better, compared to us. We are still getting genocide and we are still going through the same thing that we been through 10 years ago. Because by the time I came here, the east of the Congo was still suffering from genocide. For me, it's just words being used but no efforts, nothing being done.

Interviewer - Are you aware there was a TRC in Congo in 2003-2007?

Interviewee # 5- I heard about it. (snickers)

Interviewer- Do you have any comments about it, or should we move on to the next question?

Interviewee -Not really. Not really. Our country is, we don't really know who is controlling us right now, so I don't really have much to say about it. I will just say that the meaning of Truth Reconciliation Commission. The people, who made this, need to apply it. That's all I have to say, yeah.

Interviewer- So we can move to # 6. To your knowledge were women included in that 2003- 2007 process?

Interviewee # 5. Not too many women were included. I would say minority of them

Interviewer- Do you think another TRC would be appropriate or effective for Democratic Republic of Congo? Why or why not?

Interviewee #5- I'm not a politician. (Everyone laughs)

Interviewer- We have heard that before. *laughs*

Interviewee #5- I don't like politics. Uhhhh I don't think I really have a good answer to this question.

Interviewer- Let's see. For #8 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 in Belgium, for alleged war crimes committed in the Central African Republic. In your opinion would this model be appropriate or effective for the DRC? Why or why not?

Interviewee #5- It's appropriate because Jean- Pierre Bemba is, at least he cared about the people in Congo and umm, he shouldn't have been arrested. The election and everything that was done wasn't legal. It was illegal. So he was fighting for the country. He really fought for the people. And they are not giving him, right now, any chance to express himself. They are just accusing him for killing people. There was a war, the president that we have right now, had killed people too. But it's just one of them won and took advantage. They just rejected and pushed a way, Jean- Pierre Bemba, but I do not believe in the criminal that they are accusing him of. I just think he fought for the people and he was still fighting for the them. Yes.

Interviewer- So there have 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?

Interviewee #5- Can I answer this question later. We can go back to that.

Interviewer- Sure! Alright the next one says umm, how should women and women's issues be included in future efforts to address the legacies of violence in the DRC?

Interviewee #5- uhhh... Women issues, yes, it needs to be included in the way that a lot of women are not being heard. Nobody is trying to listen to what they are saying or what they have been through. I think most of the countries in Congo take women to be vulnerable and in Africa already it's hard for women to express themselves. I think in the last 10-15 years, that women start to talk for themselves. So, yes I think, future efforts will really help women a lot for, Yea, for the legacies of violence. Yes

Interviewer- Okay, So if you believe that, then how do you feel that these legacies of violence should be addressed or should they be addressed in the Congolese educational system, and if so how?

Interviewee #5- By letting more older women go to school. A lot of women just fight for their family to feed the family. But they don't go to school. They don't know how to read. They know how to count the money, for sure. But they don't know a lot of stuff, they are not informed about what is going on. They just live the life and if something happens to them- they get affected by it. But they need more education. Like we see here in America a lot of older women, what I call older women is over 40 years old., might have the chance to go back to school and learn at least, at least how to write her name. You know. A lot of stuff that she missed.

Interviewer- I think it's interesting that you compare some of that stuff to America, and you know how in America there is a lot in the history books that are written about wars that have happened in the past. Do you think that issues going on now, children in future generations should know about it in Congo? Do you think that in the classroom should they be taught that during this time, this happened in Congo?

Interviewee #5- Yes, I think that they should know about it. I am a mother of 3 children and my children know about my country, only if I talk to them about it. Otherwise they don't know anything about it, about Congo. So they should tell them about politics, a little bit, not too much. Just enough to tell let them know what is going on around the world. Yes!

Interviewer- So question 12. Should members of the Congolese diaspora play a role in any efforts to address the legacies of violence?

Interviewee # 5- Yes. Yes, the diaspora needs to play a role because we diaspora, we are here. I say we because I am out of my country. We are here and we see what's going on here. We come here to study, we come here to get more education and we should be able to bring it back to our country. We see our elders, they came here before and came back to Congo, and they didn't bring anything. And they learned a lot of stuff over here. America is way more advanced compared to Congo so if you go back to your country and you learn something that is new and you think that it can help your people, you should

bring it. You have to let the government know about it so that they can help you, we should do it; instead of just talking about it and crying. I might say, "I'm sad, my people in the East are being mutilated", but I'm not doing anything about it. So we should be concerned about it. Yes

Interviewee- So I think you pretty much answered 13, ad to what could be done, and that's good. Umm would you see yourself as being part of the process? You kind of touched on it about you and the diaspora.

Interviewee# 5- I try. Whenever there is a group of people or ONJ that needs help for anything, I always try my best to put my hands in it and be involved. Yes, I do!

Interviewer- Question 15. If something should be done, should these efforts wait until the conflicts end?

Interviewee #5- No. If something should be done, it should be done right now. Right now. There is no time to waste, because if we keep waiting nothing will happen. This conflict will just continue. We need to do something right now as we speak.

Interviewer- Is there a product form our research that would be useful to you and your community?

Interviewee #5- Yes, Yes. I think it will be because a lot of people are not informed about you guys doing this kind of research. You know. People, maybe, think that nobody is interested, nobody wants to know what's going on. So yes, yes!

Interviewer- AND going along with question 16, we are trying to think of different ways that we could use this information to spread the word. We were thinking about different local venues, like giving this documentary to the library or holding some kind of community forum or something on campus but also within the Champaign- Urbana community. Do you think that people might be interested in getting together to view such a documentary.

Interviewee #5- People will. Yes.

Interviewer- Do you have any question that you would like to ask us, maybe about the project in terms of, do you feel that we are missing anything in these questions. Are there any questions that you would like to see us ask the set group of people?

Interviewee #5- I would like you to ask other people, I am not going to answer to the question, about what they think the government in Congo, right now, are trying to do, what kind of efforts to stop this conflict? Because it looks like we started it, we didn't stop and other countries around us in the same continent are being touched. They are starting to go through the same thing we are going through. If we had taking it serious and tried to stop it, it wouldn't affect other countries. Yes because we are in the center of Africa. It's like you put money in the middle of your hand and if you don't try to rotate it

the right way, It gets spread around. If there is a disease and the disease goes around the whole hand will get sick. That's what's going on right now.

Interviewer -Well we thank you so much for your time and participation.