

December 2009

# Emmanuel Nwanze oral history interview by Fraser Ottanelli and S. Elizabeth Bird, December 16, 2009

Emmanuel A. C. Nwanze (Interviewee)

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## Scholar Commons Citation

Nwanze, Emmanuel A. C. (Interviewee); Ottanelli, Fraser M. (Interviewer); and Bird, S. Elizabeth (Interviewer), "Emmanuel Nwanze oral history interview by Fraser Ottanelli and S. Elizabeth Bird, December 16, 2009" (2009). *Digital Collection - Holocaust & Genocide Studies Center Oral Histories*. Paper 13.

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Asaba Memorial Oral History Project  
Oral History Program  
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Digital Object Identifier: A34-00013  
Interviewee: Emmanuel Nwanze (EN)  
Interviewers: Fraser Ottanelli (FO), S. Elizabeth Bird (EB)  
Interview date: December 16, 2009  
Interview location: University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria  
Transcribed by: Jenica Ibarra  
Transcription date: June 14, 2010 to June 22, 2010  
Audit Edited by: Caitlin Alderson  
Audit Edit date: August 4, 2010  
Final Edit by: Michelle Joy  
Final Edit date: August 13, 2010

[Transcriber's note: There are four other people present during the interview, but they do not contribute to the conversation.]

**Fraser Ottanelli:** Today is Wednesday—

**Emmanuel Nwanze:** Wednesday, the sixteenth of December.

FO: December 16, 2009. We are in Benin—

EN: Benin. Precisely, the University of Benin.

FO: Ah, actually, yes. We are on the campus of the University of Benin, in Benin.

EN: The Ugbowo campus. There are two campuses. This is the Ugbowo campus, the main campus.

FO: The main campus of the University of Benin, and we are interviewing Professor Nwanze. Together, along with me and Elizabeth Bird—

(background noise from other people)

FO: If you could just state your name.

**C. F. Okolocha:** I'm Professor Okolocha of the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, University of Benin.

FO: Thank you.

**Ify Uraih:** Dr. Ify Uraih.

**Adi Arabe:** Dr. Adi Arabe, Department of History and International Studies, University of Benin. For my Fulbright Fellow.

**G.L. Moro:** Mr. G.L. Moro, the University Administrative Deputy Registrar, the University of Benin.

FO: Thank you, thank you very much. And thank you very much for agreeing to speak with us.

EN: Thank you.

FO: We would like to divide our talk into four parts. And the first really deals with the period before the troubles, before the war begins. I was wondering if you could describe your life, your family, your family structure, who the people were in your house, and what your life was like before these events took place.

EN: Okay. Well, maybe perhaps I should say my wife and I are particularly delighted to be hosting you briefly on your way out to Lagos before your return. We are also delighted that you are doing this program. It's a critical variable to have been missing in the accounts of the Nigerian Civil War: that is, the events of October 7 in Asaba 1967. Yes.

Before the war, before the coup of January 1966, it was an excellent relationship between all the tribes in Nigeria, to the extent that individuals and families made home wherever they chose in any part of the country and made it pretty well. A particular demonstration is my father-in-law who, in spite of coming from Asaba, deep down in the south of Nigeria, made home in Kano, up north. He was a very successful entrepreneur in Kano,

had most of his children in Kano. My wife was born in Kano and raised to some extent in Kano, and this was the general trend pre-independence and immediately before the coup of 1966.

I, for example, was the son of a headmaster—a teacher, traveling teacher. So, as a traveling teacher, he traversed the whole of the then Mid-West, which is now Edo State. And I was raised amongst different peoples. We never lived in Asaba, my hometown. I never really lived amongst my people as such. I lived with other Nigerians, and knew them as brothers and friends. I thought I should bring this out to show you that the January 1966 coup was a major turning point for consciousness of tribe in Nigeria, at least as I knew it.

Pleasant childhood I had, all through, in spite of having lost my father pretty early in life. I lost him 1955, I was only six years old. I was born in 1949. I had the privilege of being raised by uncles and relations, a common feature of Nigeria then; it's a little more difficult to get now, because every home is sort of increasingly individualized. I had my primary school education around this Mid-West—present-day Edo State—and pursued my secondary school education, higher school, as well as university education, in the west of the country, in Ibadan. So, I speak two Nigerian languages fluently: Igbo, my parents' language; and Yoruba, where I did most of my growing up.

FO: How many brother and sisters did you have?

EN: Oh, yes. We are seven in my family. I have three girls ahead of me, and then four—three boys after me, making seven all together. Six are surviving; only my most senior sister is late. But both my parents are gone now.

FO: So you were living in Lagos when—

EN: Ibadan, actually.

FO: I'm sorry, in—

EN: In Ibadan, yes. I was schooling in Ibadan when the January 1966 coup occurred. And incidentally, my school, Loyola College Ibadan—like Loyola University—Loyola College Ibadan. It was at the backyard of the school that the late Major General [Johnson] Aguiyi-Ironsi, then Head of State, was assassinated.

FO: So what happened to you then, when these problems—?

EN: (inaudible) The West became turbulent. Security of lives and property was seriously compromised. It was your pick what happened to you. Most people tended to head for where they considered home. Yes, there was great disturbance.

FO: And so what did your family do?

EN: Well, my uncle Devon, whom I was staying with, moved on. He moved out to the UK for (inaudible) and left us to more or less return towards the Mid-West, which was home then. But, fortunately for me, I had just finished my school certificate in 1966. So when I returned, I returned to Benin and joined the services of the Minister of Works and Transport then. That was why the events of 1967 caught up with me in Benin. Yes.

Well, you know, this was most unfamiliar territory to most Nigerians. The kind of crises that were gravitating towards civil disturbance and then—that will catch you up in, as I said, real unfamiliar territory. No one knew this level of hostility between tribes before then. So, no one could predict or project what will happen. And quite often, believe me, many people ran from safety into serious insecurity because it was not easy to plan and commit and say, “Yes, I’ll be safer here or there.”

But I was working in Benin, as I said. I just started work, a young certificate-holder, in July of that year. That was also the month in which the Biafran soldiers infiltrated the Mid-West and captured the Mid-West. Benin was the headquarters of the Mid-West then. So you can imagine the level of hatred generated against Igbos: that an Igbo army had crossed over into Nigerian territory and Mid-West territory.

FO: Did you see the Biafrans?

EN: Oh, yes. They were everywhere. And the populace was gradually wrapped into this. The reaction went from initially being strong about what was going on to progressively getting to real hostility and denial of marketing rights, even to the soldiers. I know, for example, that Biafrans had problems purchasing salt for their barracks from markets here, at this stage, because market—you know, it was like a market union, who denied access and livelihood. Well, that much we knew, and probably not more. So, I couldn’t tell you much more about the hostilities proper that were going on in the fringes of the borders across between the Mid-West and the rest of Nigeria. But it quickly led to, in September, the federal troops recapturing Benin. And that was where my ordeal started, because, as

an Igbo man, I was caught in that. When the federal troops came in here, it was another experience to be an Igbo man in Benin.

FO: Could you describe what it meant to be an Igbo man?

EN: For a start, that very afternoon when they captured Benin, there was mass movement of all towards the radio station in the (inaudible) where you came in from to go and welcome the federal troops. Fine. It was indeed a victory celebration for those who wanted one Nigeria. What shocked me was that the federal troops didn't seem to have come here with a set mind on the kind of carnage we saw. I feel this is important, because right there, I joined in the race to go and welcome, receive the federal troops. And right amongst them after they had overlooked us, because we warned them at the (inaudible) making their entry (inaudible), and right amongst them was one of my classmates. Because of this, it was unbelievable. Classmates in Loyola College Ibadan, who had left us to join the army, the Nigerian army then. He had become a captain, and he said—and he embraced me, flawlessly. “Chuks, you are in town! We must have this evening together! We are going to camp out in”—some area where they were going to camp out. And I just said, “Oh, yes, I'll see you later.”

But from then on, you could see civilians running into shops perceived to belong to Igbo traders and looting. And you could see the war song building up. And I still remember the song. There are certain things that can never be forgotten. The song was this, “How sad the (inaudible) Igbo run away. The Hausas are coming. Igbos run away.” I found at the same time that song had translated the military victory into, one, the civil war; and (inaudible) between tribes. So I think that metamorphosis from conquest, military conquest, into ethnic strife was spontaneous, rather than planned. I say this—I hope I'm right, because if that was the case, then there's plenty of meaning in talking about reconciliation. There's plenty of meaning in looking forward to the country becoming one. So, I want to believe that it wasn't preconceived as—you know.

By the time I'd got home, where we lived—I was staying with my auntie, may her soul rest in peace; she sleep now. She was a nurse. And by the time I got home, our house had been vandalized completely. In fact, I couldn't find my auntie. We were the unfortunate ones who were trapped in Benin, and they didn't escape. Six weeks prior, when there were rumors in the air of the federal troops coming in, we always made it a point of duty at the weekend, at the close of work, to return to Asaba, the so-called safe haven then. And when we returned to Asaba on Sunday, we would have to return back to Benin to resume work on Monday. Unfortunately, my auntie didn't have a car, which meant that we had to, you know, find one relation or another that had a car. It was pretty difficult when people were running for their life. So on September 22, Wednesday, 1967, I remember, when the federal troops came in, there was nobody going to wait for you to

come for sanctuary in his car. Everybody took off as soon as they could, and so my auntie and I got trapped in Benin.

FO: This is just the two of you, your—

EN: From my house, from my home, from my home. There were four in the house: myself and herself, the working ones; and her daughter, who was a little girl; and another niece of hers, who was more or less helping out in the home. So, those we left behind in Asaba the weekend before this happened. So it was at the end of the day the two of us, and when I got home, I couldn't find my auntie. Can you imagine the commotion in the town, this town? And by the time I got home, I had, in my very innocence at the time—as I said, I was only eighteen—I had seen the first killings in the streets of Benin.

FO: These were killings by civilians against civilians?

EN: No. This time now, civilians were using soldiers to effect those killings. It was like shooting them out where they were (inaudible). Much as I agree that the federal government did not display evidence of premeditated intention, they were now being used to effect the killings. And it was—a picture cannot paint enough. I have not done my book yet because of the country, but I have recorded accounts with dates to do a proper account when I think it will not disturb the peace of the country. I can tell you my assessment is that a real candid report of the Nigerian Civil War has not really come out. I tell a lie. Don't ask for perfection all the time. I think the most accurate account I have seen is that of the young man, (inaudible)'s compatriot, (inaudible)

FO: (inaudible)

EN: That is, for my—you see, I'm talking of director's prudence now. That is a near accurate account of the events that occurred, and the passion with which they was pursued.

So, moving on from not seeing my auntie, I went into the back of the compound, knowing that the house was no longer safe because everything had been vandalized, as I said: the windows torn open, our foodstuff and the stove brought out and spread all over the ground. And then you could hear from around the corners youths with cudgels. “Whack them! Whack them! Whack them! Where are they? Where are they?” Really hounding and hunting people out; and you could see the people being dragged, even on the streets, nude. They'd take them out for, uh—slaughter, we'll call it now.

It was in that confusion that I heard a call, “Chuks!” Chuks, that’s my name. [I thought,] “Who is that?” Turned out to be my auntie—in an incinerator! We had this pit, where we emptied garbage and burnt it. She was taking shelter there. I said, “Ah! Mama!”—I called her Mama because she is the immediate younger sister of my father. I said, “Mama, what are you doing here?” She said, “Come here! Come here! Come here! Come here! They pass here regularly.” So I leapt into the pit with her. “Mama, we can’t stay here (inaudible).”

By this time, it was getting to 7:00 PM. We had not eaten since 11:00 AM when I took—joined that race to go and welcome the federal troops. So I told her—I said—I guess I was being driven again by youthfulness. You know, one thing about youthfulness is that dangers don’t mean much to you, or don’t mean what they should mean to you. So I said, “No, we can’t remain here. I’m going to look for something, for food for us. Okay, you stay.” I jumped out of the pit and ran back to her house, because when I was coming in I had seen some tins of this Heinz vegetable salad, which my auntie used to like a lot. There were some of the tins on the ground. So I went for them, but did not have the courage to put on the light, so I wouldn’t be seen.

And as I was reaching for one of them—I guess the stack of them that was together, you know, I had knocked against it, and everything just went on the floor. (makes sound effect) And behold, there was a hand on my shoulder, and a man just grabbed me. Oh! He said, “Where is your mama?” That’s my aunt. And you can imagine my state. “Where is your mama? Where is your mother?” And I could only just point. He said, “Come on, take me to the place.” And he said, “Don’t you remember me?” And I said, “No, sir.” He said, “Now, you remember when my daughter had convulsion?” It’s the little girl—that was a man in the neighborhood, you know, one of the occupants of the quarters.

Some months ago, before then, the little girl had had this episode of convulsion. He wasn’t in, both parents weren’t in, and my auntie, being a nurse, qualified nurse, went to the rescue, took the little girl, had her walked out, and then brought her to the house until the parents returned. So I went, “Wait a second, (inaudible) yes, I remember you.” He said, “Now, do you think I will hurt her? For what?” I said, “No, so come along.” So I took him to my auntie, and he said, “Nurse, nurse, come out, come out, this is not good enough. This is—you can be—you know my house, why didn’t you come?” He’s late now, too. He was a Yoruba man and so, naturally, from Benin: an apprentice of some sort in the Ministry of Works. He brought us out and took us to his house.

When we got to his house, his wife wasn’t in. His wife used to be a palm oil trader, and so she moved from Benin to the Delta very regularly, so kept weeks away from home in her commercial business, and came back home to the family on weekends and things like

that. So he said, “Look, feel free.” He turned to my auntie. “Nurse, you just pretend that you are my wife. You are my son. And nobody will disturb you. You are safe here.” We kept the night there with him and it was quite a peaceful night, except that we could hear shouts and, you know, gun shots, et cetera, from outside.

Next morning, he was up quite early and just declared that he didn’t have food at home, and so he was going to look for some bread and sardines to buy. And said, “Look, leave the door open; if you close the door, suspicion will be aroused. Leave the door open. Sit down and relax.” He put gin, some illicit gin—I wasn’t allowed alcohol at all, so it was no use to me, but he had it on the table and said, “Feel free, relax. Douse your tension,” and things like that. And my auntie was still in the room. And no sooner he rode out on his bicycle, and there was another bike almost behind him, ringing its bell. Everyone just said, “This is them. This gentleman was calling him now.” “Are you in? Are you in?” [he said]. And I was seeing him through the curtain, between me and—you know, he couldn’t see me.

So the decision was, should I respond? Should I expose myself? But finally, when it became obvious that he wasn’t going to come in and the (inaudible) see me, I picked up courage and I went, parted the curtain. I said, “Good morning, sir.” And there was this frown on his face. “Who are you?” I said, “I’m Oga’s son.” He said, “Which of his sons? I know his three sons.” I said, “Oh, I’m the one by the Yoruba woman.” You know, some quick thinking. And he spoke Yoruba to me. I could reply; as I told you, I’m very fluent in Yoruba. I said, “My mother is away. I came down only last week. Look at this thing happening. I’ve been trapped here.” And he listened to me pensively, and just turned away and rode away on his bike without uttering a word.

Our host now returned. And within a few minutes, this gentleman came back with a squad. “It is because of what you mean to us,” he was now telling our host, “otherwise, you and all these Igbos would have been finished now.”

FO: So they figured out that you were Igbo?

EN: Of course. The word gets around. They knew us in the neighborhood. And so, for him to hide, or believe that he was hiding us, was a little naive. But, yes, that’s another experience I’ve had from this sojourn, that the Lord intervenes at the times you least expect. Because right there and then, the late Mr. Aitalegbe, who was then principal information officer in the state, came on the scene. Aitalegbe is from Edo North.

FO: How do you pronounce—

EN: Aitalegbe, A-i-t-a-l-e-g-b-e. He was principal information officer to General [Samuel Osaigbovo] Ogbemudia, who was then the first administrator, subsequently to become military governor, and then civilian governor as well. He came on the scene and said the government had instructed for this senseless assault of civilians to discontinue; and that, in fact, he was assuring that the military administrator had set up a camp for refugees; and that we were just to wait for that camp to be functional. He took us to his own home, where I could mix freely with his children, because—you know, one of the daughters was a staff here; she is out in the U.S. (inaudible), yes. Their mother was Yoruba; in fact, their mother was the younger sister of H.I.D. Awolowo, the wife of the first premier of western origin.

So, I blended perfectly. I was (inaudible) for four days before they eventually opened that camp, that refugee camp, in (inaudible), the then government primary school. The refugee camp opened with my auntie and myself as first inmates—or first refugees. But within a week, over a thousand Igbos had been brought there in different stages of—

FO: How long did you stay in this camp? How long were you—

EN: We were in the camp for about three weeks before there was another disturbance that they didn't—you know, by civilians. There are so many Igbos alive. This is the truth. I tell you because I saw it. So, government was worried and disturbed that we could be—

FO: Easy targets.

EN: Storm—they could storm the place. So, they decided to relocate us. And I ended up being a prisoner in Warri, Warri Okere High Prison, because they now moved us in eight trucks. So they moved us in batches, and batch one, of course, went to Benin Prison. When Benin Prison was full, they took batch two to Sapele Prison. Sapele is about half an hour from Benin. When Sapele Prison was full, they took the remainder of us to Warri Prison, further down, another half an hour from Sapele. It was at Sapele Prison that my auntie and I were separated, because she was taken into Sapele Prison and I got into Warri Prison. We stayed there for four months, until after the complete liberation of Asaba, when we were now released to go home. When we're taken home—

FO: It should have been when, then? What month?

EN: This was well into December.

FO: December sixty-seven [1967]?

EN: Sixty-seven [1967], yes. So, that's after the October 7 massacre. When we're taken home, we're all dropped at Aboh. You passed Aboh when you were coming—Aboh is like midway between Benin and Asaba. There were no bridges anymore to cross: all the bridges had been brought out, between Aboh and Asaba, and it was an old road through Ogwashi Ukwu. So, it was “Find your way home,” because those who were—all of us who were dropped at Aboh were brought—then it was an Igbo thing. We are both Asaba and wherever you came from, so long as you were displaced, because you spoke Igbo. (inaudible) For the young, it was a relatively easy journey to (inaudible), but for the old, many fell by the wayside. And then, for all the non-Asaba Igbos—so, I'm talking of Aboh, Issele Ukwu, Ogwashi Ukwu—there was always home to get to, because these places were not—there was no pogrom, no killing in those places.

So, we have now moved into this specific assault on Asaba, which is occasioned, as I told you before, by many reasons, many of them historical, being that Asaba people came from a culture of early exposure to the white man, embraced education first, and—practically there is a graduate in every home of Asaba. This is changing now, it's beginning to spread to all other places; but then, it was something to have this level of education in homes. And it was every home.

FO: You made it back to Asaba in December. Had the—

EN: No, no, no, no! I couldn't go back to Asaba, because Asaba was devastated. Everybody—I'll tell you how I got home.

What happened was, when we got to Ogwashi Ukwu, we were told not to go to Asaba, because there's nobody in Asaba. It was a ghost town. They had done the killings, and even those who remained were turning and fleeing from their hideouts in the bushes. I specifically knew when there was no home to go to. But coincidence—this is why—don't tell me that miracles don't exist. They exist. Because, right attempting to cross the Oboshi bridge, Oboshi stream—the bridge was broken. There's a river between Ogwashi Ukwu and Ibusa.

Here comes my cousin, first cousin, on his bike. In fact, I had paused to take a drink from the water, and he was about—he had rode his bike past and was about to enter into the other embankment when I recognized him. But there was no strength to scream, so I just signaled to people, and it was he. I'm a bigger guy than him now, but then, I had shed practically—I don't think I was up to 60 KG [kilograms]. Now, I'm about 90 KG.

And it was he who embraced and lifted me off the ground, put me on the bike, and then rode the bike and told me that our family, every member of my family, survived. And I mean the extended (inaudible) family. We were lucky. My village, in Asaba, was then just by the exit into Ibusa. So it was easy, when the killing was going on, for most people to run across. And they ran to Ibusa, where we had an in-law. That's my uncle's wife. And they received us and kept us there until Asaba became more hospitable. I think we did about three or four weeks there before we began to trickle back home.

So, I think it would be nice for you in your studies—that's where you historians come in, to establish those reasons that led—as I said, one, the envy that comes from the rivalry in education and other things. Asaba people were largely civil servants. And then, two, the fact that most of the young officers who actually—

FO: Were from the broader area, yes.

EN: Yes. (inaudible) as a result of their professionalism in the Nigerian army were Delta Igbos: that's from Ibusa, Asaba. But all of them claimed Asaba then, because Asaba was the headquarters of the divisional—the Ogwashi Ukwu division. And so, it was easy to—if you said to people, “You are from Ibusa,” they wouldn't recognize you. You say, “I'm from Asaba, I'm from Asaba.” Even [Patrick Chukwuma Kaduna] Nzeogwu, the leader of the 1966 coup, is from about twenty kilometers from Asaba, Okpanam, a nearby hamlet to Asaba. But Nzeogwu would have claimed Asaba ten times over.

FO: Let me ask you something. There's a second operation in March of sixty-eight [1968].

EN: Yes.

FO: And the Biafrans crossed over.

EN: Yes. Yes.

FO: Did you experience that?

EN: No, no. I had gone by then. Luckily, when we are returning from detention, my experience in Warri, I got to Asaba to learn that I had been admitted into university in Ibadan. So I managed, with the assistance of some military boys, to smuggle myself out

to Ibadan in the daily mail van. I went over to Ibadan to commence schooling at the university.

FO: (to EB) Liz, do you have any questions?

There's been talk—well, of course, there's a lot of emphasis on what happened on October 7. Do you think this event should be memorialized?

EN: Absolutely. In fact, the report I've given you is with a very conscious sense of duty on my part. I'm sixty years old, a full citizen of this country. I owe it to this country for full reconciliation. And I believe that full reconciliation cannot come unless the truth is told fully. And the truth can only come from research, proper study. But more than that, there must be a replica of some sort to always remind us of these events. It is that memorial that is a replica (inaudible). There must be adequate documentation. There's no reason, for example, why Ogbeosowa should not be monumentalized. Ogbeosowa is the area where people were gathered, sequestered into—you've seen it?

FO: Yes.

EN: Uh-huh. This news—you know, that place is all graves. Those who couldn't remove their dead immediately had them buried there before the decomposition set in. And I understand—I wasn't there, as I said. I understand it was a very rainy evening after the killings, so everything had become soggy and the corruption was intense. Ogbeosowa, in my judgment, if I had the decision to make, should be a major memorial, with names. Fortunately, Asaba is a small community, in spite of the state capital status now. So every home knew everyone lost in Asaba. There are accounts now that have come out—*Blood on the Niger*, I'm sure, by Okocha, if you've seen it.<sup>1</sup> He attempts—and I believe he probably is in the region of 70 to 80 percent accurate in terms of the statistics, populations, the census of what happened. There's no reason why we shouldn't have that.

FO: So you would think of a monument, then, with the names?

EN: A monument, a proper truth and reconciliation account. It's important. When that was going on in South Africa, many people passed it off for, "What will it achieve?" It

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<sup>1</sup>Okocha, Emma. *Blood on the Niger: The First Black on Black Genocide*. New York: Triatlantic Books International, 2006. Emma Okocha was also interviewed for the Asaba Memorial Oral History Project; the DOI for his interview is A34-00006.

achieved a lot. It achieved awareness. It achieved—there was a basis for the government to now say, “We will take these steps to avoid a repeat.” I think (inaudible) come for that. There may be fears of victimization of those—because many of the actors are still alive. They are not far. Many of the actors who eventually ended up leading Nigeria married Asaba girls, whom they more or less grabbed from that occasion. Many of the very senior citizens today who have held sway in the government of this country are married to Asaba girls that they met as young officers in Asaba. We thank God for successful marriages, but we know that many of these were not the most acquiesced-to relationships. So, these are things that we—I was—I stood in (inaudible) for my Ph.D., for my—and [Yakubu] Gowon met me in (inaudible) and I interacted very, very closely with him. He was the military leader then. I am sure—I have heard, I should say—that he has rendered some general apologies of some sort. But I’m sure that even he himself will agree that perhaps there is a little more to do in terms of accountability.

When I talk about accountability—look, I was the vice-chancellor of this university until February; that’s the equivalent of president of university system. And all what transpired in the five years in which I was V.C. of this university, whether I knew directly about them or not, ultimately as boss, as the chief executive, I have to give an account. And this is why, if your soldiers went out on a killing spree instead of the conventional Geneva Convention (inaudible), then we must step up to account, and not just say, “I apologize for what happened.” X, Y, Zed did the wrong thing. The reasons why they did the wrong thing—so we’re not asking for punitive measures now, because that may be what is responsible for people hiding back from this. The reasons why they did this wrong thing are so that if there is a repeat, in the event of repeating the future, we will be able to check this kind of menace. I think I’ve spoken.

FO: Are there any issues that I have not brought up that you think should be—you’ve been very, very articulate and exhausting in what you said, but is there anything that we might have overlooked?

EN: Yes. From my—I’ve had the privilege now—as I told you, I was vice-chancellor of this university. I’ve had the privilege now of playing at the fringes of some level of power in the society. And I still see signs—I still am afraid. I still see signs that we have not learned the lessons we should learn from that experience. I still see signs that there may be future ethnic clashes in this country. If it happened this time again, having had the experience we’ve had—if it happened, it would be much more devastating because the lines of—the battle lines drawn in 1967 cannot be the same now.

If it happens, if there’s another ethnic strife in Nigeria, I tell you—mark my words, we are recording—the situation in Nigeria will be worse than Somalia, because we now have domains of ethnic warlords that will visit the worst kind of pogrom and genocide that the world might never have heard of because, as against Somalia and the rest, Nigeria has the

population to inflict serious damage on itself. You need population to suffer, because we will damage in civil strife. And so if you have one group turning against the other, because of our large numbers it would be massive. It would be huge, it would be horrid. I pray it doesn't happen.

Once more, let me end by thanking you. I think it's a fantastic mission you are on, and I'm glad you are taking it seriously. You've paid two visits to Nigeria, we owe you a lot. I would like to help in whatever way I can. That was why, as soon as they mentioned—my brother-in-law mentioned collaboration—I reached for two young and very committed researchers, as I said, in the area of history and in the area of sociology. So thank you, Professors.

**Elizabeth Bird:** Thank you very much.

FO: Thank you.

*End of interview*