

Transcript Rosette Nsonga Interview

Narrator : Rosette Nsonga
Interviewer : Anaïs Guery
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Anaïs Guery : So I am going to start recording. Perfect. So my name is Anaïs Guery, today is May, 22nd 2020 and I am interviewing through Zoom call for the UCSD Race and Oral history project,. Could you please state your full name, date of birth and place of birth ?

Rosette Nsonga : My name is Rosette Nsonga. I was born February, 27th 1969 and now I am fifty-one years old. {laughed}. I was born in Uganda, **East Africa**.

A.G : Which city ?

R.N : A city is called Bugiri and my village is called Busowa, which is difficult for you to pronounce, so my village is called Busowa.

A.G : Busowa ? How do you spell it ?

R.N : B - U - S - O - W - A.

A.G : Busowa, okay.

R.N : Busowa. Busowa in a district called Bugiri. You can say Busowa Village, Buwunga is a subcounty. Buwunga is B - U - W - U - N - G - A. So Busowa, Buwunga, Bugiri District, Uganda, East Africa.

A.G : Perfect, thank you. So could I ask you to read the text that I sent in the chat for recording and... for the recording of this interview ?

R.N : Let me see. Rosette Nsonga, hereby transfer to the University the rights to publish, duplicate, or otherwise use the recording and transcribed interview, and any photographs and/or videotaped footage taken during the interview. This includes publication rights in print and electronic form such as on the Internet, the right to rebroadcast the interview or portions thereof, and permission to transfer the interview to future media.

A.G : Thank you so much. So I am going to get started with the interview and first, I'd like to get to know you a little bit more with questions about your background. How would you describe your personality, your way of being in life in general ?

R.N : I can say I am an extrovert.

A.G : Oh.

R.N : I am an extrovert because I talk a lot and I am a leader.

A.G : Oh okay.

R.N : I find myself in leadership wherever I go. I didn't know that I am but people see that in me a lot and they make me leader wherever I am. I am also a go getter.

A.G : So when you are in a project, you are always the one who is leading the project for example ?

R.N : I am always elected to lead, to lead right from as I will tell you my story from school.

A.G : Do you like to lead ?

R.N : At times I am naive but people put a lot of trust in me and therefore I get the confidence. So I have been like that through my life since childhood to the extent that today, I am the heir of our family and yet I'm the last born. So that makes me have the confidence.

A.G : I see, I see.

R.N : And I am also a go getter.

A.G : Sorry what ?

R.N : A go getter

A.G : Ohh okay.

R.N : **When I mean to do something, I commit myself to it till it get it.**

A.G : Oh that is nice. So when-. Yeah you are very determined, like to get something.

R.N : Yes. And I am an achiever. Many times I achieve what I work for.

A.G : That's great. That's good. And so you grew up in Uganda as you said, could you tell me more about the place where you grew up ? Like how it was looking ?

R.N : I grew up in-. I will tell you, you can call a village, rural, russeting, very russetting, whereby the major activity is agriculture and not actually commercial agriculture but peasantry. So I am from a peasantry family. My father and mother were physically farmers. Yeah. And that's how I was brought up.

A.G : Did you have any siblings ?

R.N : Yes, I was the last born, we are born 14.

A.G : Oh 14 okay.

R.N : I am the fourteenth.

A.G : And you were close with your siblings ?

R.N : The 6 people died when they were young and we grew up 8 of us and I was the last born.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : Yeah. And my mother gave birth to me when is old, in his half-fifties.

A.G : Okay, okay. So were you close with your siblings ?

R.N : So much that I miss them a lot, the majority have died, because they loved me as the youngest and they-. I grew up loved so much that when they died, I miss them to date.

A.G : All of them are dead ?

R.N : Five are dead and we are only three. And one, one of us is married in another country so we take long to see her. So we, I kind of said basically, we are now close with it my **one sister who stays and have kept our home**. Another one is in another country so he rarely comes to see us.

A.G : In which country is he ?

R.N : Kenya

A.G : Oh okay. And the other one is in the US too ?

R.N : All my family is in Uganda, I am here by myself.

A.G : Oh in Uganda. Oh you are totally all by yourself, okay.

R.N : Yes.

A.G : And what are some of your favorite childhood memories ? And some painful ones if that's okay ?

R.N : (REDACTED). The memories that will never fade in me, is that relationship I had with my mother. I grew up with my mother because my father died when I am only 6 years and it was the following day after I had my holidays from school in my primary one grade, I had holidays on the 2nd December 1976 and he died on 3rd December 1976 and that marked the begging of fate in my life. So we, the last four, we grew up with my mother and she loved us so much. She was a Kenyan, not a Ugandan. So when he, when my father died, her people opted to come for her, to take her, because she couldn't challenge this, with a relatives of my father, who had taken everything from her and wanted to also to sell the land. So they could remarry her, as part of the culture, but her she had worked with her husband who is my father, and bought their own land. So she was struggling to retain it but these people are like, they had to take everything from her and then remarry her to their homes, which she refused. So the older relatives hated her and hated all of us, she went to Court, took time, like 3 years, to win the case. At the time of winning the case, she had remained with nothing other than land, but everything like goats, sheep, cattle, they had taken. So we grew up with my mother, Josephine Athieno was her name, the partenal relative left us and hated us. So my mother took charge of all us. So that was the time we're so close, she loved us, said 'I cannot leave you, because when I leave you are going to suffer and I can't go with out because in Kenya there is no land to till, so I have to remain with you. So that love she gave us and she taught us to work, how to struggle to get how to live because we didn't have any help. We had that attachment : she could give us stories and encouragement and telling us 'don't worry, just work hard, you are going to be powerful, you are going to be okay'. So I still remember that.

A.G : Okay. So your mom is like your example, she showed you the right path for life.

R.N : Yes. She struggled for us and she showed us how to work. So we can work with it, whether which kind of job, I can do any job as long as it can give me a living because I did it when I was young. Because after the death of our father, we could not survive. So our mother taught us how to dig and sell part of the food, sell fruits, vend things in the market, to get money for books, for uniform, for tuition so we could even brew local brew. So she could tell us 'don't be embarrassed, at the end of the day you are going to be okay'. So you work hard. So I grew up in that environment whereby a lot of children from rich families who were laughing at us and who were like, you know, we were lower class. Our home was over of grass thatched houses. So we are looked at as people of lower class, but we worked hard and we challenged that today.

A.G : That's great. Sorry go ahead.

R.N : By the memory I feel bad about is when my brother married, they took me to babysit but I was young like 5 years. But the wife didn't want me, wanted someone from their place so she brought also a sister and a brother. So as we were in the town, Kampala city, this woman didn't love me and loved her relatives. So there is a lot I think you can read my mind but what I will not forget is the day she burnt me because I broke a plate.

A.G : Oh she banned you ?

R.N : Burnt my head with a mingling stick as she was making corn bread which we call posho.

A.G : Oh she burnt you, okay. Oh my god okay, okay. So you said that was the wife of your brother right ?

R.N : Yes.

(REDACTED)

A.G : Ohh okay, okay.

R.N : She burnt me because I broke it. I was washing plates in the sink and I was short because I was young. As I was washing the plates, it fell down and it got broken.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : Okay so when-. She was mingling corn, cornflower {unclear}, and she told me 'can you bring me my plate, the plate of your brother ?'. I said that plate got broken, my brother told me to go and throw it. She took that mingling stick, I don't know that you know it, which was already in the water mixed with the corn flour and beat me on the head, on here, and it was hot. So when I did like this, all the hair got off, you know ({shows hair}, I got burnt.

A.G : Oh my god okay. You were five years old ?

R.N : (REDACTED). They took me to the hospital, my mother came and I was there like for maybe a month, I don't know I was young, but it took time for my hair to grow. I didn't have hair here.

A.G : Oh my god.

R.N : Up to maybe 10 or 9 years. And in the school, children could do, laugh at me and I felt bad. But the hair started growing and now I have hair. So that was a bad memory {laughed}.

A.G : {laughed}. Thank you so much for sharing. So now I would like to focus a little bit more about like, how school was like in Uganda. How would you describe ? Like you went to college in Uganda too right ?

R.N : The school system in Uganda is different from America. We have seven years which we call primary school.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : Then after primary school, we have what we call secondary school, four years. After the four years, we have what we call high school, two years. Then after high school, that's when you can go to University or high-institutional learning for diploma.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So I went through the seven years in my village, where I was also a leader like I say, I was a head girl {laughed}. I was like-, when I went to the primary one, they elected me as a class captain. {laughed}

A.G : Oh okay {laughed}.

R.N : I was a class captain up to primary six, every class I could go they could choose me as a class captain. And when I was in primary six, I was elected as the assistant head girl, then in primary seven I was a full-head girl. So I lead through my seven years.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : Yeah. After that, I went to a boarding school. My brother, another brother, took me to a boarding school, that was 1982, but there was a war between different governments. So again, I lost it. So after that I had to go back to the village because my brother lost a job. So from there, I went to secondary school at home, the nearest secondary school was seven miles away from home.

A.G : Oh yeah, okay.

R.N : Seven kilometers I think, kilometers. So I had to walk the seven kilometers to and from daily for four years.

A.G : Oh my god okay.

R.N : Yeah, but because I was determined, my mother could wake me up, accompany me up the road and encourage me. So I-, for the four years I was there, I did not miss school and right there when I was in my second year which is secondary two, I was assistant head girl {laughed}.

A.G : {laughed}

R.N : And when I went to secondary three, I was a full-head girl.

A.G : {laughed}

R.N : So they elected me. I was-, I am a dancer, I like dancing, I like singing and I am also a netballer so I was good in cultural activities as well as leadership. And in class as well. Because I remember in my primary education, I was number one in class from primary one to primary six, I could lead them. Because my mother could tell me 'as they are laughing at you that are poor and you have no hair, show them, show them by leading them, and they will fear you'. So I could make sure that I beat them. So I lead from primary one to primary six. So when I was in the city school, the competition was high because I didn't know the city style. But at the end of the day still, I got the first grade. So in secondary I was also assistant head girl, then a full head girl.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : But at the end of the day, I was the best in the school. So I went higher, high level. See, right, I failed to get the money to go to a boarding school, **it was called to-Tororo girls school among the best schools then**, because here for secondary, having got the first grade in primary seven I could not go to the school they had called me in. Because my mother could not afford the tuition.

A.G : Yeah, okay.

R.N : But still I made it. And I was called in another school which is government, Iganaga Girls boarding school. But still I did not make it because of money, because I was struggling with school like that but still I could make it. So after that, the problem I had ; because we could make local brew, and vend and this ; but when I went to higher school, the tuition was higher. So after studying for one year, I could not raise it so I sat home. My mother told me 'let's struggle, you seat this year, then you will study'. Prior to that time, but I forgot it, my older brother, the one of the wife who banged me, didn't want me to continue with education because in our culture by our time, they could say 'girls don't go to school, girls could only go to marry because the boys must get chores from the girls, the dowry'. So my brother got me a man who was going to give him 7 cows.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : But my mother was from a family of educated people said 'my child, not to go to that, all my daughters have been married off but they are suffering, let her go to school'. So they had a problem : my brother was working but would not support me also, because he wanted me to marry. So I wasn't really working with my mother. So after, when I went to high school, I will say the one year but I could not make it for the money, I sat home. I really felt bad. That's the time when I had this so-called friend who told me : 'there's a man who has a lot of money, and this man says that if you love him, he would pay for you the tuition'. Because they knew my problem was tuition. I was a virgin, I didn't know about sex, I didn't know about men because me I was always with my mother, the church, I was not with the groups.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So I thought this man is just going to help me. I didn't know what he wanted. So this girl takes me there to meet him. So as soon as we reached in his place where they took me, the friend said 'okay Rosette I am coming back'. This man raped me.

A.G : Okay. What-, how old were you ?

R.N : By that time I was like 17.

A.G : Oh my god okay. And it's like, this is something common in Uganda for girls ?

R.N : Yes, very common.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So, when he raped me, I was like 'what is this?'. I ran away but you know, I didn't know what to do, I was bleeding, all that, I feared my mother what happened, and all that. Eventually, I realize that I am pregnant.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : And when I followed up on this man, the man told me '(REDACTED). You are not the girl of my life of love '. So he denied the pregnancy, I had nothing to do. So I went and persisted and the other girl when I told her what he did, he gave me money to go and abort. But I feared because I had seen my friend abort and die. So I got that money he gave me and the money we had collected with my mother and I went back to school and I registered for the final examinations.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : (REDACTED). The school had come for me and said 'Rosette you can come and do final exams, we trust you can make it' because when I went to higher school, still I was a head girl of the school that was right after college. So I was head girl and they were missing me, they were like 'Rosette did not come back, why ?'. So they looked for me and came to my village and heard I failed to get the school tuition. **This was done by the deputy HeadTeacher, Mr. Mukama.** They said 'no you can come and do the exams, you are a bright girl you can get some marks and go to maybe higher institutional learning. So I got this money, plus the mother's one and I went back so I did my exams. But when pregnant, but no one knew.

A.G : Okay. Oh no one knew ?

R.N : Mm hmm.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So after that, I did not perform well as I expected, because of this. After that, I gave birth. Shortly after the exam, when I came back.

A.G : Right after ?

R.N : Mm hmm. I did the exams when I am freaking out, when I came back I told my mother, it was late so she had nothing to do. She felt bad there was nothing to do : the man had denied the pregnancy, I had got another small job there in the village, teaching a Saturday small school there to get money, **office attendant at Busowa Domestic Science school, a catholic founded school headed by one, Sr. Rosemary, whom I went and told the truth about my state and she said 'I will give you a job because you have told me the truth'.** So I gave birth to a baby boy. And that baby boy, after three months based on our school curriculum, I had performed fairly well in a grade B. So I had to leave the baby with my mother and go to school.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : I went to school, I went to do a diploma in education, that's teaching. Because that was my dream : I wanted to be a teacher. Simply because the only people I saw professionals in our village were teachers and I admired them. And they had a cousin called Antonio who could drive a small car and every time she could come home I was like 'wow'. Then my mother would say 'if you want to be like Antonio, you really have to work hard and become a teacher like her, then you could also drive a car'. So I worked hard to be a teacher. So after I went for college and I am a teacher of English and literature, English language.

A.G : Alright.

R.N : So those were the two years and another two years after, that's what we call National Teachers College. Then days after, I got a Diploma in Education, I went and taught for like two years, things didn't work out the way I felt {laughed}. (REDACTED). **Teachers were not being given money in time, and it was very little. The two year they had no put me on a government pay roll so the board could pay some little upkeep, 25,000 shillings a month which again the Head Teacher could not give us lumpsome, he could give us in bits these**, everything was bad. So I said 'no how will I ever help my mother with this little money ?' you know. I lost interest in teaching but I was praying to God ever, to ever give my a job to help my mother. So in my prayer, I think God saw it. One time I was reading a newspaper in the staff room. Even when I went to teaching, let me tell you, I was against my mistress. I was the best teacher of the year in the district, all my class passed English language which was difficult for many of theirs. And my name in the district, I was the best teacher there. I was given this idea that many schools were calling me to go and give me better money you know. But I was like : 'no, teaching will never make me have money to give my mother back'.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : One day I was in the staff room and I was reading a newspaper and there was a job advertisement. And they were like 'we are looking for community mobilizers' for a financial institution called the Foundation for International community assistance (FINCA Uganda), based in America.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : It is micro-finance. So I told my fellow teachers 'please let's apply' and they were like 'Rosette, what is wrong with you ? They want accountants in the bank, you are a mere English teacher and literature, how can you go to the bank ?'. Me I said 'I want to apply, let them throw my application but I will apply'. So I applied and within two weeks they called me for an interview. {laughed}.

A.G : Oh my god okay, so that's what you were saying, when you want something you get it.

R.N : Yes ! So when they called me for an interview, I didn't have transport to go for the interview, I didn't have any good clothes to put on for the interview. I went to my friend who was a primary teacher, gave me the clothes, the shoes, everything looked nice. And the husband, was a head teacher, gave me money for transport. So I went in, I went and I did the interview. We were 22 people, they wanted six people. But I was fearing them because they were from urban areas and looking good and putting on well : some came driving, some came with their husbands driving them... So I was like 'wow, I think I am dead'. But I was confident. So when I did the interview they gave us : the first interview was written, the second interview was oral.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : It was a white lady from America and another lady from Uganda. So after when we finished the interviews, they gave us lunch, we ate, we left. As we were going and I was at the gate, the secretary came running saying 'Please Rosette ?', I said 'Here I am', she said 'come, the director wanna talk to you'. I said 'what have I done ?' : I went fearing. When I went, the director told me 'Rosette do you have a phone number ?'. I said no. 'What about-, where do you come from ?'. I said 'I come from Busia'. 'You have a way you can call from ?'. I said no. Then he gave me a

business card and said 'you call this number on Thursday'. So on Thursday, I had never called, I had never used a phone in my life apart from reading about it. So again, I went to my friend to ask 'have you ever called?', she said 'no I have never called', 'what do we do I have a number to call?'. By that time, we went to a friend who could tell-, who have ever called. Remember, I had not told you, after some time, when I went to college, this man, the father of the child, came back to my life apologizing and I thought he's right so-.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So when I told my mother my mother said 'okay, like that you will improve'. He impregnated me the second boy, again he ran away.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : Again the third time **he came to teach in the same school with me and this time told me was going to marry me so we stay with our children**. I asked my mother, my mother said 'no, it is bad to have children from different fathers'. Again he came, slept with me, again he gave me a third boy. I have three children from that same man who ran away in my life and did not support them.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So I started having issues with the children, I said-, I said 'I want to do family planning because the man does not want children so I have to look for ways of supporting them'. So I went with a friend, I went to this man to ask him if he could call for me but he refused so they can not hear it before that. So I went to another friend across, I was at the border town, the friend also tried he failed, so again I was like, let me go to the post office : we always read that at the post office, they can dial for you the number you have.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : {laughed}. So I went to the post office so the post office said 'okay, what is the number she gave me?'. Then she dialed, I said 'okay, this is it'. So I called for the first time. So I said 'I am Rosette Nsonga', the secretary said 'wow Rosette congratulations you are the best, come for your appointment letter'. I was like 'what is this?'. And I didn't have any transport again to go to pick my appointment letter {laughed}. I went to my friend, my friend, but again they gave me transport. When I went to that, they gave me an appointment letter. I was now going to be a credit officer and they were going to give me money which is 5 times the money I get in teaching.

A.G : Oh so it was worth it ?

R.N : It was too worth it {sighed}. And then, they gave me two weeks to come and prepare. So I came back, handover, I told the head of the teachers everything, that it was a contract of one year and all that. They corrected me, they told me 'this is a one year contract, teaching is a permanent job'. I said 'no at least let me get good money'. So I came. That's how I changed my life. That was 1996, April. So I came, I didn't have anything to carry to the new place, anything, I was the poorest of the poor. My sister gave me a mattress and a blanket. I had three children, I had to leave the two children with my sister, I went with a baby of two months, a small mattress and a blanket. I was going to share the blanket and the mattress with my kid and my baby caregiver.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : But we went there, I didn't have anyone I know, I went to certainly friend who had a very small kitchen where I could sleep, **this was in a town called Jinja**. But I was ready to change my life.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : When I went there, the training was of three month, after the training I was confirmed {laughed}. And I was posted, I was posted in town. After sometime, after three months, I did so

well, I was called, requested to be taken to another district called Kamuli. So when they came to transfer me, I didn't have almost anything : the director said 'where are the things ?', I said 'I don't have'. He said 'how have you been doing all these good reports' {laughed}. So the director was an American guy **called Micheal Mcord**, they went and bought for me a bed, a mattress, this and other to settle me in the new place. And said 'okay I've given you, they are not going to get paid back'. So I began and they gave me a target of one year to manage my task.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : But within eight months, six to eight months, I had beaten the target they gave me. So later on they said 'Rosette I think you are fit to be a training officer' not actually a credit officer. So I was transferred to the city, to the head office, that is Kampala city and when I reached there, I did so wonderful job {laughed}, they told me to go for further studies because you are fit to be a manager but you have no qualifications for a manager, we need a graduate, a degree holder. I told him I have no money as usual. But they were like 'we shall pay you, we shall be reducing on your salary and pay for your tuition'. So I enrolled in Makerere University for my degree in social sciences.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : I was doing evening classes but also working.

A.G : That's intense.

R.N : So I trained to be a training officer. Later on, I was made supervisor. At the time when I finished-, when I was in my second year, actually, I was among the people who was told 'I am good at creative' and **awarded a certificate of recognition as the best supervisor in Kampala branch**.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : All right. I told them the loopholes we have in the program, the reports and all that so they told me 'can you do this ?', and I could always do. At the end of the day, they said they're taking me to other countries, Tanzania and Malawi, to train on the program. Because the program was beginning in Uganda but it had spread to other parts of Africa.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : When I was in my second year, they took me to another country, Tanzania, to train, they took me to Malawi to train : they could always call me to go and train credit officers, training supervisors, to review this, everything, their policies... Because like, I had hands-on experience and with a teaching background.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So at the time I was a third year, as soon as I completed my third year, before graduation, I was promoted to a position of a regional manager {laughed}.

A.G : {laughed}. Oh my god.

R.N : Region is like, so many districts together.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : I was made to be manager of Eastern Uganda. And afterwards, this micro-finance was the best in Africa at that time so they were like-, they can be a deposit taking institution like a bank. So they looked for people who can be trained and I, one lady and a regional manager and six gentlemen and supervisors elected. **So they took us for training banking management at Uganda Matyrs University, Nkozi where I obtained a Post Graduate Diploma in Banking Management and**

after the course, deposit taking was successfully piloted in my region and later enrolled in all regions and FINCA Uganda became the first Deposit taking Micro-Finance Institution in Uganda.

A.G : Okay.

(REDACTED)

A.G : So this job really changed your life right ?

R.N : Of course yes, it changed my life. I have a lot, me and my stories can not end in this interview {laughed}.

A.G : {laughed}.

R.N : Because I got a lot of money, I changed-, I built my mother a new house, I did a lot of things in my family, I bought a house in the city. They could take me for training in other institutions and in other countries and I was being paid in dollars as a consultant of the institution. So I became-, I bought a car, so you know, I became a-, well I changed the whole image of people who knew me.

A.G : Yeah, like you climbed the ladder, yeah.

R.N : {laughed}. So I was a regional manager and when I was looking to do my postgraduate in banking management, I was supposed to be at the main bank of Uganda. So after the two-, the one year course, I came back with a postgraduate diploma in banking. And they had trained this institution to become a bank and it was taken because we were a micro-finance. So I took the initiative to train and also implement. So we opened a fast deposit taking institution in Uganda which was begun by me.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : That's the history I made for the background.

A.G : Yes that's-.

R.N : Yes. Now, after doing-, all this took me like eight years because from credit officer, to a supervisor, to a training manager, to a regional manager. So it all went very fast. But in the process of doing that, other institutions would take me to train other institutions that wanted to begin micro-finance because now I was an expert in village banking, community banking and all that. In 2003 I think, in my eighth year from our institution I went to train in Tanzania that was GTZ, German corporation. They wanted to get me. So later on, when I came back after some time, I didn't know, I was training all people there were white apart from me and one gentlemen. I was under the block, I didn't know. So when I came back like after 6 months, I got a call that was like 'Rosette, I want to meet you, I am from UTZ here', I said 'what ? okay. Where do we meet ?'. 'Okay let's meet in a public place, in a hotel'. I went, so when I went it was a very serious call, they were like : 'there's a new project in Zambia and we want to recruit a training manager and we request that you join our team with good pay but non accompaniment, not going with family'. I declined because my children were young and I didn't always want to go far away from my mother yet I was single mother.

(REDACTED)

My brother John Owino who was a welder advised me to open up a Training Consultancy Firm which I did and called it 'Organisation For Capacity Building Initiative-OCABI' in 2003. So my first attempt to bid for a tender was with the Government of Uganda, Ministry of Agriculture under a program called National Agricultural Advisory Services-NAADS and I got the tender under my firm. So the day they were handing me a check as a Director it was published on all TV and News papers and my bosses saw. I got so many phone calls from Head office and the Human resource Manager called and told me that I needed to be transferred to another region because it seed that I was doing my own things and failure to take up the transfer she would demote me. I requested to respond within two weeks and she allowed. When I went back I shared with my brother and he advised me to resign asap so I manage my own project and not allow the HR to spoil my profile I

had built for years. It was huge check worth 60 million shillings for three months training in two District of Kamuli and Busia in Easter Uganda.

So when I went to resign there, they were like 'what is the problem?'. I said 'yes, I have served enough'. They said 'no no no Rosette if it is about anything, tell us'. These were Country Director, Marketing Director and Operations Director. But I had made my mind.

A.G : Okay wow. That is a lot.

(REDACTED)

R.N : I still have a lot along that but to give you, to tell you about my leadership, I can show you.

A.G : Yeah yeah it's-. You made your way, you built your own way.

R.N : After handing in my resignation I worked for one month and left FINCA to begin my own business . I opened a big wholesale stationery shop so after the project I would continue with that. I implemented so well and my firm was recognized as the best in mobilizing the community and I was visited by the National Chairman of NAADS and the Donors of the Project that was African Development Bank. They interviewed me how I managed to motivate the communities yet many consulting firms claimed that communities were naive about the project. I showed them my training manual I had developed which included all methods I used and breakdown of resources given. This amused them and they asked if I could allow them to adopt some of the methods I used into the National training Guide lines and I allowed. Among these were using community members to elect their own community coordinators who would be responsible for mobilization and training them so that they can continues with refreshers training to community members after the project.

I equipped them with Training manuals, bought for them bicycles and T/shirts that for publicity of the project and my organization and ensured feeding participants during the training and these were key in popularizing my organization and the project. I also ensured that the press-TV, Radio and News papers cover all activities throughout the project life

The NAADS project was extended and i worked two years In 2005 I saw an advert in the News Paper about the 9th European Development Fund-Civil Society Capacity Building Programme (9th EDF-CSCBP).They wanted consultants to train and monitor their grantees in the 8 regions of Uganda-one consultant per region. I applied for Eastern Uganda and got it right. After one year other consultants-five of them, didn't perform as expected and they were terminated So another advert was placed in the news paper but the program manager who was a white man called me and requested if I could take up Northern region on top of Eastern Region which I did. It was so amazing, they gave me a lot of money. I did great work and I was given certification as the best consultant in Uganda. I have it.

A.G : That is very inspiring.

R.N : So that one ended in 2008. Then after I became a hospital administrator for one year, worked with the government. It wasn't good, there was a lot of corruption, I didn't get used doing that kind of life. I resigned. (REDACTED). I joined Makerere University for Masters degree in Social Sector Planning and Management, also worked as Capacity Building advisor with GOAL Uganda for one year and fully became involved in Human Right Activism and that is when I was elected as a National coordinator for Civil Society Organization on the commission on the status of women. Then I joined the politics.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : Then I go back to the question that you asked me that you are a National Coordinator of the Commission on the Status of Women. What was that ? This is UN program that bring together member countries every year at a conference in New York to report on what different countries have done to empower women as per the theme of the year, you can google that.

A.G : I don't know I read that on your website, isn't that you. Sorry what was your question ?

R.N : No that brings me to what you asked that you were a Coordinator of the Commission on the Status of Women. I think we'll reach to that, I think we can go ahead because my story is long and I can't finish now. {laughed}.

A.G : Okay okay {laughed}. So you wanna move forward right ?

R.N : Yeah.

A.G : Okay perfect. Just, you said that it was hard for girls in Uganda to go to school because they were like 'girls should stay at home'. Do you think it's still the case today or did it evolve ?

R.N : It is not the case today because there is a lot of socialization but still, the culture is still in. People think that it is the boys first. If there is no money at least, it is boys first.

A.G : Okay yeah.

R.N : Mm hmm. There is still that marginalization, we are trying to bring that up but still by culture, boys are up.

A.G : Alright yeah, it is still in mentalities.

R.N : Even when you marry and you don't give birth to boys, if you give birth to only girls, men can leave you for that because they think girls are not going to help you too much. Although that is changing but some people still think like that.

A.G : Yeah it is still in some mentalities.

R.N : Yeah.

A.G : Okay. So, I also would like to talk a little bit about how like you came to the US. So when and why did you move to San Diego or the US ?

R.N : I came to the US after joining politics. I joined the politics in 2014.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : Active politics. Because having been on the Commission on the status of women is a program, if you read about it, which was launched in 1995, that's what we call the platform of action, **that took place in China. So Civil Society checks government on women empowerment programs and reports to government through Ministry of Gender (REDACTED)** every year, the United Nations took it up and every year, all governments meet at New-York at the United Nations head quarters to give reports on measures they have done to empower women.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So in civil society in Uganda we are like, governments go to US on that Commission and give their reports they have done. But they don't tell the people the loopholes that are in the reports. So we as a civil society, we came out and said 'no, we have to also mobilize ourselves and critic what governments have done and what governments have not done'.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : And we have to be an eye to the government ; 'you are saying this but this is not like it, what are you planning to do for us and this ?'. So we had to lobby governments to involve on a civil society into monitoring, into evaluating governmental programs on women.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : And I led that movement in Uganda. To mobilize the civil society, to mobilize the rural people, to mobilize the community. And lobby governments. To give us this right. Sure we can

critic and they know when they are performing well and when they aren't performing well. And when I led this movement, we went to the minister of Gender, the government listened to us and it was incorporated into the government program. So people are like 'you are the coordinator of this since you are the initiator' {laughed}. So they made me a national coordinator of the program in 2012.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So that led to that. Every theme of the year, which the UN puts in a place for governments to follow. I mobilized the civil society, the women, all those pro-empowerment of women. We look into what we want and we present it to the government. And then we follow-up. At the end of the year, we critic and give them the feedback. And also when they are going to present in New-York, we requested them for some of us to be part of them. And also, we have a shadow report to the government. Then the shadow report is looked into and issued into comparison with the report to the UN **and that is how I got my first trip to New-York in 2012 with sponsorship from UNFPA.**

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So this time I was intermediating between civil society and the community and the government {laughed}. It led me to be going to the UN headquarters, every year almost, as an intermediate of the civil society and the government, so I could go as a government delegation. So that's how I initiated going to New-York in 2012.

A.G : Okay, alright.

(REDACTED)

R.N : People are like 'go to Parliament we want these issues to be policies ? But we want people like you in Parliament. So I announced to go to Parliament, it was in a newspaper I think I would get them and send you. And when I announced that, to go back to be a member of Parliament, representing my home district Bugiri, the ruling party has been there for 30 years. (REDACTED). So the Prime Minister of that time-. Are you seeing me ? Yes you are seeing me, do you see me ?

A.G : Yeah yeah I see you yeah yeah.

R.N : You see me ?

A.G : Yeah yeah {laughed}.

R.G : Okay because I can see only a small person {laughed}. So the Prime minister was like 'President should not stand for Presidency this time'. But President was like 'I must' so they split. So we were like 'no, let's support the Prime Minister'. So I became a **mobiliser for the Prime Minister, John Patrick Amama Mbabazi**, opposing group to the President.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : And we were so powerful, we formed what we called TDA, the Democratic Alliance or the opposition. And it was a hotly contested elections, as you will read in Youtube, everything is there.

A.G : Alright.

R.N : So as I told you, while there I was elected to be one, a regional coordinator for my region Busowa, Eastern Uganda. Later on I was elected to be-, to lead the National Women's league in the Democratic Alliance, and finally in the TDA I was elected to nominate the President, our candidate.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : You will read it is in the, whatever, in the Youtube.

A.G : Alright.

R.N : On the 3rd of November 2015, I nominated the Presidential candidate to remove the current President. And that was a struggle because the President was ready to buy us off. Me they told me if you can defect TDA they would give me one billion, they would give me one billion, a house, a car and body guards for security : to defect'. People who think only about money defected (?) because we were promised administrators posts. But me I said, I have always preached integrity, I have always fought for human rights, money is not everything, I am not bad loaf, I can feed my children, so I refused to defect. So as I nominated someone as the candidate, my colleague with whom we were in the TDA and defected now are ministers in the government, **Betty Kamya Minitar for Lands, Beautrice Anywar State Minitar for Environment, Nakiywala Kyiyingi, State Minister for Youth you can read this in Youtube.** (REDACTED). But me I said no. Why ? I was looking at my integrity and my history : it would have been funny when I was preaching integrity and then going for money. So when the election came, the election was rigged highly. And they rigged our votes, and we lost, and we went to court, and we had evidence, and I worked a lot to get the evidence on board. After we collected the evidence, the government, through their operatives broke into the attorneys office and it took all of our evidence before the hearing.

A.G : Oh...

R.N : Yeah. So at the time of court, we're vulnerable. And that ended like that and he declared him a winner. We said 'this is okay', we went back to our businesses because I am a consultant, I had to manage and all, I had farms... I have so many businesses at home. I thought that is all but later on they were like, they were giving me an appointment in the government and particularly in the state house. They gave me, they wanted me to be administrator at state house, that is a very big post in Uganda.

A.G : Administrator of what ?

R.N : Working in the President's office. Political mobilization and all that. To lead, you know so many things, promises. So I was given out of the blue an appointment to work in the state house with the President. I said 'what ?'. {laughed}. I said this is not serious. But before that, because I was coordinating CSW, they tricked me because they knew I could not go. They told me 'I have all those letters' : the permanent secretary of minister of Gender sent me a letter inviting me that you have been nominated to go to the Commission, conference, that was much, and you have been sponsored by the President'. I was like {laughed}. (REDACTED). So I went to the meeting, I got the letter I thought that now that I am an activist and I have been doing everything for women, maybe they want my initiative. So I went there, I told them how I have been doing and I participated so I came to New-York, with the team of government. When we reached there, that's when they gave me those appointments from the President. They wanted to negotiate with me from here in the New-York. So I was like 'what can I do in Uganda like all that you see is President'. You refuse it, you are either killed or in prison. So I didn't tell them that I will not take it. My candidate, the Presidential candidate, I nominated, told me 'Rosette don't let me down, I'd be embarrassed internationally'. I told him 'trust me, I can not go for money'. So we were here for 14 days, but me I spent only 7 days then back to Uganda, I told-, I worked with the personal secretary of the President, Milly Babalanda who told me all those things and gave me the letter, and gave me money for upkeep and allowances. It was a lot of money \$600 per day for 14 days but me I stayed for 7 days and went back because I had a consultancy to do.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : I told her 'what we are going to do is go back because I have some projects I am finishing as a consultant. When I hand in the report, then I will come for the appointment'. She said 'okay, when shall you be ready ?', I told her 'by September it would be done'. Because it was 6 months, that was much. And she told me 'why you are wanted to come to be a political mobilizer in state house ?, we are going to take-, there is going to be a change in the Constitution, we want to open the Constitution, we want to remove the Presidential age limit'. Because in Uganda, it was like once you are 75, you can't contest as the President.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So the President was going to use money to buy off people and remove that article.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : Empowerment. So I told her 'okay'. I didn't want to tell her I had refused because I knew I have to look around where to go. So I went back to Uganda, I finished my work, I was planning where can I go, I had a friend in Tanzania, I had a friend in Kenya, in South Africa, in Sudan and here... But all these African countries, the President have influence.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : Yeah. So I said 'I have a friend-, I have so many friends here- USA'. When I talked to her, that friend said 'ohh yes, you come to the US, there are so many jobs, my daughter has a company in San Diego, in Los Angeles, in Arizona and a US citizenship would just give you a job'. That's how I came. So I prepared, I sold my car, I had already a visa which was valid, I jumped on the plane-, I was supposed to meet the President on the 15th of September, that's when they're going to take me officially to talk to him and take over my appointment. Me I left the country on the 12th and reached on the 13th of September 2017. I was running away from the appointment to come here but also knowing that I was coming to work, which work I did not get, that's another big story.

A.G : Okay so that's how you got to the US. And your plane got in San Diego ? You landed in San Diego ?

R.N : In Los Angeles.

A.G : Okay, and you settled in Los Angeles ?

R.N : No, they picked me, these people who were trafficking me in, picked me.

A.G : Oh okay they picked you okay, I see. Wow that's, that's a lot.

R.N : Well that's a big story.

A.G : Yes {laughed}, for sure. And when-, so when you got like-, when you decided to settle in San Diego and these people came to take you, what are some of the challenges that you had to face, even when you were working in San Diego? Did you have some challenges like regarding the culture, the language ?

R.N : No, because English is my second language and I speak it.

A.G : Yeah right, you were an English teacher.

R.N : And I write it well, I am even a teacher of it so I have no problem with language.

A.G : Okay, and with culture ? You had like no problem, with adapting ?

R.N : I had no problem because I travelled a lot.

A.G : Oh yeah you said you went all across Africa.

R.N : I told you, I had travelled a lot in Africa. I was traveling to New-York every time and then, I have travelled to Thailand. I am a businesswoman. To Guangzhou in China... So there's no-, there is no big deal.

A.G : Okay. Wow that's crazy how much you have travelled and how much you have done.

R.N : Yeah so the way I have travelled to me, they are all the same.

A.G : Okay yeah, wow.

R.N : Because apart from the color, there's no big deal. When you come here, there are poor people, just like in Africa, there are rich people here, there are rich people there, there are educated people here and also illiterate here. So to me I am like : apart from the color, no big deal.

A.G : Yeah. And did you have any problems with like, the color of your skin ? Did that, like, did, you get any trouble for that ? Like, because it's mostly a white country right ?

R.N : {sighed}. Because I am lucky : one, I was taught by Britain when I was at college, and with Catholics and we had with white fathers priests and brothers and I have worked with them since I was young, they are quiet people who are now missionaries at home. And also, when I went to college, our teacher of English and literature, he was a Britain, when I went to FINCA, FINCA was by Americans. So I have worked with them, I have the confidence and I love myself as I am because I know : I have worked with them and even performed better than them. So that makes me to know that I am as them or even better than them. So I don't fear them. I don't care. I do think it as part of my strength and that is all. The reason you can see me natural, you can see women in Uganda who are trying to bleach : I don't, I don't bleach, I am confident, I love my color.

A.G : That's good, yeah like you're confident, that's awesome.

R.N : {laughed}

A.G : So when you were a child, what did you dream about your future and how did, like, your migration history, affect that dream ?

R.N : My dream has never been affected. I told you : as a baby, as a younger girl, I wanted to be a teacher.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : And I was.

A.G : Yeah you did it.

R.N : And even when I stopped to teach in the classroom, I continued teaching up to now. I continue training others in different fields. That's my hobby.

A.G : Okay yeah.

R.N : So I have never lost it.

A.G : Yeah, so teaching is like-, it has always been part of your life ?

R.N : Yes.

A.G : Okay, so you kinda accomplished your dream ?

R.N : Yeah, because I am-, because I am not teaching in the class but I find myself leading women, teaching about this, teaching about the culture. So I just feel I am on the right board.

A.G : Okay yeah, that is awesome. So you said you're on your own in the US right ? No one of your family migrated there ? No one wanted to ?

R.N : I am the only one. I am talking in a small room here but this is an achievement. Because when I was trafficked in, I was in a place where they kept me in their house for one year and some months without allowing me to go out. Apart from when they took me to the East African community, like you're asking me the question.

A.G : Okay, all right. And what happened to your children ? Did they come with you to the US or-?

R.N : They are still there, I am here-, this story is long, I am here alone.

A.G : Okay, and how old are they now ?

R.N : Yeah, they're big boys.

A.G : Yeah ?

R.N : One is 29 now, he is going to make 29, the other is 26, going to make 27-. Okay, in June, one will make-, the first one will make like 29, I think.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : And the other one will make in September, will make like 28, the other one will make 25 in June, so they are big boys. They are all University graduates.

A.G : Okay okay. That's great. That's great. And like, so you raised them right ? You said that you didn't want to get the job outside Uganda because you wanted to like, stay with your children. How did your personal background, your experience as a girl in Uganda impact the way you raised your children ?

R.N : My-, the way I was raised of struggling, looking for money, doing this business, doing this, doing this, I also impacted that to my children. As a single mother, much as I had money, I didn't want to show them that you just get money, no. So during holidays, they could have businesses, small businesses. I would tell them 'what business do you want to do ?' and I gave them initial capital. (REDACTED). So my first boy was selling all the shoes, second hand shoes, he has been doing that all through. And when he went to university, he began a cooking, he would do-, cook for fellow students and they'd sell food, he called it the hunger clinic. He sells pack and all that to students, to get pocket money, my son. And from that, literally he's having now a bar and restaurant {laughed}, upon a guest house. Actually, he is my tenant in one of my premises, he pays my place but he has his own-, he has a guest house and a bar and a restaurant.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : And also he is doing what they call tour and travel business.

A.G : What is that ?

R.N : When tourists come, they want to go on tours, you take them around and all that.

A.G : Ohh okay I see. Alright.

R.N : My first son he is also working with Airtel, a telephone company. So I made them struggle to make money. The second one, that one did social sciences like me, degree. The second one did business administration. But from a child-, when he was young, he could sell ice cream, could make ice cream and sell, doing all this to get money. And when he grew up, in the university he was selling second hand clothes to the fellow students. He also learned how to braid hair so he could make great dreadlocks, which is expansive.

A.G : Ohh okay.

R.N : And he got money for it, I could only pay tuition. And right now, he has a printery, he makes t-shirts, capes, this and that. He is also an artist. He likes singing, he is an artist, he is having a music studio so you find that they do every business to get money so they can survive without me. The baby did business administration also and with him, he has a firm, marketing firm. He began at slowly but now he is getting big customers. Recently, this week-, it is on Facebook, he was nominated the fastest Ugandan, a Youtuber. Youtube gave him some award. So I have children even when I was suffering they could send me some money. Yeah.

A.G : Okay yeah. You really told them that money is not coming like that, you need to work to get the money and your hard work is gonna get you money.

R.N : Yes.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : I am proud of that **they learned that money is worked for.**

A.G : Yeah that's a great value, to know that money is not something that is already there. So I would like-, you know the organization UWEAST right ?

R.N : I know it.

A.G : And what is your relationship with this organization ? Are you a member or- ?

R.N : I am not a member but that organization, I have two main things which are funny about me and them. One : the family that took me there to San Diego, and they made me a nanny, a domestic worker.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : And they did not pay me, that family. They are the same tribe with the coordinator Awichu, if you know their coordinator program director.

A.G : Awichu ? Is it Awichu ?

R.N : Yeah, Awichu. That man, with this family, they are from the same part of Uganda, Northern Uganda. So when I reached here, because of my knowledge, first time-, but I have photos I will send you {laughed}. First time they took me, I think to fill the number, I didn't see the big deal. 'Come, come', they didn't tell me what I am going to do, to fill the number, I went and sat there, whatever happened, it was a conference or meeting to take my picture or whatever. But me I am an expert in your work {laughed}. So I came back, their programs looked so good and I was happy. Second time again, they just called me 'come, come. Can you have a pass and go and present us, we are looking-, this, we want someone who can talk for us and this and this and this. Have you ever done a, b, c, d ?'. I said 'yes'. 'Can you show that maybe-, can you tell us-, can you be creative, which kind of program do you think can be good if we do and will please the donors, increase the donors. So I have worked with the community. I know these people, they took me. Actually, I was telling them in the car, I didn't know they could talk with my bosses and they took me. So they took me to Los Angeles to defend their proposal. So when I reached Los Angeles, there were donors I think, government donors, I don't know. I forget now. So when they called the East African community me I told them : 'the East African community, one, they have a challenge : most of them can't speak English and when they can't speak English, they are not employable, here. But we can still make use of some at putting them and they can earn a living even without knowing English'. And I told them what we are going to do. Because they told me 'you are part of their organization', it is from East Africa. (REDACTED). I told them : 'one, we can teach you handwork, handcrafts and to sell like a bangle, like these, you know ? Those art crafts.

A.G : Okay yeah.

R.N : We teach them that and they can sell that, that doest need the language. I told them we can teach them like baking, baking cakes, wedding cakes, birthday, all this. And you know, the way we bake our cakes is so different from here, their cakes here are bad. So we can teach them that and **so many hand activities.**

A.G : {laughed}. I agree.

R.N : Yes. We can teach them like baking, teach them like designs at art and crafts. So if we are helped to do that, we can make use of these people and then they will stop being dependents and frustrated. So I brought the proposal very well so that they can and said 'which organization

are you from ?', I said 'I am from East Africa'. So they were given funds, 2 million, for 3 years, for two years, yeah.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : Now, after that commendation, when I came back I told them 'look people, now don't you think I will be-, at least let me be a volunteer to teach what I want to teach'. They told me 'you have no papers'.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So they did not make me part of the project which I defended.

A.G : Oh you weren't a part of it ?

R.N : I went to defend and I got the fund and when time came, they told me I have no papers, I have no work permit so they can not employ me or they can not use me. I said 'that is okay but I want to be a volunteer so I am exposed'. They refused. Cut me. I said 'no problem'. Then one time, one day, again they called me through these people, through my employers, I can say my traffickers. Again they picked me, then they told me 'you can-', I came with the bangles, this bangles from Uganda.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : I know how to make them by hand so I was selling them. 'Can you bring and we'll give you table and assure that this is the work that we do and you will sell'. I said 'okay'. So I went, they gave me a table and I displayed my art and actually they bought, I think they were students, I think they were people like you, they bought.

A.G : Okay yeah yeah.

R.N : They put a lot of flags like Ugandan flag, Tanzanian flag, Somalian flag. So everyone from his country was like-. So they bought, they were students.. During that time, when I was selling those things, that's when I met Yen, Yen was the organizer of the conference. So they came, they bought also, they asked me, I told them. Yen invited me to the group work whereby they were like 'how do we maintain our culture, much as we are refugees ?'. So in the group I was in was of 5 young girls and I was the mature person. So I gave them ideas, I told them to preserve your culture, you must write, tell your parents to tell you about how they came, what happened in their countries, you have to put on gowns or clothes of your culture, I was dressed like an Ugandan. You can through clothing, through eating the food from home, through writing, through that you kind of maintain your culture. Then the girls were like 'wow Rosette you are the one going to talk'. I said 'no, I can't talk because I don't know your English here', they said 'no, no, no you present'. So at that time, the girls asked me to present on behalf of the group on what we discussed. I don't-. I told them 'think about your language : don't lose your language. Think about dressing, think about food, think about writing : all those are about culture'. So when they told me to stand and to talk, I talked and I told them one of the things that, the key tool that we have to do is to write'. Like me I am writing whatever happened to me. I said 'even when I'll leave the world, people will read about it'.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So when I lifted that, as soon as the conference ended, Yen came and so many professors came to me. They said 'Rosette is it true that you are a writer ?'. I said 'yes, but I don't know how to publish it'. Then they asked me 'can you send us a summary of it ?'. Then I sent. Then they asked me 'do you mind when we take it to the committee to look at it and we publish it on our website ?', 'yes'. That's how they wrote, they put that one on the website.

A.G : Okay, okay.

R.N : That's how I met them.

A.G : Alright.

R.N : Now afterwards, I told them 'another thing I suggested is that these women, the problem they have is language'. That's why they were saying 'language, they don't employment, yes'. I told-, I gave the East African community an idea, I told them 'what we can do, me, I can teach language. That's in my area.' And teach someone like at home with our future children who have never spoken English. English, why ? Because you can teach someone another language using their language.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : When I am teaching you and I am using your language, you understand what I am saying. But you can not teach someone English with English and she doesn't know the English.

A.G : Yeah for sure.

R.N : So I told them 'Americans speak differently, even me, who knows English, I don't understand at times'. Even them, they don't understand me. How do we expect women who has never had English in her life to understand American English ?

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : So I told them 'we have a language that we call Swahili in African, which is international, which all these women know. So I can use Swahili as I teach English. I told them 'you give me like 6 months, I want to volunteer, and give me 10 women and I do a sample, I do a pilot'.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : For free as a volunteer : give me 10 women, I volunteer and teach English using Swahili.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : The professors were so happy about my idea and they told me to go and meet the East African community, to go and meet the study committee. But you know what happened ?

A.G : What ?

R.N : They sabotaged it. They refused.

A.G : Why ?

R.N : That's a reason I want to tell you : I don't know. But, whoever was behind it, I realized that there are two reasons why they refused it. Because I made an outline, showed the professors, showed the head, told him how we grade. One-. To me I realized they were 3 reasons. One : those, and specifically the program director from my country, Awichu, they fear people who are educated, they fear people who are exposed, they fear people who know. They look at you as a competitor, not as a partner.

A.G : I see.

R.N : To them, they looked at me as a competitor who as come to take their program. That was not my objective.

A.G : Okay yeah, you were, you were, yeah-. You were a competitor.

R.N : Yes. To them they were like 'if she comes these people will know that she knows and maybe'-. I don't know what they thought. So they looked at me as a competitor. Two : this family that trafficked me in, they wanted me to remain in doors, didn't want me to be exposed, because

they wanted to use me as a domestic worker.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : So they talked to the program director to reject the program.

A.G : Okay. So you never did the program ?

R.N : So they threw the program back and this family, they made sure that the program is thrown away. Three : these people look at the projects as business, not as capacity building for empowerment.

A.G : Okay, yeah.

R.N : Why ? With me and my history as you read, we do programs to empower. When I meet you and you can't speak English and yet after some time I met you you can speak English and are employed, that is my pride. To them, they want these people to remain in there so that they keep getting grants to help them.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : And that is not only for the East African community, I can testify to you that, even here where I am. The institution, I told them my problem and this and that but they want you to go and be in their shelters.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : So they get the money. And their shelters, they don't allow you a phone, they don't allow you anything, they make you to be in that life, whereby you are not exposed. So they continue having the numbers for donors to bring in money.

A.G : Okay, that's very interesting, so organization is a business ?

R.N : Yeah so many, many, even in Africa. I have worked with the donors and with the organization : what I am talking about is life experience.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : Organizations bring out good missions but they don't practice those missions. The more vulnerable people they have, the more money they get. So they are not up to letting these people grow because they will loose-.

A.G : Okay yeah, they will loose members and then money.

R.N : Mm hmm. And that is what I saw in the East African community. I have told you three things which are, even when you asked me at night and I am sleeping I will repeat that : one, {laughed}, this family sabotaged my entry to East African community because they wanted me to be a domestic worker and a nanny which they need ; two, it is a business, not empowering, if they were really up to empowering, they should show us the graduates because me when you are doing a project, you say 'my project is four years', then you should show me graduates of that project after five years and how we empowered them. 'I can not empower you for ten years that empowerment, you keep calling that one empowerment ?

A.G : Yeah yeah.

R.N : And lastly, they saw me as a competition, they thought when I go there, I will be behind on them. I don't know this they feared me, I will do other things. That is what I can tell you about that.

A.G : So are you still working with UWEAST today or is it like-, fell apart ?

R.N : I told you, they shut me out. Like I have told you-.

A.G : Oh of the total organization ? I thought of the project. They shut you out of the total organization ?

R.N : Yeah how can I continue ? Because these people they do not want me to come in terms of working with them.

A.G : Oh yeah, they don't want you to lead your project.

R.N : They want me-, they didn't want me to be one of them. So I said-. And also the person that was keeping me didn't want me to be exposed so they kept me in doors and they cut me off completely. And I stopped.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : These people would not allow me and even the program director was working with these people and they made sure that it. And the final thing I don't want to forget : after the project they told them 'okay begin the work' : they didn't know what to do. They were looking for me again I said 'I have no time' {laughed}.

A.G : Yeah yeah that makes sense {laughed}.

R.N : Yes I said 'no I am sorry'. So I don't know how the project ended here.

A.G : Yeah that's crazy. It is very interesting to have that, yeah, to have that point of view {laughed}.

R.N : Yeah {laughed}.

A.G : So I would like to talk a little bit more about like East Africa since you came from Uganda, what would you consider to be one of the biggest concern in East Africa nowadays ?

R.N : What do you mean ?

A.G : Like what is a big problem that you would like to change ? Like we talked about the, like, education of girls, which is improving, but still like not equal to boys, is there something that you would like to change ? Something else for example ?

R.N : One, East Africa has a problem but I will not say that East Africa because East Africa is big so let me talk about Uganda.

A.G : Yeah, okay.

R.N : Uganda's problem today is corruption.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : But unless government changes, nothing much can take place.

A.G : Yes.

R.N : Whether, whether they bring money, that money will be embezzled and no impact.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : That's an immediate challenge. Another challenge : unemployment is at its high level. If you cannot create your own smaller job, you have no job, whether you have masters, whether you have a degree, no matter what, unemployment is real.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : And what-, the biggest problem again is that people have thought-, think that Western culture is better than our culture. So they are adapting Western culture, forgetting their culture, which has changed everything negatively.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : For example, children you tell them go to practice agriculture and they think that it is lower class. Children think that after you study, you have to get formal employment, white collar job.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : They don't know that when even you get this knowledge but you can use it by even using the land we have and be rich.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : For example they believe that once you graduate, you have to go in someone's office and be a secretary and be an officer and be this and that. I am playing it. At the time I left, I was trying to change that thinking because I made sure that I am a serious farmer. And when a woman who's doing masters, I was already meeting with the President my what ? My paper, my research. But I could go gardening and do everything, I don't buy food and you know, the more you don't buy food, the more money you save.

A.G : Yeah. {laughed}

R.N : Yes {laughed}. I wanted to tell you but no : **Western culture is not better than ours but** with globalization it is good to work together but you shouldn't leave your culture.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : We shouldn't leave our own. That's why many photos you will see on me I am dressed like a, you know, a Ugandan.

A.G : Okay. That's why you were working on the preservation of the culture right like, with UWEAST, when you tried to extend your culture ?

R.N : Yeah I want to show them that our culture is great.

A.G : Yeah yeah.

R.N : And me I always told them that 'yeah I am black, ? Black as I am, I look like an African but I can go on a conference in the UN and talk and people will listen.

A.G : Yeah {laughed}.

R.N : They don't care about that. So we should not forget about our culture, our identity is vital.

A.G : Yes that's very interesting.

R.N : That's one of the things I need to be part of very much : people should retain their culture. And because of the time I've been here and what I have seen, there is no way we will feel comfortable, there is no way we will feel the love than your own country.

A.G : Yeah yeah.

R.N : Here people look at me as rubbish, they think I am a small person : I don't care.

A.G : Okay yeah, you are proud of what you do and like, of Uganda.

R.N : Yeah of course. I will tell you something : one time I was getting ready, they were giving me food at the church and some lady was like 'I think you are feeling good having free food, good food' and I said 'what is good food ?', I told her 'me I don't even eat this packed food, I eat organic food'.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : I said 'who told you that I want free things ? Free things are for people who have no place, me I need to offer myself, don't think I am proud of getting the relief'. And they were like 'what ?' {laughed}. Yes. So, people should know that their culture is important, their home is important, develop where you want to be confident.

A.G : Yeah yeah for sure, I know that.

R.N : Do you want the house you see on the Internet ? Do it, work for it. If you want, build it but in your home. So that's how I have lived. Me I have shown people that even when I was young, I could tell people 'I can not go to abroad, I cannot go to a diaspora and leave my mother'. And indeed, even when I am here but I am proud of my home still.

A.G : Yeah, your heart is still in Uganda, like, your own country, like what belongs to you is Uganda, it will never be something else.

R.N : Yes. But now look at me. At home I have this trendy house, I have beautiful houses, I have businesses. I am now in a room which is like my nanny's room at home. I can show you this is my bed {shows her bed}. Can I have this bed in Uganda ?

A.G : Oh okay.

R.N : Yes, I live here and in Uganda I am like-, you know. But people think when you go to the diaspora everything is the best : when you speak English, we don't want to speak our mother language you know.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : Yet when they get in they don't want to do-, they want to be employed out. I went and told people that self-employment is the biggest deal.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : Because when you are being employed, you are promoting someone's vision. What is your vision yourself ?

A.G : Yeah for sure being its own boss, yeah, that really true.

R.N : {laughed}. Me when I was working I am hard working, I can sleep little hours but when I was working in the bank I could measure that by seven or by six I am at the bank. I do everything perfectly, reports and all that and by one, after lunch, I am doing my own things.

A.G : Okay yeah.

R. N : But after doing the work of my boss, I also have my own things initiated.

A.G : Yeah yeah.

R.N : That's why I became a consultant at the age of 30. Addressing needs of women.

A.G : Okay yeah. That's very interesting, it's like, I don't know, I can feel that like the sense of community and being proud of your culture. since I left France too, the US is also a Western country but it's also two different parts and I was very like, proud of being French and it's my culture, it is my home country.

R.N : Yes. So that one we should tell to the younger people, they should know that.

A.G : Yeah, yeah for sure. And how would you describe the East African community in San Diego or in California : is it like a strong sense of community or is it more like, yeah, I don't know if you get what I mean.

R.N : What I can tell you : it is strong, but what you call a strength depends on you. Because for me the times I cooperated with them, it is about calling people, eating food, being raised, dancing maybe, but are we having this sense of changing these people for the better ? That's why I am here today. I am not having papers but I am going to get them. My dream is to do something different. There are so many things that you have to do here to help people : immigrants are suffering and a hand of few people are helping them.

A.G : Okay, okay.

R.N : Because they don't know even how to get attorneys, they don't know how to get this, they don't know they can work. I want to assure you that I have no papers but I have been working any job. You know what I call any job ? **House cleaning, gardening, baby sitting, picking recyclables in trash bins and selling**... I can say I was terminated by my employer without paying me for one and a half years, she told me 'Do you have work upon it to pay you ? If you insist I am going to call police and you are deported to Uganda'.

A.G : Okay okay, yeah.

R.N : So after terminating me, I went to another person who also again brought me to Corona (City). I didn't have anything to do, the room I was in I had to pay, the organization they wanted me to go to a shelter. In a shelter you sleep in a room, five to six people, men, women, children, 'which kind of life is that ?' I told them.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : They tell 'you don't come with more than four clothes, no phone', I said 'what ?'. I told this young man 'okay you give me a room, I will-, I will work and pay you slowly' so he gave me a room. You know what I did ? I went and looked for a church, I went to the church, I told them my problem, I told them I can babysit, I can do laundry, I can garden, I can clean the house, I can do anything you give me. I want to survive, I have this problem. I started picking recyclables, I will show you photos, I go to trash bins, I pick recyclables, I can sell, I get money, I buy food here in this house, I contribute, I do something, I survive like that. Then the church come to me trying to give me food, people are starting to call me to babysit, to clean their houses, to garden... I did a very nice job.

A.G : Okay yeah.

R.N : I said 'I am ready to pay some little money even if they had told me 550 but at least in a month I could be able to give like 100, 150 or buy food. At least, the owner sees that I am also struggling. Does that East African community teach women those things : survival mechanisms are lacking in East African community ?

A.G : Okay.

R.N : They are teaching dependence on donors. We want to teach people to survive. That's lacking in that organization and they don't want to hear people like us talk to them.

A.G : Yeah, yeah. So your plan is to stay in the US and like, work on these issues and help East African refugees ?

R.N : I am waiting because I have a problem at home. I applied for asylum and I also applied for a T Visa. So if I am granted I will be here officially. But also now, I learnt how to survive but also I did not forget my proposal writing skills. I went on internet, googled, and I was looking for pro-bono

attorneys. I applied to 50 organizations, looking for help and a good name and I chose Community Legal Aid where now I am a member of the board of directors representing clients.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : So I have attorneys who are legal aid, they have helped me a lot a lot, and where I talk now, I got for a work permit. I am now working as Security guard with Allied Universal Security Company deployed at Corona Transit Center Bus Terminal. But because of my struggle and my story, today, like I told you I am a leader, I was elected on the Board of Legal aid, I am a body member representing clients here in the US.

A.G : Wow.

R.N : I was telling you, it is that leadership.

A.G : Yeah that's total leadership {laughed}.

R.N : {laughed}. I was not fearing telling them. I was telling them 'I have a masters level' but all that is ended, I have to begin life. I will show you photos when I am carrying recyclables, I was picking trash in bins to go and sell. I can clean house, I can do an-, even I will show you photos you will not believe.

A.G : Okay yeah, you are working hard.

R.N : So what are the challenges of the East African community : teaching these women to survive. It's my question which they don't want to hear and they don't care. I will do something somewhere.

A.G : Yeah yeah that's a great goal to help them.

R.N : {laughed}.

A.G : And so you were talking about-, so you said that teaching was one of your hobby, do you have any others ? You said you were an artwork person right, like you like to create new things, do you have any other hobbies, things you like to do in your free time ?

R.N : Yeah. I like music, I grew up loving to dance and sing. Again, my second born is an artist, I love that, I support him a lot because he took my talent. (REDACTED). I like listening to music, I love dancing even when I am at home I go for outing, dancing. I like dancing. And I like reading.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : Reading is my hobby. I want to be updated all the time. So reading, dancing and music. And when I am-, I love children, I like to be with younger children because I was the last born, I didn't see any one younger than me so I am always excited when I am with younger people, that's why I work with the youth all the time {laughed}. And because I grew up with my mom alone, I love working with women. And also because my mother fought hard to save our land, I like human right issues. But my hobbies is that I like reading to be updated, I like dancing, I like music so much today {laughed}.

A.G : And you are also a writer right ? Could you tell me more about what you are writing, about yeah, the type of things you are writing ?

R.N : Ohh. I am writing, so far I can say I have like 3 drafts but I haven't finished because I have no money, I have no more to say, I am living a funny life, but I don't know, sooner or later, I'll be there.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : One, I wrote about my story. That story I wrote is a completed book, but still struggling on how to publish. That story-, my purpose of writing was to encourage girls, there is always a second chance. After this life, you can always take on another life. So this girl in Uganda, when you give birth, you are taken as if. You are lost. No man wants to marry you because they will call you old, whether you are 12 or whether you are 30, that is an old woman because you have a baby. So you lose market in men. In schools, they are like 'this one is what ?' : going back to school after having babies, like, you lose it. So the purpose of writing that book was to encourage that there is always another chance. Two-, I really want to show the people, that book is there to show the girls or other people, parents and all that, show them that **mistakes are human but can be corrected positively.** (REDACTED).

A.G : Okay.

R.N : I came from a village in rural setting you know, but today I am talking internationally. I am talking to someone from France, I am proud of you talking to me.

A.G : That's great.

R.N : That book when you read it, it shows you that someone can come from nowhere and become somebody. And also to give us another chance, that's one. The second book I am writing is what I am calling it : The Hidden Truth. People don't want to tell us what is in diaspora.

A.G : Okay yeah.

R.N : When they leave Africa, they're always saying 'everything is okay', even when they are suffering. They tell our children that wherever you go to diaspora, you have reached to heaven. They don't tell us this bit. Neither do they tell us that when you go to diaspora, you need to have papers to work. They don't-, they hide that from us. So someone will sell everything to go to America, everything to go to Paris, everything to go to London. When they reach there they are stranded, they can not come back.

A.G : Okay yeah yeah.

R.N : They are not working at home, here they are not working so they end up in drugs addiction. Some end up even die, some end up never coming back because of embarrassment. I am writing that book, God willing, I want to show people that people build where you were. Now today I have gotten a friend from France. I know one time we will meet in France if you allow me.

A.G : Of course !

R.N : {laughed} I have good friends now in America, I have good friends in London but still I have to base in Uganda. People should know that. So I want tot write a book to expose, to tell people that what is in diaspora is not what you think.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : The truth is hidden from you, for all those who were there, they don't tell you something. I am writing about that. Another one I am writing about child development, which is actually up bringing the children. I want to compare how Africans-, how do we up bring children and using myself and also how I have passed over that to my children.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : Because today, if I did not up bring my children in that way of working, how well will they be now ? Without me, not my income.

A.G : Yes that's interesting.

R.N : So I am writing about that, I am writing about the childhood development, how we can up

bring children ; and I want to write about life in diaspora and afterwards I will write something about build where you are.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : I have a title, I wrote them somewhere on my paper which I am developing. Another one is-, give me one minute {looking into papers on the desk and laughed}. So one story I want to write, I told you, is build where you are and the hidden truth, another one is killing anxiety through storytelling: a true storytelling.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : If I did not tell my stories, I would be dead by now.

A.G : Yeah that's what makes you keep going.

R.N : Yeah. I tell it out so no anxiety. So I am writing about whatever happened to me and how you can kill anxiety through storytelling. And I still say miracles do happen. I think they are still happening because me they have happened to me.

A.G : Yeah for sure. That's very interesting.

R.N : {laughed}.

A.G : So writing for you is a way to promote causes, and like to fight for certain goals ?

R.N : Yes. And also to preserve-, to people to promote and to preserve what they have.

A.G : Yeah. And so what do you currently do for a living, like do you have a job today ?

R.N : Actually I am about to leave you, I am working with an organization called The Allied universal. And I am a security guard at a bus, they call it what ? A transit center, a bus station {laughed}. When I got papers, I got a caregiving job, I did it for like two weeks I was like 'no, this is not my calling'. So I was like like let me try it-, because the reason is, here, I got a work employment, I have these papers, degree, diplomas as well but they don't consider them : they look at you as if you need to go to school. I said 'okay fine'. Survival for the fittest that may look for any other job. (REDACTED). I know when I get my asylum approved, I want to look for funding, scholarships. I should do another human rights related course that will lead me into promoting human rights. **I love to work with the human trafficking department.**

A.G : Okay.

R.N : And I long with the police. I am tired of people who abuse people's rights here. I long to work with the FBI. And along with the human rights organizations and God will tell me what to do. And most likely, I may do law. I may do either investigative law or something next to that. I need to also help because these young girls who have helped me through this case have shown me that I need to do something before I retire.

A.G : Okay yeah.

R.N : So those are my dreams, I don't know where they will end but in my next 10 years that's what I think and even if they fail, no problem, I will be 60 as I retire.

A.G : That's awesome yeah. Yeah that's your goal for the next years.

R.N : 10 years.

A.G : That's great. And I would like to talk a little bit about coronavirus since it's like, a big situation today.

R.N : Yeah I know.

A.G : How have you been impacted by the pandemic ? How has it changed your life or your way of being ?

R.N : I must say I thank God because me, it is because of Coronavirus that I got a job.

A.G : Okay yeah.

R.N : I got a job because other people failed to work. But me I can and God will protect me because I cannot survive without a job. So in this pandemic, me I got a job. I thank God for that, it is unique. All my family members back home are not working because of the lockdown, all businesses are shut down, now it is me sending back money through this other job. (REDACTED). So for that I think I have not been impacted very negatively although I was, I am, psychologically impacted by fear.

A.G : Oh yeah ?

R.N : I was like 'suppose if I die, they are going to throw my body on the road, who will ever bury me ?' {laughed}. Second I was like, supposedly if my people die, I will never see them. So those are simple psychological things but once you are prayerful, you leave everything to God.

A.G : Yeah yeah for sure, it is destiny.

R.N : Yeah.

A.G : And like, you are very involved in the defense of human rights, you said it was something that was very important to you, in your opinion, how could Covid 19 impact human rights ? Is it, like, would it be a bad thing like increasing inequality or could it be something that could improve the system ?

R.N : Covid-19 has so many things to do. One : the freedom of movement, it is a human right that has been cut off automatically. So people are like, even you know, you can't move, that is which I think many people are feeling. That is something which I know might not end today or tomorrow.

A.G : Yeah, yeah.

R.N : (REDACTED). Many people will still continue fearing to go to maybe these places like you know, dancing halls, restaurants, such things hence business owners will lose business. On the same time, freedom of expression leaders are not taking advantage to say what they want only. (REDACTED). And also it is going to bring a lot of unemployment, which is a human right.

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : Because most people have now tested the technologies : you are in France, I am in America, we are talking, what is the need of you flying to hear, to talk to me ?

A.G : Yeah.

R.N : So the business that would be there : if you would fly here, you would pay tickets and the plane would have the business, you'd come here and set up here for about three days and those three days you would be in a hotel, you'd be paying a hotel, you'd be eating, you'd be paying all that. All those are cut off because of this technology we are doing right now. After realizing that it is even better and cheaper, many people are going to lose jobs.

A.G : Yeah yeah that's a big issue.

R.N : We are going to be-, and after people losing their job, there will be a lot of anger, there will be a lot of politics. So many things will happen.

A.G : Yeah yeah. What is the situation in Uganda regarding the virus ? Are there a lot of cases ? How is it ?

R.N : Uganda had only little cases, actually the Ugandan when things were serious it was like 52 and no deaths. But also the 52 came from abroad to the country. But now the problem is Uganda has allowed the truck drivers to run around, to use the borders and now the number has increased to 200, but of foreigners, not of Ugandans. So Uganda for now I can say we are still calm, no deaths although the cases are increasing so we thank God for that.

A.G : Yes I see. So we're getting to the end of this interview. Thank you so much. It was very inspiring to like hear your stories. It was, I had a great time listening to you.

R.N : Thank you.

A.G : What do you think people listening to this interview should remember of it ? What is the main point on which you would insist ?

R.N : The main point people should remember is that human trafficking is real.

A.G : Okay, yeah.

R.N : Me, I grew up in knowing that human trafficking with all those things you read about that human trafficking is just a theory. Human trafficking does not know your age, your level of education, your anything. And many people who get involved in human trafficking, the traffickers are friends, or that is someone you know. I am here to say that I am a victim of labor trafficking, human trafficking.

A.G : Okay.

R.N : A woman of my level of education, my level of exposure, at my age. I am a victim today : I am a victim as you can see me picking the recyclables to survive. When you look at the room I am sleeping in, and remember this is an improvement because now I am a room renter of somebody, I can pay. And you believe that human trafficking is real, be careful with the people who convince you to go to other countries. Or from your village to the city. Many people have their own intentions, which you may not know. I am talking as a victim of human trafficking but God is going to work it out. I am soon coming out of it but I just wanted the world to know that human trafficking is real, be careful with who will convince you because I am here because I was convinced on a wrong note and I can repeat : I can't go home, I can't do anything but I have to move on. Because I am positive. And I also want people to remember that : always live positively. Once you leave everything to God and you live positively, you continue to survive **and God takes charge**.

A.G : Yeah, all right.