

Genesis of the Visitors' Book for Radio Erena project

"Genesis" may sound too pretentious, but here is how it all started in the brain of a school librarian.

In 2015 I was working as a school librarian at Jean Moulin High School in Roubaix and for the SPME - Week of the Media in schools - I had used some [RSF](#) pages, as all school librarians do. I was interested in remotely interviewing journalists and some, still alive and enjoying freedom of movement and speech, were listed as information Heroes on the [RSF](#) site.

It happened that among the 100 information heroes one journalist had found refuge as a political refugee in Paris where he had founded a web radio. As I had plans to create a school media in the near future, I was particularly interested in the web radio medium.

Reminder: In 2015 Eritrea ranked last on [RSF](#) international Freedom of the Press map. It only gained one position in the latest [RSF](#) ranking, which means nothing has changed for journalists in that self-enclosed country. Besides Eritrean migrants were on the front page of newspapers at that time. Why not publish an interview of [Biniam Simon](#) online or ask him to come and talk about Eritrea and his web radio with some students? How could this be carried out?

The web radio was broadcast in the Eritrean language and in English - and recently some programmes in Arabic - so this couldn't be done without the help of an English teacher as the interview had to be in English. Numerous articles on the web radio site are in English.

Last obstacle: how to raise funds for the journalist's travel expenses. The project could not be carried out in 2015 for various reasons: lack of time for preparing the project with partners, not enough time for raising funds, school exams were drawing near...

Yet [Biniam Simon](#) had answered my emails and heartily agreed to meet students and talk about Eritrea and how journalists at [Radio Erena](#) work. [Radio Erena](#) was thus already sponsoring our 2015 Media Week. The portraits of the 3 Eritrean information heroes were displayed, documents about [Radio Erena](#) were at the students' disposal etc.

How did I get his personal address?

At the time the interview was taking shape in my brain I had sent Léonard Vincent a message on his blogsite; here is the link:

<https://erythreens.wordpress.com/>

Maybe I sent him tweets as well. Anyway the reporter and author of a book on Eritreans answered me, sent me his cell phone number via webmail or Twitter, I called him and he offered to explain our project to Biniam Simon. Léonard Vincent then gave me the email of the Radio Erena journalist. Of course I could have written to Radio

Erena directly but Léonard Vincent is the one who made the creation of this web radio possible. As such he was a privileged contact, all the more so as he was a French reporter, which made communication easier.

In September 2015 I started to work at Camille Claudel College in Villeneuve d'Ascq but did not give up the [Radio Erena](#) project. During the 2016 and 2017 Media Weeks I went on explaining the situation of Eritrea and mentioned the role played by Radio Erena. The portraits of the 3 Eritrean journalists were still displayed on the door of the school library, my red folder containing all my documentation on [Radio Erena](#) had followed me to my new working place. In September 2017, this schoolyear, some of my English teaching colleagues were interested in the project - whereas [Radio Erena](#) couldn't fit in the projects of the two preceding years. We still have to raise fund for [Biniam Simon's](#) travel expenses. Our pre-project in [La Trousse à Projets](#) has been accepted; next step: publishing, crowdfunding...

January 2018: Camille Claudel College sent [Radio Erena](#) an official mail to present the project and invite [Biniam Simon](#) to meet students, to which he answered yes. Let's start [A Visitors' Book for Radio Erena](#) for good!



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