

Chapter Thirteen



“Everyone Scattered” Experiences of the Liberian Diaspora

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Diaspora: from the Greek, traditionally meaning to sow over or scatter, the modern meaning includes forced expulsion of a given population, dispersal, persecution, a sense of loss, and a vision of return.¹

It is estimated that of Liberia’s approximately three million people, nearly all fled their homes at some point during the civil war. Some left for a few months or years while others have yet to return. As many as 780,000 fled across an international border, becoming refugees.² Hundreds of thousands of Liberians were internally displaced in any given year during the conflict.³ This population displacement created a Liberian diaspora on the African continent and around the globe.

Displaced persons often experience what is known as the triple trauma paradigm. This longstanding paradigm posits that refugees experience trauma in the country of origin, during flight, and in the country of refuge.⁴ Each phase brings with it unique and recurring traumatic experiences. Whether witnessing atrocities while hiding in their houses, being targeted en route to internally displaced persons’ camps or neighboring countries of refuge, dealing with a seeming endless sojourn in a refugee settlement, or adjusting to life in a third country, the experiences of Liberians in the diaspora are a critical component of the TRC’s analysis.

This report uses the triple trauma paradigm as a framework for considering the Liberian diaspora experience. The first part of this section addresses the mass population displacements that began in 1990 with Charles Taylor’s invasion of Liberia and which continued through 2003, focusing on why and how Liberians fled, as well as the trauma they experienced during flight within Liberia. The second part recounts the experiences of the refugee diaspora in the West African sub-region, with a particular focus on refugees in the Buduburam Settlement in Ghana. The third part addresses the experience of the Liberian diaspora outside of Africa, with a focus on immigrants who have settled in the United States and the United Kingdom.

FLIGHT

The human rights abuses that forced Liberians to flee their homes between 1989 and 2003 – whether to a neighbor’s house or to a foreign land – were some of the most severe types of trauma imaginable. Although a significant number of Liberians fled their homeland after the coup that brought Samuel Doe to power, the vast majority of TRC statements from the diaspora focus on experiences of flight as a result of the civil war that began in December of 1989. Liberians were subjected to summary executions, rape, assault, torture, and other crimes against humanity.

Forced to Flee

Statement givers described consistent patterns of human rights violations forcing them to flee. Many

families fled to avoid attack when they heard from informants that fighters were approaching their area.⁵

My family had to flee our home in Monrovia because someone said the rebels were coming. My father, my two brothers, and I left to go to [Eternal Love Winning Africa] ELWA campus...I heard that the place at ELWA was taking in people who had nowhere to go, so my family sought refuge there.⁶

A Mandingo statement giver from Nimba County recounted his efforts to get back to his home village to warn his family about the oncoming National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) advance.⁷ Although he arrived too late to save all of his family members, he was able to send his remaining children away to towns on the border with Guinea.

Others fled because of specific threats against family members, generally a breadwinner who worked for the government, a prominent business person, or a community leader.

During the Doe administration my father was the director of police and later joint security director at the Port Authority in Liberia before the war. Because of his status we were to be hunted. He fled the country and left us in Monrovia. When the rebels entered they started asking about our father's house in the Red Light area and a neighbor came to tell us what they had heard. We fled to Fendell. While there we heard that the house was burned and everything looted.⁸

Usually, however, there were no advance warnings or threats. Community leaders and elders, those associated with the government, those suspected of having money or other valuables, or those associated with opposing fighting factions were simply abducted, executed, or violently assaulted during surprise attacks on their homes.

A statement giver in Ghana told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) what happened to her family in 1996 because of her grandfather's role in the government and community:

My grandfather...was a tax collector in Buchanan, a party member in Doe's party, and a chief...Somebody pointed out our house. They broke into the house and started shooting. My grandparents hid in the bathroom. They were beating everyone and dragging them outside. My great-uncle and step-mother died...my grandfather was beaten until unconscious. His back and neck still have pain because of injury. He was chopped with knife and has a scar on his leg. The place was near an ECOMOG checkpoint so ECOMOG

people came and the attackers ran away.⁹

While many Liberians saw their loved ones killed and tortured, other statement givers came home to find their families had simply disappeared. Fearing for their own safety and hoping to find their families on the road, they fled.

One day, I was out looking for food. When I came home, no one was there. The neighbors told me that Prince Johnson's [Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia] (INPFL) men [came] to the neighborhood and were asking for Krahn people. They said that a stray bullet hit one of my daughters... and she died. Since then, I have not seen my family and do not know what happened to them... [W]hen I learned of the death of my daughter and that the rest of my family was missing, I decided it was not safe to stay there. Starting then, I began hiding in other parts of Liberia – mostly in the bush in Grand Gedeh with some other relatives.¹⁰

The experiences of these statement givers were repeated on a massive scale.

After a flight-triggering event such as those described above, displacement often proceeded in phases: hiding, internal displacement within Liberia, refuge in a neighboring country, and for some, resettlement in a third country. These phases generally were not linear, but were cyclical, with movement between the phases occurring along with the phases of the conflict itself.

As the offensives of fighting factions spread in and out of Monrovia and through the outlying counties of Liberia, and as peace accords were signed and broken,¹¹ individuals oscillated between being forced to flee and being able to return to relative calm. One statement giver, whose husband was a government official, described leaving their home in July 1990 to take refuge in the ELWA Christian radio station compound.¹² The family stayed there for approximately a week, until they received word that Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL) forces were threatening to bomb the compound. The family then fled to the University of Liberia campus, where they were able to find a room. They stayed there until Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) forces entered Monrovia. In 1992, the statement giver and her family went into hiding again. In 1996, the family was staying with the statement giver's mother when AFL forces entered the house and executed the statement giver's husband. After the trauma of seeing her husband executed, the woman took the 15 children staying with her and walked out of Liberia into Côte d'Ivoire.¹³

During the first wave of fighting in 1990, as NPFL and AFL forces battled in Monrovia, many residents hid in the city and its nearby suburbs to attempt to wait out the fighting. Individuals described hiding in closets, on roofs, under beds, in swamps, in the "bush," and in neighbors' and family members'

homes.

One statement giver described being separated from her mother in July 1990 and staying with a family friend for several weeks.¹⁴ At one point she had to hide in a laundry basket in a closet for a couple of days to avoid being kidnapped by rebels. Later, she was taken by a different family friend to stay at the Sierra Leonean embassy in Monrovia.

There was constant fighting, especially at night, between the government and rebel forces. The buildings were shaking and there was the sound of glass breaking. A lot of people were at the embassy. There were about 30 people staying in one room the size of a bedroom. The guys would sleep one way and the women and kids the other way. I slept fully clothed with my nightgown on over my clothes. At certain times, the shooting would stop and then people would leave to search for food. Coal was not available so we would cut trees for wood. We would go in groups for safety. We would sometimes hear someone yell “Where are you guys coming from? What are you doing out?” You didn’t know where the voice was coming from. We would have to cook and eat fast. I had never had to do work at home, so I didn’t even know how to start a fire. People used to bathe in an unfinished house, using a bucket as a means for the pouring water to clean themselves. We would have to bathe quickly with no soap. I spent two months at the Embassy.¹⁵

Many in Liberia moved constantly so as to avoid being captured or killed. One statement giver described moving from Gardernsville, to the French Cable neighborhood, to Bushrod Island, then to Logantown to escape the rebel advances.¹⁶ He finally returned to Monrovia proper after the deployment of ECOMOG.¹⁷ Another statement giver, who was seven years old during the 1990 fighting, described his family’s movements during the summer of 1990 from their home near the beach on Ninth Street in Sinkor, to “Order” Road, to Twelfth Street, then to New Kru Town because food was getting scarce in Sinkor, and then finally back to their old home on Ninth Street.¹⁸

The crisis in 1990 also impacted those outside Monrovia. Across Liberia, families suffered similar patterns of displacement. In July 1990, rebels attacked Kakata. Mandingos were specifically targeted.¹⁹ One statement giver, in his 20s at the time, described hiding on the roof of his family compound while the rebels dragged his father into the street and killed him. The young man fled on foot to Monrovia, where he found his uncle’s family. He fled with his uncle’s family to Sierra Leone, where they stayed as refugees for six years.²⁰ Another statement giver described rebel raids on Bopolu, in Bomi County in February and March 1990. The statement giver was a young girl at the time and remembers hiding with her cousin’s baby in a huge pot in her grandmother’s kitchen as the rebels searched through the

house and abducted her cousin.²¹ The next day, the family fled to the mountains of Lofa County, where they stayed for several months before returning to Bopolu. In September 1990, the NPFL attacked Pourtown in Grand Gedeh County. One statement giver who worked for the Ministry of Agriculture under Doe was targeted during the attack. He and his children fled into the bush and hid out for five days.²² Ultimately, they reached Côte d'Ivoire.

In 1991, with the installation of the interim government,²³ some Liberians returned home.²⁴ One statement giver described returning on a U.N. ship from Guinea, after seeing the interim president and his cabinet board an earlier boat back to Monrovia.²⁵ Another statement giver who was a young child when the war broke out in 1990 was sent to live with his grandmother in Grand Cape Mount County in 1990. In 1991, however, his mother came from Monrovia to bring him back to the city.²⁶ Another noted that he decided to go back to Monrovia in 1991 because ECOMOG had established some control there.²⁷ Many who returned however, were soon forced to flee again.

The April 6, 1996, war forced another cycle of hiding, internal displacement, and seeking refuge. For example, the young boy who had moved between four different houses in Sinkor and New Kru Town during the summer of 1990, fled the country altogether when war broke out in 1996; he settled in Philadelphia with his brothers.²⁸

In August 1996, a ceasefire was declared and ECOMOG began disarming the fighting factions. Many Liberians returned home during this period around the 1997 elections. One statement giver summarized:

I was in Côte d'Ivoire for eight years. When they elected Taylor as President I went back [to] Liberia in 1998, June 20, thinking that things were fine in the country. Then war broke up in Sept. 18, 1998, [and that's] how I came back to Côte d'Ivoire and I continue[d] my journey to Ghana.²⁹

Some estimates indicate that more than 80 percent of displaced Liberians returned home when the civil war ended and Charles Taylor was elected.³⁰ Large scale fighting broke out in September 1998, however, when Taylor's soldiers tried to arrest Roosevelt Johnson. Fighting erupted between Johnson's supporters and Taylor's forces on Camp Johnson Road.³¹ Taylor responded by increasing his efforts to eliminate suspected opposition,³² including in his own administration.³³ While ethnic Krahn and Mandingo were often the target of these attacks,³⁴ many others fled to avoid the violence. This led to another cycle of hiding and flight.



Everyone Scattered

When the rebels came everyone scattered...They beat and raped me. When the NPFL left, I ran.³⁵

Statement givers told the TRC again and again of the trauma of being separated from family members in the chaos of fighting and flight.³⁶ For example, one statement giver described her mother going to Paynesville one day to run an errand, but the rebels invaded and cut her off from her family for the next several months.³⁷ This experience was common as rebels established shifting lines of demarcation and zones of control throughout Monrovia and the surrounding areas.³⁸ When routes between home, office, school, and market were cut off, families were separated without any advance warning. A woman who was a young teenager during the war spoke of her separation from her mother in June 1990.³⁹ Upon learning that rebels were nearing their housing estate in Gardnersville, the statement giver's mother decided to move the family into Monrovia to stay with an aunt. Her mother took the girls and the baby to town first and then returned to Gardnersville for the boys living in the household. She did not see her mother again for almost three years because her mother's return to Monrovia was cut off by the rebel advance.⁴⁰

I was living in Refinery Junction, Monrovia, with my husband and my children. In 1990, Charles Taylor's rebels arrived at our house and started shooting. My father, mother, husband, children and brothers and sisters were there. The rebels killed my older brother and raped my sister. Everyone scattered. I was only with my youngest child. I saw the rebels burn my house down. I went to Nimba County by car and then walked through the bush to Côte d'Ivoire. In Côte d'Ivoire I found the members of my family who survived.⁴¹

While some families were ultimately reunited, many Liberian families have never been made whole. A Kissi statement giver now living in Ghana told the TRC that he and his wife and son sought refuge in the U.S. Embassy compound in 2003 after NPFL rebels had killed four of his Mandingo neighbors. “While we were at the American Embassy, rockets from [Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy] (LURD) rebels hit in and around the Embassy compound killing Liberians and, I think, some American Marines. As the crowd scattered, I lost track of my wife. I have not seen her since, but I have heard that she may now be in Guinea, though I don’t know where.”⁴²

Although this statement giver was able to bring his son safely to Ghana, other children were not so lucky. Another statement giver told of being able to escape with only one child after her husband was beheaded in her presence – her other child was trampled to death in the confusion.⁴³ If not killed, children often were cut off from parents, seemingly in an instant.⁴⁴ One statement giver who was ten years old at the time told the TRC that he “ran with his neighbors when he fled; he didn’t end up running with his brothers and sisters. He doesn’t know what happened to his grandmother, his brothers...or his sisters...”⁴⁵ While many children were able to take advantage of the Liberian extended family system and find refuge with relatives, many were left stranded with no one but strangers to assist them.

I was just eight years old in 1990...[My father] decided to take us to safety in Maryland County...While enroute...he was arrested and killed at the Toe Town Checkpoint by NPFL forces. After my father was killed I joined another family and followed them to Greenville, [Sinoe County]. I was abandoned by the family that took me to Sinoe County and was adopted by another family.⁴⁶

Another statement giver was in second grade when the war started in 1990. His mother was shot. As he huddled over her body, she was bayoneted by soldiers.⁴⁷ This young boy’s father came to find him and took him to safety in Côte d’Ivoire. But after being in Côte d’Ivoire for several years, his father was killed in 2000 as a result of the conflict that engulfed that country.⁴⁸ This statement giver, who eventually made his way to Ghana, was able to locate his two younger brothers in Guinea. He is trying to bring them to Ghana but does not have enough money to do so.⁴⁹

Many Liberians were forced to make impossible decisions in a split second. A statement giver from Zwedru who now lives in Ghana told the TRC that his mother had just given birth to twins when the war came in 1990.

I had gone out as usual in the early morning to make a fire behind the house. Rebels came to the house and crashed in the front door. I crawled into the [babies’] room and was only big enough to take one. I grabbed one of the

babies and ran to the bush as fast as I could. I heard gunfire all over and later my mom told me my father was killed. She also said one of the babies had been killed. I spent three weeks in the bush with the baby, which was stressful especially when there was a need to be quiet. I made it to the Côte d'Ivoire.⁵⁰

In the summer and fall of 1990, U.S. Marines evacuated U.S. citizens and those with green cards, as well as other foreign nationals who had taken refuge at the U.S. embassy.⁵¹ Describing her memories of the evacuations, one statement giver from the southern United States described how she was evacuated, but her sister, who did not happen to be at home at the time of the evacuation, was left behind.⁵²

The family, whether traditional or statutory, is the basic unit of social organization and social support in Liberia.⁵³ Accordingly, destruction of the family structure undermined the entire Liberian social order. The impact of this trauma has had continuing repercussions in the diaspora.⁵⁴ One such impact has been a multitude of informal adoptions as communities, extended families, and sometimes even perfect strangers attempted to protect orphaned and lost children. These informal adoptions are generally not recognized by immigration authorities in other countries, which has led to additional family separations.⁵⁵

Travel Within Liberia

At first, the walking seemed normal. We all had shoes, tents, clothing, water and food. But conditions rapidly worsened. Our shoes were destroyed, and our belongings were taken from us. None of us could replace these items, as it was far more important to spend the little money we could obtain on food. Food and water were scarce, and my two young nieces died of starvation on the journey. I had to wait in long lines to get water from wells. Often, the water source was depleted by the time it was my turn to drink. And when I was able to get water, I often felt bad drinking knowing that there would be none left for the people waiting behind.

Our family sometimes walked as part of a larger group; it was safer to travel this way. People were more likely to be accosted by soldiers and killed if traveling alone. Soldiers would take people away from their walking group if they wanted to kill or torture you, and were quick to shoot if they spotted anyone running. As my family walked from village to village, we were stopped at checkpoints, where soldiers would search our belongings and take what they wanted before letting us go ahead.⁵⁶

Once forced out of their homes and villages, many statement givers described traveling in large groups of extended family or following groups of strangers to get to a relatively safe destination. Liberians were forced to walk for days, weeks, and often months to get to safety. One statement giver described having to leave for Guinea after having lived in Nimba County all her life.⁵⁷ She walked for nine days traveling with a group of some 30 family members. Another statement giver described her traverse to Guinea. She left Ganta in 1994 after being repeatedly raped and beaten while in rebel custody.⁵⁸

While walking in the forest I met a huge group of displaced people walking toward Ganta and joined them to walk to Côte d'Ivoire. I spent three weeks walking. No food. Starving. Another attack occurred with people being killed, raped.⁵⁹

Food and water along the travel routes was scarce to non-existent. One statement giver described eating wild fruits to survive.⁶⁰ Another statement giver remembered going for days and sometimes weeks between locating a source of clean water.⁶¹ As noted above, the lack of food and water led to death by starvation of vulnerable individuals such as children and the elderly. One statement giver now living in Ghana told the TRC that her three-year-old son had died one day (as she carried him on her back while trying to walk out of Liberia) because there was no food.⁶² A statement giver now in Atlanta told the TRC that:

Because I was unable to bring food with me, my daughter...died because of lack of nutrition and food. She died in Bomi. They couldn't find anything to eat. I was looking for cassava to eat. People grew it and they left some behind. You see cassava leaf and you dig for the root. Otherwise there was nothing else to eat.⁶³

Numerous statement givers, and those traveling with them, were suffering from injuries and other illnesses as they tried to escape further harm. Medical care was difficult to find, as were medications and treatment for what should have been non-fatal illnesses. One statement giver who now lives in Ghana told the TRC that her mother died en route to Sierra Leone as a result of complications from hypertension.⁶⁴ Another told of his mother treating his father's heart condition with herbs because his father ran out of medication as they were fleeing the fighting.⁶⁵ Another statement giver now in Ghana told the TRC about an attack by LURD in 2003 on her home in Duala, during which her husband and son were killed in front of her and she miscarried because of being beaten:

My neighbor was leaving. I was still sick, but my neighbor brought me along. We walked to Guinea. We were on the road for months because my health was so bad and I had to rest a lot. We saw fighting as we were walking. We would hide in the bush. Shots were fired over our heads...My neighbor

helped me and paid for everything.⁶⁶

Not everyone was fortunate enough to have a neighbor who could provide assistance. Those who were disabled or otherwise vulnerable often had to be left behind. One statement giver told the TRC about leaving behind her stepmother and others who could not walk in Lofa County in 1993:

The people in the town who could leave, and were physically capable of leaving, decided that they had to flee because the rebels were coming. The people in the town who could travel decided to put all of the people that couldn't make the journey to Guinea, 230 old and disabled peasants, in a village together. We hoped that the rebels would respect the fact that the people in the town were handicapped and defenseless and pass it by.

The rebels killed everyone in the town, including my stepmother and brother (they both had had leg problems), [except for] one person who managed to survive. The survivor told me that the rebels put my brother in a house and set it on fire, and that they had beheaded my stepmother.⁶⁷

Safety along the travel routes also was a critical concern. One witness in the U.S. public hearings told the TRC that he became responsible for leading his siblings out of Liberia during the war, although he was only a young teenager at the time. He told the TRC:

I would walk ahead of the group of my siblings. And when I walked ahead, I would make sure there ain't no rebel ahead of us. Then I would come back, and then I would walk with my siblings. So every time, I will do that...[a] mile and a half I would walk and then walk back, and make sure for their own safety...At one point, I kind of walk[ed] ahead, and then when I came back, my siblings weren't there.⁶⁸

This young man tried for a full day to find his siblings, but without success, and then was forced to go on alone to the Sierra Leone border.⁶⁹

The Checkpoint Experience

Trying to survive the maze of checkpoints established all over the country by warring factions was another virtually universal experience.⁷⁰ Describing checkpoints on the road between Monrovia and the city of Buchanan, one statement giver said, "if it was here [in the United States], it would be like walking five blocks and a checkpoint. Two blocks and a checkpoint."⁷¹

Checkpoints were established along major travel routes throughout the country and at many border crossings. Moreover, informal checkpoints guarded by small groups of fighters, often child soldiers, sprung up across Liberia. The checkpoints were designed for extortion⁷² and to control any freedom of movement within the country. “Every checkpoint someone had to pay.”⁷³

My family had to run away from Monrovia. We went into Bomi County, district of Klay. We had to go through check points. As we were crossing, fighting started. A gun shot missed me, flew in front of my face. When we reached Bomi County, I decided to come back to Monrovia to my house to get my belongings. I stayed in Monrovia for three days. I met Taylor's soldiers when I was coming back to Bomi. They said that I disobeyed the order. People were not supposed to leave the area. There was an order that nobody should leave. I was carrying food and they took food, shoes, made me lay on the ground for some time. They put me in a prison hole where I had to sit on a rug until next morning. Then they said “you can go to your village.” After I was released and before I could reach my village, I came to another check point. Area commander came...He ordered fifty-two lashes for disobeying the order (not to leave the area) and then they took me to another prison where I slept till next morning. Next morning they freed me and I went to my village in Bomi.⁷⁴

Checkpoints were gruesome testaments to the atrocities committed by the warring factions. One statement giver, now residing in Minnesota, described a checkpoint near Kakata as “hell on earth. There were bodies in the water, and the scent was so strong [I] could not stand it. [My] sister had rice. One of the rebel women said, ‘if you give us the rice, we will let you pass.’ People were tied up, sitting and crying in the sun.”⁷⁵ Another told the TRC that there “were dead bodies scattered all along the roads, many bearing marks of hideous violence. It was common practice for soldiers to tabay⁷⁶ their victims and cut out their hearts. I knew that many women were raped. At one checkpoint, I saw human intestines unraveled and used as a barricade to prevent people from crossing.”⁷⁷ Another statement giver told the TRC that at “a checkpoint on the way...I saw a dead body. The body had been cut with knives around the chest. Two men were carrying the body and threw it into the bushes.”⁷⁸ Yet another described seeing the heads of his dead relatives on a checkpoint near his community.⁷⁹

Checkpoints were used by warring factions to target people for execution, detention, assault, and torture. People trying to flee were “pulled off the line” because of their perceived tribal affiliation, perceived employment, perceived family relationship, or other perceived affiliation. “[E]very checkpoint we met up with the question[s] [were] always: ‘Where are you going? What tribe are you? Where are you from?’ And many more crazy things.”⁸⁰

Liberians engaged in an array of tactics to survive the innumerable checkpoints. One man noted that he survived because he knew many Liberian dialects and would speak whichever dialect he thought would be least threatening to the fighters he encountered.⁸¹ Another statement giver said that her “Auntie tried to keep everyone together and in the center of the groups moving through the checkpoints, because those on the edges were more likely to be pulled off the line.”⁸² Sometimes life or death was simple blind luck – a statement giver said that at one checkpoint “the soldiers shot every fourth person in line for no apparent reason.”⁸³

Most who were pulled off the line did not survive, but a statement giver now living in Ghana told the TRC of being pulled off the line and ultimately released at a checkpoint in Kakata.

The rebels told me to tell my family to go on ahead because I was going to die there. After my family left, I again pleaded with them not to kill me, saying, “I don’t think I deserve to die for no reason.” Finally, one of the rebels said, “Let’s leave him.” That rebel left and two others walked with me, telling me that if I was there tomorrow, they would kill me. At this time, my spirit left me, and I thought I was dead. I became mute, and was unable to speak for days.⁸⁴

Checkpoints were also used for forced recruitment of adults and children as fighters, sexual slaves, and forced laborers. One statement giver now living in Minnesota recounted that her entire family was pulled off the line and “were sent to do forced labor, unloading the cargo at the port of Monrovia, which the rebels were systematically looting. One [of them] was told to stay behind to watch over the little children, while the rest of the family was forced to load trucks...[They] were forced to work unloading cargo for the rest of the day, and they had to sleep overnight at the docks. The next day, the rebel commander came down and ordered them all to get out of the area, and began beating people, so they ran away as fast as they could.”⁸⁵



Another statement giver traveling from Monrovia to Buchanan with his family noted that it was dangerous for men to travel because of the risk of forced recruitment and dangerous for women because of the risk of rape and other assault.⁸⁶ He had been pulled off the line at one checkpoint but was saved by a former student who was a young fighter. Forced recruitment along the highway between Monrovia and Sierra Leone was well documented.⁸⁷ One statement giver now residing in

Minnesota told the TRC about approaching the Bo Waterside checkpoint while trying to escape to Sierra Leone.

When we got there it seemed like chaos, all the rebels were running all around and smoking and drinking...a young rebel named Small Soldier came over to me. I still had some clothes with me...Small Soldier wanted my clothes. He was smoking pot and had a gun and told me he would 'zero' me if I didn't do what he said. He took my clothes and I started to cry because they were all that I had left. I kept arguing with him and spent forty-five minutes trying to get my clothes back. My cousin kept talking to me in Vai and telling me not to argue with them. Finally, Small Soldier came back and said that he thought I should not be let through but should be recruited as a small soldier like him. I said no that I would not be a small soldier. One of the other rebels spoke Vai and kept telling me to just go along and that I could get away later. We were so close; we could see Sierra Leone across the river. They detained us at the checkpoint and put us in jail.⁸⁸

The Internally Displaced Persons' Experience

Many who fled their homes found themselves in formal and informal internally displaced centers for weeks or months on end. Estimates of the numbers of internally displaced persons during the Liberian conflict are in the hundreds of thousands⁸⁹ – sometimes more than a half a million⁹⁰ – depending on the year and the source of information. Certain locations became major centers for displaced persons at the beginning of the conflict, including church compounds, embassy compounds, army barracks, sports stadiums, and university campuses. One statement giver now living in Minnesota told the TRC why he decided to take refuge at the Fendell campus.

Food was scarce; people boiled leaves for sustenance. Between June and July of 1990, I moved to Fendell camp on the outskirts of Monrovia. Fendell was part of the University of Liberia, but, when the war started, it became a shelter where a lot of people went to seek refuge. I believed this location would be better because from there, one could go into the bush and hunt or fish for food.⁹¹

At the beginning of the war, camps were informal and some were controlled by rebel factions. The Fendell campus, described above, was a major internally displaced persons' center that came under the control of the NPFL.⁹² "[T]housands of refugees went there," one statement giver now living in Atlanta noted.⁹³ Many Liberians describe being forced to move to the Fendell campus during the summer of 1990. One statement giver whose family took refuge at the ELWA Christian radio

compound was later forced to go to Fendell.

The rebels told my family we had to leave ELWA. The rebels said “just follow us.” Everyone there, about two hundred people, had to pack their stuff, and start walking. We walked through bushes until, at night, we stopped at a big open field. The field was in the area of Duport Road, but I was not sure of its exact location. The rebels said everyone had to rest until the next day. Near the field was a big house. There was a fenced area around the house. The rebels were taking all the women and girls into a fenced area around the house. I saw girls that went into the house that were crying, saying they had been raped. My dad was scared for me, but I had to go inside the fenced area while the men in my family stayed outside in the field. I never went in the house—I stayed outside and hid beneath a flower bush. I was not raped, and I didn’t see anyone get raped, but I saw one girl come out with torn clothes, crying and saying she got raped by seven soldiers. In the morning the soldiers opened the gates and let people out. I was able to find my brothers and father.⁹⁴

A statement giver now living in Ghana described trying to seek a safe refuge among the chaos in Monrovia in the summer of 1990:

When the rebels...overran Paynesville, I fled from my home. That was during the earliest part of July 1990. My younger brother...also fled along with me to the ELWA compound. We stayed there for about two weeks. The U.S marines that were assigned there were recalled by their government. After their withdrawal, the NPFL rebels took over the compound. They beat and killed some people. They also forced us to go to Fendell.⁹⁵

One statement giver noted that those fleeing the conflict were used as “human shields” and “slaves” at Fendell.⁹⁶ News of the dangerous conditions at Fendell spread, and some Liberians sought to warn others to stay away.

The government told people to go to a college campus called Fendell in Cuttington, outside Monrovia. They were told that from Fendell they would be taken by bus to their hometowns so they would be safe, but the people taken away on the buses were killed. If we saw journalists on the road to Monrovia, we stopped the journalists and told the journalists, “If you see our friends, tell them not to come to Fendell. Tell everyone, it is dangerous here. It is not safe.”⁹⁷

Liberians also took refuge in the U.S. Embassy (Greystone) compound and the Voice of America compound, hopeful that a U.S. presence would lend some protection.⁹⁸ One statement giver told of taking refuge in St. Thomas Church in Monrovia, but then being forced out by United Liberation Movement – Johnson faction (ULIMO-J) forces.⁹⁹ Others sought shelter in Firestone’s vast rubber plantation near Harbel.¹⁰⁰ Statement givers also report seeking shelter at Soul Clinic,¹⁰¹ Barclay Training Center,¹⁰² and other locations in and around Monrovia. After the death of Samuel Doe, the Barclay Training Center was a place of refuge for members of the Krahn tribe. “All the Krahn families were packed into Barclay Training Center – there were thousands of Krahn people there because there was no other safe place.”¹⁰³

Eventually, some security was established in official internally displaced persons’ centers. By October 2000, the World Food Programme reported that it was assisting 183,900 internally displaced persons living in 14 camps located around Monrovia.¹⁰⁴ By the end of the conflict in 2003, at which point the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that there were more than half a million internally displaced persons in Liberia, Fendell was still housing many of them.¹⁰⁵ Major internally displaced persons’ centers outside of Monrovia included Maimu in Bong County and Basayma Camp in Buchanan.¹⁰⁶ By 2004, there were at least 20 official camps within Liberia housing more than 261,000 people.¹⁰⁷ These camps hosted not only Liberian internally displaced persons, but also Sierra Leonean and Ivorian refugees.¹⁰⁸ But even when there was relative safety in the camps, conditions were often desperate. Liberians told the TRC of loved ones dying from cholera in the Barclay Training Center and other internally displaced persons’ areas during the conflict.¹⁰⁹ According to one source, by the end of 2002 less than five percent of deaths in the camps were the result of violence, while 61 percent resulted from diarrhea, malaria, malnutrition, anemia, febrile disease, or respiratory infections.¹¹⁰

Crossing the Border

Hundreds of thousands of Liberians became refugees in surrounding countries in West Africa, with numbers peaking at more than 780,000 in 1996, according to U.N. estimates.¹¹¹ Those Liberians who fled the conflict in the 1990s got out by any means possible. Often this meant walking for days, weeks, or months, hitching rides in vehicles, and traveling in boats – large and small. Liberians sought safety primarily in the neighboring West African countries of Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d’Ivoire. A significant number of Liberians also went to Ghana and Nigeria, although these nations do not share a border with Liberia. Guinea and Côte d’Ivoire received the largest groups of Liberian refugees over time, numbering in the hundreds of thousands, but Sierra Leone and Ghana also received large groups of Liberian refugees.¹¹² The largest group moved from Nimba and Lofa counties into neighboring Sierra Leone and Guinea. Another huge group of refugees traveled from southeastern Liberia into Côte d’Ivoire.

Physically crossing the border was a challenge described by many statement givers. Whether on foot, by car, or by boat, it was a journey fraught with danger. Many Liberians coming out of Grand Gedeh and Nimba counties crossed the Cavally River¹¹³ between Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire. They describe crossing the river by dugout canoe, floating on a tree, or swimming across.¹¹⁴ Several statement givers described losing family members during these crossings.

The river was filled with water. My mother, brother, and sister got in [the] canoe. I was too afraid to get into the canoe, and stayed on shore. [The] canoe capsized, and only the canoe driver survived. My whole family died. However, other people still convinced me to cross the river.¹¹⁵

Another statement giver described his ordeal getting into Côte d'Ivoire, which involved an escorted taxi run by soldiers trying to make an extra dollar.

These soldiers would take passengers to their destination at a certain time of night; this was the only real method for escaping out of Liberia. The night I attempted to make the trip, a fire fight between two rebel factions took place and we were caught in the crossfire. That night I saw many innocent refugees trying to make their way into the Ivory Coast, many of them ultimately killed in their attempt to escape to the border.¹¹⁶

Entering Sierra Leone was also treacherous. Crossing the Mano River at the Bo Waterside checkpoint often led to detention, forced recruitment, or death.¹¹⁷ One public hearing witness described his experience to the TRC:

Bo is a big town between Cape Mount and Sierra Leone...They were doing some investigation and interrogation in the desert huts. When you go in there, you most likely [don't] come out. So I say...I'm going to sit here and wait for the group [coming] out, and then...I can probably try to slip my way through there. So I tried to do that the first time. Then people were looking, so I went back. So I tried the second time. People were looking; I went back. So the third time when I tried, no one was looking, so I joined the single-file line. So that's how I crossed to Sierra Leone.¹¹⁸

Another statement giver described crossing by sea into Sierra Leone on a fishing boat, avoiding Bo altogether.¹¹⁹

At the borders, refugees were still subject to human rights abuses as they attempted to flee to safety. Refugees reported extortion, arbitrary arrest and detention, and *refoulement* (forced repatriation or

being turned away at the border). According to Amnesty International, security forces at the Ivorian and Guinean borders harassed refugees or demanded fines to allow them to pass.¹²⁰ “At the border, government soldiers acted as immigration officers...They requested money from people who were leaving the country. This was expensive for the large families. [I didn’t] believe they should make [me] pay to leave my own country.”¹²¹ Refugees were arbitrarily arrested and detained, some because they were accused of being members of a fighting faction¹²² and others because they had no documents.¹²³ A statement giver now living in Minnesota told the TRC he had been abused by Ivorian rebel forces in 1998 when trying to cross the border:

Ivorian soldiers arrested [us] four Liberians from the back of a truck at a checkpoint. They demanded money and water. The soldiers put rocks and sand on my back and beat me with a stick. They also twisted the stick into my skin. They had overthrown the Ivorian government and accused me of bypassing the gate.¹²⁴

Human rights groups documented refugees being denied entry at the border of neighboring countries, a measure which amounts to refoulement.¹²⁵ Refoulement is specifically prohibited under international refugee law. Guinean security forces reportedly closed the border to refugees.¹²⁶ Sierra Leone also closed its border to Liberian refugees at various times, fearing that armed fighters were crossing the border.¹²⁷ Moreover, fighting spilled across borders and often was very intense at the border itself. A statement giver who fled to Côte d’Ivoire with her children after her husband was killed told the TRC that “there was killing at the border, and she lost track of [her children].”¹²⁸ She described looking for her children along the border for three days but never finding them.



Transport by ship out of the port in Monrovia was another major mode of border crossing. Both commercial and military vessels transported refugees out of the port. Liberians desperate to escape the atrocities overran ships. Although not designed to carry thousands of wounded and/or starving passengers, these ships were nevertheless a lifeline for many.

One statement giver who escaped Liberia by ship in October 1990 told the TRC that, using French he had learned in school, he lied to a peacekeeper and pretended to be Guinean so as to get into the port at all.¹²⁹ Then he had to fight for hours to get on board the Tano River cargo ship.¹³⁰ The statement giver said that, after an entire day fighting to get on the ship, he finally boarded at 3:00 AM.¹³¹ Another statement giver said that he was allowed on a ship first because he was in such a terrible wounded state, but that his family was not able to get on board until 12 hours later.¹³² “Many people died and were stepped over in the struggle to get on board.”¹³³ Those who were able to make it aboard often had to turn over all their cash to be allowed to travel on crowded, under-supplied vessels.¹³⁴ One statement giver told the TRC he was on board a ship bound for Ghana for five days with no food.¹³⁵

On top of the conditions on the ship, neighboring countries refused to let ships dock, such as the infamous ships Bulk Challenge, Victory Reefer, and Zolotitsa.¹³⁶ These three ships caught international attention in 1996 after no port would accept their passengers. The 2,000 Liberians, Ghanaians and Nigerians on board the Bulk Challenge were turned away by Côte d’Ivoire.¹³⁷ Ghana also declared the ship to be *non desiderata*, only to ultimately allow the ship to land in Ghana after days at sea.¹³⁸ The Victory Reefer was prohibited from docking in Sierra Leone, and the 450 passengers on the Russian Zolotitsa were refused by both Ghana and Togo.¹³⁹ The Victory Reefer was eventually allowed to land in Freetown, Sierra Leone, after refugees spent six days at sea. Liberians were taken to a refugee camp outside of town, while other non-Sierra Leoneans were taken to their respective embassies.¹⁴⁰ The Zolotitsa returned to Monrovia after being turned away by Ghana and being lost at sea for several days.¹⁴¹

ECOMOG was also credited by numerous statement givers with helping them get to the port, receive medical treatment, and then get transport on a ship out of Liberia.¹⁴² A statement giver who was in Fendell described how ECOMOG attacked the rebels at the campus and eventually liberated those held there. “ECOMOG transported me and my family to barracks in Monrovia. After three days a ship came and transported us all to Ghana. I remember very clearly how crowded the ship was.”¹⁴³

REFUGEE

Now I am a refugee, because I had crossed an international border. It was so different. There were all kinds of non-governmental organizations there to process you and give you help, whereas just an hour ago you were fighting for your life.¹⁴⁴

Persons who flee a conflict and cross an international border in the process become refugees and are protected by several international treaties; primary among them is the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees.¹⁴⁵ Once in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Ghana, or Nigeria, refugees were assisted at camps under the auspices of the UNHCR. Côte d’Ivoire followed a different approach. Even

though the government invited UNHCR assistance, it was opposed to camps. Instead, refugees were encouraged to settle among the local population in the western part of the country, called the *Zone d'Accueil des Réfugiés*.¹⁴⁶

The various periods of turmoil, with intermittent times of peace, resulted in many changes over time in the number of Liberians living in one of the surrounding countries in West Africa, as demonstrated by the table below from the UNHCR statistical yearbook.¹⁴⁷

D. REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS FROM LIBERIA -- MAIN COUNTRIES OF ASYLUM

1. Refugee population, end of year--main countries of asylum (main countries in 2005)

Asylum country*	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Sierra Leone	13,521	13,000	9,862	6,566	6,543	10,498	63,491	81,192	65,433	59,141
Guinea	415,003	243,036	183,031	129,096	117,069	82,792	119,293	149,839	127,256	54,141
Côte d'Ivoire	327,288	207,014	148,910	135,649	117,749	122,846	43,000	74,180	70,402	39,141
Ghana	15,178	17,145	12,569	10,373	9,454	8,865	28,298	42,466	40,853	38,141
United States	4,809	4,717	5,627	8,004	10,822	14,430	14,868	15,484	19,555	21,141
Other	8,409	8,428	5,399	5,006	5,293	5,177	6,472	10,383	11,968	18,141
Total	784,008	493,340	365,398	294,604	266,930	244,608	276,422	363,344	335,487	231,141

The numbers of refugees have been steadily decreasing since the end of the fighting in 2003. In February 2006, UNHCR noted that an estimated 160,000 refugees were still outside Liberia,¹⁴⁸ and in 2008 that number had dropped to just over 75,500.¹⁴⁹

Intraregional Refugee Flow

The ongoing conflict in Liberia and the related conflicts that erupted in Liberia's neighboring countries resulted in waves of Liberian refugees within countries in West Africa. When war broke out in Sierra Leone in 1991 and in Côte d'Ivoire in 2003, many Liberians were forced to flee back to Liberia or to other countries in the sub-region. The statement giver, whose experience when his father took him to Côte d'Ivoire is described earlier, told the TRC that after his father was killed:

A nice Ivorian found me and helped me find my way back to Liberia. Just before I made it back to Liberia I was caught by unknown Liberian combatants. One of the combatants knew me, but didn't try to help me. The combatants stripped me naked and were going to sodomize me, but then other rebels attacked and I escaped in the chaos. Barefoot and naked, I hiked most of the night, and slept in the bush for two nights. I pretended to be Ivorian, and worked as a porter in Ivory Coast and eventually made it to Abidjan and then Ghana.¹⁵⁰

Another statement giver who now lives in Ghana told the TRC of transiting through Sierra Leone,

Guinea, and Côte d'Ivoire, and returning to Liberia at least once, before going to Ghana.

In 1990, we ran to Sierra Leone. We took a bus there and lived in Bo-Waterside among the Sierra Leoneans for one year. When there was an attack on the border, we fled to Guinea. That was in 1991. We lived on a football field in Conakry for one month. We entered Côte d'Ivoire later that year. We went to Toulépleu and lived there with the Ivorians for six years. In 1997 we returned to Liberia. We went back to live in Sinkor right before the presidential election. We spent one year in Monrovia until we had to run again...We came back to Toulépleu in September 1998. In September 2001 I came to Ghana. I came alone, and then my family joined me here.¹⁵¹

Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire, alone among the host countries for Liberian refugees, did not initially support camps. Instead, Liberians were integrated with the local population in the Zone d'Accueil des Réfugiés.¹⁵² The Zone d'Accueil des Réfugiés was made up of the four departments of Danané, Toulépleu, Guiglo, and Tabou communities on the Ivorian/Liberian border.¹⁵³

In 1995, one camp was established at Nicla after an armed incursion from Liberia into Taï, during which Liberians and Ivorians were killed.¹⁵⁴ In 2001, to qualify for assistance, UNHCR required incoming refugees to settle at Nicla, rather than integrating within the Zone d'Accueil des Réfugiés.¹⁵⁵



Because ethnic groups exist across national borders in the sub-region, many refugees who fled to Côte d'Ivoire settled in ethnic enclaves. For example, the Gio settled in the area of Danané and the Krahn settled in the area of Guiglo where Ivorians of the same ethnic group were living.¹⁵⁶ As of 2001, more than 122,000 Liberians were living in Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁵⁷

Many Liberians adjusted to life in Côte d'Ivoire. For example, a young woman now living in Ghana told the TRC that she arrived in Côte d'Ivoire as an eight-year-old. In the UNHCR camp, she "was able to get rice and other aid, including a chance to further her education at a U.N. school."¹⁵⁸ But difficulties remained. Life in Côte d'Ivoire was described as very difficult for those refugees who did not speak French.¹⁵⁹ Liberian refugees faced continuing safety issues because of cross border incursions from Liberian rebel factions.¹⁶⁰ When many Liberians returned to Liberia after the election of Charles Taylor, Ivorians accused Liberian refugees of burning the houses and the rice they had planted.¹⁶¹ When these same refugees sought to return, local chiefs were less welcoming.¹⁶²

Liberians also complained of harassment by security forces in the Zone d'Accueil des Réfugiés as well as in other parts of Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁶³ One statement giver described how refugees were attacked by NPFL forces from Liberia if they stayed near the border, but, if they went to the interior of Côte d'Ivoire, they were harassed by the Ivorians.¹⁶⁴ Human rights groups reported that Ivorian security forces often would force Liberians to pay bribes or would subject them to arbitrary arrest and beatings as they tried to travel within Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁶⁵

The situation became more complicated as fighting spread throughout the sub-region. Ivorians increasingly viewed Liberians as potential rebels or fighters trying to destabilize Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁶⁶ Fighting broke out in 2002 in Côte d'Ivoire, after a failed coup attempt against President Laurent Gbagbo.¹⁶⁷ Life in the Niela camp near Danané became dangerous as rebels gained control of the area.¹⁶⁸ In 2003, refugees had to be evacuated from the western part of the country to escape more fighting.¹⁶⁹ Tens of thousands of returning Liberians as well as Ivorian refugees entered Liberia to escape the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁷⁰ One statement giver described how the Ivorian army blamed Liberian refugees for rebel incursions into Côte d'Ivoire and began to kill the Liberians.¹⁷¹ He stated that more than 20 of his friends were killed in Taï, Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁷² The young woman described above who had gone to school in Côte d'Ivoire, said that she "couldn't stand the tension in Côte d'Ivoire by 2003, [so] she decided to go to Ghana."¹⁷³ Another statement giver summarized her experience:

I and my baby sister lived in la Cote d'Ivoire from 1990 to 2002. I was in Danané, Cote d'Ivoire, when the Ivorian civil conflict broke out. The war there started a day after I arrived in Danané. I left Cote d'Ivoire to go to Ghana because of the outbreak of the war there. I have not seen my baby sister since I left that country...¹⁷⁴

Statement givers also reported that Ivorian fighting factions recruited Liberians to fight in their civil conflict. One said that Ivorian rebels wanted Liberians to fight for them because "Liberians know about fighting."¹⁷⁵ When the statement giver refused to fight, the rebels punished him by hanging him in the air and tying his penis to a stake, until the group leader ordered them to release him.¹⁷⁶ The constant threat from rebel raids and the growing resentment of the Ivorians was cited by numerous

statement givers as the reason they left Côte d'Ivoire.

Sierra Leone

Tens of thousands of refugees from Liberia fled to Sierra Leone, particularly during the second civil war. During the 1990s, there were fewer than 14,000 Liberians in Sierra Leone, but starting in 2002, more than 60,000 people had sought refuge there.¹⁷⁷ Nearby Lofa County produced the majority of Liberians who left to live in Sierra Leone as refugees.¹⁷⁸ Accordingly, some chose not to move into UNHCR camps because they could integrate into the local community and wanted to be near the border to tend fields back home.¹⁷⁹ But when fighting arose in March 2002, many Liberians who had settled in villages in Sierra Leone along the border with Liberia were moved by UNHCR further inland.¹⁸⁰

One statement giver described his memories of life as a refugee in Sierra Leone to the TRC:

Life in Bo was very difficult for us. We and the other Liberian refugees were often mistreated by the Sierra Leoneans and discriminated against. On one occasion, my male cousin got into a fight at the village water pump after one of the local residents had cut him in line for water. During the fight, the cousin was badly injured. Instead of investigating the incident and punishing the individual who had instigated the fight, the police arrested my cousin instead...

One night after living in Bo for approximately eight months, I awoke to hear gunshots being fired. I jumped out of bed and started running into the woods with my brother. As I was running, a bullet passed between us and came within inches of hitting us. While fleeing, we were separated from the rest of our family...We traveled for a week on foot from Bo to Freetown. As we traveled, we encountered many more people fleeing the violence and eventually were reunited with some of our family members including my aunt and her three children, two brothers, and another cousin. The refugees traveled together as a group, sleeping on the ground, drinking river and rain water, collecting cans of food that [we] found along the way, and begging for rice and other food when [we] would encounter villages on the way. During this time, only one family allowed the group to stay temporarily with them. On one occasion [we] encountered a Red Cross mobile unit, but the unit had no plates or utensils, so [we] had to eat the food out of their hands.

Eventually, we reached a refugee camp near Freetown. The camp had no

formal organization or protection and security measures, but it provided a safe community space for the refugees to live together.¹⁸¹

Other statement givers noted that they received services in the camps in Sierra Leone from non-governmental organizations and UNHCR. Statement givers reported receiving medical care¹⁸² and that younger Liberians were able to continue their education.¹⁸³ One statement giver, a young girl at the time, said that she stayed in Sierra Leone for a year so that she could go to school and that “everything was provided” by the United Nations.¹⁸⁴

As the Liberian conflict spread to Sierra Leone, thousands of Sierra Leoneans became refugees in Liberia. The regional conflict pushed both Liberians and Sierra Leoneans back and forth across the border, as well as to other countries in the sub-region. The young girl described above noted that:

In Sierra Leone, Liberians were targeted because the [refugees] were thought to be rebels. Women were not targeted as much. She told her cousins to speak their own native language in Sierra Leone so that the rebels there wouldn't think they were part of the conflict in Sierra Leone. She told the kids that they shouldn't dress like Sierra Leone boys. Her cousins were at risk in Sierra Leone, and the tension was growing. They didn't want to stay in Sierra Leone. She wanted to go back to Liberia.¹⁸⁵

Guinea

In the late 1990s, Guinea, bordered by Liberia and Sierra Leone, found itself host to hundreds of thousands of refugees from both countries.¹⁸⁶ Although numbers of Sierra Leonean refugees diminished starting in 2002, hundreds of thousands of Liberians remained in Guinea.¹⁸⁷ Refugees were assisted by UNHCR in 60 camps as well as in border villages.¹⁸⁸

According to one statement giver who now lives in Philadelphia:

Life in Guinea was hard. I did not speak French, and I did not have access to different things that I needed in life. Because of the way I spoke and the way I dressed, I stood out as Liberian, and people would not talk with me. Initially, the Liberians were not given ID cards, and the gendarmes would walk around asking for individuals' ID cards and they would collect fines from those who did not have them. Ultimately, though, I was able to get a job with the IRC...¹⁸⁹

One participant in a palava hut meeting in a suburb of Atlanta told the TRC that Liberians in Guinea

were rounded up and held in “concentration camp” conditions.¹⁹⁰ He noted that in Kindia there was a military torture brigade similar to the Liberian Anti-Terrorist Unit (ATU) that would torture refugees.¹⁹¹ “It didn’t matter where you actually were from, but if you were part of any Liberian tribe you were assumed to be a trouble maker.”¹⁹²

This statement reflects the security concerns created by a spreading sub-regional conflict. Ultimately, refugees were caught between rebel forces attacking across the border, civil dissidents in Guinea, and the Guinean army.¹⁹³ Numerous reports emerged of killings and kidnappings in the refugee camps by rebel forces.¹⁹⁴ “Guinea was not a safe place to be because it was too close to Liberia and people were being killed there as well.”¹⁹⁵ One statement giver in Ghana described how she disguised herself as old to avoid being taken.¹⁹⁶ Amnesty International reported that LURD was recruiting from among refugees in Guinea in 2001.¹⁹⁷

LURD rebel activity created other problems for refugees. In 2002, the Guinean President made a radio broadcast “alleging that Liberian and Sierra Leonean refugees in the country were a source of insecurity and should be sent home.”¹⁹⁸ This statement resulted in refugees becoming “the victims of numerous human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrest, harassment, sexual abuse, extortion, eviction and disappearances.”¹⁹⁹ Guineans also became concerned about overuse of farm land because of the influx of refugees.²⁰⁰

Many of the refugees who left Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d’Ivoire because of security concerns, found their way to Ghana. Because Ghana does not share a border with Liberia, it provided relative calm in comparison to neighboring countries where cross-border incursions had become a problem. Moreover, the conflict in Liberia eventually engulfed Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire, making Ghana one of the only safe options.

To further examine the experiences of the Liberian Diaspora living in refuge in West Africa, the following section focuses in detail on the situation in the Buduburam Refugee Settlement in Ghana. Buduburam is the largest remaining camp of the many Liberian refugee camps that were established in West Africa. Because of its size, and because many of the refugees who reside there spent time in other camps around the region, the Liberian TRC chose to focus statement taking efforts in that settlement.

Ghana

Many refugees who left Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Côte d’Ivoire because of security concerns, found their way to Ghana. Two refugee camps existed in Ghana, Krisan-Senzolli and Buduburam. In 1997, UNHCR reported that approximately 17,000 refugees were residing in Ghana.²⁰¹ In 2007, when the TRC took statements in the camp, Buduburam was home to between 35,000 and 40,000 Liberians.²⁰²



A sizable number of those individuals were children who had been born in Ghana and who had never seen Liberia.

In 1990, Liberian refugees began pouring off of ships into the port of Tema, near Accra, Ghana. Escaping the devastation in Liberia, they sought safe haven in Ghana's relative stability. None of these Liberian refugees thought they would still be in Ghana almost two decades later. In the settlement, there is an overriding sense of languishing in limbo and

deep frustration about what is seen as more than a decade of life wasted. Even so, refugees in Ghana expressed little interest in returning to Liberia at the time, often because of an abiding fear. Events in Ghana, however, pushed many to return home.

BUDUBURAM REFUGEE SETTLEMENT – LIFE IN LIMBO

Buduburam was established, like most refugee camps, as a tent city to provide for the immediate needs and physical security of a war ravaged population. The settlement, approximately 35 kilometers (22 miles) outside of Accra, is adjacent to a Ghanaian village. A panoply of international agencies coordinated by UNHCR provided services in the early years of the camp's existence. A statement giver told the TRC "first [we] lived in a shelter. The U.N. gave [us] a tarp and you cut your own sticks. People could build houses."²⁰³ Another statement giver noted that in "Ghana there were many volunteers to help with food and supplies."²⁰⁴ As a result of the more than a decade of conflict in Liberia that made return unimaginable for many, Buduburam became increasingly established. Residents replaced tents with more permanent structures of brick, tin, or wood. Today the settlement looks much like Ghanaian villages in the surrounding district, except that almost everyone living there is Liberian.²⁰⁵

Despite the surface similarities, life in Buduburam is not like life in other Ghanaian villages. Liberians live in a protracted state of limbo. As outsiders living in Ghana, but with nothing to draw them home to Liberia, they wait for something to force a change. Many Liberians in Ghana have a precarious legal status. Through the 1990s, UNHCR recommended *prima facie* refugee status determinations for Liberians entering other African countries.²⁰⁶ This determination enabled Liberians to access the valuable refugee identification card that entitled them to a number of services. In 2000, however, the Ghanaian government began processing refugee status determinations on an individual basis.²⁰⁷ This

change left many who arrived in Buduburam after the initial waves in the 1990s with an uncertain legal status in Ghana and without entitlement to assistance from UNHCR.²⁰⁸ A backlog of cases exists, and many Liberians are not even aware of whether their status determination has ever been made.²⁰⁹ Meanwhile, those in Buduburam try to make ends meet while dealing with their memories of war.

Every day at Buduburam is harder than the day before, and nobody at the camp can help me. When I first arrived, I sold bags of water so that I could go to school on the camp. Now, there are many days when I don't bathe or eat, and when I beg for my food. I'm haunted and permanently depressed by the loss of my family, and feel deep sadness whenever I see other people's kids on the camp.²¹⁰

All those who fled Liberia have suffered the same devastating trauma described in the previous sections of this report. The mental health consequences of that trauma go largely unaddressed. The need for psychological counseling for refugees was clear in TRC statements, and statement givers themselves identified the need for counseling assistance.²¹¹ An illustrative case is that of a middle-aged Liberian man who had been a soccer player and had managed his family's business before the war.²¹² Two of his former employees led a raid on his home during which NPFL rebels killed his father and aunt, raped his sister, and beat his children and threatened to throw them into his burning house. The rebels repeatedly slashed him all over his body with a cutlass. He and his remaining family were saved only by an attack from an opposing rebel force.²¹³

This man described the daily suffering and mental strain he endures as a result of the torture he experienced:²¹⁴

I am very nervous whenever I see people with [fire]arms, police on camp for example. I start to have flashbacks when I see them. I have nightmares over and over. I can't trust anyone anymore because the people who did this were my employees. I get splitting headaches with the flashbacks that take days to go away. It happens every couple of weeks. The pain in my legs is pretty constant. It is triggered just from walking.²¹⁵

This man's situation is demonstrative of a high rate of psychosomatic illness and depression in Buduburam.²¹⁶ Statement givers describe feeling "pressure," chest pain, feeling weak or faint, night sweats, and other symptoms. One woman reported feeling "dead" ever since she saw her brother tied up and thrown into their burning home.²¹⁷ A young man told the TRC that he used to work as a brickmaker but that now the pain from the beatings he received during the war keeps him from working.²¹⁸ "The sounds of war, gunboats, and airplanes are always in [my] head. They are terrible."

This statement giver told the TRC that he tried to drink kerosene one day in a suicide attempt.²¹⁹ A young woman living in Buduburam told the TRC that “sometimes she loses hope and wants to commit suicide. She has no education and no parents.”²²⁰

Living with the daily strain of this trauma, refugees in Buduburam also struggle to meet basic needs. Most in the camp are acutely aware of the obligations of the international community to protect refugees, yet they feel that they have been left to fend for themselves. Statement givers identified access to basic necessities as an ongoing issue 17 years after the camp had been established. Conditions at Buduburam are “very difficult...because we are not receiving adequate ration[s], sanitary condition is very poor, lack of proper health care, refugees are unemployed and opportunities for learning are lacking.”²²¹ One camp resident who fled Liberia when he was ten years old described his situation and perceptions of life. After losing both his mother and father in the war, this statement giver was brought to Ghana by a Liberian woman who took him in. She was then resettled in the United States, however, and since then he has not heard from her. The following is his interviewer’s description of his concerns.

He has since done yard work to make money, and this has allowed him to pay for his education. He was able to afford tuition with the help of a sponsor, and he finished his Buduburam education in 2002. He did not take the national exam, however, until 2004 when the UNHCR came to the camp to sponsor the test.

In 2005 he learned about electrical installation at a technical school, which was sponsored by AGRE and UNHCR. One of his teachers hired him for electrical installation jobs around Accra, but in November 2006 the teacher left for the United States and this work was no longer available. [He] has since sold water in the camp.

[His] time at the camp has been very tough, as he is generally alone. It is difficult to maintain steady employment, so he cannot obtain food on a consistent basis. He would also like to continue his education, which he has not been able to do. He is very dissatisfied with the economic conditions.

He has numerous security concerns. The camp is disturbingly polluted, as there are few available [toilets] and no one cleans it. He is very fearful of contracting malaria, typhoid fever, or dysentery. In particular, the public toilets and ‘the gulf’ are extremely unhealthy. Those in charge of the toilets charge 500 cedis for each use, and they have told him that as they are unpaid otherwise, they use the money for personal use, not for cleaning the toilet.

This leads [him] and others to use ‘the gulf’, an especially unsanitary field where residents go to ‘defecate for free.’ In addition to the health concerns posed by an open field of trash and feces, this is also where many robberies and beatings occur. [He] himself was attacked in July 2007 by two Ghanaian men in the middle of the day. Luckily for [him], two camp residents were nearby and prevented the attack from escalating.

[He] was also attacked in February 2007, when two camp residents and a Ghanaian man attacked him behind the internet café around 9 p.m. One of the internet café workers happened to come outside at that time, and the attackers – one of whom [he] often sees around camp – fled. The worker helped [him] inside, and he escorted [him] back to his home.

[He] explained that security conditions are very bad generally in the camp. He knows of three children that have gone missing in the past few years, only to turn up dead at various points within the camp. In 2002, a boy was found at ‘the gulf,’ and in 2003 they found a child at the dam. In 2004, a boy’s body turned up at St. Gregory College. Worst of all is the indignity of the deaths, as there is no way to properly bury them and no one bothers to investigate. He described a man named Miller, who was chopped to pieces in 2003. When the UNHCR showed up, they buried the body in a matter of hours and left without further investigation.²²²

This young man’s concerns were echoed again and again in statement taking in Buduburam. In fact, many residents are worse off because they have had no education and virtually no work. There is no freely available water in the settlement. All water for drinking, cooking, and bathing must be trucked in and then purchased on an as-needed basis.²²³ Food is available for sale in the markets in the camp and in various cook shops, but many cannot afford it.²²⁴ The World Food Programme provides food rations for individuals identified as vulnerable,²²⁵ but numerous statement givers stated that they could not get on the “list” for food, or that some refugees were on the list and others were not, with apparently little information available about the rationale for exclusion.²²⁶ Many complained that distribution of rice had been stopped and replaced with corn,²²⁷ which is not a Liberian staple and was perceived by some Liberians to be comparable to animal feed. Like so many other programs in Buduburam, funding for the food distribution program had been dramatically cut over the years. In fact, the coordinator, a Liberian refugee, was volunteering his services and had not been paid for months.²²⁸

Statement givers also repeatedly mentioned problems accessing adequate healthcare in the camp. This sentiment was echoed in interviews with staff from the St. Gregory Catholic Clinic, the only

health care facility in Buduburam.²²⁹ As of October 2007, UNHCR was paying for two physicians to work part-time at the camp, but does not fund any other clinic staff.²³⁰ The clinic is managed by a volunteer assigned by a French non-governmental organization. Out of the 34 staff at the clinic, 30 were Liberians, all of whom were working without Ghanaian employment authorization.²³¹ Fees are charged so as to keep the clinic running, but refugees are frustrated about the costs.²³²



There are limited services available to treat specific health issues in Buduburam. The UNHCR and the National Catholic Secretariat have operated an HIV/AIDS Program in Buduburam Camp since 2002.²³³ It offers walk-in HIV-testing, an anti-retroviral program, prevention of mother-to-child transmission program, outreach and education, and post-exposure prophylaxis.²³⁴

A small number of support services are available in Buduburam for women victims of violence, but as with the services for physical health needs, the mental health services do not begin to address the scope of the problem in Buduburam.

Security, especially for such a severely traumatized population, is a critical concern. Liberians in Buduburam, although they felt safer for the most part than in Liberia, were clearly afraid for their security.²³⁵ Official crime statistics are not publicly available,²³⁶ but the Neighborhood Watch Team (NEWAT) notes in its literature that the group was “established due to the uncontrollable crime rate in the settlement; such crimes are as follows: robbery, juking²³⁷ of people at night, rape, abduction of children, illicit drugs, burglary, and kidnapping...”²³⁸ NEWAT also notes that, since its establishment in 2002, crime has been reduced to almost “zero level.” The Ghanaian police also maintain a 24-hour presence in the camp, with two to three officers present during each shift.²³⁹

Despite NEWAT’s assertion of a “zero level” of crime, security concerns remain for those who spoke to the TRC. Confrontations with Ghanaians including alleged abductions and ritual killings,²⁴⁰ concerns about perpetrators from the Liberian civil war moving freely about the camp,²⁴¹ and issues of sexual assault and domestic violence were consistently reported.²⁴² A woman statement giver told the TRC that the female NPFL fighter who had facilitated her gang rape by the NPFL was still in the camp and that the statement giver saw her everywhere.²⁴³ Another statement giver noted that in a town near Buduburam she was approached on the road by a man who called her name and said, “So

[A], you're still living. We will get you..."²⁴⁴ One statement giver noted that "Liberians know not to go out alone, but rather to travel in groups"²⁴⁵ because of fear of being targeted by Ghanaians. Ethnic tensions among Liberians, especially targeting those of Krahn ethnicity, remain a problem as well.²⁴⁶ The Refugee Welfare Council previously hosted county league soccer tournaments, but the matches between Grand Gedeh (home of the Krahn tribe) and other counties became so heated that inter-county competitions were discontinued.

Because the Liberian conflict lasted so long, refugees in Buduburam have seen funding for settlement services ebb and flow, and have had to suffer firsthand the consequences of "donor fatigue."²⁴⁷ Support from UNHCR and other non-governmental organizations continued through the early 1990s; after Taylor's election in 1997, however, UNHCR initiated a policy of repatriation. UNHCR funding for most programs at Buduburam was eliminated, although funding continued for certain programs serving refugees identified as vulnerable.²⁴⁸ All services in the camp virtually ceased after the withdrawal of UNHCR funding, but only a few thousand Liberians were repatriated.²⁴⁹ Water supply to the camp ended in 1996.²⁵⁰ The camp clinic closed in 2000 because of lack of funds, ultimately reopening under the auspices of a Catholic charity.²⁵¹ The implementing partner for the camp school pulled out in 2000 because of lack of funds.²⁵² The main result of the UNCHR funding withdrawal is that all services in the camp became fee-based.²⁵³ The overriding complaint from Liberians living in Buduburam is that life in Ghana was "hard" because they had to pay for everything, including food, water, medical care, use of the toilet, and school fees. One statement giver told the TRC that "he tries to eat one meal every day but sometimes does not eat. Everything on the camp costs money."²⁵⁴

Wasted Years

Having to pay for these services would not be such a hardship if sufficient employment existed. But the lack of employment and educational opportunities led many to describe their time in Buduburam as "wasted" years.²⁵⁵ Liberians are legally entitled to work in Ghana if they obtain a permit.²⁵⁶ Even with the appropriate documents, however, jobs are almost impossible to come by. Subsisting off of remittances from family and friends abroad, or doing "small, small" work, such as petty trading or braiding hair, Liberians in the camp try to make ends meet.²⁵⁷ One woman told the TRC that she collects discarded plastic water sacs for recycling so as to make some money, but she still has to beg for food in order to eat.²⁵⁸

The cycle of missed opportunities is evident to almost everyone. Many cannot afford to send their children to primary school because they cannot pay the fees.²⁵⁹ Those who can send their children realize that they may have limited opportunities in a land where they are foreigners.

Our children who are here are not in school because we don't have money to send them. We're depending on them to rebuild. My children are just sitting

there with nothing to eat or drink. I want them to go to school anywhere – they have nothing to do here. They can't get a job.²⁶⁰

Some refugees attempt to get vocational training at one of the on-camp schools or in the neighboring Ghanaian schools, but complain that fees are high and, even upon completion of a degree, there is little work.²⁶¹ A young woman statement giver who was in a beauty training program told the TRC that she “often walks to Accra or Kasoa to earn money by styling hair. On the trips she sleeps on the streets, often in the rain.”²⁶² This statement giver said that, despite the money she makes, she often has no money to buy food or water and relies on the help of friends.²⁶³ Another young woman told the TRC a similar story:

I came from the fire to the frying pan at this camp. Life in the camp is very hard. I go to town to braid hair for money to buy food. My brothers and sisters sell small goods for money. One of my sisters began prostituting at the age of 13. I went to school in the camp and paid for it myself. I would go to town Friday after class and work braiding hair all weekend. I would sleep on the streets for the weekend and go back to camp Sunday night.²⁶⁴

Life as a Woman in Buduburam

As these last two statements demonstrate, life for women in Buduburam is particularly precarious. Liberian refugee women face tremendous economic hardship because of altered familial structures and a lack of economic opportunities and aid. Family separation and flight has left many women alone to raise children. One woman in Buduburam described how she and her family split up to survive in 1997.²⁶⁵ Her husband left by himself, because he did not want to put his family at risk while people were looking for him.²⁶⁶ She gave birth to their last child in October 1997 and has not seen her husband since then.²⁶⁷ She later discovered from friends that he is now re-married and living in the United States.²⁶⁸ Another refugee in the camp described her situation, “as a single mom, it is very difficult to afford to send the children to school and some days we don't eat.”²⁶⁹

In many cases, women statement givers described taking responsibility for the children of others. These situations increased during the war. They included women who found and protected the children of neighbors or relatives during an attack or after fleeing violence, and other women who took care of the children their partners or husbands had with other women after the mothers were killed or lost in the conflict.

Refugee life is especially difficult without a husband. Since the September 18, 1998 fighting in Monrovia, I have not seen my husband. I generate a meager income from pastry making and selling cold drinking water. I am

here with my children and step-children; five children of my own and four step-children. I am also catering to six of my grandchildren.²⁷⁰

Some women reported being forced by extreme poverty into prostitution. One woman whose parents were each killed during the war said that to make a living she worked in domestic labor and in sex work. She became pregnant as a result of her work in prostitution and had a son who lives with her in the camp. She stated, “life at the Buduburum Camp is very difficult; my son and I barely survive.”²⁷¹

Violence against women is a serious problem in Buduburam. Many statement givers recounted incidents of rape and domestic violence. In one case, a woman who was raped as a child during the war was raped again in the camp:

The rebels raped my mother and me when I was six years old...We were helped by ordinary civilians to get to Ivory Coast where we stayed for five years. My mother sold produce to provide medical care for the infections I had. Then we went to Ghana. The abusers were in the camp. I was once attacked by the same group who had raped me in Liberia. My mother advised me not to bother with the rapist so I decided to put the first rape behind me.²⁷²

Then I was raped again in Ghana by a teacher. I passed out after the rape. I reported the rape to the Ghanaian police. The teacher has since been released and blames me for bringing disgrace upon him. My mother and I are still in Ghana. We fear for our lives because the rapists are on the camp. These people are dangerous and could harm us any time with impunity.²⁷³

Some statement givers describe receiving no assistance from police when they reported crimes. Others reported that it would be futile to even attempt to make a report to the police. One woman reported how boys wearing masks raped her in Buduburam, where she was living alone. She stated the reason she did not report the incident to the police is because she has no family with her in Ghana.²⁷⁴ Another Liberian woman summarized:

[T]he camp is difficult for single mothers. It is not safe. When their children are beaten they can't protect them; some children have been killed, some men kill their wives and there are rapes, but the police do not respond.²⁷⁵

Taking Matters into their Own Hands

While there is significant frustration and hardship in Buduburam, Liberians there have built a vibrant community and have developed structures to attempt to provide the support their community needs. There are no less than 70 registered community-based organizations operating in Buduburam.²⁷⁶ These groups address many issues, including orphaned children, water, literacy, disability rights, peacebuilding and community reconciliation, and women's rights. Many refugees have started training programs to help their fellow Liberians learn productive skills. Some of these organizations have external donor funding and significant international volunteer support. The faith community in Buduburam is also very strong.



Despite these community structures, life for many in Buduburam has been simply a nearly two decade waiting game. Although frustrated with life in Ghana, Liberians in Buduburam overwhelmingly told the TRC that they did not want to return to Liberia until they were certain that the security situation was improved and until they had had an opportunity to gain skills or savings to start over.²⁷⁷ Some noted they never wanted to go back.²⁷⁸

If I ever went back, I don't know where I would live...I want to send my children to school, but I'm not able to. I know that my children are an investment in the future, but I cannot afford to feed them properly. I hope that one day my children will empower themselves and live somewhere else. Despite my problems, I feel I would suffer more in Liberia.²⁷⁹

Many said they did not want to return because they had no one and no place to go back to in Liberia.²⁸⁰ The young woman who spoke to the TRC about her sister engaging in prostitution stated that, although she wasn't sure whether life in the camp was worse than in Liberia, "at least in the camp I've started, I know people. In Liberia I'd start all over."²⁸¹ Another noted, "how can we go home? We don't even recognize it."²⁸²

Statement givers also expressed fear of returning to a place where they had experienced so much trauma. Numerous individuals noted that they could not go back to a place where their loved ones had been killed and harmed in such terrible ways.²⁸³ Statement givers also expressed fear because faction leaders whom they viewed as responsible for the abuses perpetrated against themselves and their

families are now leaders in government or are known to be living freely in Monrovia. Others noted that they had heard perpetrators who had carried out attacks on them were now in other positions of power, such as in the police.²⁸⁴

While waiting for the situation in Liberia to improve, many in Buduburam also desperately hope for resettlement in a third country. A statement giver now living in the United Kingdom told the TRC she had lived in Buduburam for nine years before being resettled.²⁸⁵ Another statement giver now in Minnesota told the TRC that he was in Buduburam for almost ten years before being resettled in the United States²⁸⁶ Both of these statement givers, like countless others, left family members behind who are still waiting.²⁸⁷



As conditions in Liberia continued to improve, however, resettlement began to fade as a viable option.²⁸⁸ At the beginning of 2008, the Ghanaian government announced a multi-million dollar program to integrate Liberian refugees into Ghanaian society, as previous repatriation efforts had met with minimal participation. In mid-February 2008, a group of refugees delivered a petition to the UNHCR and the Ghana Refugee Board. The petition stated that they “strongly oppose” integration into Ghanaian society and that they were requesting to be resettled in a third country or to be given \$1,000 USD (the standard repatriation allowance was \$100 USD) in order to start a new life back in Liberia.²⁸⁹ In conjunction with this request, hundreds of Liberian refugees – primarily women and children – held a five-week long protest on the central sports field in Buduburam.²⁹⁰

On March 17, 2008, Ghanaian authorities arrested 630 of the protesters,²⁹¹ in some cases separating families when mothers or children were taken away while other family members were left behind.²⁹²

The detained protesters, virtually all women and children, were taken to Kordeabe Youth Camp in the Eastern Region of Ghana, a several-hour drive from Buduburam and held there for several days. The Ghanaian Minister of the Interior threatened to strip all the detained refugees of their status and summarily deport them back to Liberia within a week.²⁹³ Although that threat was never carried out, 16 detained Liberians, 13 of whom had valid refugee status, were summarily deported to Liberia without due process of law.²⁹⁴

The Liberian government, the UNHCR, and the Ghanaian government began negotiations to resolve the standoff. Ultimately, the tripartite group came to an agreement to “close” the camp and repatriate the refugees back to Liberia. Reports from the camp as of early 2009 are that Liberians from Buduburam are registering for repatriation and are returning home, though there was no change in the stipend for returnees.²⁹⁵ Thousands of refugees still remain in Buduburam, despite the reality that almost no Liberians are being resettled out of Ghana to third countries at this time and that Ghana may no longer recognize Liberians as refugees.²⁹⁶

REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES

Resettlement, along with repatriation and local integration, is one of three durable solutions to refugee crises.²⁹⁷ Throughout the Liberian conflict, thousands of refugees were resettled in third countries. Even so, this number of resettled refugees is an extremely small percentage of the total number of Liberian refugees. Between 1980 and 2007, the United States resettled approximately 31,500 Liberian refugees out of the estimated 500,000 who fled.²⁹⁸ The decision to offer third-country resettlement is complex, involving foreign policy, humanitarian, and practical considerations.²⁹⁹ Designation of third-country resettlement can result in a “magnet” effect of new migration and may be resisted by the host country government.³⁰⁰ The durable solutions often are in tension with one another, and the offer of resettlement may disrupt efforts seeking repatriation – long considered the most desirable solution by UNHCR³⁰¹ – or local integration.³⁰²

The United States’ Refugee Program resettles refugees in the United States.³⁰³ The United States’ Refugee Program coordinates with the UNHCR, and private organizations referred to as Overseas Processing Entities and Voluntary Agencies. Using a priority system, cases are designated into categories, Priority One through Five. Priority One cases (P1) include those most in need of resettlement and are referred by the UNHCR or the local U.S. Embassy. Priority Two (P2) cases include those of special humanitarian concern. The remaining priority categories are for family members of refugees or asylees living in the United States. Priority Three (P3) cases have been open to Liberians sporadically during the past decade, allowing some spouses, minor children, and parents of Liberian refugees to join family in the United States. Priority Four and Five categories, which allow resettlement of more distant relatives, have been closed to all resettlement since 1999.³⁰⁴

Refugees entering the United States through the United States' Refugee Program have legal status as refugees upon their admission. Refugees are authorized for employment and have limited access to certain public assistance programs. Local resettlement and assistance programs, affiliated with the national Voluntary Agencies and funded on a per capita basis by the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, provide short-term practical and financial assistance to resettled refugees in the months immediately following their arrival. After one year, refugees are required to register for lawful permanent resident status; five years after admission, they may apply for citizenship.

ASYLUM

My aunt left the children at the refugee camp and went into Freetown to call my parents in the United States. My aunt discovered that my parents had previously given a friend all their savings to come to Sierra Leone and find the family and return them safely to the U.S. Instead, this person had used the money to bring their own family members back to the US instead of me and my family.

My parents were able to wire enough money to my aunt to get a car and bring all of us children to Freetown. My parents were then able to successfully send a member from their church in the United States to go to Sierra Leone and bring us to the United States...once we got to New York, we immediately claimed asylum.³⁰⁵

While more than 30,000 Liberians were resettled as refugees in the United States,³⁰⁶ thousands more sought asylum in the United States based on their fear of return to Liberia. Like refugee status, asylum may be granted to persons who have a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. Unlike the refugee resettlement process, however, asylum applications are made by individuals who are in the United States. Those granted asylum receive similar, although not identical, protection from return to their home country as refugees, while those denied asylum ultimately face deportation from the United States.

I was already in America when Monrovia fell, and once the Liberians arrived here in the United States shortly thereafter in large waves, the system was not ready for them. It took almost four to five years for the processing of asylum applications, and [Temporary Protected Status] (TPS) did not come until maybe 1991. In the interim, the immigration service was not giving people asylum and not making decisions, it was simply accepting people's applications, giving work authorization and then the files lingered. It

was later when the U.S. government established the asylum offices in the different districts that cases began to be processed.³⁰⁷

The number of Liberian asylum seekers rose dramatically as a result of the outbreak of war at the end of 1989. In 1989, the number of Liberians seeking asylum in the United States was 27. By 1990, that number had jumped to 1,572. Ultimately, more than 6,600 individuals were granted asylum by the Immigration and Naturalization Service between 1992 and 2007. An additional 1,789 individuals were granted asylum between 1997 and 2007 by the Executive Office for Immigration Review.³⁰⁸ Of the 1,309 Liberian asylum applications decided by Immigration Judges between 1994 and 1999, 44.5 percent were denied.³⁰⁹

I struggled to get my own immigration status in the United States. When I applied for asylum, the asylum office lost my application and they could not locate it. Going through all this by myself, it made me realize that I had lost my own innocence as a young woman and now had to do things on my own.³¹⁰

It took ten years for my asylum status to be granted, and another five or six years until I was granted my green card.³¹¹

Liberian asylum seekers, like all asylum seekers in the United States throughout the 1990s, faced a difficult and lengthy process. By 1994, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the agency then responsible for adjudication of asylum cases, had a backlog of more than 425,000 pending asylum claims.³¹² In some cases long processing delays led to changes in circumstances in Liberia or in the United States that affected pending asylum claims.

I graduated from high school in Staten Island and I have worked in the USA and paid taxes but I have had difficulty acquiring permanent resident status. I came to the U.S. with my mother in 1988, but my mother's asylum application was not approved until 1996. By that time it was too late for me to be approved under my mother's application because I was already 21. I had to begin my application all over again.³¹³

Delays in asylum cases often meant prolonged separation from families left behind in Liberia or in refugee camps in the sub-region. While asylum seekers are permitted to remain in the United States while their cases are pending, they cannot petition for their immediate families to join them until they are granted asylum.³¹⁴ One statement giver described a common story: "By August 1997, I left Liberia and came to the United States and applied for political asylum. My family had been living in the Ivory Coast, but they joined me in the United States after four years."³¹⁵

Some asylum seekers have been unable to reunite with their families due to the limits on family relationships recognized under U.S. immigration law. One statement giver's story is common: "After I obtained asylum in the United States I was able to bring two daughters here. My four other children were denied visas on grounds that they were not my biological children, so they remain in Guinea."³¹⁶

Many asylum claims by Liberians were denied.³¹⁷ For some Liberians, this denial has meant remaining legally in the United States under TPS,³¹⁸ now Deferred Enforced Departure (DED).³¹⁹ For others, it has resulted in arrest, detention, or deportation by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.³²⁰

I filed for political asylum in New Jersey. The case was decided by a court in Minnesota, where I had moved. Before moving back to New Jersey, I filed an appeal with the Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) and notified the BIA in writing of my change of address. In March 2006, I was arrested for overstaying my visa and was taken to a prison in York County, Pennsylvania. It was only then that I found out that the BIA had entered an order for deportation after not receiving my appeal. I was detained in York County prison until September 2006, when I was taken to Virginia to see the Liberian consulate. I was then moved to a prison in Louisiana. In October 2006, I filed a habeas corpus petition alleging that I had been unfairly detained. In total, I was imprisoned for nine months. I was released in December 2006 under an order of supervision and have continued to report to my immigration officer. My immigration status has yet to be determined.³²¹

TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS

So many Liberians have been unable to straighten out the mess with immigration that [Temporary Protected Status] has created. Now there are Liberians in the United States with 18 or 19 years of TPS.³²²

Beginning on March 27, 1991, the United States extended TPS³²³ to Liberians then present in the United States because of the conflict raging in Liberia.³²⁴ TPS provides a blanket temporary safe haven to eligible nationals of designated countries in 12- or 18-month increments.³²⁵ People on TPS are not subject to removal and are authorized to work during the designated period. Approximately 15,000 Liberians in the United States registered for TPS at the height of the program. By design, TPS does not lead to permanent resident status.³²⁶ When TPS ends, beneficiaries revert to the same immigration status they held before TPS (unless that status had since expired or been terminated) or to any other status they may have acquired while registered for TPS. Those with a final order of removal (deportation) may be deported without further hearing.

Although Liberians were not required to choose between TPS and other, more permanent immigration options such as asylum or family-based immigration, in practice Liberian asylum cases often were “administratively closed” by immigration judges or de-prioritized by overburdened Asylum Offices because TPS was available to them. People in this position were permitted to work and to remain in the United States, but they were unable to reunite with family members who remained outside the United States or to secure the more permanent asylum status which leads to lawful permanent residency and, eventually, citizenship.

Each year, Liberians on TPS were required to re-register for TPS, paying filing fees to renew their status and work permission. In September 2006, the Department of Homeland Security announced the termination of Liberian TPS, effective October 1, 2007. On September 12, 2007, President Bush announced that Liberians who were registered under TPS would be permitted to remain and to work in the United States under DED, a similar status to TPS, until March 31, 2009. On March 20, 2009, President Obama extended DED for Liberians for an additional 12 months from March 31, 2009.

The termination of Liberian TPS caused great anxiety throughout the Liberian community in the United States. Social workers and police officers reported increases in truancy among Liberian students because parents kept children home out of fear they would be deported while at school.³²⁷ One social worker reported that clients were hoarding food out of fear that their work authorization would end.³²⁸ After many Liberian families had experienced traumatic family separations during the conflict, Liberians on TPS feared the same fate. One community leader stated:

[W]e have a situation where some people have been on TPS now for eighteen years. We have families that came from Liberia with two children, they had two children here, and they’re on TPS. The American-born children can stay, but the Liberian-born children have to leave.³²⁹

The termination of TPS coincided with dramatic increases in immigration enforcement generally and with a contentious Congressional immigration debate, further exacerbating community fears. A faith leader in the Liberian community noted that it has been “disappointing, considering the historic ties between Liberia and the United States for Liberians to be begging to stay in the United States.”³³⁰

The Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act of 2007, S. 656, was introduced in the Senate on February 16, 2007. The House companion, the Liberian Refugee Immigration Protection Act of 2007, H.R. 1941, was introduced on April 19, 2007. This legislation, if passed, would have allowed eligible Liberians living in the United States, to apply for lawful permanent resident status.³³¹

LIFE AFTER RESETTLEMENT

The length of the conflict and the multiple changes of government resulted both in an extended period of emigration from Liberia as well as the emigration of specific groups as their political, social and economic fortunes changed. Resettlement, while clearly a desirable and safe outcome for many, has stresses of its own. This section of the report considers the experiences of Liberians in the third phase of the paradigm, resettlement outside their country of origin, and will focus specifically on the experiences of the diaspora community in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Successive waves of emigration to the United States by various groups are reflected in the statements of those who fled the Doe regime in the period 1980-1990, and the Taylor regime in the period 1997-2003, as well as those who left the country in the intervening years between the two regimes. Many early arrivals in the United States were not driven by the need to escape violence or persecution, but rather left Liberia for political or economic reasons,³³² to further their education³³³ or to work.³³⁴ In the 1970s there were only about 25 Liberians in Minnesota.³³⁵ “Most came...a technical college in the Minneapolis Uptown area that was providing training in mining technology...”³³⁶



In the aftermath of the 1980 coup, emigration to escape violence and persecution or to ensure personal safety increased and continued until the end of the conflict. “1980 came, the coup came, and Liberia became uninhabitable for a lot of people. And many of them found their way to [a third country], and it became sort of a temporary but permanent home, hoping that conditions in Liberia would change.”

³³⁷

As war broke out, Liberians who were already abroad were sometimes stranded in their host countries. One Liberian now living in the United Kingdom noted that he had arrived in the United Kingdom on a scholarship in 1989.³³⁸ He had been planning to travel back to Liberia to see his family when Charles Taylor’s and Prince Johnson’s forces began fighting for control of Monrovia.

My bags were packed when I received a fax through the student union stating that all Liberian students were to remain in the country because it was not safe to return to Liberia. At this point, I thought the restriction would only apply for a week or two. I waited with my suitcase packed but no one would tell me what was going on and there was no information coming out of Liberia. It was only when The Guardian newspaper started to report the events in Liberia that I became fully aware of the situation.³³⁹

During the civil wars, a majority of those arriving were refugees.

We had the post-1990 migration...except now the conditions in Liberia were so terrible, people came fleeing the war. Some had already given up on Liberia because [of] the trauma they faced, and some hope and want, [that] one day they will be able to return to Liberia.³⁴⁰

Post-conflict emigration has been driven in part by family reunification efforts. The demographics of the diaspora community in the United States thus show a community that is not monolithic, but rather includes members of different ethnic groups,³⁴¹ as well as persons who describe their tribe or ethnicity as “multiple tribes.”³⁴² This dramatic change in population “represent[s] different challenges, different opportunities, different demographics.”³⁴³ One community leader described the situation in this manner:

The group that came prior to the 1980s knew exactly what they were coming for, were focused, tended to have an education. The group that came ... between 1980 and 1990, was sort of a mix...the post-1990 migration pattern presents a different set of circumstances...We had families that relocated simply because...there was a refugee program. But the issues of cultural assimilation [were]...more difficult for those families and it's been a challenge for our community.³⁴⁴

The assimilation process begins as soon as new immigrants arrive and often starts with attempting to adjust expectations to the realities of life in a new land.

Arrival: Expectations vs. Realities in the United States

After a year [in Ivory Coast], we were interviewed by the Lutheran Church Family Refugee Program for eligibility to leave West Africa for refuge in the United States. I passed the interview and I and my wife soon boarded a plane which took us to JFK airport in New York. We were lent the money for the

plane tickets, which we would later slowly pay back to the Lutheran church in small monthly payments.

We suffered very much during our first three months in the United States. While we began the slow process of filing for relief funds, we lived in a homeless shelter with very little food. Later we were able to become eligible for the monthly refugee funds and move to Park Hill, Staten Island, where we now reside.³⁴⁵

While statement givers in the Buduburam refugee settlement overwhelmingly desired resettlement in the United States or in another English-speaking country outside of Africa, life for resettled refugees and other immigrants does not always match expectations, as described by the statement giver above.³⁴⁶ “[W]hat I experienced in the United States is not what I had heard before I arrived, and expected to experience.”³⁴⁷ Some statement givers described the fact that Liberians in Africa saw the United States as “paradise.”³⁴⁸ Another noted that Liberians see the United States as the iconic “land of milk and honey.”³⁴⁹ Resettled Liberian refugees and other immigrants have “very high” expectations that everything in their new country will be easy – it will be easy to find a job, easy to make money, easy to find a place to live.³⁵⁰ On the contrary, newly arrived refugees confront an array of issues including trouble finding housing,³⁵¹ food insecurity,³⁵² and difficulty finding sufficient employment.³⁵³ Even for immigrants who have traveled extensively, have visited the United States on previous occasions, or have heard from relatives and friends about the challenges of adaptation, high expectations often persist.³⁵⁴ “You can tell them, but they don’t believe you – they want to experience it for themselves.”³⁵⁵

Liberians noted that high expectations, particularly for life in the United States, come in part from a perception that there is a special relationship between the United States and Liberia, and accordingly, Liberians will be well-treated when they come to the United States.³⁵⁶ When Liberians arrive and discover that most Americans have never heard of Liberia, it is a shock:

There is no ‘special relationship’ between Liberia and the United States. When living in Liberia your perception of America is completely different. It was very easy for Americans to move around Liberia. This is not reciprocal. This is something that Liberians learn only once they arrive in America.³⁵⁷

Another interviewee in Rhode Island noted that the “U.S. views anyone from a third world country with suspicion.”³⁵⁸

Adaptation to Life in a New Land

After the initial shock of arrival, Liberians must find their way into the American system. Experiences

of Liberians emigrating to the United States often mirror those encountered by other immigrant groups. Among these many challenges for Liberians adapting to life in the United States, key themes emerged as affecting the entire community. Most critical are concerns about immigration status, particularly the recent termination of TPS for Liberians. Apart from immigration concerns, many Liberians discuss a feeling of isolation and loss of cultural identity in America, partly as they deal with issues of race in America.

In addition, Liberians often discuss the notion of America as a great “equalizer.” One Liberian academic described the phenomenon this way: “When there is displacement...[t]here is an involuntary migration. They are leaving a place of comfort without a plan and leaving abruptly, leaving resources behind. When you do this every person leaving enters the new country at the same level. They have no material assets to travel with, but there are other assets that they do travel with that do not normally get tabulated. These are immaterial assets such as education.”³⁵⁹ This notion expresses itself in many ways including through employment and education, changing gender roles, and changing age roles, especially between parents



and children. There is no doubt that the Liberian conflict upended the Liberian social and cultural structure, forcing Liberians into a new landscape where they must take on new roles. Those who were in positions of power and influence in Liberia may find themselves underemployed and living in obscurity in the United States. For those who may have had little opportunity in Liberia, life in the United States presents a chance to get an education, make money, and get the material things that were available only to the very few in Liberia. One interviewee reported:

Coming to America used to be reserved for the elite, the city people, or those with education. But truth be told, the war has brought everybody to America – I don’t blame people if they feel empowered and equalized.³⁶⁰

This phenomenon has been clearly observed by community members who have watched gender and age roles, among other roles, alter substantially in the United States. One interviewee stated,

“Even your younger brother will try to measure up with you when you are in America, while in Liberia they always used to respect you.”³⁶¹ Moreover, legal regimes in the United States that protect women and children through active enforcement have contributed to equalizing power relationships in the community, among men and women and among parents and children. All of these aspects of adjustment to life in the United States – employment, isolation, race, as well as gender and youth issues – will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

Underemployment

Statement givers in the United States describe again and again suffering from “underemployment.”³⁶² Numerous statement givers report that their professional degrees and credentials are not recognized in the United States, forcing them to accept employment at jobs far below their qualifications and of lesser prestige and pay.³⁶³ In one case, a statement giver who holds a Liberian college degree reported working only at “menial” jobs.³⁶⁴ A focus group participant in Rhode Island described the situation in this way:

Many educated Liberians come to the United States and are looked upon as not intelligent...For example, medical doctors who leave Liberia and come to the United States are not employed as doctors. They reduce themselves to jobs as medical assistants. That is true for other competent individuals, such as engineers. The community does not absorb them.³⁶⁵

One statement giver who is a Liberian and Canadian-trained physician confirmed this assertion, noting that she had never been able to successfully integrate into the U.S. healthcare system, despite experience working with the World Health Organization in Liberia.³⁶⁶ Another noted:

When I was in Liberia I had an undergraduate degree in business management. I worked as a junior project economist. I worked for an oil company and an electric company. However even that experience wasn’t considered when I applied for jobs in the United States.³⁶⁷

An interviewee with a master’s degree from Indiana University and a World Bank fellowship stated that her first job in the United States was cleaning the house for a female college student.³⁶⁸

Obtaining a job can be difficult for various reasons. According to some members of the diaspora community, their Liberian accents posed an obstacle to them in finding employment. One interviewee who has been in Atlanta since 1985 noted that when she first arrived, it was easier to find a job than it is today, which she attributes to increased hostility towards illegal immigrants and increased focus on securing necessary legal documentation as a prerequisite to employment.³⁶⁹ The pressure to send

money home right away can also lead Liberians to get the first job that comes their way regardless of its relevance to their professional skills. One interviewee noted:

When I got here, I was forced by the people I was stopping with to go into the nursing home because there was this notion that this is where you make the money. Every time I left work I was sick. I was lucky to have a professor who talked to me and actually asked me what I had done for a profession in Africa, and then she helped steer me to other training. I was able to get a job...that was actually related to what I had done in Liberia because I had that help, but hardly anyone does.³⁷⁰

Statement givers also report, however, that educational and employment opportunities that were not available to them in Liberia can be pursued in the United States, and that many have moved to mainstream careers after graduating from high school, obtaining a GED,³⁷¹ or obtaining associate, undergraduate, or graduate degrees from U.S. colleges and universities. Careers cited by statement givers include, but are not limited to, law and medicine,³⁷² nursing,³⁷³ home health care,³⁷⁴ business owner,³⁷⁵ security services,³⁷⁶ and restaurateur.³⁷⁷ One statement giver, a former child soldier, observed that, had he remained in Liberia, his only option would have been to become a farmer.³⁷⁸ Another young Liberian woman in California noted that she has just completed her LPN degree and she sees herself as a more empowered woman than she would have been had she stayed in Liberia.³⁷⁹

African American – African Race Relations in the United States

Immigrants from any non-white background often confront for the first time racial discrimination in the United States. Institutional racism and systemic xenophobia are a longstanding problem in the United States. Members of the first African diaspora, African Americans, have confronted and challenged white racism for decades. Although important gains have been made, racism continues to manifest in acts of discrimination by institutions and private actors. The history of deeply entrenched racial politics in the United States provides a backdrop for a phenomenon that was often raised by interviewees and statement givers as a problem in the Liberian diaspora – the negative interactions between African immigrants and African Americans.

Some Liberians also described unexpected conflicts with African Americans. One Liberian journalist in Minnesota described his perceptions:

We get this negative look from our African American brothers because there is this feeling that we came from the jungle and everything is about disease, violence, and civil war. There is a constant attempt by them to draw a line of demarcation – there is not a cordial relationship. Even in the classroom

in a university. We are looked at as if we came here to take from them what belongs to them.³⁸⁰

Another interviewee noted that there is a perception that African Americans “accused us of taking over their community.”³⁸¹ “African Americans are always afraid that Africans coming here will take their jobs and that white people like Africans better. It’s a myth...it’s a divide-and-rule tactic.”³⁸²

Conflicts between recent African immigrants and African Americans can become very dangerous when played out amongst youth. Interviewees in Minnesota reported these conflicts as a problem in schools, and this very serious concern for youth was documented in other sources as well.³⁸³ “African pupils are singled out because of their accents and non-trendy dress and...the harassment exceeds normal middle-school-age teasing...”³⁸⁴ In Staten Island, a service provider noted that relations got so bad that a group of African children formed a group for protection. One member of that group, a Liberian, shot another student in 2005 and was convicted of murder.³⁸⁵

An African American community leader in Minnesota noted that, although initiatives to bring African immigrants and African Americans together have been undertaken, they are often “one-shot” efforts and there is little sustained opportunity.³⁸⁶ He noted that the African American community does sometimes perceive immigrants, whether from Africa or elsewhere, as “taking something” such as opportunities, from established communities.³⁸⁷ He noted that African immigrants and African Americans have common problems as people of color. According to him, those mutual concerns should lead to mutual understanding and collaborative work on issues such as education, health disparities, and other social and economic rights.³⁸⁸

Gender Role Reversals

Liberian women in the United States have found new economic and educational opportunities. They have found increased job prospects, thus garnering greater economic power and independence for themselves. Furthermore, because many Liberian women work in the health care industry, they have the opportunity to work overtime and possibly make more money than their partners.³⁸⁹

New opportunities in the diaspora have led to a shift in gender roles from traditional lifestyles in Liberia where, according to one community leader, “our moms were the ones who were involved in our lives...dad brought home the money.”³⁹⁰ Here in the diaspora, “most women in our community make more money than men” and they work more hours, meaning that “they’re not home to take care of kids, not home to cook for their husbands.”³⁹¹

Both men and women interviewees reported that some Liberian men find the altered gender roles and power structure in the United States difficult to accept.³⁹² “The men feel less of a man...it is about

male ego.”³⁹³ This interviewee noted that he himself had been ashamed to take work in a factory or a nursing home when he first came to America because his family had been well-off in Liberia. “They have more opportunities for women here than for men. The notion that husbands have to be bread winner and the inflexibility associated with that has forced them to keep looking for jobs that are comparable to that in Liberia instead of taking lesser job and working their way up.”³⁹⁴ One Liberian community leader saw this gender role reversal as a particular issue with younger women of child bearing age.

Well, what I see happening in the community...a lot of women are in control and the men are not in favor of that, but they just, they just go with it. And what I see happening more and more...the women have been left alone to raise their children because most men, especially African men, they were raised to be head of the household, and if they're not, I've seen a lot of them just leaving, leaving thinking they leave and go to the next person it's going to be different...So I see more and more women and girls having babies by these men thinking that he will be there to help them raise these children. And it's not happening. And so therefore most of these women are taking control...going to school, getting their education and raising their children, pretty much by themselves.³⁹⁵

Another community leader found a similar issue among older women in the Liberian community. She described a female client who sought literacy and functional skills training:

We're all working together with this lady, she's coming to the literacy class and we're working with her to learn how to catch the bus...And I just never understood, the lady couldn't understand, why her husband was so resistant to his wife learning anything to become independent. He just fought everything we did. So I think at the end we just realized that it was more about control...she has always looked up to him, for everything. She didn't know how to read and write, she didn't know anything. She was there and he was a knight in shining armor, a hero. Now all of the sudden there is this opportunity for her to learn to read, to catch the bus, she's going to go to work, she's going to be independent, and he just fought against it...And every time she had to come to school, he found an excuse, he didn't want her there. So we just drew a conclusion that he was very controlling. There is a lot of this, where men are having a hard time adjusting to the women being independent and having financial independence.³⁹⁶

According to the interviewee, the struggle to accept Liberian women's independence has at times

given rise to problems within the home.³⁹⁷ For example, dynamics of power and control become apparent in domestic violence in Liberian families after they resettled in the United States: “[M]ost Liberian women did not work. The men did. In a way, they controlled the women. Then war came. Everything changed. Men found themselves humiliated whether in refugee camps or in America. They no longer had the means to support families properly.”³⁹⁸ Men perceive that women now are “disobeying” and are resisting the traditional systems of power and control that were prevalent in Liberia.³⁹⁹



Violence during war furthers the misconception that violence against women is acceptable.⁴⁰⁰ In describing domestic violence in the Liberian community, one public hearing witness stated:

The effect of the war on domestic violence is that for an already-existing problem that we have in the Liberian culture, where we consider domestic problems as something that only the family deals with, the war has actually aggravated that problem, because rather than finding ways – rather than finding peaceful ways to solve problems...perpetrator[s] of these problems, just go ahead and they become aggressive towards their domestic partners... And when they are arrested, they don't realize how aggressive the laws are in this country against domestic violence perpetrators.⁴⁰¹

Relatives see domestic violence as a family issue and generally discourage Liberian women from reporting these circumstances.⁴⁰² Furthermore, strong, enforceable laws that protect victims and hold offenders accountable contrast sharply with the lack of enforcement in Liberia. As one interviewee noted, the “protections existed back home but no one cared to enforce those laws.”⁴⁰³ A male community leader recounted the following to the TRC:

[T]here is a story about...a young man who came from Liberia. He had an argument with his girlfriend so he got mad. He stopped the car on the side of the highway and began to beat her, and the police stopped him and went to intervene. He told them, ‘I'm beating my momu.’ He was promptly arrested, of course, and he learned a lesson in American culture and the legal system.⁴⁰⁴

With regard to victims, a public hearings witness stated that “They’re so used to these things that they’re in a state of learned helplessness. They think there is no recourse, they have nothing – no way out.”⁴⁰⁵ Thus, she works with an organization that seeks to raise awareness about legal recourse for domestic violence victims.⁴⁰⁶

Young, illiterate adult women between 20 and 40 years of age comprise a particularly vulnerable population.⁴⁰⁷ Traditionally, there is a greater proportion of elderly women among the illiterate due to historical trends relative to gender and education.⁴⁰⁸ An interviewee observed, however, a recent trend of increasing numbers of younger women with little to no education. She attributed this to relocation from the war, changed familial structures, and unwanted pregnancies from early sexual exposure or rape. These women drop out of school, and with no support and a child to raise, their education ceases.⁴⁰⁹ These young women may blend in, be well-spoken and well-dressed, but they are unable to fill out a job application.

Raising Children in a New Cultural Landscape

Within the diaspora community, there are youth who have grown up largely in the United States, having arrived at young ages, as well as youth who arrived at older ages. The experiences and views of those who have been primarily raised in the United States are, in many respects, different from those who arrived at later ages. For this former group, their stories are often indistinguishable from many young persons born in the United States. One statement giver who arrived in the United States at age four reports that he self-identifies as American, that most of his friends are non-Liberians, that he is a high school graduate and college bound, and that he plans a career in business.⁴¹⁰ For the other group, many of whom have experienced trauma in Liberia or in the emigration process, life in the United States can be more complicated.

Liberian youth who arrived at older ages face significant challenges. For these young persons, school issues predominate. Multiple statement givers and interviewees reported that school age Liberians are initially placed in classrooms based on age, rather than academic level. As many of these young persons have not attended school continuously because of the conflict, their academic status lags behind their biological age.⁴¹¹ A refugee resettlement educator summarized:

Imagine an eighteen-year-old at a fourth grade level. The schools put them in classes based on their age and it’s a real problem – they can’t be with the little kids but they can’t manage academically as a senior in high school either.⁴¹²

While some students ultimately may catch up to their age peers, one statement giver reported that in his community Liberian youth are graduating from high school by memorizing material rather than

by learning the material.⁴¹³ Additional school-related problems reported are that Liberian students may have difficulty in adjusting to the behavioral expectations of schools in the United States;⁴¹⁴ Liberian students are subject to ridicule about their accents⁴¹⁵ or are placed in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes;⁴¹⁶ many students lack family support and financial resources to engage in extra-curricular activities;⁴¹⁷ and some of the students live in unstable homes with unrelated sponsors who provide little or no emotional or financial support.⁴¹⁸ Many Liberian students also have unmet needs for counseling and other mental health and social services to address their traumatic histories.⁴¹⁹

Parents' involvement with the educational system is also a concern. Service providers and Liberian community leaders from across the country report that illiteracy, particularly amongst Liberian women, is a problem that needs to be addressed. It hampers many aspects of life, including communication with the school system. "[If] you can't...read and write, you [can't] know, what's going on...looking at [a] grade sheet or [a] report card – you won't know the difference. But if [you] go and talk to the teacher, it's not writing, it's speaking, which most Liberians speak English."⁴²⁰

The heavy work-load that many Liberians maintain to support extended family in the United States, Liberia, or in refugee camps can prevent parents from actively participating in the education of their children. "Well, the school district [is] having [a] problem too, because they are not being able to get the parents to come to the parents and teachers meeting because the parents have to go to work, so you have to schedule the meeting at a time when the parents will be home."⁴²¹ Liberians also report that expectations for behavior in school are different in Liberia from here in the United States. "Some parents are getting calls from the school wanting to prescribe for [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder] ADHD. The system doesn't understand how Liberians behave and that there are different customs."⁴²²

Within the diaspora community, concern is expressed about the corrupting influence of U.S. culture on Liberian youth, including loss of traditional cultural values such as respect for elders.⁴²³ Because of the financial demands on new immigrants, all adults in a household may be working one or more jobs, leaving children alone much of the time.⁴²⁴ Other statement givers' descriptions of their concerns about youth include the prevalence of trauma, anger, and feelings of displacement among young Liberians;⁴²⁵ lack of services for youth;⁴²⁶ use of drugs by youth;⁴²⁷ involvement in criminal activity,⁴²⁸ and lack of educational and employment prospects.⁴²⁹

There are also concerns specific to Liberian girls in the United States. Interviews revealed that teenage pregnancy among young Liberian girls is a serious problem. A Liberian women's advocate reported that of the 30 immigrant teenagers who were pregnant at a Minnesota high school in 2008, the majority were Liberian girls.⁴³⁰ Counselors at a Minnesota high school confirmed that teen pregnancy in the Liberian diaspora community is high.⁴³¹ They stated that, while assistance is available for these teenage mothers, they encounter difficulties finishing their high school education unless they have

child care resources at home.⁴³² Teenage mothers are encouraged to attend an alternative school, but limited space and transportation pose hurdles.⁴³³

Changed Community Structure

Compared to life in Liberia, the greater isolation that Liberians experience in the United States is also a significant challenge. One interviewee living in Minnesota stated:

When I came here I thought it would be just like back home, where I could see my friends all the time, where the community would be so close. But people don't realize how spread out everyone here is. It's easy to get isolated – I have friends I haven't seen in ten years.⁴³⁴

Isolation from others and loss of regular community support falls particularly heavily on elderly members of the Liberian diaspora. Older members of the community report feelings of isolation and longing for the social interaction common in Liberia. They report that many members of the diaspora community have adopted an American lifestyle of keeping to themselves and not becoming involved with their neighbors.⁴³⁵

Elderly Liberian women are particularly vulnerable to hardship in adjusting to an American lifestyle. Because they may be illiterate and lack a formal education, they tend to be more disconnected from society. Even if they do attend community events, full participation remains a challenge. The programs may be printed in English and exclude those who cannot read.⁴³⁶ Even basic tasks involved in attending public events may present an obstacle. A community service provider described the social experiences of one of her literacy students:

[A]ll the time she went to events, she had to ask a child to take her to the bathroom, because she did not know if it was a woman or man's bathroom, so she couldn't distinguish between bathrooms.⁴³⁷

Elderly women often live with their adult children and tend to assume the role of homemakers and child caretakers. Within the home, illiteracy and adjustment issues continue to pose a challenge for this population. For example, elderly women may not know how to use the telephone, dial 911, or call for help in an emergency.⁴³⁸ As caretakers, elderly women are isolated within the confines of the home. This circumstance is especially difficult as it represents a major shift from their lifestyles in Liberia. According to one community leader, many of these women formerly were respected leaders with pivotal roles in the family, community, and the marketplace.⁴³⁹ In the United States, one interviewee stated, "they're just lost."⁴⁴⁰

Liberians also reported concerns about losing traditional community supports for childrearing and adapting to a legal system that is more protective of the rights of children. One focus group participant stated:

In Liberia, if two parents are working, the neighbor will step in as a parent. Here a neighbor will not do that. Consequently, one cannot leave a 9 or 13 year old at home in America, but can in Liberia.⁴⁴¹

This issue is particularly critical for single parents in the Liberian community.⁴⁴² One service provider noted that she has encouraged clients to enroll their children in after-school activities so that they do not have to stay home alone.⁴⁴³

The U.S. legal system provides protections for children against abuse and other forms of negligence. But, in Liberia, practices that may be considered abuse in the United States were accepted as forms of discipline. Many believed that “if you spare the rod, you spoil the child.”⁴⁴⁴ For example, one statement giver reported that during his youth in Liberia he was locked in a closet with no food for a day as a punishment.⁴⁴⁵ Another interviewee noted that a traditional punishment was to rub hot pepper juice all over parts of the body so that it would burn with pain.⁴⁴⁶ “In Liberia, parents were not afraid to punish their children. Here there is a fear that children will tell the guidance counselor if they are punished, and that the punishment will be considered child abuse.”⁴⁴⁷ While many reported this as a concern in the diaspora community, Liberians and law enforcement authorities are working together to address the issue. Police efforts at educating the community were reported as having helped to mitigate the problem, and Liberians are growing increasingly aware that they need to find alternative means to discipline their children in the United States. According to one community leader, however, “it’s a challenge for Liberian parents to find a way to keep the kids in line without using these practices.”⁴⁴⁸

One Liberian academic in Minnesota summarized the situation:

The struggle that we have is...in our country where we don’t have law enforcement in child protection. Instead we have a hierarchical system, where you are supposed to yell at your kids, but kids now say you cannot do this... In the old days you have children to help you on the farm, but that is not their obligation anymore. Your responsibility as a parent is to provide them an environment conducive to them being competitive...[Some families] in the community have kids before they are prepared, and these conditions lead to social stressors that lead to abuse of kids. We need to intervene in the lives of brothers and sisters so we can help them.⁴⁴⁹

Adjustment to Life in the United Kingdom

The Liberian community in the United Kingdom is much smaller than that in the United States,⁴⁵⁰ and accordingly, many fewer TRC statements were taken there. Nevertheless, these statements reflect similar patterns of adjustment and adaptation. A small community of Liberians lived in the United Kingdom before the war, and as in the United States, those individuals generally left Liberia for educational or professional reasons.⁴⁵¹ Once the war began, however, these Liberians were forced to stay. Thereafter, some Liberians arrived in the United Kingdom as refugees from the war and were resettled through the U.K.'s Gateway Protection Programme.⁴⁵²

Liberians in the United Kingdom who found themselves separated from their families back in Liberia noted the extreme difficulty of getting information about their loved ones. One statement giver noted that, after the 1980 coup, she did not hear from her family for several months.⁴⁵³ When she finally got a letter, she was shocked to see a clipping of her sister's husband in shackles being taken to jail.⁴⁵⁴ Thereafter during the years of civil conflict, she was lucky to hear from her family once a year.⁴⁵⁵ Another statement giver told the TRC that she had left her four young sons in Liberia when she had gone to work in the United Kingdom.⁴⁵⁶ Once the conflict started, she could not get any news about her sons for seven years. She reported being so worried that she often could not eat or sleep; she even had trouble cooking because she felt so guilty about having food when she thought about what was happening in Liberia.⁴⁵⁷ When she later found out that her family's home in Bong County had been targeted, she told the TRC that she believed it was targeted because rebels in the area knew she was working in the United Kingdom and thus assumed that her family had a lot of money.

Liberians in the United Kingdom in general reported a somewhat easier time adjusting to resettlement, in part because of the strong social safety nets in place there. In fact, the United Kingdom had such a strong policy in favor of Liberian refugees that many other West Africans came there under the guise of Liberian nationality.⁴⁵⁸

A higher percentage of the Liberians in the United Kingdom had arrived there prior to the war. According to the president of the U.K. Liberian community organization, "Most of the Liberians here came here before the war started to go to school. So most of them went to school in the British society and so have been integrated into the British community quite easily. But those who came after the war are not having the easiest time integrating."⁴⁵⁹

The system of government support for U.K. residents also helps to mitigate some of the phenomena that have been major stressors for the Liberian diaspora in the United States. For example, Liberians in the United Kingdom report that, while underemployment is a problem,⁴⁶⁰ is it not as severe as in the United States. "In the U.K., if you are a professional, you will be able to get a job according to your status. If you have no skills you will be at that level and working for the bare minimum."⁴⁶¹

For example, foreign medical professionals are readily integrated into the U.K. healthcare system, according to interviewees.⁴⁶² Although Liberians noted that professionals outside the medical field have more difficulty, they are generally able to find some form of professional work, as opposed to more menial labor.

In turn, the fact that Liberian men in the United Kingdom are able to find higher level employment also appears to mitigate the dramatic gender role reversals that many Liberians describe taking place in the United States.⁴⁶³ Interviewees noted that, while women are also well employed in the United Kingdom and may indeed make more than their spouses, “the pressure is not as much.”⁴⁶⁴ They attribute this directly to the fact that in the United Kingdom “families are looked after” by the state.⁴⁶⁵ This high level of social welfare, however, along with a strong child protection regime, can exacerbate problems in childrearing, according to some. One community leader reported that children were aware that the government provided monetary support to families with children and thus felt they could “have their way.”⁴⁶⁶



Like their counterparts in the United States, Liberians in the United Kingdom have built a strong structure of community organization that encompasses the United Kingdom and Europe, as described below.

Building a New Community

Although some Liberians report feelings of loss of community and concerns about isolation from other Liberians, the diaspora community has developed numerous structures that provide opportunities to interact with other Liberians. These structures include political organizations, ethnic and tribal associations, women’s groups, alumni associations, social clubs, and faith-based groups.

Liberians also socialize and stay connected through a network of list serves, blog postings, websites, news magazines, journals, and chat rooms. At times, the array of diaspora organizations can add pressure to the lives of new and established immigrants:

Take for instance, a friend of mine living in Philadelphia. He is a Mandingo from Lofa County and has been living in the city of brotherly love ever since late 1990s. This friend is part of the Lofa county organization; he is part of the Mandingo organization; he is part of Liberian Mandingo of Pennsylvania;

he is also part of the Quardu Borni Chiefdom Mandingo Association; he is a part of the Liberians in Pennsylvania-ULAA⁴⁶⁷ chapter; and, obviously a part [of] the umbrella ULAA. Beside these six organizations with almost the same objectives (development back home), this friend is also [a] member of the Movement for Political Reform in Liberia and his high school alumni association. Let us not forget that he is [a] family man and part of a local congregation in addition to attending graduate school and working a full time job.⁴⁶⁸

This quote not only illustrates the complexity of Liberian diaspora socialization and accompanying responsibilities, it also demonstrates the proliferation of groups based on ethnic, regional, and political persuasions in the Liberian diaspora.

Umbrella Political Organizations

In the early 1970s, Liberian students across the United States organized an umbrella organization to advocate for the interests and welfare of Liberian students and immigrants throughout North America as well as to provide a sense of a national community in the Americas and to impact economic and political decisions in their homeland.⁴⁶⁹ This organization ultimately was named the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA).⁴⁷⁰ Many key figures in Liberia's civil crises were also key leaders in ULAA. Today, ULAA has remained active throughout the United States, with chapters and branches in most states where Liberians are populous.⁴⁷¹

Organization of the Liberian community in the United Kingdom and Europe is similar to that in the United States. For example, the European Federation of Liberian Associations is analogous to ULAA.⁴⁷² Liberians in Europe have also established country-based umbrella organizations, for example the Union of Liberian Organizations in the United Kingdom (ULO-UK)⁴⁷³ and the Liberian Association of Belgium,⁴⁷⁴ which are analogous to state-based entities in the United States.⁴⁷⁵

County and Ethnic Organizations

Liberian counties are organized in large part based on traditional home territories of particular ethnic groups. For example, Grand Gedeh County is traditionally the home of the Krahn people, Maryland County is traditionally home of the Grebo people, and Grand Kru County is traditionally the home of the Kru people. For every major county in Liberia, an association exists in the United States. Where counties are not surrogates for ethnic associations, such as for Mandingos who are settled across Liberia, an association in America represents that ethnic group.⁴⁷⁶ These associations are one of the mainstays by which members socialize and network in America.⁴⁷⁷ In these groups, members enjoy their traditional practices unique to the individual ethnic group. For example, on Mandingo

association websites in the United States and the United Kingdom, there are announcements of births and naming ceremonies, traditional weddings, and funerals.⁴⁷⁸ County and ethnic organizations also hold national conventions, meetings, and major gatherings so as to address issues affecting the group or to focus on development projects for their local communities back in Liberia.

High School Alumni Associations

Another major area of the Liberian diaspora socialization network is the network of high school alumni associations across the United States. Like county and ethnic organizations, for every major high school, especially for those in Monrovia, there is an alumni association in the United States.⁴⁷⁹ These alumni associations are mainly organized for social and developmental purposes.⁴⁸⁰

If only for psychological purposes, alum groups are a great means of socializing in the Liberian communities in America. People reconnect; establishing serious relationships at these events, some times leading to marriages, business partnerships, and so on. They look forward to it every year.⁴⁸¹

Religious Institutions/Affiliations

Many Liberians like to say that, “[w]e are a religious people,”⁴⁸² and “whether you are a Christian or Muslim, or neither of the two, we revere our religious leaders and institutions.”⁴⁸³ Aside from the family unit, arguably the most commonly available means of Liberian diaspora socialization are religious institutions, such as the church, mosque, or other types of spiritual venues. In every major U.S. city with a large Liberian diaspora population, there are Liberian churches, as well as associations of faith leaders. In Minnesota alone, there are more than 35 community churches with sizable Liberian congregations.⁴⁸⁴ In addition to regular church services, weddings, and funerals, serious matters of community concern are often referred to the church, a pastor, or an imam for intervention.⁴⁸⁵ One statement giver said in a follow-up interview:

[W]ithout this kind of well structured system of socialization via religious authorities, co-existence in the Liberian diaspora would be impossible, for people brought with them the vestiges of the problems that ignited the war.⁴⁸⁶

Aside from the organized church or mosque, Liberians also maintain prayer chains, faith networks, and spiritual social groups.

Little Liberias in the Diaspora

The waves of emigration of Liberians in the early and late 1990s have led to the creation of Liberian settlements in the United States. Within the diaspora community, the most clustered of these communities have been given names of Liberian towns and cities. The Park Hill neighborhood on Staten Island, New York, is home to a large Liberian community. This neighborhood is often called “Little Liberia,”⁴⁸⁷ as are communities in Bridgeport, Connecticut,⁴⁸⁸ and Albany, New York.⁴⁸⁹ The suburbs of Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, are home to one the largest Liberian populations outside of West Africa. Liberians call these Midwestern neighborhoods “New Kru Town.”⁴⁹⁰



Liberians also refer to a popular Liberian enclave on Woodland Avenue in northwest Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as “Little Monrovia,” whereas Liberian-Americans have named Providence, Rhode Island, after an infamous business district of Monrovia called “Waterside.”⁴⁹¹ And finally, although not as famous by its name as the other U.S.-based Liberian areas, the Washington, DC, metro area is often referred to as “Oldest

Congo Town,” because of its status as the oldest place of residence for Liberian students, diplomats, and other privileged visitors and immigrants.⁴⁹²

Many Liberians in these communities enjoy meeting and socializing at Liberian-owned food stores, restaurants, barber shops, and other Liberian owned and operated entities.⁴⁹³ Liberians congregate at these shops to not only buy familiar African food items, but also to engage in political and social discussions pertaining to events back in Liberia. By doing so, they provide the necessary social support to one another, as well as promote the business and financial interests of the owners of those businesses or organizations to sustain them in the community.

Liberian communities in the United States are also engaged in nonprofit work. While there is a dearth of data to accurately reflect the number of Liberian-operated nonprofit organizations (or, for that

matter, for-profit businesses), certain Liberian demographics, such as the elderly and the youth, benefit from social services programs designed and run by other diaspora Liberians.⁴⁹⁴

Families, Family Reunions, and Foundations

Although adapting to a new culture has been difficult for Liberian immigrant families in many respects, the family, family reunions, and in limited instances, family foundations have been a principal source of diaspora socialization and comfort.⁴⁹⁵ Even the most distant relative, or a familiar person from the same town or village from back home, can be a source of relief and social interaction in the United States. Some families meet every year for a reunion. These reunions and annual family gatherings provide opportunities for psychosocial support, guidance, nurturing follow-ups, and other necessary support.⁴⁹⁶ It is at these gatherings that serious family matters, whether achievements or failures, are reassessed and discussed.⁴⁹⁷

Clubs: Susu, Sports Clubs or Associations

Liberians turn their passion for football (soccer) into a social support mechanism.⁴⁹⁸ They also socialize and network through traditional social support venues for economic, sports, and social institutions such as Susu clubs,⁴⁹⁹ football clubs,⁵⁰⁰ and musical groups, among others. Around the sporting events, Liberians in the diaspora organize county leagues, tournaments, and meets. One of the organizers and club owners in New York stated, “it is mainly for family recreation.”⁵⁰¹ Another interviewee, however, suggested that the benefit of these events runs deeper. According to the interviewee, these county meets represent every county in Liberia and help to heal some of the wounds and ethnic hatreds that started the violence in Liberia.⁵⁰²

Major football tournaments are held annually on July 26, which is Liberia’s Independence Day. The July 26 tournaments bring together Liberians from all walks of life.⁵⁰³ There are also kickball teams for girls and women.⁵⁰⁴ The love of football is not limited to the young people, and there are major clubs all throughout the diaspora known as old-timers associations. These older Liberian men come together not only to enjoy the games, but also to support one another in matters ranging from personal to professional concerns.⁵⁰⁵ “We use the games to mentor young people and keep them out of trouble.”⁵⁰⁶

Communication and Media Socialization

Computer-literate Liberians have used the Internet to lessen some of the isolation inherent in life in the diaspora.⁵⁰⁷ They use the Internet to share information about their community including births, weddings, deaths, conventions, anniversaries, and social, economic, and political news or commentaries from both the diaspora and Liberia.⁵⁰⁸

In addition to online news magazines,⁵⁰⁹ chat rooms, blog postings, and other social networking sites, the Liberian diaspora has also developed a number of sophisticated email listservs, through which they engage in sometimes acrimonious exchanges. For example, the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota runs a well-established listserv.⁵¹⁰ Phone tree and mobile phone messaging are also used to keep the community connected and to invite people to major community events.⁵¹¹ In Atlanta, Georgia, for instance, there is a longstanding community phone line which provides daily updates of community news to people who use the service.⁵¹²

These social networking and support mechanisms provide a reserve of community support for Liberians separated by distance and oceans. These mechanisms can also play a divisive role, however, as they reflect and magnify tensions in a community dealing with the effects of a devastating conflict.

DAMAGING THE FABRIC OF LIBERIAN SOCIETY: ONGOING IMPACT OF THE WAR



Many of the challenges and coping strategies in the Liberian diaspora community are similar to those evident among other immigrant populations. But the trauma that Liberians faced during more than fourteen years of civil war poses unique challenges as the community builds a new life in the diaspora. The legacy of the Liberian war impacts the Liberian diaspora at all levels, from the individual, to the family, to community-level structures.

Individual-Level Impact

The diaspora community includes many individuals who have experienced significant personal trauma, and for many, their traumatic history has exacerbated the difficulties experienced in the resettlement process. One interviewee noted that little effort has been made by the U.S. government to understand Liberian culture and how deeply Liberians have been affected by their war experience.⁵¹³ Liberians in the United Kingdom also described dealing with issues of retraumatization upon arrival. For example, one statement giver mentioned that she arrived in the United Kingdom around the time of Bonfire Night and everyone was setting off fireworks.⁵¹⁴ The noises terrified her because she had no idea what was happening and it brought back memories of the war.⁵¹⁵

Another interviewee described trying to support two young women who had been through extreme,

yet typical, trauma by the time they arrived in the United States as refugees:

I used to be an aunt for two Liberian girls...[b]y the time they got refugee status, one had a three-year old baby. They came to the United States, and I was contacted by a Catholic relief organization, and they told me they were coming and they found foster parents for them...Well, one thing I saw was that they were not prepared for these children. The girls were [children] when the bomb fell in their yard and killed their ma, and they ran...They had a five-year-old brother, and their father was executed. Their five-year-old brother got lost, so they were very traumatized, their father was executed in their presence, and they lost their brother and were raped constantly for five years. They went through five African countries. They were 13 and 15 years old when they got here, with a baby, having run for years. I told the people these children are very traumatized, and they need counseling...So, I looked at them, and they were not prepared for these children. If you bring traumatized people here, then they need proper psychological counseling.⁵¹⁶

Numerous statement givers and interviewees report that mental health issues are prevalent in the diaspora community, including Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome,⁵¹⁷ depression, and feelings of inadequacy. Some feel these issues are of particular concern among Liberian men because of their dramatic change in status.⁵¹⁸ One interviewee in Minnesota told the TRC that he saw his friends turning to drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism to deal with the stress of past trauma and adjustment to life in the United States.⁵¹⁹

Physical health concerns are ongoing as a result of trauma and often are linked to mental health issues. Liberians suffer from all manner of physical disability resulting from the conflict, including chronic pain, scarring, vision problems, dental pain, loss of limbs, hearing loss, and traumatic brain injury.⁵²⁰ Women in particular suffer from the long term consequences of rape and sexual assault as well as traumatic pregnancies and miscarriages during the conflict. In addition, health care providers also report that many Liberians are dealing with the after-effects of malnutrition and that older Liberians are dealing with hypertension and diabetes.⁵²¹ Statement givers also were likely to describe physical manifestations of mental health concerns, such as feeling “pressure,” chest pain, feeling weak or faint, and night sweats. Nightmares and flashbacks also are commonly reported. Within the diaspora community, youth and former child soldiers are specifically cited as being in need of mental health treatment to assist in their recovery from their war experiences.⁵²²

There is general consensus both within the diaspora community and among those providers who work with the community that few Liberians receive appropriate mental health treatment, due both to a strong cultural bias on the part of Liberians against therapy and mental-health treatment⁵²³ and

to a lack of culturally-appropriate resources and services.⁵²⁴ According to a Liberian service provider in the community:

[I]f you come at it straight...if you come in and say ‘Oh, I think you need to go talk to Doctor So-and-So in mental hospital’ she wouldn’t have gone. She wouldn’t have. Because [among] Liberians...it’s not something that’s talked about. ‘Cause crazy is not a word that they want to hear.⁵²⁵

Liberians often have alternative explanations for why mental and other health problems are afflicting them based on their traditional cultural practices. These rationales may include “violation of natural or traditional laws (e.g., inappropriate relations with kin, stealing, etc), not performing expected rituals (e.g., ritual for a deceased elder), mental poisoning by an enemy, a curse by an aged elder for serious traditional violation (e.g., disrespect, abandonment, etc.), or bad luck leading to possession by evil spirit.”⁵²⁶ These beliefs can lead to alternative care seeking, as opposed to formal counseling or therapy.⁵²⁷

Perpetrators in the Community

Like refugees in Ghana and elsewhere in the sub-region, individuals in the United States also report encounters with those who perpetrated crimes against them during the war.⁵²⁸ This experience can re-traumatize individuals finally beginning to adjust to life in a new country.⁵²⁹ Encounters with perpetrators are reported to lead to changes in victim behavior, increased isolation, or other changes such as moving.⁵³⁰

One young woman saw another Liberian who had committed crimes against her family in the parking lot of her apartment complex in Minnesota. She later discovered that he was living on the floor above her. She went to the apartment management, and they helped her to move. She did not, however, report the encounter to anyone else. A social service provider described why:

[T]hey made eye contact and she had the feeling that he doesn’t know her, he doesn’t know it’s her. But just the fact that, it’s him and not recognizing what he had done. First of all he doesn’t know who she is so how can he recognize what he had done...And I think her issue was she was helpless, how can they hold him accountable, what she can do, who will she go to to believe what [she is] saying. It’s her word against his, especially here, so what [is she] going to do? Talking to him and maybe seeing him more often would just keep bringing everything back to [her] and [she] didn’t want to go through that.⁵³¹

A community leader in Minnesota told the TRC that “I’ve seen people move, I know of a family that

actually moved out of state. I know a family that left a job because [one member] ran into another person that actually killed somebody in her sight.”⁵³² Victims generally do not report these encounters, leading to an accountability vacuum.⁵³³ Another Liberian professional living in Minnesota recounted his encounter with a perpetrator in a newspaper interview: “[w]hen he was least expecting it – at a peaceful Liberian community meeting in Minnesota – he saw the man who, years earlier, had tortured him. . . . After the confrontation years later in Minnesota, [the] torturer apologized. But. . . he’s not ready to forgive.”⁵³⁴

Family-Level Impact

The war has also severely affected families. Because of deaths of family members during the war and the vagaries of immigration policy, roles within Liberian families have been forced to change. “The division of families occurs in several ways. Often families were divided during the war. Also, it costs a lot to bring a whole family to the United States. Many times one person will come to work with the hope that they can later pay to have the whole family arrive.”⁵³⁵

Some youth are in the diaspora with no adult members of their families or with no other family members at all. Both during the conflict and now in the diaspora, “kids have to grow up fast. . . they’re becoming breadwinners.”⁵³⁶ Accordingly, they are less willing to respect elders and traditional structures, when they view themselves as independent of them.⁵³⁷ This view is a major change from the Liberian extended family system in which aunts and uncles have the same power and responsibilities as parents and in which there is virtually no distinction between cousins, half-siblings, step-siblings, foster-siblings – all are brothers and sisters.⁵³⁸

One interviewee in Minnesota noted that:

When I grew up. . . my parents were there, we didn’t have war, we had stable community, day-in, day-out. . . structure was there, rules are the same, discipline, respect, that kind of thing. But all of that was taken away and these kids were just thrown from one place to another, some of them don’t have any parent around, so in some families, some homes, they don’t have any real structure. They’re just there, existing.⁵³⁹

Another interviewee in Providence expressed the concern that this lack of structure is “damaging the fabric of Liberian society.”⁵⁴⁰

Community-Level Impact

As noted elsewhere in this report, the Liberian diaspora was established before the Liberian civil war that began in 1989. The composition of the diaspora has undergone significant change, however, as a result of the conflict.

As the conflict progressed, the diaspora changed from a relatively homogeneous community of elites with connections to the United States, to a very diverse community reflecting the ethnic, class, and political divisions that were the roots of the conflict itself. Ethnic divisions are regularly cited by statement givers as a continuing problem in diaspora communities around the United States.⁵⁴¹ A community leader in Washington, DC, told the TRC that “differences among Liberian tribes became more visible during the civil war...the Liberian community began to



sectionalize to the point where certain members of the community were only comfortable dealing with their tribesmen.”⁵⁴² A community leader in Minnesota observed the same phenomenon, noting that just as during the war, factions developed and split off in Liberia, one saw the same phenomenon in the United States, with new organizations splitting off to protect specific interests.⁵⁴³ This statement giver also observed that in the 1990s, there was a significant Krahn-Nimba divide in Minnesota, which hurt the community. According to this statement giver, as the community has become larger and as more perceived perpetrators have been coming into the community, the diaspora community has drifted apart.⁵⁴⁴

One statement giver opined that Americo-Liberians in the United States continue to discriminate against Liberians of indigenous heritage.⁵⁴⁵ By contrast, a statement giver with ties to the Congo/Americo Liberian elite reported feeling “ostracized” by the diaspora community, in part because she was not in Liberia during the war and did not suffer personal trauma.⁵⁴⁶ Another statement giver who acknowledges that such tensions exist recommended that the community should organize, reconcile, and engage in mediation among ethnic groups, as most members of the diaspora community will not be returning to Liberia in the near future.⁵⁴⁷

Other statement givers noted, however, that among younger Liberians in the diaspora, much more

inter-tribal mixing occurs than ever before. Focus group participants in Providence believe that, as a result of the war, there have been more inter-marriages, which, they say, is a good thing.⁵⁴⁸ A Krahn statement giver living in Minnesota told the TRC:

My niece has a child by a Gio man here in the United States. I talked to her and asked her how she could date a Gio man, and have his baby, after a Gio had killed her uncle. She said that she couldn't hold against her boyfriend what some other Gio person did – he “didn't know anything about it.” This is an example of how things are different here in the United States – the younger generation is not as concerned with tribal divisions...⁵⁴⁹

The fracturing of the Liberian community since the war has also occurred along political lines. In the past five years, national ULAA elections,⁵⁵⁰ as well as community elections in Staten Island, New York,⁵⁵¹ in Minnesota,⁵⁵² and in Atlanta, Georgia,⁵⁵³ have been extremely divisive. In each community, election results were contested and legal action was pursued or threatened. Leaders in Washington, DC, also noted that “in the past, some members of the Liberian community did not accept local community association election results because they felt it was not free and fair.”⁵⁵⁴ These controversies in some cases appear to be related to undercurrents of mistrust as a result of the conflict in Liberia. In the 2007 election for the leadership of the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, the ultimate winner was accused of being a “warlord” by his opponents, based on his admitted role as a spokesperson for one faction that emerged during the civil war.⁵⁵⁵ No evidence of the candidate's participation in any fighting was ever produced, but the accusation led to extensive controversy within the community, as well as negative media attention for the candidate and the community. In the 2008 ULAA elections, one of the candidates was accused of being a rebel leader and was compared to the likes of Charles Taylor and Robert Mugabe.⁵⁵⁶

The successful candidate in the Minnesota election, Kerper Dwanyen, appeared at the public hearing in Minnesota and gave lengthy testimony concerning his work for the Nimba Redemption Council during the war and the emotional impact he suffered due to the allegations against him:

If you're running for president of the United States...it's somewhat easier to understand because the stakes are high, but when you're trying to lead your community on a volunteer basis and people engaged in these tactics it's somewhat befuddling. For me it was like grabbing my father and killing him right before me once again. That was the most painful part of it. That was the very painful part of it.

...

And it's sad what we are doing to each other here in this Diaspora, fighting this war in ways which are very, very unhealthy and very, very unhelpful to our country.⁵⁵⁷

From their perspective, Dwanyen's former opponents point to his acknowledged association with the Nimba Redemption Council and repeat allegations that this organization was associated with violence or human rights abuses. Such continued and highly emotional conflicts and confusion or disagreement over what happened and who is responsible are a significant challenge for continuing progress in the Liberian diaspora. The strains in the community have made mobilizing around important issues, such as extension of Liberians' temporary immigration status,⁵⁵⁸ unduly difficult.

“A HOUSE WITH TWO ROOMS”

Liberians, like many other forced migrant communities, maintain close relationships with Liberia.⁵⁵⁹ This relationship exists at the individual, local community, and national levels. The relationship expresses itself primarily through remittances, diaspora philanthropy targeted at development and rebuilding, as well as extensive diaspora involvement in the national politics of Liberia both during and after the conflict.

Diaspora Remittances

It was so heartbreaking, to see everyone on the streets begging. To see people who had nothing. Even people who used to be okay now have nothing. My friends, my family, people I knew who were fine before, would come round where I was staying and I went broke. I gave them all that I had, and I went broke.⁵⁶⁰

The pressure on Liberians living outside of West Africa to support and to assist those in Liberia or in refugee settlements in the sub-region is an omnipresent aspect of life for Liberian immigrants in the United States. One academic study reports that more than 72 percent of Liberian households send remittances;⁵⁶¹ community leaders report that the number is even higher.⁵⁶² The pressure to remit reportedly falls on everyone in the Liberian community, regardless of whether they are earning a wage. A high school-based social worker who works with Liberian students reports that even her students are subjected to pressure to support relatives – primarily mothers – who remain in Liberia.⁵⁶³ One study noted that the amount remitted to relatives in Liberia by an average Liberian household in Minnesota was between \$3,700 and \$4,150 per year.⁵⁶⁴ Based on that average, remittances in total from the United States to Liberia annually amount to between \$19 million and \$23 million dollars annually with another \$10 million to \$13 million annually going to Liberians in the rest of the West African sub-region.⁵⁶⁵

A researcher interviewing Liberians in Providence, Rhode Island, documented Liberians getting calls daily, sometimes five or six times, often from people who simply got their number from someone in Liberia who knows them.⁵⁶⁶ In keeping with the broad concept of “family” in Liberian culture, remittances are often paid to multiple generations of extended family, including spouses, parents, children, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.⁵⁶⁷ Remittances from a single individual in the United States often support between 10 and 20 people back in Liberia.⁵⁶⁸ The Providence study described the following typical remitting pattern:

The participant sends around \$300 every month to his wife and three children in Ghana. Bi-monthly he also sends up to \$300 dollars to a brother in Liberia and the money is shared between this brother and his wife and family, an uncle and his wife and family, and sometimes other siblings. He sometimes sends extra for his father. Each month he may send up to another \$200 in response to specific requests he receives from siblings, cousins, uncles, aunts as well as from unrelated friends in Ghana, Liberia and Cote D'Ivoire. At Christmas and for Liberia's Independence Day (July 26th) he sends money particularly extensively, including extra money to be shared among more people in his transfer to his brother. On top of this personal sending, he has donated money to a collection for orphaned children in Liberia.⁵⁶⁹

Attempting to save money to send home can have a significant impact on the quality of life of Liberian immigrants, many of whom also support large extended families in the United States.

[T]hat's what we get when we're there and everybody else is sending money – your family is sending money, and then when you get here and you're not able to do that for your family right away – it becomes a problem. Our people think, oh, I'm a failure to my family because I'm not able to help them right away. So they face a lot of issues going through that. Whenever they get a job all they think about is to send money, they're not thinking about maintaining your apartment here, maintaining a phone line which is a necessity, is not a luxury.⁵⁷⁰

A police liaison officer in Minnesota who has worked extensively with the Liberian community observed that it is not unusual for a single wage-earner to be supporting ten dependents here in the United States.⁵⁷¹ One statement giver reported that the stress of working multiple jobs to support relatives in Liberia has left her little time or resources for her children living with her in the United States;⁵⁷² another statement giver described the impact of remittances to Liberia as forcing her to live “paycheck to paycheck.”⁵⁷³

Liberians report that they save money to remit by lodging with other family members (saving rent money), by collecting cans for recycling refunds, or by limiting their own educational opportunities (choosing to pay for education of family in Liberia rather than their own).⁵⁷⁴ The plight of relatives living in refugee camps is well understood by members of the diaspora, many of whom lived in the same camps prior to emigrating to the United States.⁵⁷⁵ The perception of many family members who receive remittances that relatives living in the United States are well-off and can thus afford to make the payments is at painful odds with the reality for many Liberians in the diaspora.⁵⁷⁶

The ability to remit also impacts one's standing in the community, both in the diaspora and in Liberia.

This is how they judge you in the family. If you are here and you don't send money back then they will classify you as unimportant, and they will not respect you if you go back. Because if you can't send money it is a kind of disgrace to your family, people will laugh at them and say "you have family in America but you are still poor!"⁵⁷⁷

As described above, remittances play a critical role in maintaining links between the diaspora and the population in Liberia. Remittances also play an important role in meeting the needs of Liberians who may be overlooked or outside the mandate of large international non-governmental organizations and other donors.⁵⁷⁸ One Liberian interviewed for an academic study noted that he remits to keep his brothers, who were former fighters, from returning to that lifestyle.⁵⁷⁹ Lubkemann has posited that remittances may even "mitigate some of the forms of social antagonism and conflict that repatriation and other forms of targeted humanitarian assistance have...been documented to generate."⁵⁸⁰ In this way, remittances may play a key role in Liberia's transition out of conflict.

Diaspora Philanthropy and Entrepreneurship

Apart from involvement at the individual level through remittances and other support, resettled Liberians also are very involved in communities to which they have ties in Liberia. Whether through helping with projects in their home villages, working through a high school alumni organization, or by starting their own non-profit organizations, a number of statement givers reported specific plans to assist in the rebuilding of Liberia, both in the present and the future. These statement givers reflect the view that the diaspora community must assist if conditions in Liberia are to improve⁵⁸¹ and that Liberia can benefit from what those in the Diaspora have learned.⁵⁸² "[W]e all think we have a solemn responsibility to be a part of the economic revival of Liberia, because ultimately...the issue of reviving Liberia's economy is very, very critical to this whole issue of reconciliation."⁵⁸³ Projected contributions include sharing knowledge about starting and operating businesses,⁵⁸⁴ operating children's clinics,⁵⁸⁵ and teaching.⁵⁸⁶

Several statement givers and interviewees reported that they are currently working with groups on specific projects to rebuild Liberia through non-profit organizations and foundations based in the United States.⁵⁸⁷ For example, the Grand Gedeh Association in the Americas, Inc., the primary association for those who identify themselves as Krahn, reports that it has run programs that put “students on scholarships in various colleges, universities and technical institutions in Liberia, supplies hospital beds and medications, repairing public buildings, schools textbooks/materials etc.”⁵⁸⁸ The National Association of Cape Mountainians in the Americas recently raised \$13,000 from a U.S.-based foundation and matched that through fundraising from its members to rebuild a bridge in Cape Mount County.⁵⁸⁹ The President of the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota told the TRC that the Minnesota community is working “with institutions that can help us in the relief area as it relates to two particular [issues]...revitalizing the health care and revitalizing the educational sector.”⁵⁹⁰ A Liberian living in Washington, DC, told the TRC that he funds a rebuilding project through a “clan” association. The organization has “completed the reconstruction phase of a clinic in its community at home and been involved in supplies of textbooks and school’s materials, provid[ing] monthly stipend for teachers in its clan” as well as other activities.⁵⁹¹ A Liberian woman in Atlanta told the TRC about a foundation she and her sister started to provide scholarships to young women and girls in Liberia. Liberian Women’s Initiatives – Minnesota was founded to send money and supplies back to Liberia and now provides services in the diaspora. Numerous other philanthropic endeavors were also reported, including a school supplies and sanitation project in Buchanan organized by the Bassa Action Group, for example.⁵⁹² The European Federation of Liberian Associations has instituted “The Development Challenge for Liberia” and held a conference on the issue in Paris in summer 2008. Proposed projects focus on health, education, agriculture, and resettlement and integration.⁵⁹³

Focusing on economic opportunity is also a key part of much work among resettled Liberians. A statement giver living in North Carolina told the TRC about his plans to begin the LIGREED Corporation which would build small business infrastructure and work to empower small business start-ups in Liberia.⁵⁹⁴ The Organization of Liberians in Minnesota and several other state and European associations have brought Liberian ministers of trade to their states and have worked to organize trade missions to Liberia.⁵⁹⁵

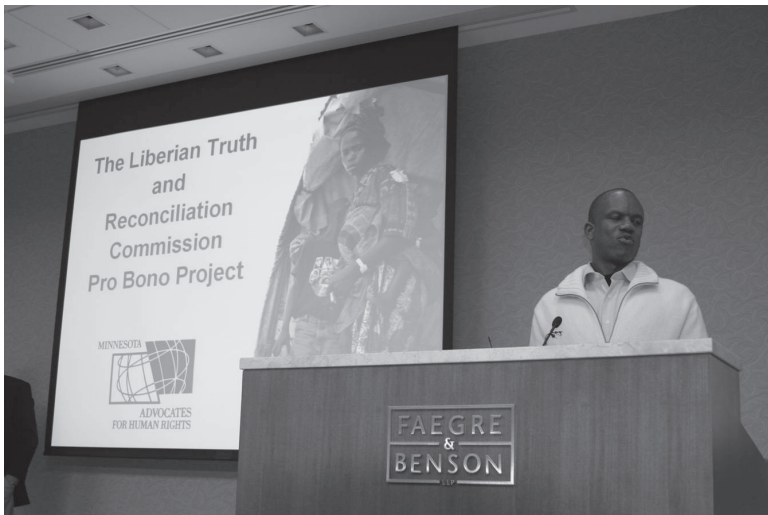
Some individual Liberians are contributing without any organization behind their efforts. An academic researcher documented this anecdote about a diaspora “philanthropist”:

His first visit to find relatives had required several days of journey by car, by boat, and by foot because bridges and roads had been destroyed by the war. During his visit it became clear that the greatest needs of the village stemmed from its problems with lack of outside access, primarily because the old road had been mined and three small bridges destroyed. With a contribution of \$800 USD this individual provided the villagers with tools and resources they needed to clear a new road and build three rudimentary

bridges over streams that would allow a four-wheel vehicle to reach the community—if not during the entire year, at least during the dry season. Indeed, when Edward visited them the following year he was able to hire a car that took him all the way to the village itself in considerably less time than his first trip had taken.

On this second trip community leaders asked for Edward’s assistance in establishing a small-scale lumber extraction business. Above all they needed a chainsaw and funds to pay for a truck to take their first shipment of lumber to the nearest market. On his return to the U.S. Edward purchased a chainsaw and sent it back through relatives in Ghana. When the villagers communicated back to him that the chainsaw was breaking down he paid for a Ghanaian operator to go and instruct the villagers in the chainsaw’s use and to repair the machine. Once he was notified that the first load of lumber was ready to be sent to market he had a relative in Monrovia hire an independent truck driver to go to the village. By his account a total investment of \$1500 USD had provided the village with the means to now run a self-sustaining small-scale lumber extraction and milling business.⁵⁹⁶

Diaspora Involvement in Liberia’s Political Fortunes



Liberia researcher Mary Moran has opined that, to ignore the role of the diaspora, particularly in the United States, is to “tell only half the story” when it comes to Liberia’s decline into conflict and its road to peace.⁵⁹⁷ TRC statements from the Diaspora reflect a sentiment that many Liberians in the diaspora played a role in fomenting and funding the conflict in Liberia. One community leader in Washington, DC, said that “some Liberians blame ULAA

for the war” because it was founded by individuals who later played significant roles in Liberia’s civil crises.⁵⁹⁸ According to him, in the early days, ULAA collaborated with and “agitated” along with home-based student organizations such as the Liberian National Student Union (LINSU), Progressive

Alliance of Liberia (PAL), and the Movement for Justice in Africa (MOJA).⁵⁹⁹ ULAA called on the Liberian authorities to implement fundamental changes in the social, political, and economic systems of the country.⁶⁰⁰

One month before the coup in which President Tolbert was killed, ULAA representatives were in Monrovia to meet with Tolbert at the Executive Mansion. The delegation included Charles Taylor.⁶⁰¹ Then-president of ULAA, Bai Gbala, presented Tolbert with a statement that is instructive about the way in which members of the diaspora saw themselves interacting with the political situation in Liberia.

[C]an it not be argued, and persuasively so, that those Liberians such as we are, who have traveled and lived abroad, and who have had the opportunity to observe and experience the mechanics and dynamics of other social, economic, and political systems...have a clear and inescapable responsibility...to deal with and speak out unequivocally on the multiple problems that now grip our common country and people?⁶⁰²

The statement outlined three major concerns, including “Freedom of Speech and Press,” “Suffrage,” and the treatment of Liberians by U.S. immigration authorities.⁶⁰³ The document also described several other meetings that had taken place between ULAA representatives and Liberian government officials in the United States and proposed a constitutional amendment to address some of ULAA’s concerns about voting rights in Liberia.⁶⁰⁴ At public hearings in St. Paul, Minnesota, a ULAA board member told the TRC that “ULAA has a history of being in the vanguard of changing the political landscape. They consistently advocated for social justice...ensuring that there was a political change in Liberia that reflected the aspirations of the majority of the Liberian people.”⁶⁰⁵

A public hearing witness, the President of the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, testified that the diaspora has had a major impact on events in Liberia, both positive and negative:

People in the diaspora have been a part of this. What we have to understand is that diaspora Liberians beginning from the seventies have been at the forefront of advocating for human rights in Liberia speaking out against the ills of the society throughout. Then we have the component in the diaspora who felt like dialogue was not the answer, military action is the answer...I know that as the result of the atrocities against the people of Nimba, the Nimba organization in this country did raise money to give to the NPFL.

After the fall of Doe, the Krahn and Mandingo organizations raised money...to fund LPC and LURD and MODEL. But that’s one component,

but the diaspora community has also been actively involved in resolving the conflict. The 1990 Banjul Conference was brought about because people in the diaspora lobbied along with people in Liberia. I don't want to have people in the diaspora take total credit for this, but diaspora Liberians have been a part of finding solutions to the conflict. Ironically, some of the same people who have been involved in looking for solutions have been involved in instigating the crisis as well.⁶⁰⁶

After the coup and as the civil war progressed, there was also a perception that Liberians abroad were supporting various factions, sometimes with funding. Although this link between diaspora funding and fighting factions was often mentioned, specific information was very difficult to obtain. Most statement givers echoed an interviewee living in Arizona who noted that he “believes that the diaspora has played a significant role in the Liberian conflict. . .[but] [h]e cannot give specific examples of funding or identify individuals who headed up that effort.”⁶⁰⁷

Not only did diaspora Liberians strategize about and take part in events that affected the course of the Liberian war, diaspora Liberians have also played an active role in steering the nation toward peace. In January 2003, for example, a meeting of prominent diaspora Liberians was held at Indiana University (an institution with which former interim president Amos Sawyer has had a long term relationship). The stated intent was to “begin a discussion designed to provide a deeper understanding of Liberian governance institutions and their potentials to contribute to peace and democratic governance in Liberia.”⁶⁰⁸ In August 2003, another “workshop” of prominent diaspora Liberians was held at the University of Pennsylvania under the auspices of the Solomon Asch Center for the study of Ethnopolitical Conflict and the Liberty Center for Survivors of Torture.⁶⁰⁹ The product of that



workshop was an extensive report intended to influence the course of peace processes in Liberia. In addition to these gatherings, Liberians in the diaspora also organized protests in Washington, DC, to demand assistance and military intervention from the United States.⁶¹⁰ ULAA also continued to be involved by sending a delegation to the Accra Peace Conference and participating in election monitoring.⁶¹¹

After the establishment of peace in Liberia, members of the diaspora continued to play a role in politics back home. In 2004, Liberians in the diaspora participated in a virtual town hall meeting with transitional government chairman Gyude Bryant.⁶¹² Statement givers reported actively campaigning for various candidates in the 2005 elections. Moran notes that the Liberian government issued a directive that campaigning outside of Liberia was prohibited by Liberian election laws in response to the “very active organizing being waged by candidates for the 2005 elections in diaspora communities.”⁶¹³

Diaspora Liberians consider themselves to have “long-term commitments and responsibilities to both a country of origin and a country of resettlement,” effectively making them “transnationals.”⁶¹⁴ This transnational identity inevitably leads to the question of a return home, a topic discussed by many statement givers in both the United States and the United Kingdom.

THE RETURN

Concerning a return to Liberia, members of the diaspora community express many views about whether they wish to return and under what conditions. An issue that looms large for both Liberians in the diaspora and those back home in Liberia is the issue of dual citizenship.⁶¹⁵ Liberia does not allow dual citizenship. Accordingly, those immigrants who wish to become citizens in their countries of resettlement must give up their Liberian citizenship. Some resettled Liberians view their lack of citizenship as tantamount to being wrongly disenfranchised.⁶¹⁶ Although many Liberians are seeking citizenship in other countries, some choose not to become citizens so that they can remain Liberian citizens.⁶¹⁷ For example, one Liberian living in the United Kingdom noted that he resisted taking on British citizenship for more than a decade because “I felt that if I took on British citizenship I was selling out.”⁶¹⁸

Many resettled Liberians see themselves as entitled to citizenship in Liberia and to its benefits, such as land ownership or government jobs. “Over the years we’ve sustained them, advocated for them over the course of the war...became the economic lifeline of the country over the course of the war.”⁶¹⁹ But not everyone is in favor of allowing dual citizenship because, in one interviewee’s opinion, it “defeats nation-building and only ensures the continuance of incompetence and corruption as dual nationals leave the country at the first sign of trouble...”⁶²⁰ Still others see the Liberian citizenship regime as antiquated and violating human rights.

Most diaspora Liberians would appreciate and want to see dual citizenship happen. I strongly believe that one of the main forces that kept us in the dark is this question of only people of negro descent to own property and have a government position. I think our constitution prior to the war was a racist constitution because only someone of Negro descent can do certain things...There should be no restrictions on a man who has been out of his

country through no fault of his own on going back and wanting to help his country and also taking a spouse and children who may be of different race; there should be no question about their ability to contribute to Liberia and be a part of the nation.⁶²¹

Apart from feeling entitled to dual citizenship, many diaspora Liberians feel that they have something to contribute to Liberia after having been abroad and having gained new education and experiences that would aid Liberia's rebuilding. "There is an economic argument to be made that what you do with dual citizenship is that you are benefiting from both sides. If our kids are prohibited from having dual citizenship then they will not forgo the United States for Liberia. So the benefits that would have been accrued to them will not happen, they will not want to take their business to Liberia and/or to go back to Liberia, this is the economic argument."⁶²² Another Liberian living in the United Kingdom noted that "I want to go back to Liberia at some point, so you are going to tell me that because I have British citizenship you aren't going to let me come there and work with the skills that I have. I think I owe a debt to my country and I want the opportunity to go and pay back at some point. Because I have British citizenship or American citizenship I can't do certain things? Many of us have argued that point. Hopefully I think the government should realize it."⁶²³

Some statement givers are clear that they do not want to return to Liberia under any conditions.⁶²⁴ Others report a wish to be able to return to the country for a limited period to attend to the burial of loved ones,⁶²⁵ attend life cycle events, visit family, or take care of property, but do not see themselves as returning permanently.⁶²⁶ Several older Liberians expressed a general wish to "go home and be in peace."⁶²⁷ Many others say they consider returning to Liberia, but only under certain conditions. These conditions range from a requirement that there be "less corruption and a better mentality in Liberia"⁶²⁸ or an opportunity for someone who has completed his education to be able to "help the Liberian people,"⁶²⁹ to being able to "lead a normal life,"⁶³⁰ have sufficient funds to live and travel,⁶³¹ and "live like an American does."⁶³²

Notes

- 1 See Steven Vertovec, *The Political Importance of Diasporas* MIGRATION INFORMATION SOURCE (Migration Policy Institute, Washington, DC, June 2005, <http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=313>).
- 2 U.N. High Comm'r for Refugees, 2005 UNHCR STATISTICAL YEARBOOK: LIBERIA 400-401 (2007) (listing the total number of Liberian refugees in 1996 at 784,008) [hereinafter U.N. High Comm'r for Refugees, STATISTICAL YEARBOOK], <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/4641be64d.pdf>.
- 3 *Id.*
- 4 R. Baker, *Psychological Consequences for Tortured Refugees Seeking Asylum and Refugee Status in Europe*, in TORTURE AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: CURRENT TREATMENT APPROACHES 83-106 (M. Basoglu ed., 1992).
- 5 See Chapter 6 for a discussion of tactics used by fighting factions during the war. See Amnesty Int'l, *Liberia: Civilians Face Human Rights Abuses at Home and Across Borders* 3, AI Index AFR 34/020/2002, Oct. 1, 2002 [hereinafter *Abuses at Home and Across Borders*], <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR34/020/2002>.
- 6 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 36.
- 7 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1553.
- 8 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1367; see also, e.g., TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 589 and 1682.
- 9 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 211. ECOMOG refers to the Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group peacekeeping force. Buchanan is a coastal city to the south of Monrovia.
- 10 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1378.
- 11 Fourteen peace accords were signed between 1990 and the end of the fighting in Liberia in 2003. PRISCILLA HAYNER, HENRY DUNANT CENTRE FOR HUMANITARIAN DIALOGUE, NEGOTIATING PEACE IN LIBERIA: PRESERVING THE POSSIBILITY FOR JUSTICE 6, <http://www.ictj.org/static/Africa/Liberia/HaynerLiberia1207.eng.pdf>.
- 12 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 115.
- 13 *Id.*
- 14 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1646.
- 15 *Id.*
- 16 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 16.
- 17 *Id.*
- 18 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 182. The offices of the TRC of Liberia are currently located on 9th Street in the Sinkor district of Monrovia.
- 19 See Chapter 4 for background discussion of ethnic tensions.
- 20 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 65.
- 21 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 151.
- 22 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 478.
- 23 See Chapter 7.
- 24 E.g., TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 32, 105, 1435, 1598, 1646, 1738.
- 25 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 707.
- 26 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 120.
- 27 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 28.
- 28 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 182.
- 29 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1616.
- 30 SHELLY DICK, FORCED MIGRATION ONLINE, RESEARCH GUIDE: LIBERIA § 2.4.1 (2003) [hereinafter DICK, FORCED MIGRATION ONLINE], <http://www.forcedmigration.org/guides/fmo013/>.
- 31 Human Rights Watch, *World Report 1999 – Liberia Human Rights Developments* 49, 51 [hereinafter *Liberia Human Rights Developments*], <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/worldreport99/africa/liberia.html>; Amnesty Int'l, *Liberia: War in Lofa County Does Not Justify Killing, Torture and Abduction*, AI Index AFR 34/003/2001, May 1, 2001, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR34/003/2001/en>; *World Briefs*, Hous. CHRONICLE, Sept. 20, 1998, at 35; *U.S. Airlifts Opposition Leader Out of Liberia*, N.Y. TIMES, Sept. 26, 1998, at A3. After one week at the U.S. embassy, Johnson was flown to Sierra Leone and later to Nigeria, where he was jailed and made to await trial for charges of treason. *Liberia Human Rights Developments*, *supra* note 31, at 49, 51; *Liberian Dismisses U.S. Rescue of Rival*, WASH. POST, Sept. 27, 1998, at A32.
- 32 See, e.g., TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 1452 (describing how Chuckie Taylor's bodyguards bayoneted a statement giver in his arm and neck, causing deafness in one ear, and detained him in jail) and 201 (describing the shooting and death of statement giver's daughter, knifing of statement

- giver, rape of statement giver's sister-in-law, and burning of their house).
- 33 Bai Gbala, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 7 (June 12, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author). Due to pressure from the international community, Taylor granted clemency to Gbala and the others on July 21, 2001 and released them after three years. *Id.* at 7-8.
- 34 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1325.
- 35 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 479.
- 36 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 430, 438, 444, 445, 479, 484, 494, 623, 637, 665, 668, 672, 679, 680, 1099, 1122, 1124, 1133, 1149.
- 37 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1646.
- 38 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 16, 585, 1481.
- 39 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 16.
- 40 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 16.
- 41 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1330.
- 42 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1529.
- 43 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 866.
- 44 *See, e.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1646 (describing her mother going to run an errand in a suburb of Monrovia and being separated from the statement giver and her brother for months by the rebel advance).
- 45 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 637.
- 46 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 176.
- 47 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1515.
- 48 *Id.*
- 49 *Id.*
- 50 *Id.*
- 51 Memorandum from Commanding Officer of Marine Medium Helicopter Squadron 261 to Commandant of the Marine Corps regarding Command Chronology for Period 1 July 1990 through 31 December 1990 at 8-9, dated January 10, 1991 (on file with author, FOIA); Michael R. Gordon, *U.S. Forces Evacuate 74 After Threats in Liberia*, N.Y. TIMES, Aug. 6, 1990; LAUREN PLOCH, CONG. RESEARCH SERVICE, AFRICA COMMAND: U.S. STRATEGIC INTERESTS & THE ROLE OF THE U.S. MILITARY IN AFRICA 36 (2007), <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL34003.pdf>.
- 52 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 648.
- 53 ROBIN DUNN-MARCOS ET AL., CTR. FOR APPLIED LINGUISTICS, LIBERIANS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THEIR HISTORY AND CULTURE 26-27 (Donald A. Ranard ed., 2005), http://www.cal.org/co/liberians/liberian_050406_1.pdf. *See generally*, AYODEJI OLUKOJU, CULTURE AND CUSTOMS OF LIBERIA 91-104 (2006).
- 54 *See infra* text accompanying notes 535 – 580
- 55 *See supra* section on Family-Level Impact for additional discussion.
- 56 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1350.
- 57 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 184.
- 58 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1277.
- 59 *Id.*
- 60 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 478.
- 61 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1352 .
- 62 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 468; *see also* TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 187.
- 63 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1303.
- 64 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1448.
- 65 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1482.
- 66 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 741.
- 67 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1424.
- 68 Ali Sylla, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 12 (June 13, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with the author).
- 69 Ali Sylla, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 12 (June 13, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with the author).
- 70 Checkpoints were also a phenomenon during the Doe era between 1980 and 1989. A statement giver now living in Atlanta told the TRC that “Doe soldiers were [giving] Liberian people [a] hard time by taking money from them at checkpoints. If traveling out of town, they would take food and money from you.” TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1303.
- 71 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1352.
- 72 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 16, 36 and 116.
- 73 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 32.
- 74 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1303.
- 75 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 187.
- 76 Tabay is a method of binding prisoners with arms

- behind the back, tied at the elbow so that the ribcage is close to bursting and all sensation in the arms is lost.
- 77 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1350.
- 78 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 36.
- 79 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 32.
- 80 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1594.
- 81 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1352.
- 82 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 16.
- 83 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 120.
- 84 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1525.
- 85 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 16.
- 86 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1352. See Chapter 10's section on Gender-based Violence during Flight.
- 87 *Abuses at Home and Across Borders*, *supra* note 5, at 4.
- 88 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 15.
- 89 INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT MONITORING CENTRE (IDMC), LIBERIA: KEY CHALLENGE IS ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY OF IDP RETURN 46-47 (2006), <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/44e9b3484.html>.
- 90 SHARON COOPER & ROY HERRMANN, U.N. HIGH COMM'R FOR REFUGEES EVALUATION & POLICY UNIT, REAL-TIME EVALUATION OF UNHCR'S RESPONSE TO THE LIBERIA EMERGENCY 5-6 (2003), <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.pdf?tbl=RESEARCH&id=3fd7320c4&page=research>.
- 91 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 25.
- 92 *See, e.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1156.
- 93 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 740.
- 94 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 36. Another statement giver described going to Eternal Love Winning Africa (ELWA) because U.S. citizens had been encouraged to go there. TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1102.
- 95 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1156.
- 96 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1396; *see also* TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 586 (describing forced labor for the NPFL at Fendell).
- 97 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1323.
- 98 See Chapter 12 for discussion on the role of the United States.
- 99 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 490.
- 100 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1350.
- 101 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 36, 349.
- 102 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 106, 107, 62, 71, 136, 748, 977, 1058, 1210.
- 103 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 107.
- 104 DICK, FORCED MIGRATION ONLINE, *supra* note 30, § 2.4.2.
- 105 COOPER & HERRMANN, *supra* note 90, at 2-3.
- 106 Humanitarian Information Centre for Liberia, *Location of Formal IDP Camps and Spontaneous Settlements and Return Package Assistance Distribution*, Map Catalog Code: LIB 135, June 3, 2005, http://www.humanitarianinfo.org/liberia/mapcentre/thematic/idps/pdf/LIB135_IDP_Camps_Locations_02Jun2005.pdf.
- 107 Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, Key statistics of official IDP camps (May 2004), [http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/\(httpEnvelopes\)/A5995FF71ECA62BC802570B8005AAD9B?OpenDocument](http://www.internal-displacement.org/idmc/website/countries.nsf/(httpEnvelopes)/A5995FF71ECA62BC802570B8005AAD9B?OpenDocument) (last visited Dec. 30, 2008).
- 108 U.N. High Comm'r for Refugees Africa Bureau, UNHCR's Position in the Treatment of Liberian Asylum Seekers and Return to Liberia 1, Aug. 3, 2005, http://www.unhcr.dk/Pdf/protect/Position_Liberia.pdf.
- 109 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 419, 971, 977, 1116, 1352.
- 110 JENNIFER SCHLECHT, MIGRATION POLICY INST., WAR IN LIBERIA HIGHLIGHTS HEALTH THREATS TO REFUGEES (2003), www.migrationinformation.org/feature/display.cfm?ID=151.
- 111 U.N. High Comm'r for Refugees, STATISTICAL YEARBOOK, *supra* note 2, at 400-01.
- 112 *Id.*
- 113 The source of the Cavally River is in the Nimba Mountains of Guinea. The river delineates the border between Côte d'Ivoire and Liberia for more than half of its length. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, IVORY COAST: A COUNTRY STUDY (Robert E. Handloff ed., 1988), <http://countrystudies.us/ivory-coast/16.htm>.
- 114 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 134, 147, 162, 363, 644, 646, 650, 771, 804, 931, 428, 478, 1092, 1294, 1298, 1356.
- 115 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1518; *see also* TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 475.
- 116 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 785
- 117 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 15.

- 118 Ali Sylla, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 14-15 (June 13, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with the author).
- 119 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 105.
- 120 *Abuses at Home and Across Borders*, *supra* note 5, at 6, 9.
- 121 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 707.
- 122 *Abuses at Home and Across Borders*, *supra* note 5, at 9.
- 123 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 741 (“My neighbor [and I] went by car to Mali. I was put in jail for a week in Mali because I did not have documents.”); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 472.
- 124 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 459.
- 125 *E.g.*, *Abuses at Home and Across Borders*, *supra* note 5, at 7.
- 126 *Id.*
- 127 *Id.* at 8.
- 128 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1457.
- 129 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 34.
- 130 *Id.* The Tano River was a Ghanaian vessel sent to evacuate Ghanaian nationals but it also carried Liberians to safety. TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 593, 1567, 1572, 1579, 178.
- 131 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 34.
- 132 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1738.
- 133 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 34.
- 134 Francis Kpatindé, *Liberia – Shaking Off Bad Memories*, 106 REFUGEES MAG., Dec. 1, 1996, <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3b5833e5f.html>.
- 135 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1351.
- 136 Cynthia Jikpamu, *Overcoming the Liberian Nightmare*, 107 REFUGEES MAG., Mar. 1, 1997, <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/PUBL/3b66ce692.html>.
- 137 DICK, FORCED MIGRATION ONLINE *supra* note 30, § 2.4.1.
- 138 Kpatindé, *supra* note 134.
- 139 *Id.*
- 140 Sierra Leone Web, Sierra Leone News: May 1996-May 14, <http://www.sierra-leone.org/Archives/slnews0596.html>.
- 141 *Id.*
- 142 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 437, 464, 484, 494, 586. See Chapter 7’s section on Deployment of ECOMOG for additional discussion.
- 143 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 586.
- 144 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 15.
- 145 See Appendix C: Protections for Refugees in International Law for additional discussion.
- 146 DUNN-MARCOS ET AL., *supra* note 53, at 21.
- 147 UNHCR, STATISTICAL YEARBOOK, *supra* note 2, at 400-01.
- 148 *Liberia: UNHCR to Promote Voluntary Repatriation Following Positive Changes*, UNHCR BRIEFING NOTES. Feb. 17, 2006, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/print?tbl=NEWS&id=43f5b0c611>.
- 149 The Secretary-General, *Sixteenth Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in Liberia*, 12, delivered to the Security Council, U.N. Doc. S/2008/183 (Mar. 19, 2008), <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/sgrep08.htm>.
- 150 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1515.
- 151 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1383.
- 152 See *supra* note 146.
- 153 TOM KUHLMAN, UNHCR POLICY AND EVALUATION UNIT, RESPONDING TO PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF LIBERIAN REFUGEES IN CÔTE D’IVOIRE 11 (2002), <http://www.unhcr.org/publ/RESEARCH/3d4006412.pdf>.
- 154 *Id.*
- 155 *Id.* at 12.
- 156 *Id.*
- 157 U.N. High Comm’r for Refugees, STATISTICAL YEARBOOK, *supra* note 2, at 400-01.
- 158 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 588.
- 159 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 457, 447.
- 160 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 439, 440, 446, 453.
- 161 KUHLMAN, *supra* note 153, at 22.
- 162 *Id.*
- 163 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 651. See also KUHLMAN, *supra* note 153, at 24.
- 164 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 478.
- 165 KUHLMAN, *supra* note 153, at 24; *Abuses at Home and Across Borders*, *supra* note 5, at 7.
- 166 See, *e.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 428, 465, 391.
- 167 DUNN-MARCOS ET AL., *supra* note 53, at 21.
- 168 *Id.*
- 169 Fati Kaba, *Tensions in Côte d’Ivoire Affect UNHCR*

- Refugee Registration, UNHCR NEWS STORIES, Mar. 3, 2005, <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/home/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&id=4227260c4&page=news>.
- 170 U.N. High Comm’r for Refugees, *supra* note 2, at 400-01 (listing the total number of Liberian refugees in 1996 at 784,008).
- 171 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 428. *See also* TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 843; *Abuses at Home and Across Borders*, *supra* note 5, at 2.
- 172 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 428.
- 173 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 588.
- 174 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 165.
- 175 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 223.
- 176 *Id.*
- 177 U.N. High Comm’r for Refugees, STATISTICAL YEARBOOK, *supra* note 2, at 400-01.
- 178 Rachel Goldstein-Rodriguez, *Biggest Convoy to Date Heads Back to Lofa County, Liberia*, UNHCR NEWS STORIES, Mar. 21, 2005, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/423eccca94.html>.
- 179 *Liberian refugees relocated in neighboring countries*, UNHCR NEWS STORIES, May 1, 2002, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/3cd00df24.html>.
- 180 *West Africa Update*, UNHCR COUNTRY UPDATES, Mar. 7, 2002, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/3c8762c64.html>.
- 181 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1408.
- 182 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 32.
- 183 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 15, 65, 707.
- 184 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 707.
- 185 *Id.*
- 186 UNHCR, STATISTICAL YEARBOOK, *supra* note 2, at 400-01.; UNHCR, 2005 UNHCR STATISTICAL YEARBOOK: SIERRA LEONE 486-87 (April 2007), <http://www.unhcr.org/statistics/STATISTICS/4641bec111.pdf>.
- 187 U.N. High Comm’r for Refugees, STATISTICAL YEARBOOK, *supra* note 2, at 400-401 (Liberia), 486-87 (Sierra Leone).
- 188 DICK, FORCED MIGRATION ONLINE, *supra* note 30, § 3.1.1.
- 189 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1556.
- 190 Statement of Anonymous, Truth & Reconciliation Comm’n of Liberia Palava Hut Meeting (June 16, 2007, Clarkston, Ga., U.S.A.) (notes on file with author).
- 191 *Id.*
- 192 *Id.*
- 193 Elizabeth Blunt, *Civil War Fears in Guinea*, BBC NEWS, October 23, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/986375.stm>, (describing cross border attacks from both Sierra Leone and Liberia); *Guinea Crisis ‘Worst in World,’* BBC NEWS, Jan. 24, 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/1132796.stm>.
- 194 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 206, 379, 412, 647, 676, 749, 1285, 1637.
- 195 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1637.
- 196 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 206.
- 197 *Abuses at Home and Across Borders*, *supra* note 5, at 7.
- 198 JEFF CRISP, THE CENTER FOR COMPARATIVE IMMIGRATION STUDIES, NO SOLUTION IN SIGHT: THE PROBLEM OF PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS IN AFRICA 14, <http://www.ccis-ucsd.org/publications/wrkg68.pdf> (2002) (citation omitted).
- 199 *Id.* at 16.
- 200 *Id.* at 10.
- 201 UNHCR, STATISTICAL YEARBOOK, *supra* note 2, at 400-01. There are two camps for Liberian refugees in Ghana, Buduburam and Krisan-Senzolli. The vast majority of refugees settled in Buduburam. Numbers at Krisan are estimated to be less than 2,000.
- 202 Interview with Varney Sambola, Chairman, Liberian Refugee Welfare Council, Buduburam, Ghana (Oct. 4, 2007).
- 203 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 306; *see also* TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 585.
- 204 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 587.
- 205 A small population of Sierra Leonean refugees also lives in Buduburam.
- 206 U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, UNHCR’s Position on the Treatment of Liberian Asylum Seekers and Return to Liberia, Aug. 3, 2005, http://www.unhcr.se/Pdf/protect/Position_Liberia.pdf.
- 207 SHELLY DICK, UNHCR EVALUATION AND POLICY UNIT, RESPONDING TO PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS: A CASE STUDY OF LIBERIAN REFUGEES IN GHANA 25-27 (2002), [hereinafter DICK, RESPONDING TO PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS] <http://www.unhcr.org/research/RESEARCH/3d40059b4.pdf>.

- 208 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 391 (“She has no ID card because UNHCR had finished giving them out.”)
- 209 DICK, RESPONDING TO PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS, *supra* note 207, at 25-27.
- 210 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 436.
- 211 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 433, 309, 382.
- 212 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 641.
- 213 *Id.*
- 214 *Id.*
- 215 *Id.*
- 216 Interview with Sebastian Nerault, clinic administrator, and Elise Nerault, physical therapist, St. Gregory Clinic, Buduburam, Ghana (Sept. 30, 2007). *See also* Peter M. Crosta, *Fighters in Liberia More Likely to Have Mental Health Disorders After Exposure to Sexual Violence*, MED. NEWS TODAY (Aug. 14, 2008), <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/118172.php> (describing a mental health study conducted in Liberia in May 2008, which found that 40% of Liberians have major depressive disorder, 44% have PTSD, 8% met criteria for social dysfunction).
- 217 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 587.
- 218 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 252.
- 219 *Id.*
- 220 *Id.*
- 221 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 170.
- 222 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 592.
- 223 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 162, 164, 166, 422, 424, 463, 467, 474, 494, 529, 539, 541, 555, 564, 570, 606, 614, 618, 633, 784, 900, 934, 935, 936, 1114, 1123, 1124, 1126, 1138, 1139, 1145, 1268, 1451, 1497, 1501, 1702, 1716.
- 224 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 238, 249, 252, 282, 310, 388, 407, 419, 463, 539, 555, 564, 570, 618, 624, 900, 935, 970, 1123, 1124, 1138, 1139, 217, 246, 290, 416, 431, 436, 478, 480, 485, 521, 592, 599, 602, 605, 614, 627, 688, 695, 727, 775, 803, 898, 933, 976, 1127, 1134, 1149, 1153, 1155, 1298, 1672, 1706, 1715, 972.
- 225 As of October 2007, the World Food Programme disbursement program consisted of a malnutrition program, serving 400 children, and a monthly rations program, serving 7,700 people. Children in the malnutrition program were referred to the program by the clinic or by the camp social worker. Eligibility for the monthly rations program was determined by a committee of leaders and organizational representatives who assessed each individual’s vulnerability. The number of individuals allowed in the program was capped at no more than 9,500, and the number actually served apparently changed with budgetary fluctuations, at times dropping to as few as 4,700 individuals at the end of a budget cycle. Factors leading to vulnerability for purposes of food aid included having no income or remittance, consuming one meal or less in a day and having limited assets. For the purpose of the vulnerability assessment, “mobile phones, generators, or television sets were to be considered as the bench mark for determining whether a person was well off or in need of food assistance.” Moreover, the following groups were to be considered vulnerable: malnourished children (including at most three family members); women-headed households without a member earning income or carrying on economic activity; HIV/AIDS affected households, infected breadwinner without a household member earning an income or engaged in economic activity; isolated/stigmatized social cases like teenage single parents; people with physical and mental disabilities without support; elderly man/woman (65 years or older) without support (without household member earning an income or engaged in an economic activity); unaccompanied minors/abandoned children; lactating and pregnant women without support, and/or without a member earning an income or engaged in an economic activity. Criteria for the Selection of Beneficiaries in Buduburam Refugee Settlement (on file with the author); Interview with Eugene Sekpeh, WFP/NCS/UNHCR Food Aid Distribution Coordinator, Buduburam, Ghana (Oct. 3, 2007).
- 226 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 46 (noting she only receives food rations for 3 out of 12 people in her household); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 53 (noting that his food rations had stopped after the election of Charles Taylor); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec.56 (“When we arrived in Ghana newly we were registered and supplied food but later discontinued. It has now restarted but told I was omitted.”); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 162 (describing her perception that only refugees who

- had arrived after 2003 were allowed rations); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 178 (stating that they could not get food rations); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 268 (noting that his sons are on the list for food); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 325 (“I have to sell things to get money because my name does not come up on the list to get food. If your name is not on the list on the board, you will not receive food.”); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 387 (“didn’t get on the UNHCR food distribution list until I begged and begged...think that the area heads on the camp are corrupt and are not willing to give food to me because I have no money to bribe them. I always put my name down and they say it is not there.”); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 388 (was never put on UNHCR lists for food); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 389 (“When we arrived on camp, we couldn’t get food because I came so late. I arrived in Ghana in 2003 and just this morning (9/26/07) got on the list for UNHCR food distribution. My wife and I are on the list but not my daughter.”); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 467 (“some people get food while certain people do not”).
- 227 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 74, 201.
- 228 Interview with Eugene Sekpeh, WFP/NCS/UNHCR Food Aid Distribution Coordinator, Buduburam, Ghana (Oct. 3, 2007).
- 229 Interview with Sebastian Nerault, clinic administrator, and Elise Nerault, physical therapist, St. Gregory Clinic, Buduburam, Ghana (Sept. 30, 2007). To serve a population of more than 35,000 individuals, the clinic has nine adult beds, ten children’s beds, a lab, a pharmacy, and ultrasound capacity. There is no surgery or X-ray capability, so anyone needing those or other services must be transferred out to other health care facilities in the district. According to the Neraults, Liberians who are transferred out to Ghanaian health care facilities are required to pay double fees because they are “foreigners.” While the clinic has a small budget to assist with these fees, the full-year’s allocated budget is usually dispersed within the first half of the year because of the high costs. Sebastian Nerault identified funding for referral health care as one of the most critical needs the clinic was facing. In 2006, the clinic budget was cut by between 50% and 60%. The funding shortfall was so severe that the clinic couldn’t afford to pay for lights or to purchase water.
- While that budgetary crisis was resolved, the clinic has begun charging refugee patients a registration fee, a consultation fee, and a fee for prescriptions in order to be able to provide some minimal remuneration to the Liberian staff at the clinic.
- 230 *Id.*
- 231 *Id.* Elise Nerault indicated that many of the Liberian staff were unable to become licensed to practice in Ghana because the licensing exam cost approximately \$200 and because the Ghanaian government had burdensome document production requirements that Liberian refugees could not meet. She also noted that many Liberians would have had difficulty getting licensed because their training had been interrupted by the outbreak of war in Liberia. The clinic was unable to hire licensed Ghanaian practitioners because the cost was prohibitive.
- 232 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 389 (“The clinic on camp is too expensive and if they want to transfer to a hospital it’s impossible.”). *See also* TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 564, 627, 933, 485, 653, 45, 46, 59, 241, 413, 514, 739, 958, 1123, 239, 602, 645, 972, 1138, 1331, 1702.
- 233 Interview with Ruben Gboweh, UNHCR/NCS HIV/AIDS Program Coordinator, Buduburam, Ghana (Oct. 3, 2007).
- 234 *Id.*
- 235 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 434 (“When someone goes to the bush to use the toilet, he runs the risk of being hurt, beat, or killed. The reason there are so many dogs on camp is for protection against such abuses. I have even been cut by someone on the camp. There is no freedom of speech on the camp, and anyone who speaks his mind runs the risk of being attacked.”) *See also* TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 541, 618, 1124, 1138, 1451, 1702, 285, 564, 1154, 514, 579, 972, 1138, 472, 502, 523, 561, 579, 592, 599, 741, 779, 988, 1698, 1730, 753, 578, 1495, 292, 438, 699.
- 236 The police inspector assigned to the camp noted that the most common crimes are assault, petty theft, and fraud and these account for between six and ten cases of all types per month. Interview with Chief Inspector G.K. Agyei, Ghanaian Police, Buduburam, Ghana (Oct. 4, 2007). Domestic violence cases and child abuse cases are sent to a special unit in Kasoa, a nearby town. *Id.*

- 237 “Juking” means getting revenge on someone through nefarious means.
- 238 Letter from Buduburam Neighborhood Watch Team (Aug. 13, 2007) (on file with the author). The Ghanaian police inspector on the camp generally confirmed this sentiment, noting that the Neighborhood Watch Team (NEWAT) had been established after a crime wave of armed robberies and other forms of intimidation. Interview with Chief Inspector G.K. Agyei, Ghanaian Police, Buduburam, Ghana (Oct. 4, 2007).
- 239 Interview with Chief Inspector G.K. Agyei, Ghanaian Police, Buduburam, Ghana (Oct. 4, 2007).
- 240 *See, e.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 292 (noting that there have been murders in the camp).
- 241 For example, legendary rebel fighter-turned-evangelist General Butt-Naked is often seen in Buduburam. Moreover, ex-combatants and former child soldiers have formed their own community-based-organization, and many are well-known to the camp residents.
- 242 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 149, 855.
- 243 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 215.
- 244 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 78.
- 245 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 428.
- 246 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 156, 136, 221, 386, 389, 438, 582, 608, 753, 784, 1123, 1153, 1487, 1529, 1639, 1654.
- 247 *See generally* Interview with Diana DuBois, Exec. Dir., Minn. Int’l Health Volunteers (July 15, 2008) (describing the difficulty of getting funding to continue an International Red Cross program in Buduburam as early as 1995 because of donor fatigue).
- 248 DICK, RESPONDING TO PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS, *supra* note 207, at 15, 18-19; TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 53 (noting that his food rations had stopped after the election of Charles Taylor).
- 249 DICK, RESPONDING TO PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS, *supra* note 207, at 15, 18-19.
- 250 *Id.* UNHCR notes that the reason water was cut off was that refugees left the taps on continuously. *Id.* Camp residents dispute this information, noting that piped water was only ever available in three of the camp “zones.” Residents note that water was shut off to the camp because there was a national water shortage in Ghana and UNHCR took advantage of the situation to stop providing water. Moreover, water was coming from hand pumps, which cannot be left “on.” *E.g.*, Email communication from Eugene Sekpeh, WFP/NCS/UNHCR Food Aid Distribution Coordinator, to The Advocates for Human Rights (July 12, 2008, 10:33 AM CST); Email communication from Eugene Sekpeh, WFP/NCS/UNHCR Food Aid Distribution Coordinator, to The Advocates for Human Rights (July 14, 2008, 10:33 AM CST).
- 251 DICK, RESPONDING TO PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS, *supra* note 207, at 15, 18-19.
- 252 *Id.*
- 253 *Id.* at 20.
- 254 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 742.
- 255 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 392 (“Time is wasting in Ghana.”); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 427 (“I have no money, no education that would allow me to make money, and I have wasted so much time at the camp”); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 630 (“I am unhappy because I feel that my life has been a waste. I feel frustrated about being stranded in the camp and about being robbed of the adult life I would have had had there been no war.”); *see also, e.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 509, 512, 585, 586, 422, 515, 630, 671, 931, 1708.
- 256 DICK, RESPONDING TO PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS, *supra* note 207, at 16.
- 257 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 1016, 1020, 1025, 1292.
- 258 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 480.
- 259 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 265, 281, 282, 387, 463, 468, etc. 66, 288, 424, 463, 934, 1139, 50, 246, 688, 716, 933, 1127, 1149, 1522, 767, 45, 49, 50, 55, 155, 157, 212, 249, 251, 280, 300, 325, 336, 422, 438, 442, 453, 464, 470, 489, 599, 613, 657, 755, 932, 958, 1113, 1240, 1398, 1495, 1522, 1716.
- 260 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 157.
- 261 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 498 and 309.
- 262 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 238.
- 263 *Id.*
- 264 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 589.
- 265 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 730.

- 266 *Id.*
- 267 *Id.*
- 268 *Id.*
- 269 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 388.
- 270 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 164.
- 271 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 37.
- 272 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 149.
- 273 *Id.*
- 274 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 855.
- 275 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 972.
- 276 Dep't of NGOs/CBOs of the Liberian Refugee Welfare Council, List of NGOs/CBOs (Sept. 2007) (on file with author).
- 277 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 113 (“I am not ready to go back to Liberia. There would be no help for my children...I have heard that [the] repatriation program is not helping with anything substantial for anyone to truly start a life after returning home”).
- 278 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 407 (“if I had to go back to Liberia, I would kill myself”).
- 279 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 453.
- 280 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 936, 1124, 62, 249, 635, 1298, 1557, 1715, 1123, 1153, 99, 138, 170, 177, 210, 213, 215, 222, 289, 481, 484, 567, 573, 638, 644, 657, 680, 701, 733, 775, 779, 784, 800, 821, 827, 832, 835, 889, 907, 933, 966, 968, 1013, 1121, 1159, 1214, 1261, 1298, 1332, 1340, 1471, 1494, 1496, 1505, 1518, 1557, 1643, 1654, 1706, 1711.
- 281 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 589.
- 282 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 590.
- 283 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 212, 523, 1268, 783, 212, 217, 225, 462, 563, 577, 638, 692, 741, 744, 774, 909, 920, 1106, 1107, 1108, 1109, 1110, 1190, 1334, 1421, 1469, 1517, 1700.
- 284 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 641.
- 285 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 895.
- 286 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 107.
- 287 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 895 (describing leaving her brother and sister behind on Buduburam and noting that her brother has not been able to leave because of accusations that he fought in the conflict); TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 107 (describing leaving his sister and her family behind).
- 288 *See infra* note 304. *See generally also* DICK, RESPONDING TO PROTRACTED REFUGEE SITUATIONS, *supra* note 207, at 29-30.
- 289 U.N. High Comm’r for Refugees, Ghana: Deportation to Liberia, UNHCR Briefing Notes, Mar. 25, 2008, <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/47e8f5722.html>; Telephone interview with Tenneh Kamara, Liberian Refugee Women (July 14, 2008).
- 290 *Id.*
- 291 *Id.*
- 292 Telephone interview with Tenneh Kamara, Liberian Refugee Women (July 14, 2008); Telephone interview with George Nimley, Assistant to the Liberian Ambassador to Ghana (July 12, 2008).
- 293 *Ghana-Liberia: Cessation Clause Invoked over Refugee Demos*, IRIN NEWS, Mar. 20, 2008, <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/IRIN/da4d8a135b90f8c2f8bfd9f5ec5236e6.htm>.
- 294 U.N. High Comm’r for Refugees, Ghana: deportation to Liberia, *supra* note 289.
- 295 U.N. High Comm’r for Refugees, Notice for Refugees and Asylum-Seekers – Voluntary Repatriation by Road to Liberia (Aug. 6, 2008) (on file with author). Moreover, Liberians who are not registered with UNHCR cannot participate in the repatriation program. *Id.*
- 296 Telephone interview with Tenneh Kamara, Liberian Refugee Women (Oct. 16, 2008).
- 297 *Strongly reaffirms* the fundamental importance and the purely humanitarian and non-political character of the function of the Office of the High Commissioner of providing international protection to refugees and seeking permanent solutions to refugee problems, recalls that these solutions include voluntary repatriation and, where appropriate and feasible, local integration and resettlement in a third country, reaffirming that voluntary repatriation remains the preferred solution, supported by necessary rehabilitation and development assistance to facilitate sustainable reintegration.
- G.A. Res. 57/187, ¶ 10, U.N. Doc. A/RES/57/187 (Feb. 6, 2003)
- 298 *See* U.S. DEPT. OF HOMELAND SECURITY, YEARBOOK OF IMMIGRATION STATISTICS: 2007, Table 14 (listing refugee arrivals from Liberia for fiscal years 1998 to 2007 as 28,991), <http://www.dhs.gov/ximgtn/>

- statistics/publications/YrBk07RA.shtm (last visited Dec. 29, 2008); U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE, 1998 STATISTICAL YEARBOOK OF THE IMMIGRATION & NATURALIZATION SERVICE 97 (2000) (listing refugee arrivals from Liberia for fiscal years 1992 to 1997 as 2,537, Table 25), <http://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/statistics/yearbook/1998/1998yb.pdf>; U.S. DEPT. OF JUSTICE, SECOND TRIENNIAL REPORT ON IMMIGRATION 160 (listing refugee arrivals from Liberia for fiscal years 1983 to 1991 as 6), <http://www.uscis.gov/files/article/2ndfullTriReport.pdf> (last visited Jan.5, 2009).
- 299 David A. Martin, *A New Era for U.S. Refugee Resettlement*, 36 COLUM. HUMAN RIGHTS L. REV. 299, 304-311 (2005).
- 300 *Id.* at 307.
- 301 *Id.* at 309.
- 302 *Id.* at 309-10.
- 303 The 1980 Refugee Act established the U.S.’ current refugee resettlement system. The Refugee Act codifies the definition of a “refugee” found in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. *See* Convention relating to the Status of Refugees art. 1, 189 U.N.T.S. 150, *entered into force* Apr. 22, 1954, as amended by the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees art. 1, ¶ 2, 606 U.N.T.S. 267, *entered into force* Oct. 4, 1967. Those seeking resettlement as refugees, therefore, must establish that they are outside their country of nationality, that they have a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion, and that they are not barred from refugee protection due to criminal, persecutory, or terrorist conduct. 8 U.S.C. §1101(42) (2008). The refugee’s spouse and minor, unmarried children may accompany or follow to join the refugee without establishing that they qualify as a refugee in their own right, so long as they are not barred from protection. 8 U.S.C. §1157(c)(2)(A)-(B) (2008).
- 304 DAVID A. MARTIN, THE UNITED STATES REFUGEE ADMISSIONS PROGRAM: REFORMS FOR A NEW ERA OF REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT 39 (2005).
- 305 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1408 (noting also that it took ten years for her asylum status to be granted, and another five or six years until she was granted her green card).
- 306 *See supra* note 298.
- 307 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1682.
- 308 *See* U.S. Dept. of Justice, Asylum Statistics by Nationality 1997-2007, <http://www.usdoj.gov/eoir/efoia/foiafreq.htm> (last visited Dec. 29, 2008). Defensive asylum statistics predating 1997 were not readily available.
- 309 Syracuse Univ. Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, Asylum Denial Rates by Nationality: FY 1994 - FY 1999, http://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/160/include/nat_denial_9499.html (last visited Dec. 29, 2008).
- 310 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1743.
- 311 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1412.
- 312 Press Release, U.S. Dept. of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, Asylum Reform: 5 Years Later: Backlog Reduced and Number of Non-Meritorious Claims Drops (Feb. 1, 2000), <http://www.uscis.gov/files/pressrelease/Asylum.pdf>.
- 313 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1410.
- 314 8 U.S.C. §1158(b)(3).
- 315 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1203.
- 316 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1552.
- 317 Syracuse Univ. Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse, *supra* note 309.
- 318 *See infra* text accompanying notes 322-330.
- 319 Press Release, White House, Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians (March 20, 2009) [hereinafter Press Release, White House, Deferred Enforced Departure], http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Presidential-Memorandum-Regarding-Deferred-Enforced-Departure-for-Liberians/.
- 320 *See* 8 U.S.C. §1231(a)(2008) (setting forth the authority of Immigration and Customs Enforcement to arrest, detain and deport those aliens with final orders of removal).
- 321 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1652.
- 322 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1682.
- 323 Immigration Act of 1990 (IMPACT), Pub. L. No. 101-649, 104 Stat. 4978 (1990).
- 324 There have been several “re-designations” of TPS, allowing Liberians who had arrived more recently to register for the status.
- 325 Press Release, White House, Deferred Enforced Departure, *supra* note 319. TPS exclusions include

- Liberians “(1)who are ineligible for TPS for the reasons provided in section 244(c)(2)(B) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1254a(c) (2)(B); (2) whose removal [Dept. of Homeland Security] determine[s] is in the interest of the United States; (3) whose presence or activities in the United States the Secretary of State has reasonable grounds to believe would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States; (4) who have voluntarily returned to Liberia or his or her country of last habitual residence outside the United States; (5) who were deported, excluded, or removed prior to the date of this memorandum; or (6) who are subject to extradition.”
- 326 RUTH ELLEN WASEM & KARMA ESTER, CONG. RESEARCH SERVICE, TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS: CURRENT IMMIGRATION POLICY AND ISSUES 4-5 (2008) (noting that this design was a result of lengthy Congressional negotiations throughout the 1980s to provide safe haven to Salvadorans fleeing that country’s civil war and to depoliticize the practice of ad hoc safe haven determinations), http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RS20844_20080930.pdf.
- 327 Personal communication from anonymous to Michele Garnett McKenzie, Police Roll Call Training, Brooklyn Center, Minn. (April 6, 2007).
- 328 Personal communication from Alice Tindi, Social Worker, Center for Victims of Torture, to Michele Garnett McKenzie (April 6, 2007).
- 329 Kerper Dwanyen, President, Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm’n of Liberia 40-41 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 330 Interview with Anonymous, Brooklyn Park, Minn. (May 26, 2008).
- 331 Both bills have been re-introduced in the Senate and House. The Liberian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act, S.F. 656, and the Liberian Refugee Immigration Protection Act, H.R. 2258, would allow eligible Liberians to apply for lawful permanent resident status.
- 332 Interview with Anonymous, Brooklyn Park, Minn. (May 23, 2008).
- 333 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 1323, 1437.
- 334 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 122, 1293.
- 335 Kerper Dwanyen, President, Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm’n of Liberia 36-37 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 336 *Id.*
- 337 *Id.* at 37.
- 338 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 789.
- 339 *Id.*
- 340 Kerper Dwanyen, President, Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm’n of Liberia 37 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 341 Analysis of TRC statements collected in the United States reflects that every ethnic group in Liberia is represented in the diaspora. *See* Appendix H.
- 342 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 33 and 1345.
- 343 Kerper Dwanyen, President, Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm’n of Liberia 37 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 344 *Id.* at 37-38.
- 345 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1337.
- 346 *See generally* TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Providence, R.I. (June 25, 2008) (Memorandum from Dechert LLP, July 18, 2008 on file with author).
- 347 *Id.*
- 348 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1329.
- 349 Telephone interview with Williametta Saydee-Tarr, Prog. Coord., New Arrivals Resource Empowerment Workshops, Refugee Services, Minn. Council of Churches (Aug. 8, 2008).
- 350 *Id.*
- 351 Interview with Ada Beh, Co-founder, Minnesota African Women’s Association (MAWA), Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 4, 2008).
- 352 *See generally* Craig Hadley, et al., *Acculturation, Economics and Food Insecurity Among Refugees Resettled in the USA: a Case Study of West African refugees*, 10 PUB. HEALTH NUTRITION 405-12 (2007).
- 353 Telephone interview with Jefferson Cooper, Liberian diaspora journalist, Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 26, 2008).
- 354 Telephone interview with Williametta Saydee-Tarr,

- Prog. Coord., New Arrivals Resource Empowerment Workshops, Refugee Services, Minn. Council of Churches (Aug. 8, 2008).
- 355 *Id.*
- 356 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Providence, *supra* note 356. *See also* Chapter 12.
- 357 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Providence, *supra* note 346.
- 358 *Id.*
- 359 Telephone interview with Dr. Emmanuel Dolo, Liberian diaspora academic (Sept. 30, 2008).
- 360 Telephone interview with Thomas Parker, Liberian diaspora community elder, Providence, R.I. (Sept. 18, 2008).
- 361 Telephone interview with J. Siaka Konneh, former journalist and community leader, Sacramento, Cal. (Sept. 22, 2008).
- 362 This concern does not appear to be as clearly expressed in the United Kingdom –for example, doctors trained in Liberia are more readily able to practice in the United Kingdom.
- 363 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1598.
- 364 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 1293 and 1461.
- 365 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Providence, *supra* note 356.
- 366 Interview with Dr. Wilhelmina Holder, Exec. Dir., Women’s Initiative for Self-Empowerment (WISE), June 2, 2008.
- 367 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Providence, *supra* note 356.
- 368 Telephone interview with Dr. Patricia Jabbeh-Wesley, Professor, Pennsylvania State Univ. (May 5, 2008).
- 369 Telephone interview with Veronica Barr, Co-founder, Mary Martha Foundation (May 14, 2008).
- 370 Telephone interview with Jefferson Cooper, Liberian diaspora journalist, Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 26, 2008).
- 371 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1390.
- 372 *Id.*
- 373 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1350.
- 374 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1415.
- 375 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 1440 and 1475.
- 376 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1440.
- 377 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1293.
- 378 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1462.
- 379 Telephone interview with Comfort Kollie, nurse and community member, Oakland, Cal. (Sept. 18, 2008).
- 380 Telephone interview with Jefferson Cooper, Liberian diaspora journalist, Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 26, 2008).
- 381 Telephone interview with Jacob Massaquoi, Exec. Dir., African Refuge, Staten Island, N.Y. (Sept. 24, 2008).
- 382 Telephone interview with Dr. Patricia Jabbeh-Wesley, Professor, Pennsylvania State Univ. (Sept. 23, 2008).
- 383 Group interview with Mitzi Heath, Student Assistance Counselor, Melody Hahn-Merges, English Language Learners School Social Worker, & Sandra Buechel, Social Worker, Park Center Senior High School, Brooklyn Center, Minn. (June 4, 2008). *See also* Michael Matza, *Liberian immigrants transforming S.W. Phila.*, PHILLY.COM, June 6, 2008, <http://www.philly.com/philly/news/homepage/19593974.html>.
- 384 *See* Matza, *supra* note 383.
- 385 Telephone interview with Jacob Massaquoi, Exec. Dir., African Refuge, Staten Island, N.Y. (Sept. 24, 2008).
- 386 Telephone interview with Roger Banks, Council on Black Minnesotans (March 3, 2009).
- 387 *Id.*
- 388 *Id.*
- 389 Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women’s Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 390 Telephone interview with Jacob Massaquoi, Exec. Dir., African Refuge, Staten Island, N.Y. (Sept. 24, 2008). *See also* Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women’s Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008); Telephone interview with Matilda Washington, Providence, R.I (Sept. 25, 2008).
- 391 Telephone interview with Jacob Massaquoi, Exec. Dir., African Refuge, Staten Island, N.Y. (September 24, 2008).
- 392 *Id.*; *see also* Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women’s Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008); Interview with Ada Beh, Co-founder, Minnesota African

- Women's Association (MAWA), Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 4, 2008); Telephone interview with Ali Sylla, IDDT Program Specialist/Psychotherapist, Mercer Behavioral Health Services, Trenton, N.J. (Sept. 19, 2008); Telephone interview with J. Siaka Konneh, former journalist and community leader, Sacramento, Cal. (Sept. 22, 2008).
- 393 Telephone interview with Ali Sylla, IDDT Program Specialist/Psychotherapist, Mercer Behavioral Health Services, Trenton, N.J. (Sept. 19, 2008).
- 394 Telephone interview with Dr. Emmanuel Dolo, Liberian diaspora academic (Sept. 30, 2008).
- 395 Interview with Ada Beh, Co-founder, Minnesota African Women's Association (MAWA), Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 4, 2008).
- 396 Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women's Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 397 *Id.*
- 398 Telephone interview with Thomas Parker, Liberian diaspora community elder, Providence, R.I. (Sept. 18, 2008).
- 399 Telephone interview with J. Siaka Konneh, former journalist and community leader, Sacramento, Cal. (Sept. 22, 2008).
- 400 Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women's Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 401 Harriette Badio, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 14, 15 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 402 Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women's Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 403 Telephone interview with Jefferson Cooper, Liberian diaspora journalist, Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 26, 2008).
- 404 Kerper Dwanyen, President, Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 39 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 405 Harriette Badio, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 14 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 406 *Id.*
- 407 Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women's Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 408 *Id.*
- 409 *Id.*
- 410 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1389.
- 411 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 1350 and 1551.
- 412 Telephone interview with Williametta Saydee-Tarr, Prog. Coord., New Arrivals Resource Empowerment Workshops, Refugee Services, Minn. Council of Churches (Aug. 8, 2008).
- 413 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1551.
- 414 Group interview with Mitzi Heath, Student Assistance Counselor, Melody Hahn-Merges, English Language Learners School Social Worker, & Sandra Buechel, Social Worker, Park Center Senior High School, Brooklyn Center, Minn. (June 4, 2008); *see also* TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1551.
- 415 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1412.
- 416 Group interview with Mitzi Heath, Student Assistance Counselor, Melody Hahn-Merges, English Language Learners School Social Worker, & Sandra Buechel, Social Worker, Park Center Senior High School, Brooklyn Center, Minn. (June 4, 2008).
- 417 *Id.*; *see also* Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women's Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 418 Group interview with Mitzi Heath, Student Assistance Counselor, Melody Hahn-Merges, English Language Learners School Social Worker, & Sandra Buechel, Social Worker, Park Center Senior High School, Brooklyn Center, Minn. (June 4, 2008); *see also* Interview with anonymous student, Park Center Senior High School, Brooklyn Center, Minn. (June 4, 2008).
- 419 *Id.*
- 420 Interview with Ada Beh, Co-founder, Minnesota African Women's Association (MAWA), Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 4, 2008).
- 421 Interview with Patrick Kugmeh, former Liberian government official and diaspora community leader, Minneapolis, Minn. (Oct. 3, 2008). *See also* Interview with Ada Beh, Co-founder, Minnesota African

- Women's Association (MAWA), Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 4, 2008).
- 422 Interview with Ishmael Komara, Liberian Mandingo community leader, Minneapolis, Minn. (May 28, 2008); Interview with Patrick Kugmeh, former Liberian government official and diaspora community leader, Minneapolis, Minn. (Oct. 3, 2008) (noting that Liberian children can be viewed as “troublesome children” because the way things are done in the U.S. is different from in Liberia).
- 423 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1322; *see also* Telephone interview with Jefferson Cooper, Liberian diaspora journalist, Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 26, 2008); Interview with Patrick Kugmeh, former Liberian government official and diaspora community leader, Minneapolis, Minn., at 74-79 (Oct. 3, 2008).
- 424 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Providence, *supra* note 356; TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1477.
- 425 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1555.
- 426 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1373.
- 427 *See generally* Garswah Blacktom, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 16, 53 (June 11, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author); Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women's Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 428 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1477.
- 429 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1414.
- 430 Liberia: Truth, Reconciliation and Women's Human Rights after the Civil War, Presentation, Doris Parker and Robin Phillips, Minneapolis, Aug. 12, 2008
- 431 Group interview with Mitzi Heath, Student Assistance Counselor, Melody Hahn-Merges, English Language Learners School Social Worker, & Sandra Buechel, Social Worker, Park Center Senior High School, Brooklyn Center, Minn. (June 4, 2008).
- 432 *Id.*
- 433 *Id.*
- 434 Telephone interview with Williametta Saydee-Tarr, Prog. Coord., New Arrivals Resource Empowerment Workshops, Refugee Services, Minn. Council of Churches (Aug. 8, 2008).
- 435 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1137.
- 436 Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women's Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 437 Liberia: Truth, Reconciliation and Women's Human Rights after the Civil War, Presentation, Doris Parker and Robin Phillips, Minneapolis, Aug. 12, 2008.
- 438 Lynette Murray Gibson, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 19 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 439 Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women's Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 440 *Id.*
- 441 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Providence, *supra* note 356.
- 442 Interview with Ada Beh, Co-founder, Minnesota African Women's Association (MAWA), Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 4, 2008).
- 443 *Id.*
- 444 Telephone interview with Williametta Saydee-Tarr, Prog. Coord., New Arrivals Resource Empowerment Workshops, Refugee Services, Minn. Council of Churches (Aug. 8, 2008).
- 445 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1329.
- 446 Telephone interview with Williametta Saydee-Tarr, Prog. Coord., New Arrivals Resource Empowerment Workshops, Refugee Services, Minn. Council of Churches (Aug. 8, 2008).
- 447 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Providence, *supra* note 356.
- 448 Telephone interview with Williametta Saydee-Tarr, Prog. Coord., New Arrivals Resource Empowerment Workshops, Refugee Services, Minn. Council of Churches (Aug. 8, 2008).
- 449 Telephone interview with Dr. Emmanuel Dolo, Liberian diaspora academic (Sept. 30, 2008).
- 450 Telephone interview with John N. Brownell, President, Union of Liberian Organizations – United Kingdom (ULO-UK) (Oct. 6, 2008) (estimating the entire UK Liberian population to be about 4,000-5,000).
- 451 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 522 (describing the fact that statement giver left Liberia to work as a nanny); Telephone interview with Dr. George Flahn, President, Liberian Med. Assoc. in the United

- Kingdom (Sept. 29, 2008) (describing coming to the United Kingdom for advanced medical training).
- 452 The Gateway program in the United Kingdom is analogous to the United States Refugee Program, see *supra* note 303. The Gateway Protection Programme is operated by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate in conjunction with the UNHCR, and a quota, which is set annually, determines its intake. The number of arrivals to the United Kingdom through the Gateway Protection Programme is determined by an annual quota, the level of which is established by Ministers each year having considered the resources available, the need for resettlement globally, and impact on local services in the United Kingdom. More information is available at <http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/documents/policyandlaw/asylumpolicyinstructions/>.
- 453 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 460.
- 454 *Id.*
- 455 *Id.*
- 456 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 522.
- 457 *Id.*
- 458 Interview with H.E. Wesley M. Johnson, Ambassador to Great Britain, London, United Kingdom (Sept. 21, 2007) (describing a collaboration between the Home Office and the Liberian Embassy to interview thousands of purported Liberians and determine whether they actually qualified for the benefits they were receiving through the Liberian resettlement program).
- 459 Telephone interview with John N. Brownell, President, Union of Liberian Organizations – United Kingdom (ULO-UK) (Oct. 6, 2008).
- 460 See Telephone interview with Dr. George Flahn, President, Liberian Med. Assoc. in the United Kingdom (Sept. 29, 2008) (describing lawyers, professors, and engineers who have had trouble finding related employ); see also TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 486 (TRC Diaspora Statement Recounting experiences of two male relatives who were judges in Liberia and could not find legal employment outside Liberia).
- 461 Telephone interview with John N. Brownell, President, Union of Liberian Organizations – United Kingdom (ULO-UK) (Oct. 6, 2008).
- 462 Telephone interview with Dr. George Flahn, President, Liberian Med. Assoc. in the United Kingdom (Sept. 29, 2008) (noting that “Britain is used to having “lots of foreign doctors” in their system).
- 463 Telephone interview with John N. Brownell, President, Union of Liberian Organizations – United Kingdom (ULO-UK) (Oct. 6, 2008).
- 464 Telephone interview with Dr. George Flahn, President, Liberian Med. Assoc. in the UK (Sept. 29, 2008); Telephone interview with Leslie Togbah, President, Liberian Union of Manchester (Sept. 30, 2008).
- 465 Telephone interview with Dr. George Flahn, President, Liberian Med. Assoc. in the UK (Sept. 29, 2008).
- 466 Telephone interview with Leslie Togbah, President, Liberian Union of Manchester (Sept. 30, 2008).
- 467 ULAA is an acronym for Union of Liberian Association in the Americas, see <http://www.ulaaliberia.net/ulaahome.htm>.
- 468 Dennis Jah, What is Wrong with Liberian Community Organizations? (Apr. 27, 2008), <http://dennisjah.blogspot.com/2008/04/what-is-wrong-liberian-community.html>.
- 469 Siahonkron Nyanseor, A Brief Assessment of the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas: 1974-1985 (Aug. 31, 1985) (paper delivered at the LCA-Georgia Board of Director’s Meeting, Charlotte, N.C., on file with the author).
- 470 *Id.*
- 471 On its website (<http://www.ulaaliberia.net/ulaahome.htm>), ULAA lists the following chapters: Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, Minnesota, Michigan, New Jersey–North, New Jersey–South, New York–Manhattan, New York–Staten Island, New York–Bronx, North Carolina, Ohio, PA–Philadelphia, PA–Pittsburg, Rhode Island, Wisconsin, Washington D.C., and Washington State. Founding members of ULAA came from metro Washington, D.C., the Delaware Valley including Philadelphia, New Jersey, Brooklyn, N.Y., Syracuse, N.Y., Bridgeport, Conn. and Boston, Mass. Siahonkron Nyanseor, A Brief Assessment of the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas: 1974-1985 (Aug. 31, 1985) (paper delivered at the LCA-Georgia Board of Director’s Meeting, Charlotte, N.C., on file with the author).

- 472 See <http://www.liberiansineurope.org/about/about.htm>, which states that “The European Federation of Liberian Associations (EFLA) is an umbrella European Liberian organizations and associations that was established in July 2003 in an effort to provide support to Liberians in Europe and Liberia. EFLA is a legally-registered Belgian based federation comprising a network of Liberian Associations and Organizations located in The Netherlands, France, Luxemburg, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, Poland, Norway, The United Kingdom and The Kingdom of Belgium.”
- 473 See John Nimly Brownell, *Liberians in Britain*, <http://jnbrownell2.tripod.com/id44.html>.
- 474 See *Liberians in Belgium*, <http://liberiansinbelgium.org/>.
- 475 One ULAA founder noted that the organization’s structure reflects the founders’ political mindset at the time – the need for inclusiveness and democratic transparency in the Liberian society. “The actual power emanates from the people at the local levels.” Telephone interview with Siahyonkron Nyanseor, ULAA founding member and eleventh president (Aug. 1, 2008). The framers of ULAA wanted to reflect their desire for decentralization of the Liberian political and governmental system in the Union’s structure. *Id.* Finally, in addition to the local chapters, ULAA has a membership arm, which is a stand-alone arm. The membership body encompasses all formal local chapters, other Liberian organizations that may not hold official status with the union, as well as friends of Liberia as honorary members. *Id.*
- 476 See, e.g., *The Federation of Liberian Mandingo in the United States of America (FELMAUSA)* at www.felmausa.org, *Liberian Mandingo Association of Pennsylvania (LIMAP)* at www.limap.org, *The United Bong County Association in the Americas* at www.unitedbong.org, *the United Nimba Citizen’s Council (UNICCO)* at www.unicco.org, *the United Bassa Organization in America (UNIBOA)* at www.uniboa.org, *the National Bomi County Association in the Americas* at www.nbcaa.org, etc.
- 477 One interviewee opined that, in addition to the need to socialize, some members of the ULAA withdrew from the organization in the 1980s and formed county, ethnic, or high school alumni associations to protest certain policies in favor of or against the new PRC regime in Liberia. Telephone interview with Siahyonkron Nyanseor, ULAA founding member and eleventh president (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 478 E.g., FELMAUSA, *supra* note 476; *The National Association of Cape Mountainians in the Americas* at <http://siteground214.com/~sanfranc/NACA/?q=frontpage>.
- 479 For example, the University of Liberia has a major alumni association in the United States with branches in every state with a high Liberian population. High school alumni associations include, for example, C.H. Dewey High School Alumni Association in America, The William V.S. Tubman High School Alumni Association, Samford Dennis Alumni Association, Ricks Institute Alumni Association, Cathedral Catholic High School Alumni Association, College of West Africa Alumni Association, and Konola Academy Alumni Association.
- 480 Interview with Wayne Douglas Doe, 1998-2002 president of the Konola Academy Alumni Association, Minneapolis, Minn. (Aug. 5, 2008).
- 481 *Id.*
- 482 Telephone interview with Father James N. Wilson II, past-president, Liberian Ministers Association of Minnesota (Aug. 22, 2008).
- 483 *Id.*
- 484 Liberian Ministers Association official membership listing 2007 (on file with the author); DANA K. NELSON, *MISSION AND MIGRATION: FIFTY TWO AFRICAN AND ASIAN CONGREGATIONS IN MINNESOTA* 42-46, 138-42 (2007).
- 485 Numerous Liberian community disputes have been referred to religious leaders whether Christian or Muslim. For example, community elections and leadership disputes in Minnesota, Rhode Island, and Staten Island have been settled by pastors in the recent past.
- 486 Telephone interview with Father James N. Wilson II, past-president, Liberian Ministers Association of Minnesota (Aug. 22, 2008).
- 487 Johnny Dwyer, *Trying Times in Little Liberia: On Staten Island, Reflections of a War-Torn Country*, THE VILLAGE VOICE, Aug. 19 2003, <http://www.villagevoice.com/2003-08-19/news/trying-times-in-little-liberia/>.
- 488 *Historic ‘Little Liberia’ Homes Face Forclosure*, BAY STATE

- BANNER, Sept. 4, 2008, <http://www.baystatebanner.com/Local19-2008-09-04>.
- 489 Jesse Delaughter, U.S. Comm. for Refugees & Immigrants (USCRI), "Little Liberia," <http://www.refugees.org/article.aspx?id=1540> (last visited Dec. 30, 2008).
- 490 The actual New Kru Town is a populous borough of the city of Monrovia, located in northwestern Bushrod Island on the outskirts of Monrovia.
- 491 Telephone interview with Georgette Gray, Board Member, Organization of Liberians in Minnesota (Nov. 7, 2008).
- 492 *Id.*
- 493 *See* Delaughter, *supra* note 489 (describing the fact that the Liberian community in Albany has "an African shop run by a leader from the local Liberian community who stocks his shelves with African videos and foods like cassava leaf and plantains").
- 494 *See* Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women's Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008); Telephone interview with Jacob Massaquoi, Exec. Dir., African Refuge, Staten Island, N.Y. (September 24, 2008); Telephone interview with Vofee Jabateh, Founder, African Cultural Alliance of North America (ACANA) (Nov. 14, 2008).
- 495 *See* TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 1551, 1011.
- 496 Telephone interview with Rufus Z. Arkoi, Roza Productions (Aug. 6, 2008); Telephone interview with Telee Brown, president, Staten Island Liberian Community Association, Inc. (SILCA) (Aug. 6, 2008).
- 497 Telephone interview with Rufus Z. Arkoi, Roza Productions (Aug. 6, 2008).
- 498 *Id.*
- 499 Susu is an informal savings system in Liberia, where members contribute and collect money and take turns to receive the whole sum as a means of savings.
- 500 *E.g.*, Junior Lone Star (Philadelphia, PA); Club Cavalla (Philadelphia, PA); Coatesville United (Coatesville, NJ); Roza Promotions (Staten Island, NY); New York FC; Mission Professionals (Bristol, PA); A Mon-Nue Sports and Social Association, Brooklyn Park (MN); Old-Timers Sports Club (Brooklyn Park, MN).
- 501 Telephone interview with Rufus Z. Arkoi, Roza Productions (Aug. 6, 2008).
- 502 *Id.*
- 503 Any single July 26 event could bring together from 5,000 to 10,000 Liberians in a given area. *Id.*
- 504 *Id.*
- 505 *Id.*
- 506 *Id.*
- 507 Telephone interview with Abdullah Kiatamba, Publisher, The Liberian Journal (August 7, 2008).
- 508 *Id.*
- 509 *E.g.*, FrontPage Africa (<http://frontpageafrica.com/>), The Perspective (<http://www.theperspective.org/>), The Liberian Journal (<http://www.theliberianjournal.com/>), Running Africa (<http://www.runningafrica.com/>).
- 510 *See, e.g.*, 'Bleeding Hearts': Family in Awe after Liberian Confesses to Killing Girlfriend, FRONTPAGE AFRICA, May 14, 2007 (describing a statement that one Liberian family distributed on the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota listserv after their son confessed to a shooting), <http://www.frontpageafrica.com/newsmanager/anmvviewer.asp?a=3957>.
- 511 Telephone interview with Abdullah Kiatamba, Publisher, The Liberian Journal (August 7, 2008).
- 512 Telephone interview with Hassan Kiawu, Liberian Association of Metro Atlanta (May 21, 2008).
- 513 Interview with Anonymous (May 23, 2008).
- 514 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1015.
- 515 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1015; *see also* TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1345.
- 516 Telephone interview with Dr. Patricia Jabbeh-Wesley, Professor, Pennsylvania State Univ. (Sept. 23, 2008).
- 517 Group interview with Mitzi Heath, Student Assistance Counselor, Melody Hahn-Merges, English Language Learners School Social Worker, & Sandra Buechel, Social Worker, Park Center Senior High School, Brooklyn Center, Minn. (June 4, 2008).
- 518 Interview with Anonymous (June 2, 2008).
- 519 Interview with John Bartee, Brooklyn Center, Minn. (May 15, 2008).
- 520 Presentation by Ev Lennon & Gboyee Seeyon, Center for Victims of Torture, Healing Through Faith Conference, St. Paul, Minn. (March 7-8, 2008).

- 521 Office of Global Health Affairs U.S. DHHS, Background on Potential Health Issues for Liberian Refugees (Jan. 30, 2004), http://www.brycs.org/documents/ft_brycs0847.pdf.
- 522 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 1004, 1337, 1555, 1738.
- 523 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1475.
- 524 Telephone interview with Dr. Patricia Jabbeh-Wesley, Professor, Pennsylvania State Univ. (May 5, 2008); *see also* Group interview with Mitzi Heath, Student Assistance Counselor, Melody Hahn-Merges, English Language Learners School Social Worker, & Sandra Buechel, Social Worker, Park Center Senior High School, Brooklyn Center, Minn. (June 4, 2008).
- 525 Interview with Ada Beh, Co-founder, Minnesota African Women’s Association (MAWA), Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 4, 2008); *see also* Telephone interview with Dr. Patricia Jabbeh-Wesley, Professor, Pennsylvania State Univ. (Sept. 23, 2008) (noting that Liberians are “afraid to seek mental health [assistance], because they are afraid to be seen as mentally ill [by other Liberians]. I’m sure if you put them in another place where there are no Liberians, I am sure they would go for help.”)
- 526 Office of Global Health Affairs, U.S. Dep’t of Health and Human Services, Background on Potential Health Issues for Liberian Refugees 20 (Jan. 30, 2004), http://www.brycs.org/documents/ft_brycs0847.pdf.
- 527 *Id.*
- 528 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 122, 784, 1254, 1434, 1444, 1611.
- 529 Telephone interview with C. Hendrix Grupee, United Nimba Citizens Council, (June 7 & 8, 2008).
- 530 *See* Interview with Ada Beh, Co-founder, Minnesota African Women’s Association (MAWA), Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 4, 2008).
- 531 *Id.*
- 532 *Id.*
- 533 A notable exception is the trial of Chuckie Taylor, son of Charles Taylor. Chuckie Taylor, whose actions during the Liberian civil conflict were notorious, was arrested in the United States on immigration fraud charges and ultimately was convicted of criminal torture under 18 U.S.C. § 2340A. Chuckie Taylor is a U.S. citizen.
- 534 Sharon Schmickle, *Stories from more survivors*, STAR TRIB. (Feb. 20, 2007), <http://www.startribune.com/local/11551991.html>.
- 535 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Providence, *supra* note 356.
- 536 Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women’s Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 537 *See generally id.*
- 538 *Id.*
- 539 *Id.*
- 540 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Providence, *supra* note 356.
- 541 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Washington, D.C. (May 18, 2008); TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 183, 1254, 1551.
- 542 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Washington, *supra* note 541.
- 543 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1611.
- 544 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1611.
- 545 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1302.
- 546 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1373.
- 547 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1551.
- 548 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Providence, *supra* note 356.
- 549 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 107.
- 550 *See Dr. Mariab Seton Threatens ULAA Elections...Points To Boycott of Chapters*, THE LIBERIAN JOURNAL, Oct. 2, 2008, <http://www.theliberianjournal.com/index.php?st=news&sbst=details&rid=544&comesOfTheHome=1>; Nat G. Gbessagee & Sylvestine Payne, *Major ULAA Actors Discuss Elections Crisis on Friday*, THE LIBERIAN JOURNAL, Sept. 19, 2008, <http://www.theliberianjournal.com/index.php?st=news&sbst=details&rid=508&comesOfTheHome=1>.
- 551 Abdullah Kiatamba, *Liberians In Staten Island Cancel Elections...Hold Service for July 26*, THE LIBERIAN JOURNAL, July 26, 2008, <http://www.theliberianjournal.com/index.php?st=news&sbst=details&rid=372&comesOfTheHome=1>; Kirk Semple, *Political Dissension Troubles Liberian Groups on Staten Island*, July 28, 2008, N.Y. TIMES, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/28/nyregion/28liberians.html>.

- 552 See, e.g., Assoc. Press, *Liberian Leader In Minn. Accused Of Being Warlord*, WCCO, Dec. 10, 2007, <http://wcco.com/local/warlord.kerper.dwanyen.2.607602.html>.
- 553 See, e.g., Tewroh-Wehtoe Sungbeh, *Unprecedented and Frivolous*, THE LIBERIAN DIALOGUE, Dec. 16, 2007, <http://www.theliberiandialogue.org/articles/c121607twsh.htm>.
- 554 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Washington, *supra* note 541.
- 555 Assoc. Press, *Liberian Leader In Minn. Accused Of Being Warlord*, WCCO, Dec. 10, 2007, <http://wcco.com/local/warlord.kerper.dwanyen.2.607602.html>.
- 556 Don't Listen to Mr. Anthony Kesselly's Verbiage: Warnings for Rebel Leader Anthony "Morris Kanneh" Francis Duwana" Kesselley: ULAA's Worst Nightmare, Posting to theliberiancommunityusa@yahoo.com, November 17, 2008 (on file with the author).
- 557 Kerper Dwanyen, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 33-35 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 558 See *infra* section on Temporary Protected Status.
- 559 See generally Mary H. Moran, *Time and Place in the Anthropology of Events: A diaspora perspective on the Liberian transition*, 78 ANTHROPOLOGICAL QUARTERLY 457-463 (2005); Sophie Briant, *Remittance Sending Behavior of Liberians in Providence* 32, (May 2005) (unpublished master's thesis, Brown University, on file with the author); Stephen C. Lubkemann, *Remittance Relief and Not-Just-for-Profit Entrepreneurship: The Case of Liberia*, in DIASPORAS & DEVELOPMENT: EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL 45-66 (Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff ed. 2008).
- 560 Sophie Briant, *Remittance Sending Behavior of Liberians in Providence* 32, (May 2005) (unpublished master's thesis, Brown University, on file with the author).
- 561 Lubkemann, *supra* note 559, at 52.
- 562 Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women's Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 563 Group interview with Mitzi Heath, Student Assistance Counselor, Melody Hahn-Merges, English Language Learners School Social Worker, & Sandra Buechel, Social Worker, Park Center Senior High School, Brooklyn Center, Minn. (June 4, 2008). Elderly Liberians who are in the U.S. also attempt to send remittances, even though they may not be working. Interview with Doris Parker, Exec. Dir., Liberian Women's Initiative – Minnesota (LIWIM), Minneapolis, Minn., (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 564 Lubkemann, *supra* note 559, at 52.
- 565 *Id.* at 53.
- 566 Briant, *supra* note 559, at 30, 40.
- 567 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 896, 1103, 1350.
- 568 Lubkemann, *supra* note 559, at 54; see generally Briant, *supra* note 559.
- 569 Briant, *supra* note 559, at 25.
- 570 Interview with Ada Beh, Co-founder, Minnesota African Women's Association (MAWA), Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 4, 2008).
- 571 Telephone interview with Anonymous (June 2, 2008).
- 572 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1477.
- 573 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1103.
- 574 Briant, *supra* note 559, at 36.
- 575 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1413.
- 576 Telephone interview with Anonymous (June 2, 2008); Sophie Briant, *Remittance Sending Behavior of Liberians in Providence* 30, (May 2005) (unpublished master's thesis, Brown University, on file with the author).
- 577 Briant, *supra* note 559, at 30-31. Another interviewee in the Providence study noted that "[t]here are some people who can't go back. They can't go back because they haven't been contributing. They don't have a rapport with the people back home. If I go back tomorrow then many people will come to see me. They have a lot of respect for me and they are proud because I send money. They will come to see me and thank me for having helped them." *Id.* at 31.
- 578 See Lubkemann, *supra* note 559, at 55-56.
- 579 See *id.* at 55.
- 580 *Id.* at 55-56.
- 581 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1463.
- 582 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1440.
- 583 Kerper Dwanyen, President, Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 43 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul,

- Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 584 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1440.
- 585 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1389.
- 586 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1467.
- 587 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1475; *see also* Interview with Veronica Barr, *supra* note 369.
- 588 Email communication from Henry Glay, August 7, 2008, on file with the author.
- 589 NACA raised over \$70,000 in 2008, Oct. 8, 2008. Posting by James Kaidii to theliberiancommunityusa@yahoogleroups.com (on file with the author).
- 590 Kerper Dwanyen, President, Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 43 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 591 Email from Henry Glay to Patricia Minikon (Aug. 7, 2008, 18:54:32 EST) (on file with the author).
- 592 *See* Bassa Action Group, <http://www.bassaactiongroup.org/history.html> (last visited Dec. 30, 2008).
- 593 *See* European Federation of Liberian Associations, <http://www.liberiansineurope.org/about/about.htm> (last visited Dec. 30, 2008).
- 594 Email from James Y. Hunder to Laura Young (June 13, 2008, 9:57:00 CST) (on file with the author).
- 595 *See generally* Kerper Dwanyen, President, Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 596 Lubkemann, *supra* note 559, at 60-61.
- 597 Moran, *supra* note 559, at 459.
- 598 TRC Diaspora Project Focus Group, Washington, D.C. (May 18, 2008).
- 599 Telephone interview with Siahyonkron Nyanseor, ULAA founding member and eleventh president (Aug. 1, 2008).
- 600 Telephone interview with Siahyonkron Nyanseor, ULAA founding member and eleventh president (Aug. 1, 2008); Siahyonkron Nyanseor, A Brief Assessment of the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas: 1974-1985 (Aug. 31, 1985) (paper delivered at the LCA-Georgia Board of Director's Meeting, Charlotte, N.C., on file with the author).
- 601 Bai Gbala, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 9-10 (June 12, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 602 Speech by Bai M. Gbala, President of ULAA, at the Meeting with President Tolbert, At the Executive Mansion, Monrovia, March 11, 1980 (on file with author).
- 603 *Id.*
- 604 *Id.*
- 605 Sam Slewion, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 50 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
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- 607 Telephone interview with Clarence Moniba, doctoral student, Arizona State University (May 23, 2008).
- 608 Moran, *supra* note 559, at 459.
- 609 Liberia Institute For Peace, Democracy, & Good Governance, *Workshop Report on the Implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement Between the Government of Liberia, the Liberians United for TRC Diaspora Statement Reconciliation Democracy (LURD), the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL), and Political Parties*, THE PERSPECTIVE, Oct. 30, 2003, <http://www.theperspective.org/workshopreport.htm>.
- 610 Statement of Anonymous, Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia Palava Hut Meeting (June 16, 2007, Clarkston, Ga., U.S.A.) (notes on file with author); *see also* THE LOVE OF LIBERTY BROUGHT US HERE (Gerald K. Barclay 2004).
- 611 Sam Slewion, Testimony at the Diaspora Public Hearings of the Truth & Reconciliation Comm'n of Liberia 52 (June 14, 2008, St. Paul, Minn., U.S.A.) (transcript on file with author).
- 612 Audio recording of this United States Institute of Peace town hall forum from February 9, 2004, http://www.usip.org/events/2004/0209_thliberia.html.
- 613 Moran, *supra* note 559, at 463.

- 614 *See* Nina Glick Schiller, Long-Distance Nationalism *in* THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF DIASPORAS: IMMIGRANT AND REFUGEE COMMUNITIES AROUND THE WORLD 570-580 (Melvin Ember et al. ed. 2005).
- 615 *E.g.*, TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1637.
- 616 *E.g.*, Telephone interview with Jacob Massaquoi, Exec. Dir., African Refuge, Staten Island, N.Y. (Sept. 24, 2008).
- 617 *See* TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1681.
- 618 Telephone interview with Dr. George Flahn, President, Liberian Med. Assoc. in the UK (Sept. 29, 2008).
- 619 Telephone interview with Jacob Massaquoi, Exec. Dir., African Refuge, Staten Island, N.Y. (Sept. 24, 2008).
- 620 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1491.
- 621 Telephone interview with Jefferson Cooper, Liberian diaspora journalist, Minneapolis, Minn. (Sept. 26, 2008).
- 622 Telephone interview with Dr. Emmanuel Dolo, Liberian diaspora academic (Sept. 30, 2008).
- 623 Telephone interview with Dr. George Flahn, President, Liberian Med. Assoc. in the UK (Sept. 29, 2008).
- 624 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1486.
- 625 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1329.
- 626 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 122, 1366, 1417.
- 627 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1550 (80 year-old statement giver). *See also* TRC Diaspora Statement Rec., 1322 (75 year-old statement giver), 1490 (78 year-old statement giver).
- 628 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1437.
- 629 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1463.
- 630 *Id.*
- 631 TRC Diaspora Statement Recs. 1490, 1514, 1535.
- 632 TRC Diaspora Statement Rec. 1424.

