

## Chapter Three



## Diaspora Project Overview and Methods



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### HISTORY AND GOALS

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia (TRC) was negotiated and agreed upon in the August 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement and subsequently enacted into law by the National Transitional Legislative Assembly in 2005. The TRC was established to “promote national peace, security, unity and reconciliation,” and at the same time make it possible to hold perpetrators accountable for gross human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law that occurred in Liberia between January 1979 and October 2003. Once President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf was elected, she moved to inaugurate the TRC in February 2006.<sup>1</sup>



The TRC determined early that it wished to engage Liberians living outside of Liberia, the “diaspora,” in the national truth-seeking process. While more than 30 countries have implemented some form of national truth seeking body, no similar body has systematically engaged a diaspora population in all aspects of its work. The TRC approached The Advocates for Human Rights (The Advocates), known at the time as Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights, and proposed a partnership to achieve its goal of engaging the Liberian diaspora, particularly the U.S.-based diaspora, in its work.

The TRC and The Advocates ultimately signed a memorandum of understanding<sup>2</sup> authorizing The Advocates to act as the TRC’s implementing partner in the diaspora. After a preparatory period, the TRC officially launched its work on June 22, 2006. The Advocates held a simultaneous launch in Minnesota for the U.S.-based TRC Diaspora Project.

The Advocates initially volunteered to develop a pilot project and recruit and train volunteers for the diaspora statement taking process in Minnesota. It quickly became apparent, however, that information from the diaspora would need to be gathered in a consistent and coordinated manner for it to be of use to the TRC. The Advocates subsequently agreed to coordinate the work of the TRC with the diaspora community throughout the United States as resources became available.

The TRC approached The Advocates because it sought an organization that would be perceived as trusted, transparent, and neutral within the Liberian diaspora community. Moreover, the TRC was seeking an organization with established connections to the Liberian diaspora. The Advocates was ideally situated to partner with the Liberian TRC to undertake the Diaspora Project for a number of reasons. The mission of The Advocates for Human Rights is to implement international human rights standards to promote civil society and reinforce the rule of law. The Advocates is a non-profit, volunteer-based organization that investigates and exposes human rights violations; represents immigrants and refugees in the community who are victims of human rights abuses; trains and assists groups that protect human rights; and works through education and advocacy locally, nationally, and internationally to engage the public, policy-makers, and children about human rights and cultural understanding.

The Advocates, which is headquartered in Minneapolis, Minnesota, has a long history of working with the Liberian diaspora. Minnesota is home to one of the largest populations of Liberians living outside of West Africa. Liberians fleeing the conflict in the 1990s made up the largest single client group seeking The Advocates' free asylum legal services. In addition to providing legal representation to hundreds of Liberians, The Advocates trained dozens of volunteer attorneys to handle Liberian asylum cases. For years The Advocates also worked through the Building Immigrant Awareness and Support (BIAS) Project to provide training and resource materials to the Liberian community and to educators in schools with substantial Liberian refugee student populations. As an organization, The Advocates has a long-standing commitment to the human rights of Liberians.

The Advocates began using human rights monitoring methods in 2002 to evaluate and contribute to the success of transitional justice in post-conflict societies. This expansion of the organization's human rights work was premised on the belief that human rights monitors' investigations and published observations would help uphold the integrity of the transitional justice process and on the belief that monitoring further supports the transitional justice process by bringing it to the attention of the international community.

## **MANAGEMENT AND OPERATION**

### **Relationship to the TRC in Liberia**

The Diaspora Project was an integrated part of the TRC's overall work. The Advocates acted as an implementing partner for the TRC in the diaspora. As such, The Advocates consulted as extensively as possible with Commissioners and staff of the TRC regarding the broad operation and structure of the Diaspora Project. Day-to-day decision making and implementation were undertaken by The Advocates.

Commissioner Massa Washington, who was charged with overseeing the Diaspora component of the TRC's work, and Chairman Jerome Verdier traveled to the United States several times to assist with training volunteers in Minnesota and New York and to plan for future Diaspora Project activities. Commissioners Oumu Syllah, Gerald Coleman, and Arthur Kulah<sup>3</sup> also participated in community outreach and volunteer training events in Atlanta, Chicago, North Carolina, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC.

In addition, The Advocates' staff and volunteers traveled to Liberia four times in 2007 and 2008 to continue the coordination of activities and to observe TRC statement taking and public hearings activities in Liberia.

The Advocates did not receive funding for any part of its work from the TRC of Liberia. As with all of its projects, The Advocates raised a small cash budget from U.S.-based foundations and individual donors and then leveraged that budget through donations of volunteer time and in-kind support. *Pro bono* and in-kind contributions totaled nearly \$4 million in fiscal year 2007 and more than \$6 million in fiscal year 2008.

### **Project Structure and Scope**

Upon accepting the responsibility for implementing TRC activities in the diaspora, The Advocates created a project structure that would ensure accountability to key stakeholders (including the TRC of Liberia, statement givers, and the Liberian diaspora community generally) and to other project participants such as volunteers. The TRC Diaspora Project was co-directed by The Advocates' Executive Director and Deputy Director. Two staff members in The Advocates' Special Projects Program worked full-time on the project, and three other staff members dedicated significant portions of their time to the project depending on need. The Advocates created a *pro bono* management team and a national advisory committee of Liberian community leaders to provide input and strategic advice throughout the project.<sup>4</sup>

It was envisioned from the beginning that volunteers would undertake a substantial portion of the work of the project, specifically statement taking. The *pro bono* management team was composed of representatives from law firms who had committed from the outset to provide volunteers and in-kind support to ensure the project's successful completion. The national advisory committee was composed of members of the Liberian community in the United States who represented the geographic and ethnic diversity of the Liberian people and who were recognized as leaders in their respective communities. The members of the national advisory committee were approved by the TRC.

In addition to seeking the input of the management team and the national advisory committee, The Advocates specifically sought the input of recognized experts in critical areas. For example, The

Advocates invited the International Centre for Transitional Justice<sup>5</sup> to advise and train staff and volunteers on implementation of public hearings and on current issues in transitional justice. Relative to the psychosocial needs of statement givers, The Advocates sought expert input from the Center for Victims of Torture,<sup>6</sup> an internationally recognized torture treatment center that has extensive experience working with Liberians both in Liberia and in the diaspora.

The TRC Diaspora Project piloted its model of community outreach and statement taking in Minnesota, then expanded to other locations where there were substantial Liberian populations and where *pro bono* support was available. Priority locations were selected in consultation with the TRC, the national advisory committee, and the *pro bono* management team. Before expanding statement taking to a new location, The Advocates identified *pro bono* coordinating



partners in the area and worked with them to ensure that there would be sufficient administrative and volunteer support to complete the project goals in that location.<sup>7</sup> *Pro bono* partners included law firms, law school clinics, and other community organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) who were willing to work on an entirely voluntary basis, receiving no funding from either the TRC or The Advocates. Ultimately, the project included statement taking sites in Minneapolis/St. Paul,<sup>8</sup> Atlanta/South Eastern United States,<sup>9</sup> Chicago,<sup>10</sup> Philadelphia,<sup>11</sup> Washington, DC,<sup>12</sup> New York,<sup>13</sup> Newark,<sup>14</sup> Providence/Boston,<sup>15</sup> and the United Kingdom.<sup>16</sup>

The TRC also asked The Advocates to assist with statement taking in the West African sub-region, specifically the Buduburam refugee settlement near Accra, Ghana. Drawing on volunteers from all of its *pro bono* affiliates, The Advocates took more than twenty volunteers on three trips to document the statements of refugees in Ghana.<sup>17</sup> TRC Diaspora Project volunteers worked alongside TRC staff and Liberian refugees who had been trained as statement takers.

## **PRE-IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS**

### **A Non-Liberian Organization in a Liberian Process**

Many national truth commissions grapple with whether and to what extent to include non-nationals in the process, either as commissioners or staff members. In Liberia, the decision was made to keep the process as Liberian as possible. For example, there are no non-Liberian commission members. In evaluating who could assist the TRC with its diaspora process, The Advocates and the TRC engaged in preliminary discussions about the feasibility of a non-Liberian organization taking a lead role in the project. From the outset the TRC was clear that it was important that a non-Liberian group take the lead because, at the time, no Liberian entity would be seen as sufficiently neutral to be trusted by all segments of the community.

Nevertheless, questions consistently arose as to why a non-Liberian organization had been chosen and what benefits might accrue to The Advocates that would not accrue to a theoretical Liberian organization. Despite attempts to ensure Liberian involvement in the process through the creation of a community advisory committee, some advisory committee members were reluctant to support the TRC before it had been proven a success. This reticence hampered efforts to build community momentum. Some leaders went beyond reluctance to overt obstructionism. The political climate significantly varied by region in the United States and by specific community. In some communities, established community leadership was highly effective in partnering and pushing forward the TRC effort.

Another key issue was that while many in the international community and sometimes the TRC itself saw the diaspora work as very separate from TRC efforts in Liberia, individuals in the diaspora saw the work of The Advocates as intimately connected with the TRC itself. Because of the instantaneous nature of the international news cycle, news about the TRC in Liberia immediately had a ripple effect on work in the diaspora. Although The Advocates had no control over TRC policies, scope of work, or timeline of activities, the organization was viewed by many in the diaspora as having influence over processes in Liberia. For example, the TRC's decision not to call major perpetrators to public hearings until late in the process, the reluctance of key actors, including the president, to appear before the TRC, and media coverage of internal conflicts at the TRC all had dampening effects on participation in the diaspora. This highlights the complexity and importance of coordination between in-country and diaspora processes. This relationship can be reciprocal as well. News coverage of diaspora hearings in the United States, where high level witnesses came forward to testify, may have spurred many higher level witnesses in Liberia to come forward.

### **Legal Issues**

The legislation creating the TRC in Liberia has no applicability outside of the territorial jurisdiction of Liberia. Accordingly, the powers conferred on the TRC did not transfer to The Advocates in the United States, the United Kingdom, or Ghana. Moreover, protections for statement givers and other participants in Liberia did not apply in those other countries.

Given this reality, The Advocates consulted with legal experts in the areas of immigration law, criminal law, and ethics regarding the statement taking protocol. A primary consideration in the development of the TRC Diaspora Project was protection for statement givers in the form of fully informed consent. Specifically, it was critical that before disclosure of any information, all potential statement givers be informed that The Advocates could not protect them from prosecution or other legal consequences in any jurisdiction, that the information they provided would eventually be sent back to entities in Liberia, and that they could choose to provide an anonymous statement if they had concerns about any legal or safety ramifications of their statements. The Advocates, in consultation with the *pro bono* management team, developed a disclosure statement that was read, signed by, and given to every statement giver with whom volunteers interacted in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ghana. In conjunction with that disclosure, each statement giver in the United States and the United Kingdom was offered the opportunity to speak with a lawyer before deciding whether to provide information to the TRC.<sup>18</sup> Statement givers were able to use this opportunity to access legal services unrelated to their decision to give a statement, if they desired to do so.

In addition, The Advocates examined local law in the United States and the United Kingdom to assess any risks and or requirements related to conflict of interest, defamation, parental consent for minors providing statements, and other issues. Moreover, the possibility that anyone associated with the project might be sued for defamation based on any statements made during public events, such as radio interviews or public hearings, was closely examined and discussed with the TRC Commissioners.

Treatment and ownership of documents and information gathered by the TRC Diaspora Project was also a consideration. All information gathered for the TRC Diaspora Project was treated as property of the TRC of Liberia. Accordingly, information provided to the Diaspora Project was subject to the same policy proscriptions as information gathered in Liberia. For example, it could not be used for academic research purposes without express permission of the TRC Commissioners.

### **Support for Statement Givers**

After ensuring that statement givers had relevant information about the legal status of the TRC Diaspora Project, the next priority was ensuring adequate psychosocial support for statement givers who might experience retraumatization during the statement taking process. The TRC Diaspora Project sought out *pro bono* services from mental health professionals who had experience working with survivors of trauma. These professionals were available on-site during some statement taking sessions in the United States and the United Kingdom and during U.S. public hearings. They were also available on call for pre- or post-statement taking counseling. In Ghana, where lack of mental health and counseling services was a major concern, statement takers were given additional training on how to support statement givers through the process and on how to access resources available in the settlement, including Ghanaian NGOs, the health clinic, and faith and traditional leaders.



The TRC Diaspora Project also saw this process as an opportunity to connect Liberians who might be in need of services with appropriate information about available resources in their communities. Each *pro bono* affiliate developed a referral sheet for the local area to provide statement givers with information about legal service providers, housing, health, and other resources. This information was provided to all statement givers in the United States and the United Kingdom.<sup>19</sup>

### PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND METHODOLOGIES

The TRC Diaspora Project was responsible for carrying out the same core activities as the TRC in Liberia: outreach and sensitization, statement taking, public hearings, research, and report writing.

#### Community Outreach and Sensitization



The TRC Diaspora Project outreach strategy was based on practices and materials developed by the TRC but adapted for the circumstances of the Liberian diaspora in the United States and the United Kingdom. Outreach materials were approved by the TRC prior to use.

Outreach materials included brochures, a video about the statement taking process,<sup>20</sup> online messaging, and Powerpoint presentations. Materials developed

for use in the diaspora included the TRC logo, other TRC graphics, video of Commissioners, the TRC Peace Song, and other images from Liberia to ensure that the TRC Diaspora Project was viewed as a fully integrated component of the TRC's work.

The Liberian diaspora in the United States and the United Kingdom is organized into myriad political, ethnic, faith, and geographic-based organizations. In addition, a large segment of the community in the diaspora uses internet-based communication (listserves, blogs, new media) to exchange information. The TRC Diaspora Project sought to use these avenues to spread information about the opportunity to participate in the TRC process.

As in Liberia, much of the community outreach was conducted through face-to-face communication

at events in the diaspora community. For example, The Advocates and its *pro bono* affiliates organized community meetings in Minneapolis, Atlanta, Chicago, Newark, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC. The meetings provided an opportunity for several hundred Liberians in the United States to hear from Chairman Verdier and other Commissioners and to ask questions about the TRC's operation and goals. In several cities, a festive kick-off event with food and cultural performances was held to launch statement taking. Some of the most effective outreach efforts centered on apartment buildings or neighborhoods populated by Liberians or at Liberian food shops, restaurants, beauty salons, and barber shops. On several occasions, The Advocates staff and volunteers conducted outreach at national conventions of diaspora community organizations. The Advocates also conducted a special "Healing Through Faith" conference for Liberian diaspora religious leaders. The Advocates staff, volunteers, and national advisory committee members conducted outreach at numerous churches and mosques, soccer matches, county association meetings, and other local events.

### **Statement Taker Recruitment and Training**

In Liberia, statement takers were Liberians paid by the TRC, but statement takers in the diaspora were all unpaid volunteers recruited from *pro bono* affiliates.<sup>21</sup> Most were non-Liberian, but Liberians were welcomed to the process, and several did complete the training and participated as statement takers.<sup>22</sup> In addition to reviewing a 400-page training manual,<sup>23</sup> all volunteers were required to complete a nine-hour in-depth training program. Volunteer trainings were held in all project locations. Volunteers who were unable to attend could also complete the training by viewing video replay of the sessions, which remain available on-line.<sup>24</sup> Volunteer statement takers received training on the mandate of the TRC, the history of Liberia and the conflict, international human rights and humanitarian law, statement taking protocols and policies, interviewing survivors of torture and war trauma, avoiding vicarious trauma, and cultural considerations for working with Liberians. All training sessions included a mock TRC statement interview facilitated by The Advocates' staff and a Liberian volunteer. Trainers included The Advocates' staff, Commissioners, psychologists, Liberian professionals and community leaders, as well as academics.

### **Statement Taking**

Statement forms and protocols used in the diaspora were modeled after those used in Liberia with some modifications appropriate to the diaspora context. The addition of a disclosure form and resource information, as described above, was a key modification. Questions specifically relating to the experience of Liberians in flight and in the diaspora also were added to the statement taking protocol. Diaspora forms and protocols were pilot-tested in late 2006. Volunteer statement takers began taking statements in January 2007 in Minnesota. Project sites were added around the country and in the United Kingdom through January 2008. Statement taking continued through August 2008.

The majority of TRC statements from the diaspora were gathered during in-person interviews. In the United States and the United Kingdom, these interviews generally were one to two hours in length and took place in homes, designated statement taking sites, or other locations of the statement giver's choosing. Interviews were conducted by a team of statement takers who then compiled a narrative summary of the statement giver's experiences, opinions, and recommendations. As a result of an overwhelming demand from refugees in Ghana to provide statements to the TRC, interviews there were almost exclusively taken by single interviewers in designated statement taking sites around the settlement.

### **Data Management**

Information from statement taking interviews was entered by statement takers from around the United States and the United Kingdom into a web-based data management system designed to store confidential client communications and other legal information. Volunteers were given passwords and the database was filtered so that they could view only the statements that they themselves entered. Statements gathered in the diaspora were also provided to the TRC coding unit in Liberia so as to be included in the statistical analysis undertaken by the TRC's data management partner.

### **Research**

The TRC of Liberia requested that The Advocates provide the Research and Inquiry Unit of the TRC with support via The Advocates' network of volunteers in the United States. To that end, several U.S. law firms completed background memoranda on topics ranging from the role of the United States in the Liberian conflict to a comparison of reparations programs that were provided to the TRC for its use.<sup>25</sup>

### **Diaspora Public Hearings**

Pursuant to the Memorandum of Understanding with the TRC of Liberia, The Advocates assisted the TRC by planning and conducting public hearings in the diaspora. The Liberian TRC was the first national TRC to hold public hearings in the United States.<sup>26</sup> The public hearings were held June 9-14, 2008, at Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. All eight<sup>27</sup> Commissioners presided over



the hearings, which centered on the theme of “Confronting Our Difficult Past for a Better Future: The Diaspora Experience.” Twenty-nine witnesses from 10 states traveled to St. Paul to testify about the human rights abuses in Liberia that forced them to flee, their experiences in flight and in refugee camps, and the experience of resettlement in the United States.<sup>28</sup> The hearings also provided Liberians in the diaspora the opportunity to present their experiences and recommendations directly to the TRC, which is mandated to make binding recommendations to the government of Liberia.

### **Other Data Collection**

Apart from gathering statements in the diaspora, The Advocates also gathered additional information to respond to requests from the TRC and to provide context for thematic information emerging from statements. This supplementary information was collected in a number of ways including (1) group meetings in the community, (2) background interviews with topic experts and community leaders, (3) review of academic literature, NGO reports, news articles, films, and other secondary sources, and (4) a review of the artifacts of Liberian diaspora community dialogue, such as articles posted on community websites, listserves, and other media outlets focused on the diaspora.<sup>29</sup>

### **Report Writing and Analysis**

The purpose of The Advocates’ report is to document for the TRC key aspects of the Liberian diaspora experience as expressed through statements provided to the TRC. The Advocates sought to ensure that the experiences and recommendations of Liberians in the diaspora are considered as part of the national reconciliation process in Liberia. The report does not attempt to replace any component of the final report of the TRC, nor to draw conclusions or to make recommendations on behalf of the Commissioners of the TRC. Rather, this report is a descriptive, qualitative analysis based on the authors’ review of statements and secondary information.

Review of TRC statements collected in the diaspora was carried out by staff from the Advocates and a select number of *pro bono* management team members. The purpose of the statement review was to identify themes, critical events, people, and ideas that were central to the diaspora community’s experience of the Liberian conflict. Statement review also focused on identifying the breadth of recommendations from the diaspora.

Each statement entered into The Advocates’ secure database was read by a staff or management team member. This included 1,377 statements gathered in the Buduburam refugee settlement and 253 statements gathered in the United States and the United Kingdom.<sup>30</sup> A preliminary thematic outline was created based on preliminary readings carried out over a period of months as statements were being entered into the database. Several subsequent readings were carried out in fall 2008, to refine the analysis.

The report authors include staff members from The Advocates and *pro bono* management team members who had engaged in the statement review process. Each report author had significant experience in the statement taking process in the United States, the United Kingdom, Ghana, or all three. Some sections of the report also draw heavily on background research memoranda completed by our *pro bono* affiliates.

The report reflects an international human rights framework. The intended audiences for this report include the Commissioners of the TRC of Liberia, the Liberian people, the international human rights community, and the public at large.

## Notes

- 1 See Appendix A for a list of Commissioners of the TRC along with their biographical information.
- 2 See Appendix E.
- 3 Commissioner Kulah resigned from the TRC to take a new post outside of Liberia and did not complete his term. No new member was appointed to take his place.
- 4 See Appendix F for a list of members of these advisory bodies.
- 5 See [www.ictj.org](http://www.ictj.org).
- 6 See [www.cvt.org](http://www.cvt.org).
- 7 Coordinating partners included Faegre & Benson LLP (Minneapolis & London), King & Spalding LLP (Atlanta), Schiff Hardin LLP (Chicago), Fried Frank Shriver & Jacobson LLP (New York), Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis LLP (Philadelphia), Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld (Washington, DC), Dechert LLP (Boston), and DLA Piper (Manchester, UK).
- 8 Partners in Minneapolis/St. Paul included the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota (OLM), Hamline University, and the law firms of Briggs & Morgan P.A., Dorsey & Whitney LLP, Faegre & Benson LLP, Fredrikson & Byron P.A. Gray Plant Mooty, Leonard Street & Deinard, Lindquist & Vennum, Maslon Edelman Borman & Brand, and Robins, Kaplan, Miller & Ciresi.
- 9 The Atlanta Friends of the Liberian TRC included The Carter Center, Emory University, Morehouse and Spelman Colleges, Georgia Institute of Technology, the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, the Liberian Association of Metro Atlanta (LAMA), Southern Truth & Reconciliation (S.T.A.R.), Refugee Resettlement Services of Atlanta, and the law firms of King & Spaulding, Kilpatrick Stockton, Alston & Byrd, and Sutherland, Asbill & Brennan.
- 10 Partners in Chicago included the Bluhm Legal Clinic at Northwestern University School of Law, the law firm of Schiff Hardin, and the Organization of Liberians in Chicago, Illinois.
- 11 Partners in Philadelphia included the Liberian Association of Pennsylvania, the Liberian Mandingo Association of Pennsylvania, ACANA, members of the Liberian community in Trenton, NJ, as well as the University of Pennsylvania Law School Transnational Law Clinic, the law firms of Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll, Blank Rome, Pepper Hamilton, Reed Smith, and Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young, and immigration legal service providers HIAS, Nationality Service Center, and Liberty Center for Survivors of Torture.
- 12 Partners in Washington, DC included Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld, American University and the Liberian Association of Metro Washington, DC.
- 13 Partners in New York included The Staten Island Liberian Community Association (SILCA), African Refugee, and the Columbia University International Trauma Studies Program, as well as the law firms of Fried Frank, Akin Gump, and Dechert LLP. Students from New York University and Columbia Law Schools were also involved.
- 14 Partners in Newark included Seton Hall Law School and the Liberian Association of Northern New Jersey.
- 15 In Providence/Boston, the Liberian Community Association of Rhode Island Inc. (LCARI) collaborated with the Roger Williams University School of Law, the Boston and Hartford offices of Dechert LLP, the Boston office of DLA Piper, the law firm of Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge, as well as Sun Life.
- 16 In the United Kingdom, partners included the Union of Liberian Organizations – UK (ULO-UK), Faegre & Benson LLP, Mayer Brown International LLP, and Eversheds LLP.
- 17 Volunteers from across the United States paid their own expenses to travel to Ghana and work as statement takers for a week at a time in Buduburam.
- 18 The Advocates and its partners recruited local lawyers in each project area who were willing to provide a free, confidential consultation regarding legal issues arising from a particular person providing a statement to the TRC.
- 19 Providing referral information for statement givers in Ghana was less formal than in the United States and the United Kingdom. All statement givers were provided with information about how to reach The Advocates and requests for information were followed-up on an individual basis.
- 20 *Quest for Justice* is a video designed to demystify the TRC Diaspora Project and encourage statement

- taking and is available for viewing at <http://liberiatic.mnadvocates.org/> or upon request from The Advocates.
- 21 Some volunteers were not employees, students, or members of a specific *pro bono* affiliate, but were integrated into teams to work under the auspices of an affiliate.
- 22 All Liberians who wished to participate as statement takers were vetted by the TRC in Liberia.
- 23 The Liberia TRC Diaspora Project volunteer training manual is available for download at [http://liberiatic.mnadvocates.org/Training\\_Manual.html](http://liberiatic.mnadvocates.org/Training_Manual.html).
- 24 Video of volunteer training sessions are available for viewing at [http://liberiatic.mnadvocates.org/Statement\\_Taker\\_Trainings.html](http://liberiatic.mnadvocates.org/Statement_Taker_Trainings.html).
- 25 Research topics included 1) international human rights and humanitarian standards, 2) prosecution and transitional justice models, 3) reparations and economic, social and cultural rights, 4) child soldiers, 5) traditional religion and culture, 6) education, 7) corruption and economic crimes, 8) media, 9) women, 10) the Diaspora experience, 11) the role of international actors, and 12) refugee protection standards for those in long term refugee situations, such as Buduburam.
- Moreover, research conducted by the Minneapolis office of Dorsey & Whitney related to current country conditions in Liberia was compiled into a report that was used as part of The Advocates for Human Rights' advocacy work on the issue of temporary protected status (TPS) for Liberians residing in the United States. The 2009 report, *Liberia is Not Ready: A Report of Country Conditions in Liberia and Reasons the United States Should Extend Deferred Enforced Departure for Liberians*, can be accessed at [http://www.mnadvocates.org/Publications\\_by\\_Date.html](http://www.mnadvocates.org/Publications_by_Date.html).
- 26 In 2006, a truth commission in the United States focused on an examination of the context, causes, sequence, and consequences of events that took place on Nov. 3, 1979 in Greensboro, North Carolina, but was not a national body and was not focused on a diaspora population. *See* <http://www.greensborotrc.org/>.
- 27 By the date of the public hearings, Commissioner Arthur Kulah had resigned from the TRC and had not been replaced.
- 28 The Commissioners heard from two in camera witnesses and from the following public witnesses (listed below in order of their appearance):
- Dr. Augustine Konneh, Georgia
  - Bishop Bennie D. Warner, Oklahoma
  - Samuel Kalongo Luo, Minnesota
  - James Y. Hunder, North Carolina
  - Dr. Wilhelmina Holder, Minnesota
  - Sackor Zahnee, Pennsylvania
  - Garswah Blacktom, Illinois
  - Amb. Herman J. Cohen (former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs)
  - Alfred K. Zeon, Minnesota
  - Marie Y. Hayes, Minnesota
  - Bai Gbala, Pennsylvania
  - Miatta Adotey, Minnesota
  - Ali Sylla, Pennsylvania
  - Marie Vah, Minnesota
  - Jane Samukai, New Jersey
  - Dr. Patricia Jabbeh Wesley, Pennsylvania
  - Doris Parker, Minnesota
  - Kerper Dwanyen, Minnesota
  - Miamen Woepa, Minnesota
  - Telee Brown, New York
  - Georgette Gray, Minnesota
  - Aicha Cooper, Minnesota
  - Harriette Badio, Minnesota
  - Tete Cole, Minnesota
  - Lynette Murray-Gibson, Minnesota
  - Sam Slewion, Pennsylvania
  - Hassan Kiawu, Georgia
  - Pajibo Kyne, Rhode Island
  - Rev. William B.G.K. Harris, Georgia
- 29 *Pro bono* affiliate Dorsey & Whitney also reviewed documents that were provided in response to a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request filed by the TRC in 2006. Information from the responsive documents was incorporated into a memorandum provided to The Advocates and the TRC on the topic of the U.S. role in the Liberian conflict.
- 30 Statistical information about statements collected in the diaspora can be found in Appendix H.

