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4 LIBERIA TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION
5 DIASPORA PROJECT
6

7 PUBLIC HEARING
8 June 13, 2008
9 St. Paul, Minnesota

10 TESTIMONY OF
11 DORIS KAIYONNOH PARKER
12
13

14 TRC Commissioners: Chairman Jerome Verdier
15 Vice Chairperson Dede Dolopei
16 Oumu Syllah
17 Sheikh Kafumba Konneh
18 Pearl Brown Bull
19 Rev. Gerald Coleman
20 John H.T. Stewart
21 Massa Washington

22 Court Reporter: JoAnn Wahl
23
24
25

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Shall we rise, please.

2 DORIS PARKER

3 [being first duly sworn/duly affirming to tell the truth],
4 testified as follows:

5 TESTIMONY OF DORIS PARKER

6 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Please be seated. I'm
7 tempted to say no coffee, but I realize there's a lot of
8 coffee going around here. But our witness, welcome and good
9 evening.

10 THE WITNESS: Okay.

11 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Can you kindly repeat
12 your name for us?

13 THE WITNESS: Doris Kaiyonnoh Parker, and
14 Kaiyonnoh is spelled K-a-i-y-o-n-n-o-h.

15 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Kaiyonnoh?

16 THE WITNESS: Kaiyonnoh.

17 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: It has a meaning?

18 THE WITNESS: Yeah, but I don't want to say. It's
19 kind of funny.

20 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Your date of birth,
21 please?

22 THE WITNESS: September 19, 1963.

23 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Residence currently?

24 THE WITNESS: Coon Rapids, Minnesota.

25 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Occupation?

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 THE WITNESS: Registered nurse.

2 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: When did you migrate to
3 the U.S.?

4 THE WITNESS: April 10th, 1986.

5 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. I want to thank
6 you for coming to share your experience with us at the
7 Commission as your way of contributing to us understanding
8 our past, sharing lessons, and finding the way forward for
9 lasting peace and reconciliation. The Commission has
10 traveled this far just for that purpose and we appreciate it
11 that Liberians are coming out to make their contribution.

12 So I will introduce Commissioners to you,
13 following which you can proceed with your testimony. Sheikh
14 Kafumba Konneh is at your right; Pearl Brown Bull, Gerald
15 Coleman, Dede Dolopei, Massa Washington, John Stewart, and
16 Oumu Sylla. Thank you, again, and welcome. You may proceed
17 now with your testimony.

18 THE WITNESS: Thank you. I'm here to tell the
19 story of what I have experienced relating to family members
20 who were affected by the war. Fortunately, for me, I was not
21 in Liberia. As you can see, I came here in 1986. But my
22 family -- I was born in Monrovia, grew up in Robertsfield
23 where my father was assigned -- worked with the government of
24 Liberia, and he was assigned at the airport as port health
25 inspector. We lived in Robertsfield for many years until the

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 war -- until I left, and my family remained there until the
2 war in 1990.

3 My father was accused of being an informant for
4 Samuel Doe, so in fear he left the area. And his thought and
5 belief was that the war would not have lasted as long as it
6 did; that maybe it would have been like the 1985 attempted
7 coup that failed. So having several children living in the
8 home, and family members, he crossed over, went to Sierra
9 Leone in search of a home, a place where he can, later on,
10 relocate the family. However, in the process, he distributed
11 some of my siblings, cousins and so forth, to other family
12 members and friends in the area. Some of my sisters were
13 left in Firestone with some family friends, some were left in
14 Monrovia with other relatives, so the family was scattered.
15 And he went to Sierra Leone, found a place, and came back,
16 got some furniture or whatever, a refrigerator and so forth.

17 In the process he came to Robertsfield and went to
18 Smell No Taste. He said that people had told him that he was
19 listed as an informant and he was being targeted, so he had
20 to leave and he could not even stay in that town that night.
21 So he went across the border, and he said immediately when he
22 crossed over, the border had closed; the rebels had taken
23 over, so there was no way for him to come back. So the
24 children were all scattered. My ten-year old sister was
25 left, I believe, on Mamba Point with one of our cousins.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 When the rebel enter Monrovia, they went to the
2 home where my sister was living, and we -- I got this
3 information because my sister did make a videotape, and she
4 sent it to us just about a year ago, just restating
5 everything that happened to her, telling us, so we were able
6 to get some more details.

7 She was -- when I left Liberia in 1986, my sister
8 was six years old. In 1990 she was ten. At ten years old,
9 she said a rebel commander, commanding officer, went to this
10 home where she was living, staying with a cousin who was not
11 at home, and there were three of them at home, a teenager,
12 probably between the ages of 15, 17, I'm not sure, a 12-year
13 old boy, and my sister who was ten. This rebel and his
14 troop -- group of people -- were searching homes and so
15 forth, and they broke into this home and found the three
16 young people in there: Children. They killed the older boy,
17 whose name I don't have at this point. I can find that out
18 for sure and then submit it to you all. He was shot. But
19 for some reason they did not kill the two younger children,
20 the 12-year-old boy and my sister, ten years old.

21 The rebel commander looked at my sister and
22 thought she was beautiful, and he was going to take her with
23 him. So immediately, it seems like their plan changed.
24 After he captured my sister and this boy -- didn't kill
25 him -- they debated whether or not to kill them, but he

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 decided he wasn't going to kill her. And he was the leader.
2 They decided to go back to where he came from. And my sister
3 said that they traveled, and she remembered that they got to
4 Careysburg and they decided to spend the night. While they
5 were in Careysburg -- I think they spent a couple of nights;
6 I'm not sure.

7 One night they were all drinking, their friends
8 and this rebel leader, drinking and so forth, and they went
9 to bed. And he called my ten-year old sister into his
10 bedroom, and she said she was scared and crying and, you
11 know, didn't want to go in, but he told her to come in; that
12 she was going to spend the night with him. And she said that
13 he raped her that night. She said she screamed, she cried,
14 but nobody could do -- you know, there was nobody to help.

15 After he raped her, then he took her -- there
16 was -- she said there was a Mandingo lady. All she knows is
17 the lady name was Fanta, it was a routine that the rebels
18 will beat her every morning. Every day they will beat her
19 up. And she was there to cook, you know, prepare food and
20 just run errands for them. So he took my sister and handed
21 her to this Mandingo lady and said, "Make sure you take care
22 of her because we're supposed to continue our trip, and she
23 cannot walk," because he raped her and she was unable to
24 walk. And she said she became incontinent. She was peeing
25 all over herself and bleeding at the same time.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 And she said they spent three days there or more,
2 she doesn't recall, where this woman nursed her; would warm
3 up some water and, you know, take care of her to get better.

4 And when she could walk a little bit, they
5 continued the journey, and continue all the way until they
6 got to his home village. But what she told me was that -- I
7 asked her if he -- was that the only time he raped her. She
8 said no. But whether along the way, or in the village when
9 they got there or whatever, but he raped her more than five
10 times. And when they got into this village, he handed her
11 over to his -- he had two wives. And he gave my sister to
12 the younger wife or the second wife.

13 She said that she stayed there with the family,
14 but at some point she ended up living with the mother of that
15 wife. After -- and she -- she just went through a lot. I'm
16 telling her story, and it's kind of sketchy and it's very
17 hard to, you know, ask all those questions, but I believe,
18 it's my estimation, maybe some of the rapes occurred there
19 because she said that the people in the village, or the
20 mother-in-law of the wife, did not like what he was doing.
21 And they took, I believe, this is when they took her away and
22 gave her over to the mother-in-law for her to live with her
23 in another place because probably he continue to rape her.
24 And she said that she lived in this village, ten-years old,
25 far away from where her home, didn't know anybody. And she

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 kept crying and hoping that my father would come back because
2 this is what he had told her, that he was going to come back
3 and get her. But she said she kept waiting. She kept
4 waiting and wondering why isn't he coming to get her, and
5 nobody came for her.

6 For 12 years she lived in this village, not
7 knowing where her family was, and we didn't know, as a
8 family. All we knew was she was captured. And because
9 someone was killed in that home, we thought she was dead. So
10 for 12 years we thought she was dead, and most of the family
11 members came to the U.S. (Crying.)

12 Not until 2002 we were able -- we got a phone call
13 from Ivory Coast that someone had spotted my sister in a
14 remote village in -- somewhere in Nimba, between the border
15 of Ivory Coast and Nimba. And this person, my sister
16 recalled later on, that after she had stayed in the village
17 for some time, and I think when she was 16 or so, she said
18 the wife of this man took her and gave her to his -- to her
19 brother to become his wife, forced her to get married to her
20 brother. She said, in her mind, because this lady kept
21 telling her that, oh, don't you know I know that you're mine?
22 My husband brought you here so that when you get older, you
23 can become his wife. So in her own mind, you know, being
24 jealous that maybe this was going to take her place or
25 whatever, you know, sick idea. But in that -- believing

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 this, she -- my sister says she was beaten a lot, you know,
2 ill-treated and, you know, so forth, but took her and said,
3 you know, give her to her brother and said, you gonna marry
4 him; this is your wife.

5 So she ended up living with this man, her husband,
6 who also just beat her, beat on her. Because she said a lot
7 of times he would tell her that, oh, you -- we don't -- you
8 don't know who your people are. You don't know where you're
9 from. You have nobody. And she said some of the things that
10 happened to a lot of young children, babies, kids, that were
11 taken into that village, and she said relief organizations
12 would come and other people will come and adopt those kids.
13 Some family members -- people will come and look for their
14 children. Whether they were their children, she will -- they
15 will take them. She said there was one time a man came in
16 and tried to claim her as his daughter, and she says, no; I
17 know who my father is. You're not my father. Because the
18 people will come and ask, you know, is this your father, you
19 know; is he your father, and she says, no, he's not my
20 father, so then they didn't allow him to take her. So that
21 kind of tells us that, you know, we don't even know what
22 happened to a lot of the innocent children that, you know,
23 were just separated from their families.

24 So she said that she ended up living with this man
25 who was her husband now. She had a child by him. When we

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 found her, she was eight months pregnant, and she had a
2 child. How we came to found her, she said that a man who was
3 friends with her husband, this husband, used to come and
4 trade between Ivory Coast and this village, this area, back
5 and forth. And whenever he came by, he will stop by their
6 house, and then she will prepare food and, you know, cook for
7 him and stuff. So -- and he kept asking her, are you sure
8 you're from this area? And she said -- she never said
9 anything. And then he kept saying you look like somebody I
10 knew. And you look like this family, this one Parker man
11 from Robertsfield. You just look like this family. In fact,
12 you look like the one Doris Parker that I went to school
13 with. And so she said that she knew that this man knew us,
14 but she was afraid to say anything.

15 So on several occasions he would come by, and they
16 would talk and they just become friends. So she finally
17 decided to confide in him and tell him the truth: I'm so and
18 so person. My family is from Robertsfield, and my father is
19 this person, and yes, my sister is Doris. And she said the
20 man told her that, "Oh, your family is in the U.S." And she
21 said she couldn't believe it because she -- in her
22 ten-year-old mind, what she remember was we live in
23 Robertsfield. My dad was going to come back and get her, and
24 that's all she remember. Not having any access to TV, radio
25 or newspaper or nothing, she had no clue what was happening

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 in the country. So she just had that memory that, no, my
2 family is in Robertsfield, not in the U.S. And the man was
3 telling her, yes, and I know your family is in the U.S. I
4 know some of your family members.

5 So he went to this family where she was staying
6 saying, well, I know who her family is. And he came back and
7 forth between Ivory Coast and told other family members that
8 were there. And just within that time, my stepmother had
9 gone to Liberia, to Ivory Coast to visit, and we were able to
10 make the arrangement. I mean, it was just unbelievable,
11 make -- we're making phone calls, calling each other, family
12 members, that she had been found. And -- and all night, I
13 remember my dad, myself were on the phone all night, just
14 calling and trying to get through to Ivory Coast, all the
15 calling cards we could get, to reach her. And she finally
16 came to Ivory Coast, Abidjan. And the family that she was
17 with, they kept her -- the baby, the little boy that she had
18 and -- because she was pregnant, they kept the baby so to
19 guarantee that she would come back.

20 So she came to Ivory Coast. She met with my
21 stepmom, and we just -- everybody was on the phone. We're
22 calling each other and crying, and everybody was just scared
23 to ask her what happened, you know. We didn't even bother
24 asking her. We were just happy to hear from her at that
25 time. And then, I think her baby end up dying. The child,

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 the older child died. But we -- we pretty much had -- she
2 wanted to go back because of her baby. And we had to beg
3 her, just beg her. I remember we're bribing her; we'll buy
4 you this; we'll do this; don't go back, you know. And we had
5 to get her away because it was too close to the border and
6 stuff like that, and who knows whether she will go back. And
7 it was just really strange to me that she wanted to go back.
8 But I guess, psychologically, it's understood, you know,
9 when -- I know there's something called the Stockholm
10 Syndrome. People become attached to their cap -- captors.

11 My sister is now 28 years old. I really do not
12 want to say where she is right now, for safety, because she
13 is in the same, almost, vicinity where the perpetrator is. I
14 just spoke with her a few days ago and told her I was going
15 to tell her story, and she agreed to that. But we agreed not
16 to reveal -- I will definitely reveal the name of the
17 perpetrator and the name of my sister to the Commissioners,
18 but I don't want to say this publicly, just for her own
19 safety, because she says that they are asking her not to say
20 anything about it.

21 Also, I want to talk about a cousin of mine, also,
22 who died in the war. He was killed by Prince Johnson's
23 forces. My cousin's name is Dean Tunning, or was. Dean,
24 D-e-a-n, Tunning, T-u-n-n-i-n-g, and he's from Sinoe. He was
25 working from the -- for the Coast Guard. He was assigned in

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 Buchanan port. When the war happened, he abandoned his post
2 and decided to come back to town. His family live in Peter's
3 Town or Goglow area, around Bong Mines Bridge, and my
4 grandparents live in New Kru Town. So he decided that he was
5 going to -- he found his way from Buchanan all the way to New
6 Kru Town to see if he could find some food and to see his
7 family.

8 So when he got to New Kru Town, my aunt told me
9 that they didn't have any food, so they gave him a few bags
10 of tea and some sugar. So he told them that he was on his
11 way to see his wife Mary. On his way, somebody pointed him
12 out and said that he was in the army. He was an army
13 governor official or army personnel. And the last that we
14 heard of him is that Prince Johnson and his forces, they
15 arrested him, tabey him, tied him up, put him in the back of
16 a pickup truck and took him to Caldwell, and that was the
17 last we've ever heard from him. This is around 1990. When
18 he died -- we assume that he's dead 'cause no one has heard
19 from him. He's an only child for his mother, who is my
20 mother's older sister. When his mother heard about it, she
21 was in Sinoe. When word reach her, she got out of her mind,
22 went insane and jump in the bush, and nobody heard from her
23 for about six months or so. When they finally found her, she
24 was just totally out of her mind. She still is demented
25 right now, I mean, just confused, not to herself, because her

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 only son was killed.

2 When the news of his death reached his wife -- he
3 had a wife with three children -- or he's captured, the wife
4 immediately maybe became broken-hearted; we don't know what
5 happened. But in two weeks she got sick and she died. His
6 three children were taken by the maternal grandmother, who
7 took them all the way to Brewerville, somewhere behind
8 Brewerville. She was a Bassa lady and she -- I believe
9 there's some Bassa people that live in that area. She took
10 the children there. And what we learned is that out of the
11 three children, two of them died, so there's only one child
12 alive today, his oldest daughter.

13 You know, this is my story. Because of what
14 happened to my sister and what I, you know, heard happened to
15 other women, lots of women, that women were used in the war
16 and victimized, young girls were raped and forced into
17 marriages, and lots of other terrible things happened, other
18 Liberian women and myself in the state of Minnesota came
19 together, and for me, it was a tribute and a memorial to my
20 sister and other women who have experienced such trauma, and
21 we started an organization to advocate for the rights of
22 women and girls, organization called the Liberian Women's
23 Initiative of Minnesota. Little did we know -- no relation
24 to the one in Liberia. We didn't know there was one in
25 Liberia as well. This is my story.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much.
2 Thank you very much, Doris, for sharing all of this with us.

3 THE WITNESS: Uh-huh.

4 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: We understand the need
5 for protection to the extent that we don't even expect you to
6 call your -- to call your sister's name. We don't expect you
7 to do that. But we'll be asking some questions that will
8 position us enough to understand and see what can be done in
9 the immediate. At the TROC, we try to give special attention
10 to this situation, situation of women, so that especially in
11 that case, where there's force marriage, children are
12 involved, it would be good to know what needs to do in terms
13 of intervention.

14 We have had one or two cases like that. There was
15 a girl who came to the Commission and explain how she was
16 forced to marry this guy. The guy kill her parents in their
17 presence. She had twin brothers and they were separated.
18 One of them -- she had twin brothers. They were separated,
19 and one of them will stay in the custody of the perpetrator.
20 But she cooperated with the Commission, and after 14 years,
21 we managed to locate the guy, went to the very Nimba County
22 and located the child, took the child from him, and today
23 they are united as brothers and sisters. So some of this
24 information, in terms of which village in Nimba, for example,
25 we need them, if it is possible, to share the tip with us so

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 that we get a first-hand impression. All of this can be done
2 in-camera.

3 THE WITNESS: She said the village was Gborplay or
4 something, Gborplay or --

5 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. Gborplay.

6 THE WITNESS: Gborplay, yep. And the person is --
7 the perpetrator is Benedict Batua.

8 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. We want to thank
9 you. And to those who may be reporting on behalf of the
10 media institutions, she just had a slip of tongue and called
11 the perpetrator's name. We beg your indulgence not to
12 include that in anything you report. If you do so, we deny
13 it, because I'm sure you don't have the recording. We just
14 beg you to cooperate on this. Because if you expose publicly
15 by media, you will know from whence the leak came. I don't
16 know whether we should go on with the question.

17 VICE CHAIR DEDE DOLOPEI: No.

18 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: So Commissioners, we
19 share the moments with you. I'm sure they have some
20 consolation out of that. But we will not ask further
21 questions just so that we don't compromise her security
22 prematurely, so thank you very much.

23 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: The TROC provides
24 that the Commission shall handle, when it comes to women and
25 children, provide special mechanism to handle such cases.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 And for further, going on with this, the mechanism is we can
2 have public hearings and in-camera hearings, and will get the
3 rest of the information in-camera. But it was very good to
4 bring it out in the light so you can know -- the public can
5 know what really happened. And when we say we are having
6 in-camera hearings, these are hearings like these; that we
7 try to protect the witnesses and the survivors. So this is
8 the situation. We say thank you. And the rest, we like to
9 get it in-camera because, you know, because we want our
10 sacred responsibilities, sacred charge. And we happy that
11 you all can help us with our sacred priorities and share it
12 with us.

13 THE WITNESS: I have one thing else to say
14 before -- can I -- not relating to this. I am just -- huh?

15 HEARING OFFICER TEAYAH: Go ahead.

16 THE WITNESS: Okay. You know, looking at the
17 magnitude of what has happened to Liberians across the board
18 indiscriminately, to me, is grave. It's nothing to be taken
19 lightly. I am really disappointed -- first of all I want to
20 thank the TRC for this opportunity, and our partners, the
21 Advocates For Human Rights, and those who encouraged me to
22 really come up and say this, because I was one of those who
23 was just added my name on the list. For a long time I did
24 not want to talk about it. Thank you for the work that
25 you're doing, your sacred responsibility.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 Having said that, I believe this is -- this is --
2 for us to reconcile, we need to be honest. Every Liberian
3 need to really look within themselves. And it's not about
4 any tribe. It's not about any individual or any ethnic group
5 or whatever, but it's just about Liberia. It should be about
6 Liberia, and we need to be honest with ourselves. I am so
7 disappointed, I am so disappointed with three quote/unquote
8 prominent leaders and elders in our nation: Bishop Bennie
9 Dee Warner, Mr. Bai Gbala and Mr. Kalongo Luo. These people
10 played key roles in government. They were major players.
11 However, they came here and trivialized this process. They
12 did not take it seriously. They were making fun of the
13 process. My sister and many women, Marie Vah, other women
14 that sat here, Jane, that were raped violently for no reason.
15 People were killed. And people who led and made decisions in
16 our country sat here and trivialized it. Bishop Bennie Dee
17 Warner did not believe that 133 year of Americo-Liberian rule
18 in Liberia, there was nothing -- anything wrong. No apology,
19 no regrets. Mr. Bai Gbala, who advised so many leaders,
20 three presidents; there were so many atrocity committed,
21 human rights violations, no apology, no responsibility.
22 Mr. Kalongo Luo, who was an adviser, did not take
23 responsibility or even admit to knowing about the 13 people
24 that were executed.

25 These people were toying with our emotions, and I

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 don't find that funny, and I'm really disappointed. They are
2 elders in our community. We, as Liberian, we respect our
3 elders and we follow them. We listen to our parents. And if
4 our elders can come here and not set an example for us to
5 move forward, what do they expect us to do, or what do they
6 expect from the younger generation? I am just disappointed,
7 and I just want to register that.

8 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Thank you. We
9 will take note of that. Are you related to the late Doris
10 Gbala --

11 THE WITNESS: No.

12 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: -- the late Bai
13 Gbala's wife?

14 THE WITNESS: No. We just got the same name,
15 "Doris."

16 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Mr. Coleman.

17 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Again, I've known
18 the Commission sometime to make some strange statements, so I
19 just have to refrain, but I just want to tell you I'm sorry
20 for what happened.

21 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

22 VICE CHAIR DEDE DOLOPEI: Doris?

23 THE WITNESS: Yes.

24 VICE CHAIR DEDE DOLOPEI: I just want to say sorry
25 also, especially for what happened to your sister and cousin,

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 and maybe other members of the family that you -- you
2 couldn't repeat today.

3 THE WITNESS: Uh-huh.

4 VICE CHAIR DEDE DOLOPEI: I also want to assure
5 you that the eight Commissioners here take this process
6 serious. If we did not take it serious, we wouldn't be here
7 today. If we did not take it serious, we wouldn't have left
8 our comfortable homes. It may not be very comfortable
9 because we all went through the same process of the war and,
10 you know, some of us are still struggling to make it. But we
11 left those conditions that were comfortable and went through
12 the 15 -- 14 counties. We have one more to go through. The
13 14 counties of Liberia, bad roads, sleeping in places that we
14 bathe with dirty water, drank dirty water. Just name the
15 conditions; we went through it. I want you to know we did it
16 only because we, as Liberians, take this process serious.
17 And so we are supposed to come and listen to people come to
18 us and tell us their experience. We are supposed to be
19 neutral and unbiased.

20 We also expect that this hall will be filled with
21 Liberians to come and tell us what happened to them, to come
22 and tell us who they feel are responsible for what happened
23 in our country. We are not supposed to go around just
24 grabbing people and pointing fingers, no. It's the Liberian
25 people responsibility to come to us and tell us. Why?

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 Because we are supposed to be unbiased. We are supposed to
2 take our feelings and everything and put it behind us and be
3 neutral. We went through the war. And so don't think that
4 for one moment anybody can come here and pull the wool over
5 our eyes. We are not joking; we are serious. We take the
6 fact that a ten-year old child was taken from her
7 environment, taken somewhere else, raped, and made a slave
8 for 12 years, and is still there -- she didn't go back
9 because she liked her condition, but she went for her child.
10 They kept that child from her and she felt she had to go
11 back. This is the reason why she went back. No mother for
12 no reason or comfort would want to leave her child in a
13 condition that she herself know what she went through when
14 she was there. No mother will want to do that.

15 THE WITNESS: No. For a correction, she didn't go
16 back.

17 VICE CHAIR DEDE DOLOPEI: She didn't go back?

18 THE WITNESS: No, she didn't go back. But where
19 she is now --

20 VICE CHAIR DEDE DOLOPEI: Oh, okay, thank you.

21 THE WITNESS: -- the perpetrator is in the same
22 environment.

23 VICE CHAIR DEDE DOLOPEI: It's almost the same
24 thing.

25 THE WITNESS: Yeah, but she's not back there.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 VICE CHAIR DEDE DOLOPEI: Okay. We didn't go.

2 And so we say thank you for coming, and I just
3 want to give you that assurance. Everybody will come and
4 tell their stories. At the end of the day, it's the eight of
5 us who will sit there to make that final report to the
6 Liberian people. We pray that, like she said, you all will
7 be praying for us also, that in our collective wisdom, we
8 will be able to come up with the kind of report that the
9 Liberian people will want to see, because we are human and
10 maybe we may make one or two mistakes. But we need your
11 prayers and we need your guidance. Liberian people, come out
12 and say what happened to you to guide the TROC to make the
13 best report possible. Thank you so much for coming.

14 THE WITNESS: You're welcome. Thank you.

15 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you very
16 much, Doris for coming out and speaking on behalf of your
17 family. We can see it's been heart-wrenching here. This is
18 a very difficult task for us, and I guess as well as the
19 thousands of Liberians/victims who have gone through this.
20 But I would like you to know that we are with you. We
21 sympathize with you and your family. And someone said
22 yesterday, after we left the hall, that Liberians often
23 confuse reconciliation with impunity, and I think that's a
24 big charge that we have, to make sure our people understand
25 that. While it is true that we have a bigger mandate of

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 reconciliation, but within that bigger mandate there are
2 several processes and several sub-elements that must fall in
3 place to ensure that our people are reconciled. People will
4 not be truly reconciled, that is my personal opinion as a
5 person, people will not feel reconciled if they don't feel
6 justified, no matter how we -- how we define justice.

7 And the culture of impunity that has split our
8 nation for so long is one of those issues that the TROC has a
9 mandate to address. And we want to assure all Liberians,
10 irrespective of where we're from, that the TROC intends to do
11 this job and do it well. The TROC is a mechanism of
12 transitional justice that is victim-centered. We put victims
13 first because it is your day. It is your time to get your
14 voices heard. You were silent for so long.

15 While it is true that our process has incorporated
16 perpetrators, because we realize that due to our own unique
17 situation as Liberians, and what has transpired in our
18 country, there is no way we can try to reconcile the nation
19 if we didn't bring together all parties to this conflict, so
20 in our process, we accommodate perpetrators and violators or
21 alleged perpetrators and violators. They, too, have their
22 story. Some of them are victims/perpetrators, some of them,
23 for the fun of it, to perpetrate their crimes. But just to
24 remind everybody that the TROC is, first and foremost, a
25 victim-friendly, a victim-centered approach to transitional

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 justice. We will be looking at all issues concerning
2 reconciliation, including addressing the culture of impunity.
3 So those who think that reconciliation will exist or will
4 happen in a vacuum outside of addressing the issue of justice
5 and reconciliation in the culture of impunity, we want you to
6 be patient and -- and cooperate with the Commission and
7 continue to work with us, as we look at all of this -- these
8 different elements of this one were reconciliation, as we try
9 and struggle to reconcile this nation.

10 I just want to say that to you, and to all the
11 other victims who have come out here today, and who have
12 spoken about justice and also addressing the culture of
13 impunity. We do have that mandate as well.

14 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Thank you very much,
15 Doris, and let me say how much I'm in solidarity with you for
16 the pain you feel as a result of the fate that befell your
17 sister.

18 And on the note of individuals appearing before
19 the Commission and trivializing the issues, let me say that
20 ours is a task to help, if you might say so, people regain
21 their lost humanity by committing the kinds of atrocities
22 they did, either by commission or by omission. Some just
23 simply looked the other way, and in the process,
24 relationships were broken, and our task is to help restore
25 that balance. Those relationships are broken. And that

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 carries the imperative that those who contributed to the
2 breaking of those relationships have an obligation to help
3 restore those relationships.

4 And let me say to you that until you appeared
5 before this Commission and gave your testimony, I had no
6 idea. I had seen you in the hall, and I simply saw you as a
7 Liberian interested in the process. Never had any idea of
8 the tremendous pain that you carried in your heart. Let me
9 say that the battle has just begun, the battle against
10 impunity. Impunity has to be combated at all levels, even
11 within our own ranks. And ours is just a short time,
12 following which recommendations will be made and those
13 recommendations will be given the government. And the
14 government will have to muster the necessary political will
15 to implement those reso -- to implement those
16 recommendations, although the Act says that -- the Act
17 creating the TROC says that the recommendations we make will
18 be binding on the government. But like we saw in 1979, the
19 Brownell Commission, in the aftermath of the -- of the Rice
20 Riots, the recommendations and observations contained in that
21 report were simply shelved, and we saw ourselves coming to
22 the coup and, subsequently, into civil war.

23 So with the kind of courage you have displayed by
24 coming up here to bring forth the story of your sister to the
25 world, let me say that -- let me urge you and others that

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 this has just begun. Because those recommendations we make
2 will mean nothing if people like you and myself and others
3 will not bring to bear the necessary pressure on those who
4 will be responsible to implement those recommendations. If
5 we keep silent, we should expect that those recommendations
6 will simply be shelved. Because we must not lose sight of
7 the fact that the government's -- this government, in a way,
8 can be considered a transitional government in a lot of ways.
9 Why? Because it's composed of disparate, and in some cases,
10 competing interests, antagonistic and competing interests.
11 And until we, as a civil society, the diaspora, at home, and
12 other members of the human family, can act in solidarity to
13 ensure that we deal with the issue of impunity that has
14 plagued our country for so long, I'm afraid that we may be
15 digging our graves, that we eventually will fail.

16 So let me commend you for the courage you have
17 shown. Let me urge you to muster more courage because
18 there's much yet to be done in the post-TROC. Thank you very
19 much.

20 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much,
21 Doris, for coming to share your experience with us today.
22 And thank you for all the support, because this is not my --
23 during my last visit, I saw you and how hard you worked for
24 the TROC process to ensure that this process succeed. Little
25 did I know that you, too, have a story to tell. Most often,

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 I always say that all Liberians have a story to tell. I just
2 want to say thank you for coming, and I know what it means,
3 and my greetings and everything to your sister.

4 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you, Doris. Just
5 to say that because you're one of those Liberians who came
6 forward, you're one of those who want to support peace and
7 reconciliation in our country, you have the right to be
8 critical of those who came forward to support the process as
9 well.

10 Ours is an inquiry commission, and we are doing
11 our best to be open and give everybody the opportunity. We
12 cannot call people and compel them to say sorry for what they
13 did or what they didn't do. We hope that by the way we
14 conduct ourselves, by the fair nature of our proceedings,
15 Liberians will learn a new way of conducting ourselves.

16 For too long we focused on what people did, what
17 people say, and what people didn't do, and we tend to forget
18 about our own contribution and what we should be doing. You
19 know, like my colleagues said, in the end, the Commission
20 will decide. We are all Liberians. We know we are helping
21 the country and people come forward. I'm sure the
22 Commissioners aren't easily deceived. But it's an open
23 process. We want, by the end of this process, no one will
24 deny that they had an opportunity to approach the Commission
25 to make a presentation, or for their voices to be heard.

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 After reliving the pains of your ten-year-old
2 sister there, I can understand your heart, and how
3 disappointed you would be when those you look up to for
4 leadership do not seem to be meeting up with your
5 expectations. But that's the nature of our society today.
6 Tolerance is a virtue, we have to cultivate, knowing that
7 people have the right to disagree with us. People have the
8 right to speak their minds. People have the right to hold
9 opinions. Albeit, we thank you and we look forward to
10 engaging you much further, so that we can -- when we return,
11 we can render the assistance to your deprived sister as much
12 as she deserves. Is there anything you would like to say at
13 this point before you leave?

14 THE WITNESS: No. I just -- you know, I think
15 somebody mentioned earlier during the week that we, you know,
16 have a memorial for those who lost their lives. And I think
17 it would be necessary to have a memorial to -- for just women
18 to -- to -- to memorialize women who have suffered. Because
19 someone like my sister, I have no information whether or not
20 she has seen -- sought counseling, if she's received
21 counseling. We, as a family, have not really had time to
22 even grieve over this or, you know, bring closure and stuff
23 like that. We're still apart.

24 My father is elderly now. He's going to be
25 twenty -- 28! He's going to be 78 in October. He is now a

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 U.S. citizen, but he -- he still has fear of going home, you
2 know, so -- but lots of women suffered. And just sitting
3 here listening to the stories of, you know, what women have
4 gone through, I think as we even memorialize the victims of
5 the war, I think we should have special memorial for women
6 specifically, you know, for women, just to empower them, you
7 know, help to bring closure, healing to some of these women,
8 and definitely rehabilitation. And I hear about Sister To
9 Sister, lots of rehabilitation, but we can't do, you know,
10 enough.

11 In the case of my sister, the 12 years she was
12 there, she didn't go to school, so at 28, she's in tenth
13 grade. There are lots -- thousands of women like that. We
14 really, you know, recommend that -- I don't know what their
15 educational system is in Liberia, but I know they have to buy
16 uniform and all those kind of things, but I think they need
17 to make special revisions, provisions, you know, for totally
18 free education, you know, to allow these young people to go
19 to school rather than worrying about where they going to get
20 registration fees and fees for their books and fees for a,
21 because there are some people who just don't have those basic
22 necessities that -- they don't have them. So that's all I
23 can say.

24 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much,
25 especially for this last recommendation. We've been charged

TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 with putting in place special mechanism for women. And the
2 recommendation about memorials have come about many times,
3 but a special memorial for women is a different case, and we
4 appreciate that you've brought this up. And we hope that if
5 you have some ideas and thoughts on how this will be
6 realized, you can communicate that to the Commission.

7 THE WITNESS: Okay.

8 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much.

9 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. Ladies and
11 gentlemen, we still do have another 30 minutes for those of
12 you who want to throw a shout at the Commission, contribute
13 their thoughts, or just make a comment. This is the time.
14 We have 30 minutes, and I'm sure we may not have the
15 opportunity to hear everybody, but this opportunity.

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TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, JoAnn Wahl, Official Court Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing pages of typewritten material constitute an accurate verbatim stenographic record taken by me of the proceedings aforementioned before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, on the 13th day of June, 2008, at the time and place specified.

DATED: July 30, 2008.

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