

**Truth & Reconciliation Commission of Liberia Diaspora Project
Oral History Interview - Diaspora Public Hearings Participant
Project Organizer: The Advocates for Human Rights, Minneapolis, MN, USA
Funder: Minnesota History Center, St. Paul, MN, USA**

Interviewee (A): Marie Hayes

Interviewers (I): Diana Morissey, Theresa Dykoschak

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I: Thank you again for agreeing to meet with us to speak about your experience with the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Project. As a reminder, we are recording this and the recording will be made public, I believe, on the Minnesota Historical Society's webpage and also possibly by the Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights—the Advocates for Human Rights. So if we'd like to get started, could you please tell us: Why did you decide to participate in the public hearings?

A: First let me give you my name.

I: Thank you very much.

A: That name is Marie Yarsiah Hayes, originally from Liberia. Now the question is: Why did I decide to participate in this? It's because I am a Liberian at heart and a Liberian by birth and I always feel that what concern Liberia—anything that would make it possible to bring peace and reconciliation to Liberia—it's my duty, my responsibility, and my obligation to be a part of it. And that's why I agreed to be a statement – to give my own statement and to even serve as part of the advisory member of the Advocates for Human Rights.

I: And when you were deciding to participate did you speak with any family members or any friends?

A: Of course my husband and I discussed it. I also spoke with my mother who lives here with me and some of my siblings that are here also and my children. I told them that I would be doing this.

I: And what were their reactions?

A: They were very supportive. For some it was just an information purpose – it was not a matter of trying to get their approval to do it but it was a matter of them being knowledgeable of what was going on. I even gave some of them the opportunity to do likewise if they felt moved to do that.

I: And how did you prepare to testify at the hearings?

A: Wow, this girl likes to talk, so I don't know. I didn't really just – one thing, anything I'm ready to do I pray about it. I'm a praying person. I prayed about it and I felt that I was ready and for any question.

I: Ok. Did you have any idea of what the process would be like?

A: Yes, I had prior meeting with folks at the Advocates to talk about the need for counseling if I needed that and to even have an opportunity to first develop – write down my statement and to go over it. I went to the Advocates' office and we went over it. I think that was with Jim or... I can't remember exactly who the person was. But yes, I was prepared for that. And so just going over it and knowing and so I was ready to answer the questions that came from the – from those who came from Liberia.

I: Were the questions—the questions that actually were asked of you—were they what you expected? Were they different?

A: I expected that and much more because of my previous involvement in government. So I think it was right, the questions that were asked.

I: What do you remember about the public hearings?

A: Well, yes, one thing that was fascinating for me. I came right after Cohen [Herman J. Cohen] who was the Assistant Secretary of State, responsible for Africa, at that time. And hearing about his statement and what America should have done during that time gave me an eye opener. ...to know -- because I remember I was just getting ready to go back and they said, "He has something more to say." He came right back on to apologize for what was not done. And that, I think it gave credence to the time – to the level of time that I had to wait to give my statement. It was important to hear those things. And I did not stay to listen to all of those people who were giving their statement. But just hearing that part of the statement and knowing – I think it was very important to me to hear that. So, it was good, it was good.

I: And who was it that spoke again?

A: Cohen. I think it was Cohen [Hank]. Secretary – I'm not remembering his full name now but folks at the Human Rights will have that information. But he was Assistant Secretary of State *at that time*.

I: Ok. And... you had previously prepared your statement and thought about what you were going to testify about. After hearing Cohen speak, did that change your statement in any way?

A: Not necessarily.

I: No?

A: It gave credence to what I had to say. And it – what he had to say was nothing much added to my statement. It's – some of the things that we said and we is... most of the – I said – and that is most of the, most of the statement-givers gave talk about, about people really being, people *waiting* that America was going to *do* something and for that reason they really did not – were not really leaving as they would have left if they did not have hope. But I knowing that the expectations, there was disappointment and what people thought would happen did not happen and so they had to flee. So that was really – it was important to hear that, that it was not just coming from me. That America itself did not do what they were expected to do by the people.

I: And so when you were testifying yourself, hearing the statements before-hand might have made you feel differently while you were testifying?

A: Well, feel – I don't know what I felt differently or what I felt – I felt the same...

I: Ok

A: ...as that, yes, I'm giving my statement that was a statement. But it's like you feel that you saying something that has already been – it has already been clarified, so there is no need for you to elaborate further.

I: Can you describe any emotions that you may have felt either leading up to the testimony or during your testimony?

A: I would say, like, anticipation prior to the... the testimony and relief after the testimony. This is something that I wanted to do and that I hoped that people would hear my story. And after giving that story, I felt a sense of relief.

I: For having shared it?

A: Yeah.

I: Ok. What did the experience in participating in the public hearings – what did that experience mean to you?

A: It made me feel that I am a part of a system that is being put in place – that was being put in place to bring peace and reconciliation to a nation that I love and I'm glad I was part of it.

I: Ok. Was there anything from your testimony that you left out that you wish that you had included now?

A: I don't think so. I don't think so. I think I covered basically everything that I wanted to cover.

I: Ok. Did you have your statement written out before-hand? Did you read from it...

A: No

I: ...during your testimony, or did you...?

A: No, I did not read from it. I had it written down but it was something that I wrote – nobody, nobody wrote it, so I was able to just give an overview of what I had earlier written.

I: Ok. Was there anything that you regretted talking about or that you were surprised that you ended up talking about?

A: In... it came into the question and answer period when one of the TRC commissioners asked the question about William Tolbert engagement in having young girls at his place in – at his farm in Palala or somewhere – whether I was aware of that.

And I said that, you know, that's not something that I was ready to talk about. Because of course I'd heard about it but I had not gone there, that was not something for me to confirm whether it was true or not. That's not what I went to talk about. Of course it helped, in terms of my statement where we talked – my recommendation in terms of where 'Big Shots'—we call them 'Bit Shots,' call them officials, especially male—tend to use young girls as, in an attempt to help them go to school or so, but they... they sort of, we say, sleep with them or use them as concubines or *god child*. Complete different definition of *godchild*. But, so, that within these new – the new development in Liberia that those things would be carefully looked into. And I see that Ellen is much more involved with that now about the rights for girls, for women, and making sure that anyone – and I heard a lot of that on the radio when I was there in 2006 and 2009 about rape, statutory rape and all of that and people being, you know, being educated to that effect. And I'm glad that those things are now be happening. So I did not expect to talk about that – it was in my recommendation but when the questions came about, it was little bit touchy. But I'm glad it was talked about and the things being done in Liberia now – I'm not crediting myself for that because other people, including the women lawyers in Liberia have been really fighting for these rights for women and so these things are happening and I'm glad they're happening.

I: And what was the term that you were using?

A: *God child?*

I: Yes. *God child [or god pa]*. Oh, *God child!* Sorry, yes.

A: That's a different, that's a different connotation. When we talk about *God child*, you expect that Godparents are people who go to the church and stand with you for baptizing or confirmation or some people, some religious group we say, *Christendiya*.

I: *Chrsitenya*.

A: Yeah, but some how people use that differently when they say, in Liberia when they say, "This is my *Godchild*," or when the child say, "This is my "*Godpa*." The *Godpa* means that it is an elderly man that they have to have some sexual relationship with to gain something from them... so...

I: Was there anything else you were surprised to either learn or hear about, maybe for the first time, at the TRC hearings?

A: Not necessarily, not necessarily.

I: Ok. What do you think the TRC process, in general, means to Liberians?

A: It meant a whole lot to Liberians when the process started. Right now, I don't know, because the follow-up steps that is supposed to be taken in Liberia – everything to me seems dormant.

I: Dormant.

A: Yeah, because there are – there are different feelings as to what should be done. The recommendations that came from the TRC process itself is being questioned because

the people there are saying “This is not what we asked you to do,” and there are people there who saying, “Implement it immediately.” I feel that certain aspects of it should be implemented and I still feel that the people are not really... especially serious perpetrators like... the guy who is in the senate in Nimba county... oh, the guy who killed two... I’ll think about his name...

I: Prince Johnson?

A: Prince Johnson. I don’t see any sense of... remorse. There’s no sense of remorse for what has been done. And for me, one of my recommendations was not exactly for persecution. Mine was for people who were perpetrators should be made to tell the truth, to ask for forgiveness. And that we learn to forgive and move forward, but how can you forgive someone who does not feel that he wronged you? Who feels that whatsoever he did, it was justified? And so there are a lot of – I hate to give what people feel, but this is what I feel. And for the few people that I talked to, it varied. You don’t know what really they are feeling. Some people just want to move on and let things go. But there are some people who are still saying that even Ellen had a role to play in that and based on the recommendations of the TRC, she’s not to run for government. So... those are... those are people’s feelings. My feeling is, if Ellen had come out and say, “I apologize for what my role was through all of this...” Let’s move on and build our nation. But not keep going back to say, “Who will you punish?” To say: “Punish, who? Who will you punish?” Because in Liberia we say, “When you pull rope – when you pull the rope, the rope will bring the bush along with it. It will pull the bushes.” So it will keep continuing, continuing because if I try to pull you and everybody else that was surrounding you, it will be pulled together, and then it start another conflict and that’s not what I hope for. I hope for us to move on. But I hope for people who were part of this entire system of war and abuse of human rights who come out and say, “I’m sorry for what’s the role that I played in this,” you go on and build the country. Liberians are forgiving people, and you can see that when you go into Liberia. People are moving on with their lives and ??? doing things but no, there are people who do not know how Liberia was prior to 1990, so they’ve got nothing to compare it with. But yet instead of people who were there prior to 1990 who were not there, like me. I was there prior to 1990 – I left 1990. I did not see as the destructions were going on. I went there in 2006. What I expected to see was better than what I saw.

I: How do you mean?

A: How do I mean is that when I went in 2006, the war had ended in 2003, this was just three years in between. I did not expect to see some beatings up. I did not expect to see possible roads—roads that people could drive cars...

I: Ok.

A: I did not expect to see some market places in operation. I expected it to be in worse—in a worse situation. Well, what I saw gave me hope that even after fourteen years of war, people are determined to move on, to build their lives. And in 2009 when I went there were much more improvements than 2006. So, like I was telling Diana before you got back—you know, before we started this, it’s like: it depends on who you talk to and where you go in Liberia when they talk about ‘Things are not happening.’ Things are happening, depending on your own perception.

I: Ok. [Background noise increasing] Is this distracting? Yeah, I wonder if—I wonder if—

A: Is it distracting you?

I: No, but I wonder if the tape is picking up... maybe the tape is... over in the corner would be Ok... Ok, we are recording again. We decided to re-ask a question just because there were some students outside and we were worried that we might not be able to hear you on the tape. So if you could please let us know again: What do you think that the TRC in general means or meant to Liberians?

A: I think when the process started it was meaningful to Liberians, everyone. For me, especially, I thought that this was a process that would make people that have been perpetrators to come out and say the truth about what they may have done and ask for forgiveness and be forgiven. I'd—I was not one of those who thought that they should be persecuted [sic], per se. I feel that people should be able to apologize for what they did—realize that they erred—some were forced into war. There were some who entered of their own will. But whatsoever that those people would come forward and say, "I'm sorry – forgive me for what I did," so that we can move forward as a country. But if you have man like Prince Johnson coming up and trying to justify what he did and show no remorse for what was done then how can you forgive a man like that if he's not remorseful? Forgiveness come with—come after one asks for forgiveness but if you don't ask for forgiveness then why forgive? But if you talk about persecution it's like what I said earlier that when you pull bush—when you pull the rope, the rope will pull the bush and there will be continuing of the conflicts. So who are you going to persecute? There are people who say even Ellen Johnson's solution not to run for the second term because the TRC recommendation was that she was involved in the process and there should be a punishment. But to me, if Ellen come out and say "This is what I did for whatsoever—for whatsoever my involvement was in this conflict in Liberia, I apologize. We need to move forward and build the country because we need everybody who is able, who is committed to rebuilding Liberia, to go ahead and rebuild it instead of trying to go back and judge people."

But that does not mean that people who have done wrong should not say "I'm sorry for what I did." So, I mean, that's—that's what I think the whole process is – I may not be speaking for every Liberian, but I'm speaking for myself. And for those who I have talked to, there have been conflicting information what they want. We know, we heard of the people pushing that there should be persecution of others. But I feel that instead of persecution, there should be apology, there should be an asking for forgiveness, and for reconciliation and rebuilding of the country.

I: So do you think that the TRC process provided an outlet for people to be able to come forward and ask for that forgiveness and to—

A: The report—the final report that was sent, and I can't remember exactly everything that was said in it—I'm not talking about the report from *here*. I'm talking about the report that was submitted by the TRC itself in Liberia with their recommendations. That has brought up other debates. There are people who feel that the report that is submitted was not what they were asked to do. There were people who feel that the report was biased. There are other people who feel that the report as submitted should be implemented. But right now it seems as though everything is dormant. The report was submitted. I don't know what is happening to it right now. If it's not—if there are certain aspects of the report that would be taken into consideration, then they need to address

the report and not just have either with the legislature, the executive, or the judiciary—we don't know—I don't know where it is. I'm hoping that the work that was done by very good people in the country—Liberia—also out of the country of Liberia, should not just be left as a historical document with no actions. Something should be done with it.

I: What was your perception of the involvement of non-Liberians in the process?

A: Oh, I think it was great. It was great because it helped us... as Liberians to know what the ideas with others who were also concerned about Liberia. And it also really gave an understanding—provided a better understanding from another perspective of the situation in Liberia. So now you have people from the outside looking on the inside and asking, "What went wrong?" It's not just Liberians asking "What went wrong?" but others, who are completely divorced from the nation and the activities that went on in there that are asking these questions, that are helping us to address the problems. So it was great.

I: Actually, as a follow-up question to one of the things you had mentioned earlier. You had said that you testified after Cohen and you were—he was talking about the U.S.'s involvement or lack-of involvement. What—what did you think that the Liberians were hoping or expecting the U.S. to do during that period of time?

A: Oh, there were a lot of things. Liberia—if you know the history of Liberia, you know that it was through—of course America would never agree that they had a colony but even our surrounding countries know that Liberia was a colony of the United States. But it was through the American Colonization Society that Liberia was founded and in its original—in its original state as a colony, governors were appointed from the United States and sent to Liberia until Liberia declared itself independent in 1847. And some of that understanding had been—people think that, Ok, Liberia is a foster-child of the United States. Like, conflicts have been in the Cote d'Ivoire—France is always there. Conflicts have been in Sierra Leone or in Guinea, you have the United Kingdom or France going to help to sort of resolve the problem. So there are a lot of Liberians who thought that America—and you heard this in the street—"America is not going to allow us to go deep in the hole. America would not sit and allow this country to be destroyed. They have too much investment in the country."

Until Cohen [Hank] himself came on the television, here in the United States, I was already in the United States? When he said that the US had no more vested interest in Liberia. And that was a shame. That was a shame. Because Liberia had been the host of so many U.S. interests including hosting the...well, some other things they don't want people to know, this is where the CIA office was... a lot of things. A lot of U.S.—I don't want to be the one saying this since I was in the Liberian government before coming here—but there were a lot of interests for Liberia—for the United States—within the country of Liberia. And so people thought that this is—this would not happen. Unfortunately when the crisis was being unfolded in Liberia it was just when the wars were coming down. The Soviet Union powers were being broken down. And so now the threat of the Soviet Union to the threat of the United States in these countries where the United States had vested interest were minimized. So yes, the U.S. can go on and say that we—they have no more vested interest in Liberia. And a lot of the people in the street did not know that but they were hoping that the U.S. would come in.

Somewhere earlier in 1990—because, you know, the war started in December 1989, Christmas Eve—somewhere earlier in 1990, I think that was here probably before I took my kids out of the country. A U.S. naval ship came near the shores of Liberia with Marines. When that was announced that gave a lot of Liberians hope. But the Marines

were only there to help, to take away U.S. citizens and not to 'interfere'—quote—into this Liberian conflict. So that was—those are some other things that we said people were disappointed about -- that America did not do what people thought it would do.

I: There was hope that there would be involvement... because of the history.

A: Yeah, yeah. But again there were talks about offers were made to Samuel Doe to step down and the U.S. was willing to help him to leave the country and he refused. Well, it might be true because I knew Samuel Doe and I knew how stubborn he could be. But if America could go into one of the South American countries and kick off the president and bring him here and put him in jail, they would have taken Samuel Doe out of Liberia if they really wanted to. And nobody would force that point.

I: One of the things you had also mentioned before were your trips back to Liberia in—I think the first one you said was in 2006—and the change that you saw.

A: When I—when I went in 2006 I went with the mindset that things were worse in Liberia, realizing that the country had been at war for fourteen years. When I went what I saw was better than what I thought I would see. It may not have been up to the standard that other people thought it would be, but I had lived in Liberia before 1990, between 1990 and 2006 or 2003, when actual fighting was going on and things were being destroyed I was not there to see it. I heard about it, I saw it, but when I went back in 2006 anticipating seeing the same things, well, I saw that people were moving on with their lives, there were hope, there was some improvement in some of the buildings, there were buildings that I thought had been destroyed that were still there. So... and then when I went in 2009 I saw: people are building – re-building.

I: More progress.

A: More progress being made. So for people who were saying “Liberia is not developing,” I would ask them to go to certain parts of the United States—in the southern part of the United States, to certain parts, this great country—and see after the Civil War of the 1800s, whether America has completed rebuilding. That would be my thought to them. That it takes—it took us 100 more years to come to where we were in 1990 that we-- it took us *back* 100 years. It may take us another hundred years to come to where we were in 1990. But we should celebrate what we have and again, continue to rebuild—maybe we can do better. It might not take us another hundred years. But blaming others and continuously blaming and blaming and blaming would not resolve the problem. And saying that “Things are not the way they are in Liberia so I will not go back,” no. I’m here at home for my mom now. She should be going back home and this year I plan to go again once I can raise the funds for my ticket. And I’m glad now we have both Delta and... it’s not Luft...uh [SN Brussels]...

I: KLM, maybe?

A: No... uh... what’s the... what’s the airline that was going there... And that’s the thing... when I went in... uh, anyway...[SN Brussels]

I: United?

A: No, the uh... the airline that was... well anyway we have two major airlines that are going there including Delta that just started going there.

I: Into Monrovia, or...?

A: Yeah, into Monrovia. Now we have all of those means of travels and there are others—others will join. ... Brussels. Brussels Airline. Brussels were going there before. Yeah. The two times—when I went before I went with Brussels in—not when I went in 2007—2006 because I was going to Ghana. I went to Ghana I took a local flight to Liberia and back to Ghana, here. 2009 when I went, I went with Brussels.

I: Directly to...

A: Well, it's not a direct-flight but you have to go through Brussels, yeah.

I: How do you feel about the public hearings now—the TRC public hearings—two years later? I think you've touched on it a little bit with respect to the report.

A: It's just a repeat of what I said that I would hope that the work that was done by the commission in Liberia and by other expatriates, especially the Advocates for Human Rights and other groups, would not lie dormant. That some actions would be taken. To actually give credence to what has been done. That it won't just become part of history. That what happened—history will judge us, the future, they will judge us: "They did all this work, what was the outcome?" I want to see an outcome.

I: So you would still have... testified? You haven't--?

A: If I would still testify?

I: You haven't changed your mind about deciding to testify?

A: Testify in what way? If somebody who that I testify about was being brought in for questioning, that's not a right I'm looking at. I'm looking at: Are there some aspects of the recommendations that were made—I can't remember what all those recommendations were; there were several of them that were made. I'm not particularly pushing the recommendation for people that need to be prosecuted. Yes, where prosecution will come in, that should take a separate form, a separate action form. If individuals want to sue people specifically then these individuals can come together and file a civil law suit against these people, then let them handle it that way. But it's not something that through the TRC process that we will say, "Ok, we need to bring Prince Johnson to court." Prince Johnson was not the only one. Charles Taylor, who is currently in The Hague being tried—if you note he's not being tried for his atrocities in Liberia—he's being tried for his atrocities in Sierra Leone. So when people talk about Taylor being prosecuted, other should be, that's not even it. If there's a group of Liberians who want to come together and file a lawsuit against Charles Taylor, then let them do that. If the TRC is summoned to present its report based on this individual in court then that's the point that they say, "Marie, here's the statement that you gave that relate to things. We need for you to testify." Of course I would testify.

I: Have you been part of any reconciliation activities in the community since you testified?

A: I was in that before even I testified, I've been involved with the Liberian group here in the Twin Cities. I have served as vice-president for the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota (OLM) and then as chairman of the board of directors [of the OLM]. Even within our midst here there have been continuances of conflict. Some of the conflicts come in out of people accusing others of being part of the war process and ????. I have served there have been these meetings to try to reconcile and I have been one of the key persons trying to bring groups together to reconcile. I'm part of the Liberian Women's Round Table, a process that we set up along with Laura Young for Liberian women to see how we, as women, can begin this reconciliation process that we extend to other groups. Part of the reconciliation is not just among Liberians but also among the communities in which Liberians live: Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, the northern suburbs and all of those areas. Working with the police department and some of those other groups to understand Liberians, their culture, what are the differences, and that continual healing with my role with the human rights commission in New Hope. So anything that I see that is geared towards building relationships is what I get involved in. To be able to—I want people to know who Liberians are, what, what they are up for, what are they doing, what are their goals, how can you help them to attain those goals even as we live in a strange land. So those are some of the things that I am involved in.

I: Both reconciliation among the Liberian community and also kind of an education and a communication with others.

A: With others, yeah.

I: Ok, have those organizations—I know you mentioned quite a few organizations—were they in existence before the hearings or do you think that they came about as a result of the TRC process?

A: The Organization of Liberians in Minnesota has been here since 1980s. I mean, there are organizations that have been in place. Actually, Jane, just recently I was along with another girl educating the judiciary system in Minnesota about the—how we look at the laws, the laws in Liberia, and how it applies here. And she's a lawyer from Liberia, and I, talking about what are the laws, etc???. For example, and I come from the indigenous background and looking at a different group of Liberians here, how to understand the legal system coming to a new place. So those are some of the things that we try to do, or I try to do, to let the community here in the United States know what happened if a Liberian man says that, "Ok, you don't want to be my wife anymore? Fine, go. Take care of yourself; I don't care." It's not that I don't care – they care for their kids. But how to provide for that kid is not to tell mom about what the court says as compared to what is now in the United States. If you have a child by someone you are legally obligated to provide support. And that's how I remember during the talk there was this—one of the persons from southwest Minnesota, somewhere, because it was a web—a telecast so they had, the court employees from different parts of the country listening and he asked the question, "Why do I see Liberian men coming into the court system here for child support?" And so he said, "Well, here is how the man wants to provide child support. He will do for his children. He wants to provide for his children but he fears that if he provide directly to the wife, the wife will use that for the new man. So he has not been obligated before to do that." And so when it is time for him to go to court the family steps in. There's a lot of family negotiation in terms of separations, in terms of caring for the child. So when they have those family meetings they don't expect to move anywhere farther.

They expect the lady to go back to court and say, “This is not a court issue; this is a case for the family.”

I: “This is what we agreed upon.”

A: “This is what we agreed upon.” But what they don’t know is that it’s not now the woman; it’s the state. So those are things we try to do, not just educating, not just—that’s part of reconciling the way we live here with the way we are used to living in other places. So those are, those are important. So those have been some of my involvement.

I: Was there anything else? I have just a couple of questions. You mentioned at the beginning of your statement that you had served as an advisory member for the Advocates.

A: Yeah.

I: Can you explain what that involved?

A: I go to the meetings—the advisory committee meetings—and those are some of the things that we talk about and how should this process take place—the TRC—what are some other things and trying to understand some of the cultures of Liberia, how should we proceed, and... so, I think I’m staying a member of the advisory committee.

I: Oh, Ok.

A: I am. I still get updates and advise and I’m called upon to participate and to do this. And even when I signed up for this, I told Ahmed, “Don’t do it, don’t do that to me again.” Because he had not informed me and he thought, “Ok, I’ll let her know.” [Laughing] No... But yeah, that’s what I do when there are questions that I can’t possibly answer for the Advocates and contacts.

I: Ok, so as a member of the advisory committee, did you have some input into how the hearings would progress – as to how the hearing would be set up and how it would take place?

A: Yes, we all are part of those discussions; we’re part of those meetings. But the folks in Liberia decided how did we do it here. And we here agreed on how we would do it here. Where we would go and looking for the appropriate places and people to be involved and having volunteers come in, so yes, I was part of the process.

I: And having gone through it now, is there anything that you think—you know, if you had it to do again—is there anything that you would recommend be done differently about the hearings?

A: I don’t think so. I don’t think so. I think, I mean, it based here in Minnesota and having people coming from all over who really wanted to be part of it: former Vice President??? Who came in; Came in from? Other people who came from different parts of the country. And I think it was... it was right. I don’t think I want to do it differently.

I: Do you feel like the Liberians here in Minnesota were able to take part in the hearing process, either by attending or by hearing about it, enough? Was there enough publicity?

A: Yeah, yeah there was.

I: You mentioned that you had given some of your family members an opportunity to participate in the--or, to testify at the hearings if they wanted to. Did anybody else from your family testify?

A: No, they felt I represented enough. [Laughing]

I: And did any of your family members attend the hearing on the day you testified?

A: Uh, no. School. My mother would have loved to come but it would have been much more complicated for her. She's limited in English language understanding and it means that I would have had to go to New Hope to get her and bring her here and I was at work. I was using—I just took off some time and went for the hearing.

I: What—

A: I should say that there were some cousins of mine that were there.

I: Oh, that was there. Ok.

A: Yeah.

I: What impact do you think that the hearings—having the hearings in Minnesota—have had on the community generally? Do you think that there has been an increase in people's understanding of the whole Liberian situation, or do you think that... or not?

A: I don't know how to answer that. There are a lot of people who were excited that it was here in Minnesota because of the population of Liberians here in the Twin Cities. It depends what group of Liberians you are talking to. So, yes, and I don't know. Yes for a lot of others who thought that it gave them some understanding of what was being done. I don't know for those who did not understand what this whole thing was about.

I: As between Liberians in this community and other members—people from other parts of Africa in this community—do you think the Liberian hearings helped *those* people better understand what took place in Liberia or do you have a sense of that?

A: I don't know how many other Africans went to the hearings. I was not there every day, myself. So I don't know how many of them. I know there is an East-African newspaper. They had some things in it. So judging from that, it gave them some sense of understanding of hearing what people had to say, of coming to the hearing and understanding some of the things that people had to say about the conflicts. So it gave them different perspective apart from what they were hearing on the news. And some of those countries had peace-keepers from their countries in Liberia, so some were anxious to hear what was going on since it indirectly somehow affected them as well.

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I: Anything else? I don't have anything else. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

A: Just thank you. Let us know when the report is ready and how we can have access to them.

I: Well thank you very much. And we will let you know where you can access the recording. Thank you very much.