

1 TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

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DIASPORA PROJECT

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PUBLIC HEARINGS
HAMLINE UNIVERSITY
June 10, 2008
St. Paul, Minnesota

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OPENING CEREMONIES

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TRC Commissioners:

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Chairman Jerome Verdier
Vice Chairperson Dede Dolopei
Oumu Syllah
Sheikh Kafumba Konneh
Pearl Brown Bull
Rev. Gerald Coleman
John H.T. Stewart
Massa Washington

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(The following proceedings were had and made of record, commencing at approximately 11:34 a.m.)

MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Ladies and gentlemen, please. Jerome Verdier, followed by Commissioner Sheikh Kafumba Konneh, Commissioner Pearl Bull Brown --

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Pearl Brown Bull.

MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: -- Pearl Brown Bull, and Commissioner Dolopei, Commissioner Massa Washington, Commissioner Oumu Syllah.

(Applause.)

Thank you. Thank you all. You may be seated.

Commissioner Gerald Coleman and Commissioner John Stewart, ladies and gentlemen.

(Applause.)

MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Thank you. We -- we knew we were missing two more, but we got them in here.

Thank you all. We would like to welcome you here today at this very auspicious occasion and very solemn occasion. We thank you and welcome you once again.

At this time I would like to invite Dan Loritz, Vice President for University Relations,

1 Hamline University, to give you a traditional Hamline
2 welcome. Dan.

3 (Applause.)

4 MR. LORITZ: Thank you, Ahmed. Ahmed is one
5 of our alums, so we're very, very proud of that.

6 On behalf of the Board of Trustees of
7 Hamline University, and we have one of our life
8 trustees with us today, Charles Purdham --

9 Chuck, would you --

10 -- and President Linda Hanson, who could not
11 be here today, she is away from the state on a
12 long-standing engagement, but I want to welcome you to
13 Minnesota's oldest university.

14 Hamline is honored to be part of this
15 important effort and to carry -- and to carry forth the
16 greatest hope of our founders, which was that we would
17 have far-reaching benefits for humanity. And I put
18 today's activities and this week's activities in that
19 context.

20 Hamline was founded by the United Methodist
21 Church, and the University founders had to work with
22 the Territorial Legislature to receive a charter for
23 the University. So we are very public in many
24 respects. But we worked very closely, the founders
25 worked very closely, with the Territorial Legislature

1 in 1854 to enact a charter that would ensure the
2 University would be open to all regardless of gender,
3 race, and religious beliefs. And that was now 154
4 years ago.

5 One of the core values of the United
6 Methodist Church is a constant search for truth no
7 matter where it leads. It is in that spirit that we
8 gather today.

9 When Ken Fox, the director of our conflict
10 studies program, was contacted by one of his former
11 students, Hamline Alum Ahmed Sirleaf, he called me and
12 asked if Hamline would be willing to provide space and
13 support for these hearings. We said that we would, and
14 that brought us into contact with The Advocates for
15 Human Rights, the organization that is responsible for
16 ensuring that these hearings are taking place today.

17 And while Hamline is providing the space and
18 support, it is The Advocates for Human Rights who are
19 making this possible today. They have worked
20 tirelessly with many Hamline University staff to create
21 a space for the -- for the Commission, and we welcome
22 you here today, the greater Liberian Community, and all
23 who are committed to constructive social change can
24 come together.

25 These hearings speak to Hamline University's

1 values, which include a university-wide commitment to
2 helping our students and the larger society to
3 understand and respond constructively to conflict in
4 all forms and to work for justice in ways that promote
5 reconciliation and healing.

6 These values are expressed through a number
7 of our academic programs, such as the conflicts studies
8 program I just mentioned, and our nationally recognized
9 dispute resolution institute, which is part of our
10 school of law.

11 But more importantly, these hearings
12 demonstrate the possibility of enacting the highest
13 ideals and response to the most difficult situations.
14 We are humbled by the work of so many people who are
15 making these hearings possible.

16 Welcome to Hamline.

17 (Applause.)

18 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Thank you. Thank you,
19 Vice-President Loritz.

20 At this time I will invite our executive
21 director, the executive director of The Advocates for
22 Human Rights, Robin Phillips, to welcome the
23 Commissioners and welcome you all to this important
24 occasion.

25 Robin.

1 (Applause.)

2 MS. PHILLIPS: Thank you very much, Ahmed.
3 It is really a thrill and a pleasure to welcome you all
4 here today and to welcome our distinguished guests.

5 First, I'd like to thank Hamline for
6 providing this beautiful and peaceful space. It's very
7 important to have a calm space like this, and we
8 greatly appreciate it.

9 The Advocates for Human Rights is
10 celebrating its 25th anniversary this year. We're an
11 international human rights organization based here in
12 Minnesota. We do work locally, nationally, and
13 internationally. I'll just tell you a little bit about
14 our organization before I welcome all our individual
15 guests.

16 We do free legal services for people seeking
17 asylum in the United States, human rights education,
18 women's human rights, advocacy against the death
19 penalty, and as you'll see today, working with Truth
20 and Reconciliation Commissions.

21 We started this process more than two years
22 ago, and we entered into a Memorandum of Understanding
23 with the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission
24 to operate for them here in the United States and to
25 bring the Diaspora Community into the process so that

1 the historical record would be more complete to involve
2 the voices of those who fled the conflict so many years
3 ago, and really, even up until the last few years.

4 I represent the board, the staff, and the
5 many volunteers of The Advocates for Human Rights.
6 Hundreds of people stand with me here. In particular
7 I'd like to thank our management team, who's here with
8 us today, Faegre and Benson, led by Jim O'Neal and
9 Dianne Heins.

10 Fredrikson & Byron --

11 (Applause.)

12 MS. PHILLIPS: Fredrikson & Byron, led by
13 Dulce Foster.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. PHILLIPS: And Dorsey & Whitney, led by
16 Mark Kalla.

17 (Applause.)

18 MS. PHILLIPS: Thank you very much for all
19 your hard work, and there are many other -- We have
20 more than 25 law firms around the country. We're
21 operating in eight cities and the United Kingdom. We
22 sent teams to Ghana, to the Buduburam Refugee Camp, to
23 make sure, again, as many people who had to flee the
24 conflict could also participate in these proceedings.

25 Now, I'm -- I'm going to also recognize many

1 other people who made this happen who are here with us
2 today.

3 First, the extraordinary staff of The
4 Advocates for Human Rights. Everybody has really
5 pitched in this week. In particular I'd like to
6 recognize our Deputy Director, Jennifer Presholdt;
7 Laura Young --

8 (Applause.)

9 MS. PHILLIPS: Laura Young.

10 (Applause.)

11 MS. PHILLIPS: Ahmed Sirleaf, who you've
12 met.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. PHILLIPS: Rosalyn Park.

15 (Applause.)

16 MS. PHILLIPS: Michelle Garnett McKenzie.

17 (Applause.)

18 MS. PHILLIPS: And Deirdre O'Brien.

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. PHILLIPS: Also, we have many, many
21 volunteers and interns, but I'd in particular like to
22 recognize Erin McCabe.

23 (Applause.)

24 MS. PHILLIPS: Michael Walters.

25 (Applause.)

1 MS. PHILLIPS: And Maggie Crosby.

2 (Applause.)

3 MS. PHILLIPS: Also, as I mentioned, this
4 day could not have been possible without the many, many
5 volunteers. Bob Vaaler, Magnetic Pictures and his film
6 crew are all here as volunteers today to make sure --
7 for this whole week, rather, to make sure this can be
8 web cast.

9 Georgia Tech is volunteering with web
10 streaming.

11 (Applause.)

12 MS. PHILLIPS: We have the MAVRC court
13 reporters, who are here making sure that everything
14 is -- the testimony is transcribed.

15 (Applause.)

16 MS. PHILLIPS: The Center for Victims of
17 Torture, the first torture treatment center in the
18 country based here in Minnesota, is here to work with
19 our witnesses.

20 (Applause.)

21 MS. PHILLIPS: The Center for Restorative
22 Justice and Peacemaking.

23 (Applause.)

24 MS. PHILLIPS: Chris Carlson and the Guthrie
25 Theater.

1 (Applause.)

2 MS. PHILLIPS: And I'd like to now also
3 recognize members of the Liberian Ministers
4 Association, particularly Father Wilson and Reverend
5 Howard --

6 (Applause.)

7 MS. PHILLIPS: -- who will also be working
8 with -- with witnesses here.

9 Now I'd like to also recognize many of our
10 guests from the Liberian Community. We have with us
11 Consul General Alex Gbayee.

12 (Applause.)

13 MS. PHILLIPS: The president of the Union of
14 Liberian Associations of the Americas, President
15 Emmanuel Wettee.

16 (Applause.)

17 MS. PHILLIPS: The Organization of Liberians
18 of Minnesota, Mr. Kerper Dwanyen.

19 (Applause.)

20 MS. PHILLIPS: Also, we have the
21 organizations of -- the Organization of Liberians of
22 Chicago, President Mr. Blacktom.

23 (Applause.)

24 MS. PHILLIPS: The Organization of Liberians
25 of the Piedmont, President Hunder.

1 (Applause.)

2 MS. PHILLIPS: Oh, there he is.

3 We also have many other regional leaders,
4 county association heads, and organizational
5 representatives from other Liberian organizations, and
6 we warmly welcome you all here as well.

7 We have many also international
8 organizational representatives. Some are here this
9 morning and some will be joining us as we go through
10 the testimony this week.

11 Here from Liberia, UNDP Representative Marzu
12 Stubblefield.

13 (Applause.)

14 MS. PHILLIPS: Later this week we will be
15 joined by the Liberia Desk Officer of the United States
16 Department of State, Peter Davis; from UNMIL, Raphael
17 Abiem; from the International Center for Transitional
18 Justice, Ruben Carranza.

19 We also have with us some of our political
20 leaders from Minnesota. We have a representative from
21 Senator Amy Klobuchar's office, a representative from
22 Senator Norm Coleman's office, a representative from
23 Betty McCollum's office.

24 (Applause.)

25 MS. PHILLIPS: And also we have with us

1 representatives from the City of Minneapolis and St.
2 Paul.

3 (Applause.)

4 MS. PHILLIPS: And the City of Brooklyn
5 Center and the City of Brooklyn Park.

6 (Applause.)

7 MS. PHILLIPS: And I'd like to extend
8 personal warm regards to Chairman Verdier and all of
9 the Commissioners. We're thrilled that you're here
10 with us and we want to thank you so much for all your
11 hard work. What you're doing for human rights in the
12 world and peace building is -- is very important, and
13 we're very happy to have you here today. Thank you.

14 (Applause.)

15 MS. PHILLIPS: Also, last but certainly not
16 least, I want to thank all of the witnesses who are
17 here today. They're extremely brave. They're speaking
18 out for the future of Liberia. They're speaking out
19 for peace, for human rights. They're speaking on
20 behalf of those who we lost, who can't speak out for
21 themselves, and we appreciate their time and their
22 energy and their bravery being here with us.

23 (Applause.)

24 MS. PHILLIPS: I'd like to, in closing, just
25 thank you all for being part of this important

1 transition to a vibrant and peaceful Liberia where
2 every human being's human rights are respected. Thank
3 you very much.

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Thank you, Robin.
6 Please give it up for my executive director once again.

7 Robin Phillips, ladies and gentlemen. Thank
8 you very much.

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Thank you all. You
11 know, as Robin indicated, this is a very solemn
12 occasion. It is unlike any I have certainly seen here
13 in this country since I've been here, and so we are
14 treating it as such as we proceed through the program.

15 And with these proceedings today, you will
16 recognize how sacred, how solemn this is. As you
17 listen to our Commissioners, as you listen to the
18 witnesses, and all the dignitaries and leaders and
19 friends that have come here today to support us, you
20 will recognize them and we will ask you all to respect
21 their search as we proceed.

22 I would now like to invite some of our
23 community leaders. You know, in Liberia, hierarchy
24 models leadership authority. For me as a young person
25 standing here, if I don't invite these leaders in the

1 appropriate order, I could be in serious trouble with
2 them. And so it's a matter of tradition, it's a matter
3 of custom. And, therefore, at this time, without much
4 ado, I'd like to call on the president of the Union of
5 Liberian Associations in the Americas.

6 You know that Robin also mentioned that
7 we -- we have -- she mentioned several organizations,
8 Liberian community organizations from various states.
9 All of these organizations have an umbrella
10 organization, which governs the affairs of all Liberian
11 groups in North America, which is ULAA. And therefore,
12 the president, who happens to be a very dynamic person,
13 whom I've known and admired for a long time, is here
14 with us today to grace the solemnity of this occasion.

15 So I'd like to invite
16 Mr. Emmanuel S. Wettee. Mr. President, welcome again
17 to the Twin Cities.

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. WETTEE: Thank you very much, my dear
20 friend.

21 Robin, thank you very much for the
22 introduction, and I just want to continue where you
23 started from. She listed everybody I wanted to honor,
24 so, you know, I would just continue -- I want to add on
25 to your list of honor, our vice president, the

1 Honorable Bennie Dee Warner. I want to recognize
2 your -- your presence here. Yeah.

3 (Applause.)

4 So I'm just going through the list, so if I
5 don't call your name, you know, it's the same list,
6 because my first name is Kerper Dwanyen. And I
7 recognize the Commission, my friend, brother, Verdier.

8 Not to say much, I'm very happy that we are
9 part of this process, and we are part of the process.
10 We are very, very part of the whole process.

11 In the early '70s, the political landscape
12 in Liberia was not balanced. A group of Liberian
13 students in the United States decided that it was time
14 that they participated in the process and they decided
15 to form what we call the Liberian Student Association.
16 It started with the state of New York, New Jersey,
17 Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. Some of the names at
18 the time: G. Baccus Matthew, Tom Woiewa, Charles
19 Taylor, just to name a few.

20 They decided that the people of Liberia were
21 not benefitting from the political landscape, the
22 political resources, and so a group of students came
23 together. After many transformations, the group
24 extended to all the states and that gave birth to what
25 we call ULAA in 1974.

1 Liberians in the Diaspora said, look, we
2 have to go home and we have to participate. There
3 should be a transparent democratic process, and those
4 students started this movement.

5 And ULAA is very, very proud. People have
6 called us names; we are troublemakers and all kinds of
7 names, but there is one thing we want to say, that we
8 said there's absolutely no reason that we cannot have a
9 multi-party process in Liberia.

10 If Liberia will have to champion the cause
11 of our people, there should be more than one party.
12 Absolutely no reason why the people of Liberia cannot
13 benefit.

14 Today, we are honored to say that the
15 joining of our generations before us have produced
16 Africa's first elected female president. We are very
17 honored to say that.

18 (Applause.)

19 MR. WETTEE: Now that the war is over, our
20 options are different. Opportunities are coming. Our
21 parents are in the states. Our children are here. So
22 ULAA cannot do what she did yesterday.

23 We are convinced that there's some level
24 that the multi-process democracy can go on in Liberia.
25 And we are happy and relieved to say that in the

1 history of our country, we had an election where there
2 were more than ten parties, and nobody can say that
3 they were beaten up, they were assaulted, or put a halt
4 on human rights. Everybody participated in the
5 process. At least we are happy to say that.

6 Again, let me say to you that ULAA was in
7 Ghana, the peace accord, that led to the end of the
8 war. ULAA was in Ghana and ULAA signed the document.
9 So we are not just talking. We are part of the
10 process.

11 Today, we have our parents here. We have
12 our people with immigration status. We have issues,
13 and ULAA again is championing that cause of
14 immigration. And let it be known that ULAA would never
15 insist openly for Liberia to return to the darker days.
16 In our lifetime, there will always be a democratic
17 process, and we are happy that this Commission is here
18 to allow our people to voice out what they have to say.

19 Ladies and gentlemen, never ever, never in
20 our time, that the people of Liberia will be denied the
21 democratic right. Never ever. We will not return to
22 the darker days. We remain for that, we stand for it,
23 and we live. With our friends and with our partners,
24 Liberia's better days are ahead, and our children will
25 enjoy the golden days ahead.

1 We have sacrificed, like any other country,
2 any other generation. The war was our time. Things
3 happened. The war is over and we have to move on.

4 This process, my administration and ULAA
5 support TRC. These have been our cornerstone of our
6 policy toward the peace process that allowed the
7 people --

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. WETTEE: -- allowed the people to express
10 themselves. In the process we all can have one goal
11 and move on.

12 I'm honored. My dear friend and brother,
13 like I always say, I don't know how to address Verdier,
14 whether I call him a friend, commissioner because I've
15 known him so long, but I'm happy to share this stage
16 with you. And as long as I'm president of this union,
17 we'll make sure there's peace in Liberia and we all
18 will benefit from a democratic process in Liberia.

19 Ladies and gentleman, may God bless the
20 great United States of America, may God bless ULAA, and
21 may God bless the people of Liberia. Thank you.

22 (Applause.)

23 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Thank you. Thank you.
24 Thank you, President Wettee.

25 This illustrates to you that this occasion

1 is going to be difficult. We will hear different
2 versions of our history, we will hear different aspects
3 of our diversity, and -- and so we have to brace
4 ourselves for that.

5 That's part of the work of the Commission,
6 to help us reconcile history, to help us bring our
7 diversity together. We're diverse, but we need to
8 embrace and -- and welcome diversity and address our
9 painful and difficult pasts.

10 And so, ladies and gentlemen, I will now
11 invite the town chief of Liberia in Minnesota, the
12 president of the Liberian Organization of Liberians in
13 Minnesota, LOLM.

14 You know, when you go to an African village,
15 even if you are the president of the republic, you must
16 see the town chief. If you don't see the town chief,
17 your business is not going to go the way it's supposed
18 to go in that particular community. If you don't see
19 the town chief, your visit -- your visit in that
20 community could be not an experience that you will want
21 to have.

22 And so we're honored to have our town chief
23 in our midst, Honorable Kerper Dwanyen.

24 Mr. Dwanyen, your people.

25 (Applause.)

1 MR. DWANYEN: Thank you, Ahmed. On behalf
2 of the Liberian community in Minnesota, I want to take
3 this time to extend a warm welcome to the
4 Commissioners, and I also want to say a great thank you
5 to The Advocates for Human Rights for their tireless
6 work on behalf of Liberians, which began at their very
7 birth. It's been an honor to work with them on this
8 project and other issues related to the interests of
9 our community.

10 We in this community have looked forward to
11 this process with a mix of anticipation, concern,
12 apprehension, and hope. This is a very solemn process
13 that is underway. It is a process that is critical to
14 the future of our country. It is a process that honors
15 those who can no longer speak for themselves while
16 giving our children a foundation for tomorrow.

17 It is a process that not only is
18 instrumental in healing the wounds in Liberia, but also
19 healing the wounds across borders. This war is not
20 just a Liberian event. It is a set of events that
21 includes other countries, includes their participation
22 for good and for bad.

23 We look forward to the experiences, of
24 sharing our experiences here. I personally look
25 forward to doing that, and I also look forward to

1 speaking on behalf of our community, speaking of the
2 roles of the Diaspora Community in both agitating the
3 conflict and resolving the conflict, and what role the
4 Diaspora Community can continue to play in this
5 process.

6 We are hopeful that in the end we will
7 accurately and meaningfully document the reasons, the
8 causes that led us to where we are today, and that that
9 documentation will serve as a road map for the future,
10 a road map that will be honored, a road map that will
11 be followed.

12 We want to thank all of those who have taken
13 the journey from many other states, many locations to
14 be here. We want to thank all of those who have been
15 partners with the Liberian community here in Minnesota.

16 We look forward to seeing that this solemn
17 process will create a beacon of hope in Africa again.
18 That beacon of hope that Liberia once was, that that
19 beacon of hope can be relit.

20 Thank you.

21 (Applause.)

22 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Thank you. Thank you,
23 Mr. President, for those words of inspiration.

24 You know, the TRC Diaspora project is an
25 integral part of what's happening in Liberia. Under

1 our MOU, our mandate here has been to mirror as closely
2 and as best as possible what exactly is happening in
3 Liberia. And as such, when they had a -- the opening
4 ceremony, the day the hearings started in Monrovia,
5 everybody invited the president to grace the occasion,
6 Her Excellency, President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf.

7 As such, we thought we would invite the
8 president as well, because we knew the entire
9 commission would be here, and the Liberian people of
10 the Diaspora would like the opportunity to interact not
11 only with their commissioners, but also with their
12 second of state.

13 We invited the president, but unfortunately
14 we got -- we couldn't get on her calendar, let's just
15 say. We -- we came a little too late. Although she's
16 in the country right now, it's our understanding she
17 couldn't be here. So she's obviously got to go down
18 the diplomatic lines to see the ambassador, who
19 deputized the president, but then the ambassador says,
20 well, the president is in the country, she's going to
21 the United Nations, I -- I can't let her go there by
22 herself, so I'm going to call on the consul general to
23 Chicago and the Midwest, Honorable Alex Gbayee, to
24 represent the Liberian Government at this solemn
25 occasion. And this is why we have Honorable Gbayee,

1 who took his time to be here, although himself he
2 has -- has a very busy calendar.

3 But I believe the president's item, no
4 matter how busy your calendar is, when you get a call,
5 you have to answer it, and so we're very honored and
6 pleased to have you here. Now we'll invite you to say
7 a word or two to your people and our friends in
8 Minnesota.

9 (Applause.)

10 MR. GBAYEE: Thank you very much. And I
11 want to thank today Robin Phillips and the Human
12 Rights, what they have been doing for Liberia; try to
13 look at our pain and to provide a solution. We thank
14 you very much and the state of Minnesota for offering
15 this kind of opportunity.

16 I know it has been rough for all -- all of
17 Liberia. All of Liberia has been touched by this war.
18 As I stand here, I think about the village that I came
19 from. When the people came there, and the people there
20 in the village, they ran away. When the people left,
21 they burned the village. It's all kind of pain that we
22 feel.

23 Every Liberian has been touched by this
24 incident that's just passed. But as I was saying to my
25 -- the people that came with me in the car from

1 Chicago, we cannot stay in the graveyard forever. We
2 must bury our dead, our pain. We've got to forgive
3 each other and build Liberia.

4 The Human Rights, as I talked with
5 Ms. Phillips, she tells me she has been dealing with a
6 lot of the immigration problems, Liberians that are
7 having problem. Then I say to myself, no wonder, in
8 the last few years, I have not come to Minnesota, in
9 court, to help out a Liberian citizen here that may be
10 in trouble.

11 Right now we have hundreds of our young
12 people, Liberians, that are in jail today. In Houston
13 alone, we have pretty close to 200 Liberians in the
14 jail down there. I'm not sure how many we have here in
15 Minnesota. But I thank you for standing in for
16 Liberia.

17 I thank the Commissioners who travel a long
18 way from Liberia. You're welcome. The ambassador
19 couldn't come today, but he appointed me to come and
20 say you're welcome here. And so a special thank you
21 for the progress that -- that you're carrying on. God
22 bless you.

23 (Applause.)

24 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: I'm here. I didn't --
25 I'm still here, so we're -- we're good. Thank you.

1 Thank you all.

2 Consul General Alexander Gyabee, we really
3 appreciate the government's support through this
4 process and your representation of our Excellency and
5 Ambassador. We appreciate it.

6 Let's give it up to the Liberian Government,
7 my people.

8 (Applause.)

9 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Thank you. Now, at this
10 time we would like to recognize some of our
11 distinguished guests, and I know my boss -- my -- in
12 Liberia, I will say my boss lady or my boss man. You
13 can't miss that, because if you miss that, then you
14 don't know your job.

15 All right. So the executive director did
16 that already, but, you know, as part of the -- the
17 importance of what we're doing here, we've worked with
18 so many people, some of whom we did not even have the
19 opportunity to mention, perhaps, or who would not like
20 to be recognized publicly, because everybody is
21 chipping in, as they say in America, to contribute
22 towards the healing of a country that has so broken
23 itself, that was so hurt itself so badly.

24 So we have so many of these people here
25 whose names we probably did not call. It's not because

1 we just are -- are ignoring you deliberately. It was
2 an oversight, if it was the case, in fact. Otherwise
3 we really want to take this moment to say that we do
4 appreciate all of you, our fabulous management
5 committee. Commissioner Washington wants me to
6 re-emphasize that again.

7 Our management team, advisory committee
8 members who are here or who could not make it here
9 because we know this is a workday, it's a work week,
10 but as the week goes on, the proceedings go on, you'll
11 see more and more people coming and go. And so we just
12 wanted you to take the message to those people that we
13 recognize you, we recognize your contributions, and we
14 are very appreciative. I think I can speak, I've been
15 authorized to do so, on behalf of the executive
16 director.

17 We have people from -- from as far as
18 Liberia and other countries and all over this country
19 who are here today representing different organizations
20 who supported TRC process. The UNDP representative,
21 Ms. Marzu Stubblefield, has already been introduced;
22 our former vice president, Bishop Warner; Mr. Hunder;
23 our local political officials here in Minnesota.

24 See, we are Liberians, but we are also
25 Minnesotans, and -- and therefore we have to stop to

1 recognize the officials, the local officials, who have
2 helped us and supported us in this process. And I'd
3 just like to say thank you again to all of you. Let's
4 give them a big round of applause.

5 (Applause.)

6 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Some of our partners are
7 watching us as we speak right now on the Internet and
8 via web cast in other cities who couldn't make it here
9 today. God knows we just like to say we love you, we
10 appreciate you wherever you may be, and thank you so
11 much for all that you've done.

12 You know, we've worked with so many
13 institutions, law firms, law schools, human rights
14 programs and centers, professional organizations, and
15 you -- you name it. Without those kinds of pro bono
16 contributions, we couldn't have been able to -- to help
17 the Commission in the way that the Advocates has been
18 able to do. So we just want to say again, on behalf of
19 Robin Phillips, who can speak for our organization, who
20 has also already done so.

21 The -- the head of the board of directors of
22 The Advocates for Human Rights, Aviva, Aviva Breen is
23 here.

24 Aviva, will you please rise. Aviva went --

25 (Applause.)

1 seconds the different Liberian dialects and languages
2 as you sing along.

3 (Liberian TRC Peace Song is played.)

4 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Okay. TRC, you know,
5 this is -- Just a little background to the song, is if
6 you don't understand Belleh or Vai or Kru or Gola or
7 Gbandi, Mandingo, Grebo, Gio, and all of the Liberian
8 dialects, Liberian English, if you don't understand
9 those, the -- the essence of the song is just to call
10 all Liberians together to unite despite our
11 differences, our difficult history, our past.

12 All the difficulties we've encountered, we
13 should put them behind us. Open our minds and our
14 hearts, embrace one another for we have more in common
15 than differences. To unite as Liberians, rebuild our
16 country, move forward, and stop the bitterness.

17 TROC, under the Truth and Reconciliation
18 Commission of Liberia, we have to embrace this process
19 because it's a springboard to so many other processes
20 that will eventually lead to peace, reconciliation,
21 justice, accountability, reconstruction. We can't
22 afford to not support the process. Liberians, friends
23 of Liberia, let's support the TROC. So that's why you
24 heard TROC.

25 All right. Thank you. I can try, you know.

1 Don't try me.

2 All right. So at this time the moment that
3 we've all been waiting for is finally here. We're
4 going to now hear from the Commission, and the actual
5 solemn nature, the sacrosanct nature of this process is
6 now about to begin.

7 You know, this is an august occasion, but
8 it's even much more solemn and sacred occasion to me
9 than, as I said, that I have ever participated in or --
10 or been able to observe. We are all observing history
11 in the making and we are all part of history today. So
12 we have to recognize that.

13 The chairman of the Commission will come and
14 speak for his colleagues, for the Commission, and for
15 Liberia, for Liberians. After which, of course, then
16 we will go into the hearings. And the chairman will
17 tell you exactly how this happens because, as you can
18 see, I'm not a commissioner, let alone a chairman. So
19 I can't even play that role. I can't even --

20 Counselor Jerome Verdier, Sr., has been a
21 long activist for peace, justice, rule of law,
22 accountability, human rights in Liberia. He's a lawyer
23 by training. He may be young, he may appear young, but
24 he has a long resume of accomplishments. He's one of
25 those people that I admire and I call my mentor and my

1 friend and my big brother because Verdier has provided
2 stewardship for this Commission because this is the
3 only peace reconciliation process that we have going.

4 I mean, I told him once, I said, I don't
5 know how you can do this. I -- You know, I -- we are
6 just there trying to help you people do your work.
7 It's even more difficult for us. Sometimes I want to
8 give up, but you guys keep going. You're so strong.
9 You've traveled throughout the 15 counties of Liberia,
10 all 64 districts in the country, remote regions of the
11 country that are so difficult to navigate.

12 I had the honor and the opportunity to
13 observe one of such hearings when I recently visited
14 Liberia. I went way up to Bopolua. Just from Monrovia
15 to where they were was overwhelming for me, let alone
16 to live and work under those difficult conditions.

17 But with the leadership of Counselor Verdier
18 and his able team and colleagues, they have been able
19 to bring this Commission from the ground and build it
20 up to an institution of -- worthy of admiration and --
21 and respect. I respect.

22 And so, without much ado, I would like to
23 invite Counselor Verdier to -- to give us a little
24 piece of the work that the Commission has been doing.
25 Give a welcome to Chairman Verdier.

1 (Applause.)

2 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Thank you. Thank you,
3 Ahmed.

4 Good morning, every -- good morning,
5 everyone.

6 Vice President Warner, our partners and host
7 of volunteers, distinguished members of the Liberian
8 Community, including our two distinguished leaders --
9 three distinguished leaders here, members of the
10 American society here, present and identifying with us
11 in this process, we want to give praises and gratitude
12 to God Almighty for his graces and his blessings which
13 have sustained us in this process thus far.

14 In doing so, we also want to beg your
15 indulgence for a moment of silence, silent meditation
16 to the memory of all of those who have passed, and in
17 reverence to the Almighty who has brought us this far.

18 Please join me by standing.

19 And now let us pray for peace and prosperity
20 in Liberia, for healing and reconciliation, for the
21 success of this process, and for a lasting, fruitful
22 Liberia/U.S. relationship.

23 Thank you. Please be seated.

24 What we have today is the culmination of
25 several processes, efforts, resources from all around

1 the world to assist the people of Liberia in
2 redefining their humanity and re-establishing the field
3 state as we have experienced.

4 Advocates for Human Rights stood with the
5 Commission in ensuring that our processes reached out
6 to Liberians in the Diaspora. The Diaspora we speak of
7 is the overwhelming number of Liberians here in the
8 United States, notably Minnesota as well; over 36,000
9 Liberians in the Republic of Ghana who are in refugee
10 camps as a consequence of the conflict back home;
11 another 26,000 in the Republic of Guinea; 18,000 in the
12 Republic of Sierra Leone; and then, of course, some
13 18,000 in the Republic of Nigeria.

14 When we were tasked to carry on the work of
15 the Commission, the nine of us took months pondering on
16 how to proceed and how to reaccomplish the objectives
17 the Liberian people have established for the
18 Commission.

19 Expectations were high, but we had no
20 blueprints. We had nothing to start with. And then we
21 realized, from studying the works of other commissions
22 before us, their circumstances were different, their
23 national conditions weren't similar, and their
24 experiences were also different. Then we realized that
25 Liberia was in a unique situation.

1 After a protracted period of violent
2 conflict that engulfed the entire nation, with over 1.5
3 million of their citizens displaced internally and out
4 of the country, nearly 200,000 dead, all national and
5 public infrastructures ravished, poverty, sickness,
6 disease, we knew we had a daunting task ahead.

7 And the planning process commenced, and
8 today we are very, very pleased that the hearings,
9 which constitute the fourth major component of the
10 TROC work, is now in progress and we are here in the
11 United States to share and hear from Liberians in the
12 Diaspora as a way of affording all Liberians an
13 opportunity to be heard, to be listened to, to be
14 acknowledged, and to be validated.

15 We commenced at a time when memories of the
16 war were still very, very fresh; when leaders of
17 warring factions were in political authority, firm
18 grips of political authority; when despondency was all
19 about; and Liberians were crying out for justice.

20 We understood that people emerging out of
21 conflict are anxious to see change, are anxious for
22 results, and they could not stand the fact that those
23 who were head of the warring factions and perhaps
24 responsible for the violence and the atrocities were in
25 control.

1 This led the Commission to embark upon a
2 vigorous awareness program to educate the Liberian
3 people that the TROC is part of a systematic peace
4 process. It is part of a peace agreement that was
5 brokered by the international community and all the
6 warring factions, and if we are to build a society
7 founded on the principles of the rule of law, it begins
8 now, right after the cessation of hostilities. We have
9 to proceed progressively in helping ourselves to
10 understand from whence we have come and what we need to
11 do as a nation and people to transcend those ugly
12 experiences and move forward.

13 So part of the -- part of the processes the
14 Commission had to embark upon was massive education and
15 awareness. Our people had to understand what
16 reconciliation means, what role does it play in the
17 post conflict society which was fraught with violence
18 and the kind of experiences we had.

19 Should we continue in a confrontational
20 state? It is true that people will always disagree,
21 but what matters is how do we handle our disagreements
22 without resorting to violence. It was a very, very
23 daunting task that took us to all parts of Liberia.

24 And then we realized that there were
25 Liberians who were out of the country and needed to

1 understand as well. There is a very long-held belief
2 that all of the wars started in the Diaspora because
3 there were Liberians who were out of the country and
4 very bitter that the war was happening, and that was
5 their prescription for peace or change.

6 And if it is in their hearts and minds of
7 those Liberians that the conflict started, it is worth
8 reaching to the hearts and minds of those Liberians as
9 well so that we can sustain and build a lasting peace
10 process in Liberia.

11 In speaking of what we have done and where
12 we have come, we want to give to you recognition to the
13 contributions of Liberians everywhere at home and here
14 in the U.S. The constructive criticism of the process
15 has only helped to strengthen us, to understand the
16 weaknesses of what we were doing; and based upon that,
17 we're able to chart a course that has brought us this
18 far.

19 The Government of Liberia, Her Excellency,
20 President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, has been up to now
21 very supportive of the process, and we are very, very
22 proud that the National Government has saw the need to
23 lend political, financial, and moral support to a
24 process that is embarking upon healing and
25 reconciliation of our country.

1 Not only that, the international contact
2 group from Liberia, which includes the United States
3 Government, the European Union, Denmark, Sweden, Ghana,
4 Nigeria, the UNDP, the United Nations Mission in
5 Liberia, collectively supported the efforts of the
6 TROC. And that is why we can proudly say that the TROC
7 enjoys very popular acceptance with the people of
8 Liberia and its partners.

9 Civil society has also been instrumental in
10 our success. Be it women, youth or child advocate
11 groups, or pro democracy institutions, traditional
12 religious institutions, have all rallied around the
13 TROC, to the extent that we have popular support with
14 civil society. And at the moment, civil society is
15 bracing itself for the periods after the TROC.

16 If the TROC comes out with reports, what
17 happens to those reports. That's a challenge for all
18 of us so that our worthy efforts of meeting,
19 organizing, mobilizing resources, do not go in vain.

20 Having said that, I would like to talk a
21 little bit about the TROC process. As I said, it has
22 been a -- a five-complement process starting first with
23 establishing a TROC secretariat. We are nine
24 commissioners appointed with no staff, no office. Just
25 a commission or a letter of appointment. We had to

1 sit, recruit staff, look for offices, staff the
2 offices, equip the offices, and all of that. That took
3 more than 18 months of our operational period to get
4 done. The TROC Act allowed for only three months, but
5 in three months we had not taken the first step.

6 The first step, of course, was getting to
7 know ourselves, all distinguished Liberians from
8 diverse backgrounds and reflecting the Liberian
9 diversity. I must assure you, the group that was
10 involved with this selection was very careful to make
11 sure that you have a unique blend of Liberians who can
12 represent the shared diversity of our society so that
13 all shades of thoughts, opinions, and -- and
14 impressions are represented on the Commission. And in
15 our individual and collective rights, we asked those to
16 be people of high standing, honor, and integrity, to
17 such an extent that the people of Liberia will accept
18 our work and they will listen to us to the extent they
19 pour their hearts out to the Commission.

20 I spoke earlier about outreach, and this
21 song Ahmed made reference to, is a song written and
22 performed in all of Liberian vernaculars, included
23 artists from all around the country. They came
24 together and performed that song. It was the first
25 time that we had a song of that nature that every

1 dialect, every ethnic group can identify with it, and
2 that was inspired by our desire to make sure that we
3 reach out to as many Liberians as possible so that the
4 message of truth and reconciliation can filter in our
5 hearts.

6 After we embarked upon that vigorous
7 outreach process, which brought us also to the
8 Diaspora, we conducted statement taking where we went
9 out to all of the 15 counties, the 64 districts, and
10 educating people about the process and requesting of
11 them to give their testimony in those statements to the
12 TROC.

13 We did that in Ghana. We did that here in
14 the U.S., in Minnesota, in the New York area. We did
15 that in New England area. We did that in Chicago. We
16 did that in Ghana. We did that a little bit in
17 Nigeria. We reached out to Sierra Leone. There were
18 other places we couldn't go because of time constraints
19 and resources.

20 To date we have over 18,000 statements from
21 Liberians expressing to the Commission what they saw,
22 what they did, what they experienced, and in most times
23 making recommendations on how they think Liberia can
24 progress beyond the experiences of the past.

25 That process laid the basis for the public

1 hearings and where we are today. We are now holding
2 public hearings in Minnesota and the U.S.A. as a way of
3 censoring the experiences of Liberians in the Diaspora.

4 Many of us left the country long before the
5 conflict of 1990. There are a lot of us who are here
6 and experienced the conflict from 1990 to 2003, but we
7 feel that, and honor the TROC Act, we had to conduct
8 comprehensive investigation that would lead to arriving
9 at the root causes of the conflict. And the conflict
10 period is considered between 1979 to 2003.

11 During that period there were Liberians who
12 left and are residing in the Diaspora, most likely --
13 most commonly in the United States of America. In the
14 subregion, we have Liberians who left during the period
15 1990 to 2003. So we wanted all voices to be heard.

16 In getting a forum like this recognized
17 where we are conducting hearings, a lot of
18 complementary efforts and processes are -- are built
19 into that. We went around to the 15 counties. There's
20 only one county outstanding, but we have visited the 14
21 counties and the 61 districts. We considered the
22 Diaspora in Minnesota as one of the counties as well.
23 So we can say we are visiting 16.

24 And then when we return, Grand Cape Mount
25 County will be the close of the -- the -- the public

1 hearings in the different regions, and so we say from
2 cape to cape. We started in Cape Palmas and we will be
3 ending in Grand Cape Mount County.

4 Involved with this is a team of psychosocial
5 counselors who give support to our witnesses. We are
6 seeing so much and it would have been impossible to
7 have a successful hearing without that team of
8 counselors who talked to witnesses, who helped
9 witnesses understand the process, who coped with the
10 psychological and sometimes emotional breakdowns of our
11 witnesses.

12 In our own ways we find many creative ways
13 to support each other in what we go through.
14 Commissioners have their share of experiences, but we
15 told ourselves, this is not about us, this is about our
16 people. Whatever our experience was, you have to bury
17 that, it has to be secondary to the experiences of
18 others.

19 But that doesn't mean we do not understand
20 what people go through, it doesn't mean that people do
21 not reach to us. Many times we break down ourselves.
22 After hearings we find ways to support ourselves. We
23 meet, we share fun, and we go into the high and low
24 moments of the hearings. I'm sure the Minnesota
25 hearings here will be no exception.

1 Then we have a very robust inquiry unit that
2 includes an IT unit as well, where we are collating all
3 of the statements, we are entering them into a master
4 data base for careful analysis so that proper
5 conclusions can be drawn from the huge amount of
6 information the Commission is gathering from all around
7 the world. There are people who are sending in
8 statements. They have written submissions giving us
9 information. Almost all of the international human
10 rights institutions have presented written submissions
11 on violations from 1979 to 2003 in Liberia. All of
12 those have to be synthesized, analyzed, collated, and
13 all of that.

14 So apart from the inquiry unit, at the
15 moment there is a conflict mapping exercise ongoing in
16 Liberia. We believe that what we saw exploding maybe
17 in 1990 or 199 -- 1980, was the result of what has been
18 brewing for years and perhaps centuries. And so we
19 took interest in understanding what are those looming
20 conflicts, our social and potential conflicts ongoing
21 in our societies. So in the 64 districts, our
22 researchers are there and interesting results are
23 coming out. Those are potential conflicts that will
24 have to be mediated and resolved so that in the future
25 Liberia does not revert to the violence we have already

1 experienced.

2 Apart from that, there is a committed
3 dialogue process that will go on the moment we complete
4 the public hearings around the counties. We go back
5 into the communities, engage the leaders, engage the
6 elder -- the elders, and we just talk about peace and
7 peace building in our communities.

8 All of that will lead to a national
9 conference, which will be held later in November of
10 this year where representatives from the Diaspora
11 communities all around will join Liberians at home and
12 they will discuss some of the high points of the TROC
13 process, what its findings has been, and what the
14 people think about the recommendations that the
15 Commission is expected to put forth.

16 The Commission has a responsibility to
17 recommend reparations from victims of the conflict, to
18 recommend prosecution where it finds it necessary, to
19 recommend reconciliation processes and what will be
20 necessary to ensure that we have a truly reconciled
21 society.

22 But the Commission, we believe and know that
23 reconciliation is a process, and what we do is lay the
24 foundation for -- for reconciliation. And part of that
25 foundation could be establishing the truth of what

1 happened, establishing the root causes of the conflict,
2 identifying victims.

3 There are so many victims who are living
4 with the scars of the conflict. We may not heal those
5 wounds; many of which are internal and extend beyond
6 what we see physically, but we can begin a process, a
7 process of acknowledgment of what has happened, a
8 process of memorialization so that people in villages
9 where there was a massacre of 300 of their relatives,
10 can finally come to grips with the reality that this
11 has happened and this is where they were buried, and
12 this is a memorial to their memory, to their honor.

13 So all of these are going on with the
14 express objective of helping to restore the -- the
15 humanity of -- of victims, acknowledging and
16 vindicating them so they understand that they are not
17 or were not responsible for what has happened. It's a
18 national effort, and we are together -- working
19 together to ensure that we have genuine healing and
20 reconciliation.

21 Of course, there's the issue of justice and
22 impunity. This Commission is charged with the
23 responsibility of ensuring that there is adequate and
24 proper redress to the issues of injustice and impunity
25 in our country, because we believe that identifying the

1 root causes of the conflict will definitely point to
2 the culture of impunity which has pervaded our society
3 for so many years.

4 Also, institutions in our country, public
5 and national institutions, have been identified to be
6 part of the problems in Liberia either because of their
7 inaction or by their very actions, their failure to act
8 or by them acting out of their constitutional and
9 statutory mandates, which have led to the breakdown of
10 law and order, the dehumanization of our people, and,
11 of course, the violations of human rights.

12 How can we strengthen these institutions:
13 the local governments, the security sector, the
14 national legislature, even the very executive branch of
15 government and all its functionaries. How can they be
16 more accountable. How can they be more transparent.
17 How can we build lasting democratic institutions that
18 will sustain and represent the aspirations of our -- of
19 our people for greater democracy.

20 The objectives now and established is that
21 at the culmination of all of this and the
22 implementation of the TROC's recommendation, there will
23 be lasting peace, security, unity and reconciliation in
24 Liberia. This is an arduous process that we have
25 embarked upon, and we could have never come this far

1 without the support of our partners here and Liberians
2 from all around the United States.

3 The web site of the TROC is active, there
4 are a lot of Liberian media institutions that are very
5 active in propagating the work of the TROC, encouraging
6 debates about the TROC. All of this crystalizes the
7 process and clarifies in the minds of Liberians on what
8 is necessary and what needs to be done.

9 We are very, very grateful, and I say this
10 on behalf of every member of the Commission. We've
11 enjoyed your overwhelming support. You are
12 volunteering your time, your resources, just to assist
13 this tiny nation in West Africa overcome the traumas of
14 the past. We are very, very appreciative, and we say
15 thank you to you all for all the support.

16 Having said this, I would like to take this
17 time to introduce members of the Commission, following
18 which we'll declare the hearings formally open.

19 To begin with, we start with Commissioner
20 Sheikh Kafumba Konneh.

21 (Applause.)

22 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: He is an Islamic cleric
23 and one of the architects of the Liberian peace
24 process. When the war commenced in 1989, early 1990, a
25 group of religious leaders came together and said, no,

1 this war shouldn't continue. They drafted a peace plan
2 for Liberia, they intervened, and tried to negotiate
3 several cease fires.

4 And now today in Liberia, because of their
5 good work, we have the Interfaith Religious Council
6 where the Islamic faith and the Christian faith and
7 other faiths come together and work together for peace
8 and conflict negotiation and resolution.

9 Thank you.

10 Commissioner Pearl Brown Bull --

11 (Applause.)

12 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: -- is a politician and a
13 lawyer. She has worked with different women's groups
14 in their advocacy work, and at the same time, she is --
15 has been a member of the Bull Law Firm, one of the
16 oldest law firms in Liberia. Wherever Commissioner
17 Bull is, her voice is always heard.

18 Commissioner Gerald Coleman.

19 (Applause.)

20 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: He is also a reverend, an
21 ambassador, and an engineer by profession. He has been
22 in peace building for a long time with the
23 International Federation for Peace, and he has
24 initiated the TROC process. Initially, when there
25 wasn't a commission, when the thought was floating

1 around, long before our international partners came in,
2 he headed a process as part of his vision for peace and
3 his movement for peace building in Liberia.

4 We have Commissioner Dede Dolopei.

5 (Applause.)

6 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: She is the vice
7 chairperson of the Commission.

8 You know, gender equity, equity balance, and
9 all of those things are -- are resonating now even in
10 our society. So we had nine commissioners, five males
11 and four females. One commissioner resigned for
12 another assignment. Fortunately for the women it is
13 now balanced. So there's four female and four men, so
14 this is an equally balanced commission.

15 We hope that if there's any thoughts of
16 replacing the resigned commissioner, this balance
17 wouldn't be too tipped because it has served our
18 purpose very well.

19 Commissioner Dolopei is an accountant by
20 profession. She has a degree in accounting and she was
21 plying her trade long before joining the TROC. She was
22 also involved in a group of women mobilizers who,
23 during the heat of the conflict, prayed relentlessly in
24 the streets of Liberia and fasted for months just for
25 peace. And the moment the peace agreement was signed,

1 they said, thank God, and they dispersed.

2 Next to her is Commissioner Massa
3 Washington.

4 (Applause.)

5 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: She is a journalist by
6 profession and an advocate for women's issues as well.
7 During the early days of the conflict, she was very,
8 very active with several Indigenous Liberian groups.
9 She reported from behind the crisis lines in greater
10 Liberia, Charles Taylor's territory, and made a lot of
11 breaking revelations on what was transpiring in those.
12 And that brought to her some threats, and that's how
13 she left and matriculated here to the U.S.

14 She is the only commissioner who was
15 recruited from the Diaspora, so you see, you are
16 represented on the Commission.

17 Commissioner John Stewart.

18 (Applause.)

19 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: He is a journalist and
20 a -- and a -- and a politician. He goes back since the
21 early '70s. When it comes to activism and -- and --
22 and politics in the early '70s, the late '60s, up to
23 the present, John Stewart has been there. He has
24 produced several thought provocative radio programs,
25 and as a journalist his pen is very, very powerful.

1 Commissioner Oumu Syllah.

2 (Applause.)

3 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: She is a nurse by
4 profession and an HIV counselor. She was called to
5 join the TRC because of those values and characters she
6 has.

7 May I say that the commissioners were
8 selected from a pool of nearly 200 applicants. Some
9 people did apply, some people were recommended by
10 members of this -- of the community. And so out of
11 that pool, the committee that was established, headed
12 by ECOWAS and co-chaired by the United Nations, had to
13 select 15 distinguished Liberians of diverse
14 backgrounds, orientations, and all of that.

15 That's how Commissioner Oumu Syllah came in
16 as a nurse and as an HIV counselor. I need not
17 emphasize the role counseling plays in a post conflict
18 society like ours.

19 So this is the full complement of the
20 Commission; and I am, of course, Jerome Verdier. I'm a
21 lawyer by profession, and Ahmed has said a lot of
22 things about me. We've got --

23 Ladies and gentlemen, again, we are honored
24 by your presence and your support, and with the
25 authority in me vested, I wish to formally declare the

1 hearings of the Liberian TROC in the Diaspora now
2 convening in Minnesota formally open.

3 Thank you very much.

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Thank you. Thank you
6 all.

7 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

8 Thank you. Be seated, please.

9 I told you so. I told you about
10 Jerome Verdier.

11 And so -- Well, at this point, just as the
12 chairman has declared the hearings formally opened, I
13 would just like, Mr. Chairman, with your permission,
14 with the permission of the Commission, to take a five
15 minute break so we can reset our stage and then
16 reconvene.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The anthems.

18 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Yes, we come to that.

19 But before we do that, we would like to honor Liberia
20 and honor the United States by singing the two national
21 anthems. And, therefore, I will again ask you to
22 please rise and join me in singing the Liberian
23 National Anthem first.

24 (The Liberian National Anthem is played.)

25 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Now we'll go to the U.S.

1 National Anthem.

2 (The United States National Anthem is
3 played.)

4 (Applause.)

5 MR. AHMED SIRLEAF: Thank you. Thank you.
6 This is a quick five minute recess so that we can reset
7 our stage and then we will reconvene. Please, just
8 five minutes. We will be very strict in enforcing
9 that. Thank you.

10 (Proceedings recessed from 11:19 a.m. to
11 11:38 a.m.)

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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2
3 I, JACKIE YOUNG, a Registered Professional
4 Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing pages of
5 typewritten material constitute an accurate verbatim
6 stenographic record taken by me of the proceedings
7 aforementioned before the Truth and Reconciliation
8 Commission of Liberia, on the 10th day of June, 2008,
9 at the time and place specified.

10
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12
13
14 DATED: June 30, 2008.

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