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TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

DIASPORA PROJECT

TESTIMONY OF

REVEREND WILLIAM B.G.K. HARRIS

TRANSCRIPTION OF DVD

Recorded June 13, 2008

at Hamline University
St. Paul, Minnesota

TRC Commissioners Identified on DVD:
Chairman Jerome Verdier
Oumu K. Syllah
Massa Washington
John H.T. Stewart
Reverend Gerald Coleman

Court Reporter: Patricia S. Onken, Court Reporter
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Reporters & Captioners
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Marshall, Minnesota 56258
U.S.A.
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1 (The following proceedings were had and made
2 of record:

3 (Witness sworn.)

4 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Please be seated.

5 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: We want to say welcome,
7 Reverend Harris. We appreciate you coming to serve as
8 a witness before the TRC, to share some of your
9 thoughts and experiences with us, direct experiences
10 in -- in Liberia, maybe, and the Diaspora and your
11 experience working with the community here and all of
12 that.

13 All these processes are necessary for us to build
14 consensus on the contentious issues in our national
15 life, and also consensus on the way forward. That is
16 why we appreciate it when Liberians come forward to
17 assist us.

18 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

19 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: It's a momentous task, and
20 we have no illusion that we can do it alone.

21 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

22 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: So we are very happy and
23 we say welcome.

24 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

25 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: I will introduce the

1 commissioners here present, then, before you do your
2 presentation.

3 John Stewart is at the far end of the table.

4 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

5 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Massa Washington next to
6 him.

7 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

8 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Gerald Coleman.

9 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

10 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Oumu Syllah.

11 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

12 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: And then myself --

13 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

14 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: -- Jerome Verdier.

15 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

16 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Can you please just start
17 by repeating your name, please, for our records?

18 THE WITNESS: My name is William B.G.K.
19 Harris.

20 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Where do you reside
21 presently?

22 THE WITNESS: I presently reside in Buford,
23 Georgia, a suburb of Atlanta.

24 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: And your date of birth,
25 please?

1 THE WITNESS: April 11, 1953.

2 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Of course, you are a
3 reverend. Can you say which church? What do you do as
4 a reverend?

5 THE WITNESS: I'm a senior pastor and founder
6 of the International Christian Fellowship Ministries,
7 in Atlanta. It was founded about 22 years ago. But
8 I'm also an engineer, electrical engineer, by
9 profession. I'm an author also, and a grant writer.

10 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: That's information for us.
11 Can you say when you migrated to the U.S.?

12 THE WITNESS: I migrated to the U.S. in
13 September the 7th, 1974.

14 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: September 7, 1974.

15 THE WITNESS: 1974.

16 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: And since then you've been
17 going and coming back?

18 THE WITNESS: Not repeatedly. I went in
19 1979. Right about the time of the Rice Riot my father
20 passed away, and I went to Liberia to -- to bury him,
21 and then I went in 2005.

22 For the most part, during the whole civil war
23 process I was, quote, unquote, on somebody's black
24 list.

25 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Okay.

1 THE WITNESS: So I could not really go home.

2 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Okay.

3 THE WITNESS: I was looked for.

4 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Okay. Thank you very
5 much, Mr. Witness, and you may kindly proceed with your
6 presentation.

7 THE WITNESS: Thank you very much,
8 Mr. Chairperson, and the Commissioners. I'd like to
9 say thanks for allowing us to come to share some
10 information with you. I really want to seize the
11 opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation to
12 the Commissioners for your very hard work, even for
13 your courage and for your deep love, I want to
14 underscore the deep love for your country Liberia,
15 because what you have committed yourself to do is not
16 an easy task. As a pastor, we just thinking on how
17 much you've been loaded up on in the sense of hearing
18 all of these stories and still manage to keep your
19 sanity and your dignity and still try to conduct
20 yourself in a way that is in the interest of our
21 nation.

22 So we want to say thank you so much for all that
23 you do. May God grant you peace and the courage to see
24 it to the end, what you are trying to do. So I -- I
25 want to thank the Advocates for Human Rights also.

1 It's a very important organization that has spearheaded
2 this process to bring the TRC to the Diaspora.
3 Commissioner Washington was very instrumental in that
4 process, I got to meet her, and including you, as the
5 Chairperson, and I've been very active in Atlanta in
6 trying to promote the TRC concept in that part of the
7 country. We had some successes. So I can only say
8 thank you all so much, as I think about what will
9 happen even when they had this process in the United
10 States, what the laws were doing to Liberia, you know,
11 and great laws with information that will help us seek
12 some solutions. So I say thank you so much.

13 I'd like to underscore that my testimony is going
14 to be very different. In fact, you have some of the
15 text. It's different in the sense that, as you heard
16 me state, I did not live through the war in Liberia. I
17 was away. But I can assure you, even though I wasn't
18 in the war in the physical sense, I live it. I mean, I
19 live it daily. And today I come to be the voice of so
20 many pastors, the work of pastors and those who are in
21 religious leadership positions, they are underestimated
22 in the process of what we do.

23 So today, as I share with you, I'm going to be
24 giving you information and some insights how people are
25 able to cope, those that were in the war, once they get

1 here, how they have managed to cope to keep on moving
2 forward. That's a role that I have played in a very
3 unique manner since Honorable Tubman.

4 So there are four different areas that I'll be
5 trying to touch upon today. I'll give you a little
6 background about myself, and then I'm going give you
7 testimonies about my families, those that are displaced
8 and those that died, and then I want to talk a little
9 bit about the Diaspora experience, what we did here to
10 help people adjust and cope.

11 And then I want to talk about a few myths that
12 characterize us as a people. I will not go into
13 detail. I may highlight some of them, but they are all
14 in your notes. Those are what I call myths that need
15 to be expanded upon.

16 And then lastly I'll be giving some reflections,
17 some opportunities to move forward as a nation, as --
18 as a people. It's my hope that some of these
19 suggestions will be considered and become part of
20 whatever recommendations you may have. So with that in
21 mind, I would like to begin with what I call the
22 background.

23 The background, as I indicated, my name is William
24 B.G.K. Harris. I must say, as a kid, that when I was
25 born my official documents may not say B.G.K.

1 Officially, when I was born, I was named William
2 Benjamin Harris. That's my official. But I had an
3 experience that I had to look back into my roots, and I
4 took names from my two maternal grandparents, who are
5 indigenous. One come from Grand Bassa, River Cess
6 area, and one from Bopolu, which is the name that I
7 got, Garmansor and Kporkpor. So just to share that.

8 In the notes I share that my -- one of my
9 great-grandfathers came from the United States, the
10 Harris, that's the link, and the other grandfather came
11 from the Congo, the Carandas. He was en route when the
12 slave trade was abandoned, and he was taken as a child
13 and he was reared by the Lewises, and later on he got
14 his name Caranda. So I come from that part, and also
15 my two maternal grandparents are from River Cess, the
16 Bassa area, and also Bopolu, which has the link of
17 Kpelle and Mandingo.

18 Why I say that, because we -- we are a mixed
19 people. Liberia have lot of intermarriages, and
20 it's -- it's very typical there that even in
21 (unintelligible) aren't a Liberian who is not part of
22 the whole indigenous group. It be very, very hard to
23 find a Liberian that cannot find a link to any
24 indigenous person. So I just want to highlight that,
25 that we are all people -- I consider Liberia as a

1 melting pot. People come from all over to form that
2 particular nation.

3 I'm 55 years old, and I was born in Monrovia, but
4 my family moved to Suakoko at a very early age, besides
5 my older brothers and my sisters, so I consider
6 Suakoko, Bong County, as my homeland.

7 My father, the late Oliver Melville Francis
8 Harris, Senior, he was an agriculturist, and he also
9 served in the House of Representatives from 1969 until
10 his death April 10, 1997. My mother, an
11 agriculturist -- I mean, yes, she's agriculturist also,
12 but she's a nurse, raised a nurse. She opened many
13 clinics up in the Gbarnga area. My father died just
14 about the Rice Riot time. In fact, my birthday is
15 April 11. He died on the 10th, and I got a call hoping
16 they were telling me happy birthday. They tell me, no,
17 we're calling to tell you that he's passed away.

18 At that time I was a senior in college, and I made
19 plans to go home, and, in fact, it was very difficult.
20 When I got to Liberia I saw the destruction, all of the
21 things at the Freeport, even at the airport. It was
22 very difficult for me to get to town. Even the clothes
23 that I carried for me to wear, we had to use that to
24 bury my father, because things were so destroyed. So
25 the funeral services were very brief, very short,

1 because of the curfew and all of that. We buried my
2 father and I came back to the States day after.

3 I must indicate that, as an electrical engineer, I
4 was expected to go back to work for PUA, having a
5 contract and everything, and I just was graduate, but
6 when I went home and saw the destructions, I say I
7 better heed to the call to go to seminary, and so I
8 left -- after graduation I went on to seminary in
9 Atlanta.

10 I attended mission schools of Baptists and Totata
11 Lutheran Mission for elementary school. I went to BWI,
12 that's where I did a diploma in electronics, and then I
13 got my BSEE in electrical engineering from Tuskegee
14 Institute in Alabama, and also a Master's degree in
15 divinity from ITC in Atlanta.

16 I'm married to the former Queeta Tolbert, and we
17 have seven children, including three college triplet
18 daughters. So that's a little background as to who I
19 am.

20 My -- my real passion is community work, a passion
21 to work for unity and peace, and that's what I have
22 done over the years. I've done that even against some
23 of the odds, even got into trouble because I tried to
24 help and do the will of -- of the Lord.

25 So what I will do now, I -- I will give you a few

1 accounts of experiences, particularly with relatives,
2 during the April coup and during the civil war.
3 There's one in particular I'd like to start with, about
4 the -- the 1990 -- I mean, 1980 coup. One of my older
5 brothers, Charles B. Harris, Senior, he served in the
6 Tolbert government. He was the first person
7 commissioned as Assistant Minister for Engineering. He
8 was in charge of the engineering group, and at the time
9 of the coup he was one of those that was searched.
10 They went to his house and they shot so many rounds
11 through the house. They first tortured his wife and
12 kids, and just by a few inches the bullets missed him
13 while he was lying on the rafters in the house, and he
14 was -- he was safe.

15 As far as the '80 coup, my father-in-law, the late
16 Wilmot Tolbert, he was working at the -- at the General
17 Auditing, he worked there for years. He was one of
18 those, because of his name -- he was some sort of
19 cousin to Tolbert, but merely because -- because of his
20 name he was put in jail, beaten. And so on this side
21 we had the -- the problem of trying to find out what to
22 do. In fact, to marry his daughter I had to write and
23 ask permission, and through the consent of the -- of
24 the mother, to marry his daughter.

25 So he was let go with other people I think during

1 that last exodus of people that were in jail, and he --
2 he never recovered from there, he was very sick, and
3 during the preceding war he -- he died, and he died,
4 they had to do a hasty burial right at the eve of the
5 house. Just a few weeks ago my mother-in-law was able
6 to go back to Liberia, and a few weeks ago they had a
7 proper burial for him, took him to -- to bury him, so
8 those are some of the challenges.

9 Now looking at the displacement during the civil
10 war. I will not give you details, because some of
11 them, they are in your handout, but I just want to say,
12 my elderly mother, Josephine, at that time she was very
13 sick when the war happened, and she had to flee with my
14 sisters and lot of other children, nieces, nephews,
15 cousins, and they fled to Fendall, and they were there
16 with all of the great [ph] people, and many, many
17 people. Food were very difficult to come by, and
18 finally they were all together in a big truck they said
19 that came from Firestone, and they were able to put her
20 in the front, she was lucky, and everybody else were in
21 the back, from what she said, and they were heading
22 towards Suakoko, where our home is.

23 And when they got there they couldn't go to get in
24 our house, it was occupied, and they went on to
25 Sargeant Kollie Town, which is neighboring town, and

1 they were there for many months, and finally they went
2 to Dananee, and then from Dananee, in Ivory Coast. The
3 family stay there for a long time. While they were
4 there we had to give them moral, financial, and other
5 support, with a whole contingent, and when trouble came
6 into Ivory Coast they had to -- we had to find a way to
7 rent a house in Ghana.

8 And they stayed in Ghana for a long time, and then
9 we were able to get them back to Ivory Coast. My
10 mother took sick and she passed away in eighty -- '99,
11 she passed away, and we had to take her from there, to
12 bury her, to Liberia. I couldn't go, but my other
13 siblings went.

14 Hannah, my older sister, she was the main one
15 taking care of the family. She was very sick. I tried
16 to get her over here. She came, and because of some of
17 the lingering illnesses from the war and what they went
18 through, and I tried to help her, and not too long
19 after she came she passed away, in 2006. So that was a
20 big parting.

21 Again, because of the civil war, my brother,
22 Charles Harris, he was here, and Doe begged him to come
23 home so that he could work with him, because of his
24 technical skills, he's a civil engineer, so he went
25 back to work in Doe government. And while working in

1 Doe government, of course the war -- war broke out
2 again and he was on the run for his life. He had many
3 serious encounters, particularly at ELWA, in the
4 compound, where -- while he was there, they identified
5 him as being one of Doe's government officers, and so
6 they took him to the back, they said, "We're going to
7 kill you." And he said he never prayed hard like he
8 never prayed before that day.

9 The man took the knife and was going to behead
10 him, and he was praying the -- the Lord's Prayer and
11 23rd Psalm, and the man just got confused and the man
12 left him, left him, and from there we were able to find
13 a way to get him over.

14 My brother came, I didn't know who he was. I
15 mean, I went to the airport, he had reduced -- you
16 know, like, we are a heavysset people. I didn't know
17 him, you know. But it was a devastating impact from
18 the war.

19 My cousin, Doughba Carmo Caranda, Junior, he
20 worked during the civil war time frame or before then
21 at Radio ELBC. He was a target on many occasions. He
22 even mentioned about people telling him that they like
23 to eat Quiwonkpa, they were going to eat him too, and
24 he was put on the -- on the firing squad near JFK
25 Hospital, but they were distracted by a passerby and he

1 was let go.

2 My cousin, Virginia [sic] Washington, he was
3 beheaded, and we understand he was beheaded by Prince
4 Johnson's group. They lived in Virginia area, and long
5 time Stanley was in the militia, he had some of the
6 military clothes -- and there was a house in the
7 back -- he had in there. When the force came, they
8 want to go in that back room, and he asked them not to
9 go in there because there was some secret thing, and
10 they got curious and went in there and they found all
11 the military clothes and they said he was a general,
12 and so because of that they beheaded him. I don't know
13 the exact time, no date, but he was killed, I
14 understand, by the Prince Johnson group.

15 My cousin Frederick Ajavon and his wife Annie
16 Somie Ajavon, they were killed, I understand, in the
17 Lofa area by Roosevelt Johnson's group and, my
18 understanding, they were trying to escape from Gbarnga
19 area to -- to Guinea, and they were killed on September
20 the 21st, 1994, speaking to their daughter in Atlanta.
21 And I understand -- I asked her who she heard about
22 being responsible for that killing. She mentioned the
23 name Benidictus Williams, Junior. And I don't know who
24 that is, but that's what she mentioned that was
25 responsible for their deaths.

1 My late uncle, Doughba Caranda, Senior, when the
2 war took place, he was dragged and beaten unmercifully.
3 And the worst thing that happened, you know, he was
4 very good at keeping history. He had many, many
5 historical documents that would benefit this country, I
6 mean our -- our country. While he was beaten in front
7 of his house, the house was set on fire, and our family
8 documents, official, our grandparents, he was the
9 historian for the family, and a lot of that, everything
10 got burned with -- with the -- with the house that was
11 in Monrovia.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

13 THE WITNESS: Down the road, yeah, mm-hmm.
14 That pink house right there.

15 Our family estate, the Harris family estate in
16 Suakoko, that was used as Taylor's soldier checkpoint.
17 You couldn't -- because of it being right to the road,
18 and being high, so they blocked the place, and before
19 you go to -- to Gbarnga Pass or go anywhere you had to
20 go through the checkpoint. And we are told that so
21 many persons were killed. They had -- they had a
22 lineup, they took you in and asked you questions, and
23 if you were not answering right or because your name or
24 whatever it is, they would take you at the back of the
25 house, kill you, and throw you in the well, the well

1 that we had right -- right near there.

2 So, but after -- after the civil war, it was a
3 problem to get the people off from our house and the
4 land, but right now we've got relatives in the house,
5 and it is secured.

6 But when I went home in 2005 it was so sad to see
7 that my mother's and my father's grave, they had been
8 vandalized. They said that my father and my mother had
9 a lot of jewelry and a lot of money in the grave, so
10 they -- they broke in, they broke in, you know, and
11 I -- so it was very sad. They had so many things.

12 So that's a little summary of what I mentioned
13 about what happened during the -- during the coup. I
14 had two brothers, two -- my father and my mother took
15 lot of people that -- children they took care of, they
16 were considered our brothers and our -- our sisters,
17 but two of them, Jeremiah Harris and Stanley Harris, we
18 heard they were killed. We don't know where they were
19 killed, or when, but we have had reports that those two
20 brothers were killed.

21 I want to share now, turn a little bit to the
22 Diaspora aspect, the impact of the war on Liberians in
23 the Diaspora. Now, even though I'm going to focus on
24 the Atlanta area in particular, where I pastored over
25 the last 20 years, I can rest assured to you that this

1 scenario is typical throughout many cities in America,
2 and that's why I said I'm trying to -- to be the voice
3 for the work that pastors do with those that come from
4 Liberia.

5 Many Liberians who migrate to the U.S. were dying
6 in the U.S. shortly after they arrive. Now, I'm going
7 to just share with you that in the past it was typical
8 for students who come to the U.S. do four years or two
9 years and then go back. But since the 1980, it began a
10 new wave, not only in Liberia, throughout Africa,
11 people began to have a more permanent stay here than
12 coming for education and going back. And with the wave
13 of wars across Africa, it even became more concerted.
14 So we had to start to adjust ourselves to looking at
15 permanent.

16 And when people come they got children, they got
17 families, those same social needs. I would tell
18 individuals, I say, just like the Americans, when time
19 to go to any country, they carry everything. They
20 carry the school, they carry the medical doctor, they
21 carry the religion, everything, unlike us.

22 When we come, those same services that we have, we
23 have to have them to be able to cope. And so our
24 people began to come into this area, 1980, in Atlanta
25 area, and no services were available for them. I

1 started doing some work with the church, the Methodist
2 church where I was working on the staff. We did some
3 work, but then the Lord led me to start a ministry to
4 help people coming.

5 And I tell you, it was a big shock, because people
6 were coming depressed, discouraged, had no financial
7 means or no green card or don't know where to start.
8 They were just glad to get away from the 1980 coup.
9 And many older people as well, who pay their way to
10 come, they came, were coming with a little bit of
11 money, had to pay rent and do other things, the money
12 keep going and keep going, afterwards it became
13 problem. We had to help some of the people to adjust.

14 So they were depressed because of lots of stuff,
15 and they didn't have health -- health care, so many of
16 them, we had to make a way to -- found a way for them
17 to see doctors, or go to the public health center, and
18 help them in that way.

19 On the other hand, those who arrived in the U.S.
20 and their relatives were already in the U.S., you had
21 to send money. Very typical. It's a strain on those
22 who are already here working, most of them did not have
23 good jobs. In my case, I was -- I was very lucky, I
24 work as an engineer, so it -- it was not that typical.
25 But many, many people did not have the -- the means to

1 send money to their relatives at home or who were
2 stranded.

3 So it would be very interesting, as I said, to --
4 to do a research, from 1980 until 2000, at least, to go
5 to Western Union and just get a estimate as to how much
6 people send home to Liberia. You would find it would
7 be very alarming. As I understand, some of the people,
8 the only survival they had was money from -- coming
9 from -- from this side, you know, to survive, not only
10 in Liberia but other African countries. And when they
11 did travel, families here had to send money to them to
12 travel, and when they got to where they were going, had
13 to send money for them to be kept there. None of
14 that -- they had to decide to even bring them. Some of
15 them even had to put money together to bring them over.
16 So those are some great challenges.

17 The need for pastoral support was very great from
18 1980 and throughout the civil war, even right now.
19 Lots of counseling. We've done a lot of counseling to
20 help people cope. One of the typical way that
21 Liberians address their griefs would be through
22 laughing and jokes, but it can go so far, and so far
23 that you need professional counseling. Some of them,
24 we are able to refer them; some of them, we've done
25 that through pastoral counseling, but that's a real

1 need for that.

2 Many -- many of them, their properties, I mean,
3 people who were well off at one time, to come and have
4 to be begging and asking the -- even the children,
5 asking the children for money or for things that is --
6 that is needed, that was very degrading to some of
7 them. We had to counsel some of them through some of
8 those -- those problems.

9 There were many challenges, including to break the
10 news of relatives that have -- that have died in
11 Liberia, particularly during the time when you had
12 these -- they call it the bombings and the rockets. I
13 mean, I'd get news every day, there was news that you
14 call -- the first person you call would be the pastor
15 to go and tell the family that some relative have died.

16 And they would call me, and when they call me, I
17 later learned that it was very important to make sure
18 that the news was true. Because like in my own case I
19 was told that my whole family, my mother and the
20 children and everybody else were killed, and later on
21 we found out that it was not so, when the call came.
22 So we had to deal with lots of those kind of issues,
23 hearing news that somebody's father, mother, children,
24 brother, sister, they have died.

25 Now, once you hear that news, the first step is to

1 find out how to break the news to the person. Some of
2 them, I had to go and find out from their relatives or
3 friends whether they were on medication, high blood
4 pressure, anything else, or find a good timing, and
5 tell them some of -- some of these things and then deal
6 with -- with the cry and moan. It's a very difficult
7 thing to know your relatives passed away and you so
8 many miles away and you can't go, or even to know that
9 your relatives passed away and nobody told you, or
10 since then they can't find the body or they buried them
11 on the side of the road. So these were things that we
12 had to deal with with individuals as we dealt with
13 people that were here in the Diaspora.

14 As I said, again, there are many times that people
15 abused the system. There were times we'd get calls
16 from relatives who would say that so-and-so have died
17 and it turned out that it was not so, they wanted
18 money, you know. So people exploited the system just
19 as well, so these were issues.

20 Sometimes I would be asked, Pastor, should we send
21 the money or shouldn't send the money? That burden on
22 me, I had to go and do my own detective work, calling
23 Liberia and find somebody to confirm. And then
24 sometimes, if it's not so, then I have to come and tell
25 the relatives. And then all the relatives say, well,

1 you know, we're jammed, we can't do this, I said, well,
2 go ahead and tell them you need some money. But --
3 because you know what it is when your relatives are far
4 away and somebody has died and then you say no, they --
5 they are not dead. We had lots of that.

6 Again I want to mention about the spiritual
7 support, and the programs and services, particularly
8 the ministry that was organized. We were very
9 instrumental in helping people with immigration
10 matters. Many people going to court, we had to go
11 along with them, explain to people the differences
12 between the laws of Liberia and the laws over here.

13 One of the typical problem what we have is that in
14 Liberia, you know, when the police stop you, you get up
15 and you go to them, okay, and you talk what you need to
16 be talk. And sometimes you can share with them some
17 solidarity, if you will, in that -- in that sense.

18 Over here it's a different thing. When the --
19 when the police stops you, you stay in the car. So you
20 have problem with many people, the police drawing their
21 guns, and some people, about to shoot them, because
22 they think something else is wrong when you get out of
23 the car, you jump out when they stop you, they --
24 there's a cultural difference.

25 How you deal with children, children, when you

1 have the discipline and dealing with how you relate to
2 your elderly people, there were seniors who were used
3 to having children calling them by -- by certain names.
4 Children here had a different attitude how they would
5 address their -- their relatives. So all of these sort
6 of problems we have to do.

7 The church has been very helpful, though. We were
8 able to open up programs where we dealt with things in
9 different programs, teaching them some of the cultural
10 rules as to where they come from, so they cannot get
11 into the system, letting them know who they are,
12 teaching them some cultural values such as like the
13 elderly, to respect ladies and all of that.

14 But part of the things that we do, not only those
15 that die here, we have to do wakes and funerals, have
16 to work with funeral homes so we can have services and
17 wakes. We don't have it like you do in Liberia. In
18 Liberia, you know, you have all-night wake. You can't
19 do it here. And this year I've gotten most of the
20 funeral homes to work with us, we will have wakes go
21 for two or three hours. I tell them to put us on the
22 back end so we have a chance to -- to cry out and do
23 what we need to do.

24 So those are services -- weddings, weddings and
25 all those things are special. Business dedication, all

1 of those things, the average American pastor, if you
2 will, are not schooled in how to deal with -- with
3 cultural things, so we have to be able to serve in that
4 way, as the -- as the needs.

5 To give an example, one of the things I have
6 looked at through the years is I look at children that
7 were born here since 1980, in the church, and then
8 students that came along with their parents. I've been
9 tracking them very, very closely, and it's amazing that
10 I've seen, because of the famliness, the church support
11 to them, we have a lower problem with -- with most of
12 the -- the children. We still call each other uncle,
13 aunts, or all of those things, in the family, kind of
14 keeping the values, even though you are not their
15 biological uncle, we do that.

16 And just as a reflecting, from the time the church
17 started to now, there are people that have gone through
18 the church, well, we have people with medical doctors.
19 I'll name some of the names here: Medical doctors like
20 Kaddalah Brandy, just graduated from Meharry Medical
21 College; Melvin Johnson, an attorney, and soon to be,
22 he'll become the first African-American black judge in
23 some part of Atlanta. You know, he grew up right there
24 in the church. So you have seen some of these young
25 people who are -- who have grown up, to grow up in the

1 church and nurtured in the church.

2 On the other hand, there are many elderly people
3 that also came, and there are many of them that have
4 special needs, they went through the war. One of them
5 in particular is Deacon Jehu Brandy. Deacon Jehu
6 Brandy is an elderly statesman, he was aide-de-camp, he
7 grew up in the army, in the ranks, in Liberia. He
8 ended up being aide-de-camp to President Tolbert. He
9 was very close to him, and later on he became minister
10 of, I think, of Coast Guard. But during the 1980 coup
11 he was one of those that suffer immensely. He -- he
12 showed me his back so many times. In fact, he, right
13 now, about 85 years old, and he's trying to go back
14 home to go and visit.

15 But he talks about his pain, the suffering that he
16 got, he said he was whipped every day at the Post
17 Stockade, he was whipped with the car tires and some
18 other stuff, they put sand on there. Sometimes they
19 would whip him until he would pass out. And sometimes
20 they would be in there tight in the pack and they can't
21 get no food to eat, other terrible conditions, but
22 still he survived. He's been very courageous. Since
23 he's been with us almost 18 years or so, he has chaired
24 two building projects, we have built two building
25 projects, and he has been chairperson for both of them,

1 and to show you his courage and his strength.

2 Also Mother Druscilla George, her husband the late
3 James George from Gbarnga, her son was killed right in
4 her presence, from what I understand, and he was thrown
5 in the well. She had a --

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

7 THE WITNESS: Yeah, Sonny Boy was killed.
8 Yeah, Sonny Boy was killed. That had a big impact.
9 She had to run for her life. She walked from -- from
10 Gbarnga all the way to what that -- what that town
11 name. Salala [ph], in the bushes. And at that time
12 she was about 80-something. And she tell you the story
13 of how she couldn't eat and all of that, but she lived
14 to be almost hundred years old. She died in February,
15 recently we just buried her.

16 But she would tell you her stories and what the
17 war meant, and she couldn't understand how our people
18 could be so cruel, you know. And she said she had to
19 (untelligible) some of the soldiers and -- and say to
20 them, look, I'm your grandmother, you know. So all of
21 those things happened with them.

22 Our church acquired a mission in Gbarnga area, it
23 used to be called Youth Mission. That mission was
24 owned by the Flimesters [ph]. One of our ministers was
25 in charge of that -- that mission, and then about five

1 or six years ago he told us that the Lord led him to
2 relay that mission to us. It's right outside Gbarnga,
3 it was called Youth Mission, but we call it now ICF
4 Mission of Hope.

5 During the war that whole place was destroyed, and
6 since the last few years we have been sending money
7 over there, we have reconstructed it, the school has
8 been reopened for the past three years, it's been
9 reopened. We -- we continue to support them, we send
10 containers, and hopefully we trying to have a new plan
11 to build some new -- new structures and dormitories on
12 the campus, and we just praise God for that chance.
13 But the war was very devastating, how the church on the
14 mission, all of those things were destroyed. The
15 benches, they took them and burned them for firewood,
16 so you can imagine some of the troubles of war. Yes.

17 Now, as I mentioned to you, that there are some
18 challenges of Liberians in the Diaspora. I have a
19 particular section here that deals with that. I will
20 not go into detail, you can read them later on, but
21 some of the challenges including eating traditional
22 foods. You know, you're used to one sort of food, and
23 you come here and then you can't eat the American food
24 and it's very expensive. So that's some of the
25 challenges.

1 The upbringing of the children, the -- the
2 children are reared differently in our country. Over
3 here there's so many laws, and children tell their
4 parents, I will call the police on you, or so like
5 parents trying to -- to spank the kids, say, how dare
6 you spank me, I'll call the police, and so it's a very
7 difficult issue, how to adjust. Even how you respect
8 your elderly, you know, how you -- how you talk to
9 them, those are some problems that they have. The
10 elderly, even understanding the law, the visa,
11 immigration.

12 Employment is another problem. Many times the
13 church have to write references for individuals to get
14 jobs, maybe have to talk to people to find jobs for
15 them. So those -- those are all the things that the
16 immigrants face, most of the -- the challenges in the
17 U.S.

18 The next thing, as I said, the immigrants face the
19 home support, and for families and also relative
20 relationships. As a pastor, many, many times the
21 conflict between husband and wife has to deal with
22 those issues, because there are different roles that
23 were played in Liberia, that the husband and wife want
24 to play the same roles here. Even vice versa, the wife
25 will say, well, you're the man, you got to pay all the

1 bills, and in the meantime, you both working and don't
2 have the kind of income, where it may take two incomes
3 to make the family work.

4 On the other hand, you find the man and the woman
5 working full-time jobs, and he want her to make cassava
6 gravy every morning, before they go to work. Or
7 sometimes a Liberian marries to an American, and then
8 there are a lot of cultural differences, and even
9 though you have marital counseling, all the problems
10 that people face.

11 The other typical problem that we face in the
12 Diaspora is like relatives come from home, the person
13 be in Liberia, they cry, "Oh, I want to come, please
14 send for me, you pay the tab for me," and you'll come
15 on that note, sometimes they will tell you, if I come,
16 if I get a job, I will pay you back, and sometimes you
17 never get those payments back.

18 Not only that, they come in the house, they carry
19 the bills up, all the work, the work in the house, and
20 they don't want to contribute towards the well-being of
21 the house. They say, well, you know, you my brother,
22 you my sister, I'm not so happy with the bills. As a
23 result, there are many family conflicts. You have to
24 bring them together, try to understand the whole
25 system, you know, as to what it should be.

1 A typical problem we used to have, the phone
2 bills, you know, to know that at a certain time you
3 call home on the phone, the bill get high. And
4 normally you call at certain time, and the new person
5 coming from home, they get on the phone, they're high,
6 and they make calls at home, when the bill comes it's
7 about \$2,000. When the relative confront them, they
8 get angry, they say, well, you my brother, you my
9 sister, why you not paying for the phone? But that's
10 not a bill that you can just pay when you got rent to
11 pay, food to buy, and all of that. So sometimes those
12 tensions come to play, they have to be resolved and
13 help family to move on.

14 Sometimes families come, they have the argument
15 and they can't stay together. Sometimes they have to
16 go their separate ways. Even right now there are
17 families who not speaking to each other because of this
18 kind of conflict. Had good intentions, and before you
19 look, financial difficulties come, creep in.

20 So, now, the next issue that I want to talk about
21 in the Diaspora has to do with the TRC, the TRC
22 process. As I shared with you, I have been working
23 very hard to try to get our people to understand, but I
24 can still share with you this, that they lack proper
25 understanding of what the TRC is all about. For

1 instance, they have not read all the mandates that you
2 have come to tell them, and so they have a different
3 concept as to what the mandates of the TRC is, or
4 either because of their own personal values or desires,
5 they want to see you as being a law enforcer, whereas a
6 mediator, and trying to get facts to (unintelligible)
7 certain things.

8 So I have been making the cry that we -- we need
9 to find a way -- even though you're almost at the end
10 of your work, we may have to find a way to still do a
11 lot of education, even starting with the ministers.
12 The ministers put you in the same mold. You understand
13 some of the comments they make about the TRC that it's
14 a waste of time, that it -- it will take us nowhere,
15 and so I have to spend endless hours trying to tell
16 them. Have to be interim care for Liberian ministers
17 in Atlanta. And so we've been trying to educate them
18 to get the people to give statements. We have made a
19 lot of progress in that area.

20 But I think, for the larger good, we got to
21 continue to find a way to educate the Liberians,
22 particularly in the Diaspora, as to the importance and
23 the work. That's why I'm surprised with all the
24 numbers of people here. I know they have to go to
25 work, but sometimes you need to make some sacrifice,

1 you know, even to drop in for half a day. The thing
2 was well advertised. So we really need to get them to
3 understand and how this is going to help them.

4 Other problems here is cultural appreciation.
5 Most of our people understand they want to be Western,
6 but as I always say, I don't care how long a stick
7 stays in the water, it cannot become an alligator. An
8 African is an African. Don't be ashamed of your
9 cultural ties, don't be ashamed of your language. And
10 so those are things we need to start educating them to
11 appreciate who they are.

12 And not only that, but national patriotism, we
13 really lack that. We -- we are not -- we talk about
14 Liberia, but we never really have the passion that we
15 should. For example, I told somebody the other day
16 that we may have to find a way to have intentional
17 dialogues about Liberia, so that we can document some
18 of the issues, because when you go to parties or social
19 events, people talk. They do talk, but they talk under
20 certain conditions when they are not in the right frame
21 of mind because of maybe what they have partaken, so
22 they talk, and the other problem is that if you just
23 talk at a social gathering like that, nobody takes
24 notes, nobody documents what the end results are.

25 So we got to start finding opportunities for us to

1 sit down and lead to dialogue and discuss, come up with
2 suggestions, and move on with the suggestions. And
3 that's what we need in the Diaspora the most, to start
4 to do some of those, so that we can build our
5 nationalism.

6 Now, I will not spend too much time on this
7 aspect; I will just highlight a few things I call the
8 myths. And these are typical -- some people may agree
9 and not agree with me. I'm not -- I'm not suggesting
10 that what I'm saying here is law and gospel, but I have
11 some things that I see are what I call myths. And if
12 they are myths, then we need to find some ways to deal
13 with them. I highlighted them and tried to explain
14 some of them. There are ten.

15 The first one is that Liberia's history started in
16 1822. That's a wrong myth. It did not. My contention
17 is that we go way back. And even to be true, we need
18 to start off from way to the Nile, who migrated
19 downwards, you know, how we got to where we are. So
20 historians have the tendency to start our history at
21 1822 or even 1847. We need to go back to that.

22 Now, the next one is that the word Congo, and I
23 put that in quotations, the word Congo refers to people
24 who came from the United States. That's a myth, and I
25 was very glad yesterday that Sister Pearl Bull was able

1 to shed some light in that, want to understand, we have
2 got it confused. And in my estimation the word Congo
3 is synonymous with economic empowerment, those that
4 were economically high in status, because you had
5 people who were indigenous that were also economically
6 strong, but somehow we mix the word Congo with people
7 that came from here.

8 It's not so. The word Congo, as we said
9 yesterday, were those, when the slave trade was
10 abandoned, like my grandfather, they were en route to
11 the United States, and when it was abolished they had a
12 whole ship to come to Liberia, so now you got Congo
13 Town. But the whole phrase of Congo has been grouped
14 with so many people, and I think that's a -- that's a
15 thing we need to work on, and how we define who a Congo
16 person is. And even if you start to look at that, you
17 start asking people who have intermarried, it be very
18 hard to find anybody who is a real person that came
19 from the United States. We have intermingled. So
20 that's -- that's one thing that I'd just like to
21 highlight as far as the myths.

22 One of the myths that we say as a people, that
23 Liberia problem is the country versus -- versus Congo
24 issue, and in my estimation, I think it is more than
25 that. You show that even those who are from the

1 indigenou, and even people from the other side that is
2 called Congo, quote, unquote, everybody can mess up.
3 So it has nothing to do with people just being country
4 or Congo. We have some problems from the past. That's
5 all right, because of the -- the problems we had, but I
6 think our issues go more than that.

7 Even right now our issue is not only political.
8 One of the statements that I make is that we've got a
9 lot of moral issues, got a lot of social issues, and
10 many, many other issues. We've got immi -- relation
11 issues, you know. And if we just focus in on one thing
12 and use that, I think we really miss lot of things that
13 we can do.

14 One of the other myths that concerns me, and now
15 even more so when I found out that I'm a part of
16 Mandingo group, people are saying that Mandingos are
17 not citizens of Liberia. That's a myth. I'm from
18 Gbarnga area. You got a whole -- people there that
19 have been born there, you go to Saniquellie or you go
20 to almost every part. So we must begin to stop those
21 things that bring about division, to call certain group
22 that they are not this, you know. Mandingos have
23 rights to Liberia like anybody else who was born there.

24 The 1980 coup, the myth is that it was a
25 revolution, and I disagree with that because, again, I

1 don't think it was properly planned as it should be.
2 The educational things that were done by some of the
3 people that -- they did not teach the people well, did
4 not give them all of the -- the necessary tools to
5 understand and put those things into place. A
6 revolution don't just happen like that. You got things
7 planned to make sure that the end result. So you say
8 you're having a revolution in the name of getting rid
9 of corruption and all of that, then in the end it's
10 more than -- than what you started with.

11 So of course the issue of Liberia as America's
12 stepchild, we can all see clearly now that even though
13 we have some relationship, but in my opinion and many
14 people feel that the U.S. failed Liberia. Particularly
15 they -- they could have stopped the carnage in the war.
16 We heard from the Secretary of State, the former
17 Secretary of State, who came to testify. But I think,
18 though, we all need to rethink our relationships. Not
19 only just Liberians; Americans as well. We need to sit
20 down, come to a common table and reassess our
21 relationships.

22 One of the issues too that I think is a myth, that
23 Tubman was the best president Liberia ever had. I
24 don't really think so. He was a good president, he --
25 he did well, but in my opinion he was not empowering,

1 in the senses that most people were just relaxed and it
2 was not too good for us. He was -- he was a good man,
3 but I don't think he empowered the nation to move
4 forward, unlike Tolbert. Tolbert had more plan and
5 more things to try to propel the country forward.

6 One of the myths is that war and fighting is the
7 solution to our problems. Now we have found out that
8 it is not a solution; if anything, it gets us into
9 deeper trouble. So we've got to start teaching the new
10 generation that war and fighting, it does not solve
11 problems; it create more problems.

12 Right now we are -- we are far back than ever, our
13 thinking, our relationships, our -- our infrastructure,
14 we're behind the curve, and so we have to be very
15 careful that what happened to us never happen again.
16 We've got to put systems into place that we can
17 disagree to agree, and if in case you do not want an
18 individual in office we have a way we can get them out
19 in -- in a way that do not cause the carnage, death,
20 and destruction as we experienced.

21 The other one is that -- and this -- this, I may
22 get into some trouble for this but I'm going to say
23 anyway, we have a myth, and there are many things that
24 people will say, oh, they -- they towed all the people
25 in the admin -- our folks towed the commissioner, all

1 the government citizens in the hammock. That's a
2 typical scene that some Liberians would aspire, which
3 is very divisive. But my concern is that, as a person
4 who lives in Suakoko, and in the Gbarnga area, I saw
5 many chiefs that were also carried in the hammock.
6 Why? Because that was a traditional way of
7 transportation and honor to a leader.

8 Now, when the government sends an official over
9 there to conduct business or so, they give him or her
10 the same courtesy. So for people to come back and say,
11 well, we had to tow their people in the hammock, it
12 were good for the chiefs to be towed, then it is just
13 good enough for a government officer to be carried.

14 So the issue should not be, oh, you tow me there,
15 none of that. There were chiefs who exploited people
16 by having them to work on their farm for free and who
17 expected them to bring certain things to them for free.
18 To me, that's also exploitation. Same way it was
19 exploiting for a government official to rob the
20 national treasury, all of that. So I say that this is
21 a myth that we need to come to grips with as -- as a
22 people.

23 And as for commenting on the last one about the
24 war is not the answer, I'm suggesting here too that
25 peace and reconciliation talking should be solution to

1 our problems.

2 The last one is about Liberia's problems are
3 political. As I said, I don't think so. We have more
4 than just political problems. We -- we have religious
5 issues. An example, I was very much impressed when I
6 asked the -- the fellow that -- that would swear you in
7 before you do, I asked him about how you manage when
8 somebody is a traditionalist or maybe from the Islamic
9 faith. He said, oh, we have the Koran, all of that,
10 see? But in the past, a person who was a -- who was a
11 Muslim would be -- swear on the Bible, you know?

12 So we need to start to respect other people. The
13 constitution guarantees everybody the right to a
14 religion, and a religion shouldn't be forced upon
15 people if they don't want to, so in public area we got
16 to start having -- if we have a swearing-in ceremony or
17 whatever it is, ask the individual what their faith, or
18 ask them what they want to use. If they say the Bible,
19 that's fine, but don't force it on them. Religious
20 tolerance, we got to tolerate each other. That's the
21 constitution.

22 So there are big issues in Liberia about the
23 holidays and some of that stuff, yes, it need to be
24 revisited, to respect the religion of other people.

25 The work ethics, we got a great problem with work

1 ethics, even through the war, now even worse, so we got
2 that major problem. We got the thing with the social
3 issues, how young ladies are used and abused, even
4 having child out of wedlock. Those -- those are things
5 that society -- society will break down. We got to
6 start talking about them, that is not right. You know,
7 we don't want to talk about them. Those are problems
8 we got to start talking about and let people know that
9 if you want to do it the right way, there are other
10 ways to do it, see? So I think our problems beyond
11 political issues. We got many other social issues that
12 we need to look at.

13 With that, now I want to begin to end and wind
14 down, and this is where I want to do some reflections.
15 I want to give you some opportunities, opportunities
16 where we can press forward, press forward from beyond
17 the war. I believe in turning a new leaf, looking at
18 new possibilities, and I'd like to focus on the first
19 one very closely. In fact, to make sure, I'm going to
20 read it word for word.

21 Our history, that means the Liberian history,
22 needs to be rewritten and taught. It has mostly been
23 written by outsiders, by foreigners, (unintelligible),
24 all the other people, they wrote for us, they wrote
25 from their perspective. Even during the civil war, the

1 whole gamut, people have been writing books. None of
2 them have been historic whereby it's helped us to
3 document our history. It needs to be written by
4 Liberians, and I know that enough people are qualified
5 to do that now.

6 What I want to suggest, though, is that the data
7 that you collect through your process of the TRC -- and
8 I know they'll be used as a basis for some of this
9 scholarly work -- but I'm suggesting that the data that
10 you got be used by an appointed team of scholars, an
11 editor from each county of Liberia to write the history
12 of Liberia beginning before 1822 and ending up,
13 perhaps, with your final report as a -- as a cutoff
14 point. But it's just my suggestion. The -- the
15 political scientists can get on that as far as where
16 they end to begin as the thing. But I think with your
17 report, what all your final report would be, that would
18 be a good cutoff to start on. But that's just what I
19 think about.

20 Now, what I'm thinking, the history should be
21 written at different levels, primary level, secondary
22 level, high school, and college levels, and then on a
23 general level in a big volume that people can have.
24 Why I say that, because right now, in lots of other
25 African countries, we do not write and plan for our

1 elementary levels. We are still importing books on --
2 from United States, Europe, you know. So we -- we got
3 to start incorporating those things into our history,
4 so I'm suggesting that we do that.

5 And what I'm thinking, though, and I'm suggesting
6 that a special wartime lexicon be established, because
7 when generation comes later on and start reading about
8 tabay and all that thing, they wonder what it is. So
9 we need to find a way to document some of these
10 lexicons that are unique to the war so that when people
11 begin to read in the future when we're gone, they going
12 to understand what we're talking about.

13 Lastly, too, it is therefore suggested that the
14 TRC process include the Commissioners asking witnesses
15 for any documents. And you all are doing a great job,
16 but today I was very much impressed, the other lady,
17 when she came, she gave a book. There are so many
18 books that have been written since the war about the
19 war. They even have names, have pictures, all of that,
20 videotapes all available, so we need to find -- start
21 finding a -- a resource way that we can gather those
22 things and put them together.

23 Now, if you ask an individual, say, you come to
24 give your -- your statement, do you have any documents
25 to submit? They may or may not, but if they do, they

1 can give that for the national interest, and which
2 would be a good thing to help us for the future.

3 Now, how you handle those collection of the
4 documents (unintelligible) problem, I don't know, but
5 I'm just saying it would be a good thing to ask for all
6 the books that have been written on Liberia, make an
7 appeal, people can bring them, ask people for videos
8 that they may have, people who have some -- some tapes
9 or whatever it is, presented to you, that can be
10 helpful in the process of collecting our documents.

11 The other one that I would like to suggest is that
12 there has to be a way for us to develop patriotism, I
13 mean real patriotism of Liberia, so I'm suggesting that
14 we embark upon some sort of campaign, patriotism
15 campaign, some sort of slogan, and set up a committee
16 or a group to help us go through that process so we're
17 going to have to rethink Liberia first instead of our
18 ethnic group first. So we -- we need to find a way on
19 how a special group can begin to develop something with
20 the new media, with the linking, and that be a national
21 campaign and go on for a period of time, not just
22 one -- one year, I mean, a period of time, and go with
23 the elementary school to -- to bring about patriotism
24 for the long run. I think that would -- that would
25 help us in the long way.

1 Thirdly, Liberians need to appreciate their
2 culture. Liberians needs to appreciate their culture.
3 They need to have some sort of values, and not to copy
4 others. Just because somebody doing it -- an example,
5 our children, what they wear and what they do. An
6 example, when I was in the mission school it was -- it
7 was so terrible that the Peace Corps were over there,
8 they would wear sneakers, and because they were so lazy
9 to wash their sneakers, they would wear dirty sneakers,
10 we, as young people, start buy sneakers, and you buy
11 new sneakers, you say you were in Peace Corps. My
12 goodness. As I look back down through the years, I
13 say, what (unintelligible) am I?

14 Because a young man from college left from here
15 and go to Liberia to -- to work and he doesn't have
16 house skills, and he wears the dirty sneakers, we
17 patronize that, we're buying new sneakers, putting them
18 up as though we were in Peace Corps. We got to find a
19 way to tell our people that it ain't right. I mean,
20 it's a fashion, but it ain't right, few other thing.

21 Our history, just a handful of books are written
22 towards educational. All of those are just kind of
23 different things. So we should try to encourage that.
24 And what I want to suggest to you in this area of
25 documenting our culture, twofold. One of them is not

1 in there because I forgot to write it in.

2 The -- the first one is that I went to the Library
3 of Congress last week, and I was impressed. I was
4 impressed, the amount of history they got on Liberia,
5 alone. I mean, I saw a book in the Library of Congress
6 that goes back to the 1800s that listed every tribe in
7 Liberia, and it was this thick, and it had the listing
8 of the common names of every tribe and what it means,
9 and they wouldn't have such a book even in Liberia.

10 So I'm saying that one of the things to help us as
11 a people, we need to have a kind of Library of Congress
12 for Liberia, something like that, that cultural center.
13 And where the money would come from? We got a lot of
14 iron ore, we got Firestone and all the people there, so
15 with the payments to the government, let's allocate
16 certain amount of that for the kind of -- building of
17 that kind of library, a library from each county where
18 the elders and people can bring things and deposit it
19 for generations here to come. We've got to preserve
20 our culture and our heritage, and we've got to start
21 now.

22 Now, just to further push that, I know when you do
23 your work, your report and all of that, you're going to
24 have lots of material. I want to suggest that if at
25 all possible, you find an institution here in the U.S.

1 that can make copies of those things as a document to
2 some of the things that we got, to preserve them. At
3 least we'll have them in two places, so if in case
4 there's a -- there's a problem again, or the fire or
5 anything, we (unintelligible) get all the documents
6 going through the breeze, we got them no more.

7 So (unintelligible) it would be far thinking in
8 that area that maybe, I don't know the logistics or the
9 cost, but if you could find an institution maybe like
10 this, or they got a big state school that would like to
11 keep those documents, just like right now Morehouse
12 College houses the King papers, and so anybody have
13 access to that.

14 But knowing our people back home, it would take a
15 long time before they build this kind of Congress
16 library system or cultural museum to keep our
17 documents. We may want to find a way, all the things
18 that you've been collecting, our history, to get an
19 institution over here, a co-partner, where they can
20 either copy or some way in that area, I think it would
21 be good.

22 An example, is so many students here, through the
23 whole process here this week, I saw them taking notes.
24 It would be a good thing, when you establish with that
25 University, they can file their notes. I'm talking

1 about researching, because our children in the future
2 may want to research some of the things, and it would
3 be a good thing if they have access to the papers in
4 the format they can -- they can do that. So that's one
5 that's very close to my heart.

6 We'd like to ensure religious freedom in Liberia,
7 and instill moral values and character. This is a pet
8 peeve of mine. Again, as I said, the constitution
9 guarantees everybody the right to religion. So we want
10 to start learning to -- to respect our religiousness,
11 accept people for who they are, and don't downplay
12 other people's religion.

13 The schools, religious institutions, the churches,
14 the mosques, in my opinion, those are the places for
15 religious instruction, and the home, not in the public
16 government-funded schools. Because if you start
17 teaching one religion in -- in the schools, then you
18 got -- you got to let other religions come as well. So
19 I'm suggesting that we need to look at that critically,
20 that the mosques, the churches, the homes, and the
21 religious institutions should be the one to teach
22 (unintelligible) school.

23 In the past I know we have been very religious,
24 all of that, you had one sort of religion being taught
25 in public schools. We used the government funding paid

1 by every taxpayer from different religious persuasions.
2 So it's my desire to see us be more practical. Let's
3 keep the religious instruction where they belong, and
4 let's focus on those things that we need to teach in
5 the public arena when they're funded by public dollars.
6 And many people may disagree with me, but that's how I
7 see to bring about some of the different things in the
8 future. Liberians, you know, we need to unite and work
9 together.

10 Number five is we need to ensure the freedom of
11 the press. That's very paramount to any society. So
12 we need to continue to cry that out, and the cultural
13 media, we need to be very sure that what goes on the
14 air is adequate. Now anything can go on the air, and
15 all kind of things. We need to have some way that we
16 can -- we can look at that.

17 And a suggestion would be for future planners to
18 design and construct a new capital with a interhighway
19 system that would promote commerce and promote, you
20 know, intertravel. I think that would build our
21 country in a fast way. We need to be farsighted, and
22 that need to be on our far plan.

23 This I suggest also, number seven, is that we
24 revamp the salary scales. I mean, I'm hearing that
25 some people making \$20 per month. That's -- that's

1 going to help to facilitate corruption. So it may not
2 be able to happen right now, but I'm strongly of the
3 opinion that we need to have people revisit that in a
4 more practical way and plan for the future, to help
5 curb some of this corruption and help to establish
6 small businesses.

7 Number eight, we need to establish work ethics and
8 standards, and be sensitive to time; and then our young
9 people need to know that war is not the answer to our
10 problems.

11 And lastly, religious institutions can play an
12 important role. The churches, the churches and other
13 (unintelligible) to say, but the church got to be more
14 than just a Sunday morning sermon. In my opinion, the
15 sermon is not just a soothing sermon. A sermon is to
16 challenge people, and if you have programs and services
17 that meet the needs of the people. So some of the
18 processes with the ministers and religious leaders, we
19 need to start thinking on how our religious
20 institutions can be of more practical services to the
21 people's daily lives, not just on Sunday to Sunday, but
22 from -- from Sunday every day during the week.

23 So these are just some thoughts that I had on
24 this. I want to thank you all very much again for your
25 hard work and for listening to what I had to say

1 concerning these presentations. I thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Thank you. Shall we clap?
3 (Applause.)

4 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: How many more minutes do
5 we have?

6 (End of DVD 21, beginning of DVD 22.)

7 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Reverend Harris, we want
8 to thank you very much. This was a very short
9 20-minute presentation (laughing).

10 THE WITNESS: (Laughing.) Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Yeah, and we realize the
12 forward-looking process is -- it makes for detail, and
13 it was good to -- to speak a lot about that. We
14 appreciate it so much.

15 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

16 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: I hope the Commissioners
17 can be energized to challenge Reverend Harris now.

18 We'll start with Oumu, if you have anything to
19 say.

20 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very
21 much, Reverend Harris.

22 THE WITNESS: Yes.

23 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: You said initially
24 that your testimony was unique; indeed, it is unique.
25 You talked about the victims being before us, some

1 before us though they are not here today, but thank you
2 for speaking on their behalf, and your sound
3 recommendations, and so how you see the way forward on
4 things. So I just want to say thank you very much for
5 everything you said.

6 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

7 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: For they are
8 sound, they are clear. I'm sure that this testimony is
9 going to help us immensely in our work. But the TRC
10 is -- you know, usually we talk to institutions --

11 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

12 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: -- to make
13 submissions --

14 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

15 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: -- so it's like
16 you made a submission too on religion.

17 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

18 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: We want to say
19 thank you very much for that.

20 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

21 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: So with that,
22 maybe I give the (unintelligible) to my colleagues.

23 THE WITNESS: Okay.

24 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: And then I will --

25 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: (Inaudible.)

1 (Inaudible.)

2 (Selected "mm-hmms" voiced by the witness
3 have been omitted for added clarity and brevity of the
4 record.)

5 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Well, from my
6 side, again, I just join my colleagues; I mean, as I
7 listen to you, I can just hear many parts of myself
8 speaking --

9 THE WITNESS: (Chuckling.)

10 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: -- so it's
11 something very interesting.

12 One point I just thought to add, one of the
13 greatest challenges that we have in the rebuilding of
14 Liberia is for us to come to a clear common ground of
15 what is good and evil. Because, you know, in a civil
16 society where you're dealing with tolerance and trying
17 to find balance and conflict resolution and democracy,
18 people tend to create an environment where the very
19 thing --

20 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

21 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: -- that is the
22 root of their problems never gets solved because of the
23 liberal sort of objective view of life. So in Liberia
24 this is something we need to consider.

25 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

1 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Like you said,
2 you know, give people options.

3 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

4 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: A man may come
5 up to say, well, (inaudible), to know that, and so we
6 have to be liberal with him and give it to him. So we
7 need to think of how to deal with that part.
8 (Unintelligible) very much in place.

9 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm. Thank you very much.
10 Okay. Yes.

11 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you,
12 Reverend Harris --

13 THE WITNESS: Yes.

14 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Also for
15 your --

16 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Massa.

17 THE WITNESS: Yes.

18 (Inaudible.)

19 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Do I have to
20 say it in there?

21 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Yes.

22 (Inaudible.)

23 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: I was trying
24 to avoid the air conditioning --

25 THE WITNESS: Oh, I see.

1 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Which is --
2 was hitting my back.

3 I was saying thank you very much, Reverend Harris,
4 for --

5 THE WITNESS: Yes.

6 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: -- taking the
7 time off your busy schedule --

8 THE WITNESS: Yes.

9 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: -- to come
10 here and do this on behalf of the people of Liberia.

11 THE WITNESS: Yes.

12 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: And also on
13 behalf of your Diaspora community in -- in Georgia.
14 And also thank you for helping us with the TRC process
15 in the Atlanta metro area.

16 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

17 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: You gave an
18 expose, yeah, you said a lot of interesting things, but
19 you mentioned some problems.

20 THE WITNESS: Yes.

21 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Well, you
22 didn't state the problems, but said that generally, you
23 said that there are problems surrounding this
24 perspective of, quote, unquote, Congo and -- and
25 country --

1 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

2 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: -- thing that
3 we have going in Liberia.

4 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

5 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: And you
6 thought it was a big problem.

7 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

8 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: My question
9 is, do you think that problem still exists, and how is
10 it impacting our -- our country in terms of how we move
11 on --

12 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

13 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: -- as -- you
14 know, as one people?

15 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm. Yes, yes, I think -- I
16 think it's still a major problem, and that's why I
17 think the educational side of it needs to be done.
18 Religious leaders need to begin to speak to their
19 congregation. Like, in Atlanta I talk about it all the
20 time, you know. So we've got to start to address the
21 issue, and, again, let people know that we are one. We
22 have -- we have -- we have been intermarried for a long
23 time, and we -- we need to claim ownership to Liberia.
24 Everyone has the right to be there, you know, not like
25 you were born there.

1 The example that was made yesterday about, you
2 know, children born here and there, in Ivory Coast,
3 like Doe, his grandparents, those were very good. So I
4 want to say we need some dialogue, little by little.
5 So, okay, let's talk about it. What's your concern,
6 what's your understanding? Or ask somebody who you
7 consider a Congo person or who you consider indigenous
8 person, and let's -- let's define it. Then the more we
9 talk about it, and people can understand me, then I
10 think we'll move towards a better thing.

11 But right now we're not talking about it. We only
12 talk about it in the sense of, well, we see you as a
13 Congo versus country or indigenous person, and so we
14 just continue to perpetuate that. And as I'm saying,
15 even right in this room, if you ask people for their
16 background, you'd be surprised, ask them to raise their
17 hand that they've got some indigenous roots.

18 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. As a
19 pastor, someone who studies religion, how do you feel
20 or what is your own view on this thing with Liberians,
21 people want reconciliation, to speak of reconciliation,
22 but yet you can see in certain instances sometimes
23 those steps and those -- I like to call them elements,
24 that culminate into the bigger picture of
25 reconciliation.

1 People have problems as to how you go about
2 reconciliation; that, for example, the TRC process, I
3 think one of the reasons why we still have some
4 Liberians who are still sitting on the fence to support
5 the process is that they think let bygone be. The war
6 is over, people survive it, so what, we want to move
7 on, let's reconcile. And people often mistake
8 reconciliation for impunity, they don't think
9 reconciliation has, should have, a justice component,
10 no matter how justice is defined or whatsoever. And so
11 the Commission has come under, you know, attacks for,
12 quote, unquote, being -- or trying to open old wounds
13 and trying to divide the nation further and what have
14 you. What is your own perspective on this issue?

15 THE WITNESS: Well, again, as I said in my
16 presentation, one of the problems in the Diaspora is
17 that people do not understand the TRC process. If you
18 understand that it's a process, then -- because I'm
19 going to start maybe the end and then start from the
20 beginning, you see, you got to go through the process
21 and get to the end. And what I'm thinking is that we
22 need to give the process a chance. The process is that
23 you have (unintelligible), you document what to be
24 found, and you find people who are willing to go meet
25 whoever have done their wrong and see if they want to

1 reconcile. Now, in the end, if they can't reconcile,
2 then you go through the legal process, you know.

3 But I don't advocate that bygones be bygones,
4 because you say those that don't learn from the past,
5 you are doomed to repeat it. Now, going to the past is
6 not to stay in the past; it is to look at what you did
7 in the past and make correction to move forward.

8 So I would say, yes, indeed, we do need to get all
9 the hearing, the testimony here and all of that, and
10 ask some of the victims, if you find out that those
11 that perpetrated that wrong, they still alive, maybe
12 you all can go ask it through the religious aspect, do
13 you want to meet the individual to say sorry. Then
14 those can be done. And after that, when you close that
15 particular period up, then you put the next one forth
16 for litigations.

17 We might take a long time, but I think history
18 would be well served, because the TRC process is more
19 than just trying to bring up old wounds. Like I just
20 told you, our history is not correct. We need to write
21 our history for our generations to come, and they --
22 this is a good process to get some information to
23 straighten up our past. So those that make the -- the
24 point that it's bringing up old wounds, I don't think
25 so. We need to examine where we been and even --

1 suppose we didn't have -- like I'm saying, suppose we
2 didn't have the T -- this TR -- the TRC process; we
3 never heard from the Undersecretary of State. I mean,
4 I felt so good, because as you see in my document I --
5 I have been really concerned that the U.S. did not
6 treat us right. For him to come and even come back and
7 say, "Look, I'm sorry," it make me feel good, somebody
8 admit that something was not done needs to be done.
9 And (unintelligible) I felt good, (unintelligible) I
10 felt good is the same thing.

11 If somebody find their victim, or their relative
12 can say I'm sorry for what my relative did to you, that
13 can go a long way. So I would think that should be
14 some of the process that -- it may not happen
15 overnight, because I know you're dealing with a short
16 time frame, but part of the -- the going forward would
17 be to give people an opportunity, if you're able to
18 find the perpetrator, you can go and ask them, so,
19 look, this person said this about you, do you want to
20 go and tell them sorry? If -- if the person who the
21 crime was against say yes, then you find a way for them
22 to meet to do the hugging and the crying, you know.

23 Pastors do that all the time now in the churches,
24 with all the problems people have, I make people to hug
25 all the time, even husband and wife. It's the same

1 kind of thing, you know; tell you, say, tell your
2 husband sorry or tell your wife sorry, they hug, and
3 then they -- they move on from there. So we -- we have
4 to find opportunities for those who are able to say
5 sorry for what I've already done, even to make a public
6 declaration of that, and then we move on. But I do not
7 say let bygones be bygones. I think it will harm us
8 more, it will harm us more in the long run.

9 And people who have done bad, we need to let them
10 know they done bad. And we forgive you, we love you,
11 but don't do it again, because if you do it, look what
12 will happen to us. Not only to you, but your -- even
13 your grandchildren or boy yet unborn.

14 So that's my opinion, is that I don't agree for
15 bygones to be bygones. To me, it's a way of pushing it
16 under the rug and -- and just leaving it there.

17 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: My last
18 question, the church has come under attack, you know,
19 in -- with our process with some of the places that
20 we've been. For example, in Gbarnga we listened to a
21 young girl who -- whose father was killed and her --
22 her family was badly treated. And right now she
23 attends a church where the perpetrator is and the --
24 you know, he's in church every Sunday and she is there
25 every Sunday. And when she explained her story, we

1 asked her about the perpetrator, do you see him?

2 Oh, yes. He's in my church.

3 Has he spoken to you? Has he said sorry? Has
4 anyone spoken to you about it?

5 No. Only the TRC, through the statement taking,
6 and now the hearings.

7 And one Commissioner asked the question, but what
8 about the pastor in the church? Has the pastor spoken
9 to you and your mom about what has happened? Have they
10 called him, have the -- the elders in the church called
11 him to try to reconcile these things? And she said no.
12 He -- you know, the pastor only preaches from the
13 pulpit every Sunday about general forgiveness, the war
14 is over, let's forgive and forget.

15 But you can -- you could see how very deeply
16 she's -- she still is -- she -- I mean, she still
17 hurts. So do you have -- have you had some of these
18 scenarios in your -- in your church?

19 THE WITNESS: Well, then, because -- because
20 of my -- my training, you see, nowadays, to be a
21 minister, it's not just enough to take the Bible and
22 say you are a minister. You -- you got to go and get
23 proper training, there are special courses you take in
24 counseling and all of that. And then there are
25 sometimes you can't even continue with the counseling,

1 you go to an expert, you refer them.

2 So most of the challenges that we have is to start
3 to retrain ministers in light of all that. It's --
4 it's more than just preaching the word, because when a
5 person leaves home -- or they go home, they -- they got
6 to live in the world, so you got to start preaching
7 sermons that apply to people's daily lives. And a
8 pastor who has not had that kind of training, it can't
9 happen overnight. It's a process as well.

10 One of the things that I also criticize with our
11 seminaries back in Liberia and even here, the ministers
12 are not properly prepared. As a professor at a -- at
13 the Bible College in Atlanta, I taught there for four
14 years, I was a professor, one of the things I was
15 trying to do is trying to expand the horizon of our
16 people, the -- the ministers, because they're the ones
17 who get there to talk to the people.

18 I give an example. In Liberia the curriculum at
19 the -- at the seminary, it's imported from here. It's
20 not indigenous. Now, I'm not saying that some of the
21 Old Testament, New Testament things is -- is not good.
22 But you need to start having pastoral counseling in the
23 African context, what that means, how you deal with
24 some of the issues like that. If this pastor can't do
25 it, he may have a friend or another pastor. It

1 don't -- it don't have to be the pastor there if that
2 pastor is not understanding the (unintelligible) you
3 can do that.

4 But I'm saying the curriculum alone, only pastors
5 who are trained -- they're not trained to serve the
6 people. They are trained to serve people that they
7 really come from here, so they're trained to serve
8 people here.

9 Things like dreams, our people have dreams. They
10 go to their pastor, Pastor, I had a dream last night,
11 they say, oh, you ate too much palm butter, instead of
12 saying, okay, let me go pray about it, let me find out
13 what the dream is. Because God sent them to Joseph and
14 Daniels. And so the pastor is not equipped.

15 And so we may meet them and say, we're going to
16 have the interchurch day, have the leaders to look at
17 that, go to the seminaries, try to retrain portions of
18 curriculum to help the people serve some of the needs.
19 That's a big need, and so --

20 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: But,
21 Reverend, I was actually asking whether you have had
22 any such scenario in your church, where it may be a
23 victim or victims and then maybe a perpetrator or --

24 THE WITNESS: Oh, no, we haven't had that.
25 But if we had that it would be no problem, because I

1 would just go over there and we would have a sit-down,
2 talk it out, and ask a lot of our -- in counseling,
3 sometimes we do it all night, you know, talking about
4 issues and stuff, so -- but we don't -- we don't have
5 that problem. Yeah. Yeah.

6 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you.

7 THE WITNESS: But if we did, that's how we
8 would do. So I would suggest you find another pastor
9 who is willing, who may know the family, or a family
10 friend, you always got family friend's pastor. So if
11 that particular pastor is not trained or he's scared or
12 he -- he doesn't know how to approach it, get somebody
13 else involved.

14 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

15 THE WITNESS: That too. So ...

16 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

17 THE WITNESS: Yeah. Yeah.

18 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Reverend Harris,
19 thank you very much.

20 THE WITNESS: Okay.

21 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: For this
22 presentation.

23 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

24 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: There's a few
25 comments I would like to -- I would like to make.

1 THE WITNESS: Okay.

2 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: In the first
3 place, you talk about our educational system,
4 reintroducing cultural values back to our people. But
5 from my perspective over the years, I see that, in the
6 first place, religion is always tied into culture. If
7 you look at the Chris -- if you look at the different
8 Christian celebrations, for example, in a way, they all
9 have their roots to some form of some cultural
10 expression that came from either in the area in which
11 Christianity was founded or in the area in which Islam
12 was born.

13 And, for instance, in Liberia, the Muslim
14 preacher, he will say praise -- he will not say praise
15 be to God, he will say praise be to Allah. The
16 Christian will not say praise be to Allah, he will say
17 praise be to God. But it turns out we all -- all of
18 those are religions of faith and worship the one
19 person. But there is an attitude that's prevalent in
20 both Christianity and Islam as practiced at home to
21 dismiss traditional religion, and traditional religion
22 espouses much of the values that our people attach to
23 life, respect for human dignity. In traditional
24 society, life is sacred.

25 The same values that Christians and Muslims hold

1 true and close are do not steal, do not abuse other
2 people's rights, treat other people as you would have
3 them treat you, but yet traditional religion is often
4 ignored, and we go to public ceremonies, we say -- we
5 open our service with -- with Christian prayer and we
6 close with a Muslim prayer, institutionalizing two
7 religions when we have a whole spectrum of religions,
8 and there is this disrespect for traditional religion
9 from our people in leadership, Christians and Muslims.

10 I don't know -- I would think that these are
11 issues that we need to address, you know, first of all,
12 rid ourselves of this bigotry, and then we can perhaps
13 maybe can begin to look at each other as children of
14 one God, and this is not -- not the case.

15 Secondly, traditionally, impunity is something
16 that does not exist in traditional culture. If you're
17 breaking -- if you are breaking the rules or if you
18 broke the rules, you know, you'll be dealt with in
19 according with the laws that are there. And so I would
20 ask how such issues can be addressed from your
21 perspective, especially in the Diaspora, where you're
22 confronted with the ravages of a culture that espouses
23 materialism, a car, a good house is what makes a man,
24 and not the values.

25 THE WITNESS: Yeah, well, you see, that's

1 what I was saying, first of all, is that the education,
2 the exposure, the training. So if all of the religious
3 leaders go to a certain school, and that school limits
4 your -- your thinking and your horizon, then you come
5 out as that kind of product. And so, as I'm saying,
6 even here, as I tried to teach my -- my students here,
7 I was different than the other professors because I
8 tried to make them think more out of the box and give
9 them a wider view of religion than to box them in, you
10 see?

11 We, as a people, particularly in Liberia -- and
12 I'm not downing the missionaries. The missionaries did
13 the best for us they could, but they limited us in so
14 many different ways. What they gave us was not the
15 word of God straight and forward as it should be. They
16 gave us a European version, and I understand that, a
17 European version of the Gospel, and they denied the
18 Africans to -- to integrate.

19 An example: I can preach in the church in this
20 shirt, in my church, and nobody is going to raise that
21 issue with me as to why I should wear a collar, and
22 they dare not, because it's not so much of a religious
23 collar, that's European, that alters my message. So we
24 should start thinking that we don't have to follow
25 anything that comes to us from the West, that the West

1 has to be the epitome. We should have some flexibility
2 in how we take the Gospel and integrate it into our
3 culture.

4 And that's where the missing links is. There were
5 times, long time in the Baptist church in Liberia, you
6 dared not go there with a shirt like this. You can't.
7 You got to go with a coat suit or a tie. You dare not
8 play the drums, you know, because the missionaries have
9 come and told us that the drums are demonic, and --
10 because they saw a witch doctor play the drums, so they
11 just con -- concern -- conclude that because a witch
12 doctor plays the drum, so all drums are demonic,
13 whereas Psalm 150 says, "Let everything that has breath
14 praise the Lord." So if I use that same drum that I
15 use to do my witchcraft, I can't use it to praise the
16 Lord.

17 We must be free to integrate our music, our -- our
18 things from the culture into that, and so that's where
19 the breakdown is coming. And the solution to that,
20 (unintelligible) the religious leaders,
21 (unintelligible) our seminaries and the curriculum and
22 see what they are teaching and how they are teaching,
23 who their professors are, what the professors are
24 teaching. Are they teaching strictly just the word of
25 God and how you -- if it doesn't violate the word of

1 God, you can do it. That's -- that's my rule. If it
2 doesn't violate the word of God, you can do it.

3 So for a missionary to come and telling me that I
4 can't play the drums, if the drum beat is to my rhythm
5 as an African, or if -- I don't need to use a hymn book
6 to sing. The singing out of the hymn book is -- is
7 something from Europe. African tradition, the way
8 you're singing, you sing freely. So -- and -- and
9 nowadays, even in our church, we got visual projection,
10 and so you don't even need a song book. But we are
11 restricted, and now you find churches in Liberia are
12 trying to be like European, and -- and dignified like
13 that, and don't free the people up to do what need to
14 be done. So what I'm saying, it got to go back to the
15 training. And to do that training we got to have
16 dialogue, and some of the churches that are tied to --
17 to denominations that are very rigid and eurocentric,
18 we got to be free to develop from the cultural
19 standpoint.

20 And back to the point where you mentioned about
21 traditional, yes, there are good things and bad things.
22 And what I do, those bad things from the culture, I
23 don't even touch it. Witchcraft and voodoo, no, we
24 don't do that. But there are good things. The baby
25 dedications and all that kind of stuff, the prayers,

1 all those things, they are good, they can be
2 incorporated without compromising the word of God, you
3 know.

4 Also, too, you -- you're talking about the -- the
5 justice and things of traditional people, all the time,
6 when you did wrong, the -- the council meets in the
7 palaver hut, and when they had the dialogue, after the
8 dialogue somebody pays a fine. And we know that. And
9 the same thing here. They -- they truly do. So if --
10 if you do wrong to justice, the elders say, look, you
11 have done wrong, you have raped this girl, you have
12 done this thing, you have done this, you done bad to
13 your brother or sister, the elders get together and
14 they come up with a fine, be it a goat, be it a
15 chicken, or the chief fine people. Ain't no different,
16 cultural things.

17 So the truth and reconciliation here, if you go
18 through the process, you -- they go through the court,
19 if you're found guilty for the crime that you done, you
20 going to pay the price for it. But we got to make sure
21 that the system is fair, that the system that we judge,
22 the -- the process that we have is fair and not biased,
23 and I think that's where the thing comes in, is having
24 people of integrity to look at the issues. After you
25 say, well, the person say I was raped, they did this,

1 and they couldn't compromise, they go to court, they
2 ask questions. If they find you guilty, then they fine
3 you.

4 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: In the same
5 light --

6 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

7 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- you call for
8 the teaching of religious education in the schools.

9 THE WITNESS: No, not in -- not public
10 schools.

11 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Not -- okay. In
12 private schools.

13 THE WITNESS: In private schools only.

14 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Okay. But take,
15 for instance, the issue of corruption in our country.

16 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

17 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: You find the --
18 that the preacher, he will rant on Sundays about
19 corruption in public life but in the churches you hear
20 nothing about the corruption that goes on.

21 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

22 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Even within --
23 within the mosques there have been so many stories
24 where they collected money to build a new mosque.

25 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

1 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: A few leaders ate
2 up the money, the mosque was not built, and other
3 problems. But you always hear our national leaders,
4 our national leaders criticizing the political
5 establishment when those have cultural roots as well.
6 So you don't hear -- you don't hear the churches taking
7 an introspective and critical look at themselves --

8 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

9 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- rather, I
10 won't just say the churches, but the religious
11 institutions taking an introspective and critical look
12 at themselves as well as reflecting the aspirations and
13 values of society.

14 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

15 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: So I think
16 there's much to be done within our religious
17 institutions themselves that we address the -- the --
18 that we conform to the values to -- of our people which
19 you will find in traditional culture.

20 I'm not saying that everything in traditional
21 culture is good, but I think this kind of bigotry,
22 we need to get away from it, go back to our roots, see
23 what is it that -- and are you finding that
24 organization is --

25 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: You're lecturing the

1 witness?

2 (General laughter.)

3 THE WITNESS: No, I mean, I'm agreeing with
4 him.

5 (Multiple speakers, inaudible.)

6 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: I'm creating --
7 I'm creating a basis for discussion.

8 THE WITNESS: -- discussion.

9 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Ask a question. Ask a
10 question.

11 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: How -- how -- how
12 are you and others --

13 THE WITNESS: Yes.

14 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- especially in
15 the Diaspora, trying to bridge the -- this divide,
16 developing a common outlook on issues of corruption, on
17 the issues of impunity across the spectrum, Islam,
18 Christianity, and other religions that we find --

19 THE WITNESS: Well, I can say, you know, that
20 has been most of my job as a pastor, pastoral care, and
21 I have been doing that, you know, for almost 20-some
22 years plus, trying to solve issues and using the model
23 of traditional palaver hut concept, you know. See?
24 So, and that's why I can't emphasize enough that the
25 leaders in the church, the religion and the moral --

1 the leaders have to first get the proper training and
2 understanding what to be done, even to the point
3 whereby the religious leaders do not become so powerful
4 that we can't even talk to them.

5 And that's -- that's -- a lot of problems are --
6 I'm saying, you can respect -- you can respect your
7 leader, but not to the point where you can't be
8 challenging them if something is wrong. Those
9 prominent people, if they misuse the forum, there
10 should be a committee or a group who will be there in
11 the check and balance. So what I'm saying, you need a
12 whole new reform with everybody, so the church will --
13 (unintelligible), religious things, they have to be
14 looked at seriously to move forward, because they
15 have -- it have to start with them. They got to start
16 with them.

17 And the place to start is like these interfaith
18 groups and all the ministers. The ministers, we got to
19 look at what kind of training they got, even you get
20 some upgraded training and look at that.

21 And there will be some tension, because people
22 come from different backgrounds. Even there are
23 tensions where they don't want women to even preach,
24 some churches, you know. So right now that's a
25 tension.

1 I've been trying to get together the Liberian
2 ministerial group. It's very difficult even to get the
3 ministers. Even understanding this town here, you got
4 over 50 small churches, you know. In Atlanta you
5 got -- you got almost close to 20 now, you know. I
6 started off in '86, and most of them came from us. But
7 when time come, I said, well, if the Lord call you, you
8 happy, go with my blessing, you know, and I continued.
9 So it -- it's that division that's amongst us, and we
10 got to be firm, continuing to -- to work within the
11 scope and continue to do the will of the people. And
12 that's why I'm saying, we -- we got to have a -- a new
13 base, you know.

14 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Has it ever been
15 an instance where a church or a religious
16 establishment, Liberian --

17 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

18 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- maybe we
19 should contextualize it --

20 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

21 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- taking a
22 religious leader to court for embezzlement of the
23 church funds, or -- or is that (inaudible) and forgive
24 brothers and (inaudible) incorrupt?

25 THE WITNESS: Ahh --

1 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: I'm talking about
2 the rule of law, we're talking about --

3 THE WITNESS: Yes. I haven't -- I haven't
4 heard that, but -- but I heard what -- they kind of
5 either leave and they go, you know. You say, where
6 they go? But, you see, again, it's how you set up the
7 whole system.

8 Like, in our church, no form can be written unless
9 three person signs. Okay? And so there's a check and
10 balance. We got a budget, and every week we got to
11 check, the treasurer and the committee put a thing on
12 my desk what we got in, and they have the bill of what
13 to be paid, and it's there.

14 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: I would like to
15 know what kinds of sanctions you have --

16 THE WITNESS: Huh?

17 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: What kind of
18 sanctions you have prescribed for --

19 THE WITNESS: Oh, it's in the constitution.

20 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

21 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- for leaders --

22 THE WITNESS: It's in the -- I'm going to say
23 the constitution has to be established up front.
24 You've got to have it in there. The constitution says
25 that there will be a treasurer, and the treasurer is

1 the secretary to the account, and so on and so on, you
2 know.

3 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: In case of
4 misappropriation?

5 THE WITNESS: Oh, yes. But there are audits.
6 We have -- we have -- we have quarterly meetings --

7 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: And is it --

8 THE WITNESS: -- quarterly meetings and
9 reports are given on what was in, what was out. So
10 from quarter to quarter everything -- we have a -- a
11 whole vote meeting, they bring the whole thing up and
12 show and got copies.

13 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: If the audit
14 shows that somebody has been dipping into the kitty --

15 THE WITNESS: Never.

16 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: No, no, no, no.

17 THE WITNESS: (Inaudible.)

18 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: I'm just -- this
19 is a hypothetical -- no, just a hypothetical case.

20 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

21 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: If the audits
22 show -- I'm trying to draw the correlation between --

23 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

24 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- the rule of
25 law --

1 THE WITNESS: Yes.

2 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- in the
3 churches --

4 THE WITNESS: Yes.

5 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- extending to
6 the rule of law in society.

7 THE WITNESS: Yes.

8 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Because if the
9 rule of law --

10 THE WITNESS: Yes.

11 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- is not
12 strengthened in the church --

13 THE WITNESS: Right.

14 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- and -- and the
15 people who go to church and church leaders and what
16 have you --

17 THE WITNESS: Yes.

18 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- and -- and
19 religious institutions --

20 THE WITNESS: Uh-huh.

21 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- have a role to
22 play in society --

23 THE WITNESS: Right.

24 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- and if there
25 is no respect for the rule of law within those

1 institutions, how can there -- how can -- how can they
2 transcend into -- into the larger society and espousing
3 and practicing those values that -- that call for
4 respect for the rule of law?

5 THE WITNESS: Well, I think that I say it
6 again, it all start with having procedure and policies.
7 And even like we mandate that by the state before -- I
8 mean, any religious institution in this country is
9 certified by the state, so the state actually -- even
10 you got to have by-laws before you even get your --
11 your 501(c). So you are forced to have that. Then you
12 can get leaders into place that would make sure that
13 everybody is accountable to what to be done.

14 So I'm saying, but -- and because of my exposure
15 and my training, and I established a church, I made
16 sure those things were into place. Some people don't
17 have that, and some leaders don't want that. They want
18 it to be opening where they can be the godfather over
19 everything, where nobody can ask questions and this
20 sort of thing. That thing, whole thing have to change.
21 You can respect the leader, but you need to have open
22 thing and all the transparency, as well as continuing
23 education.

24 And that's why I'm saying the education is very
25 important. Not just only of the leaders, but of the

1 members as well. And so the religious institution and
2 what goes on -- can you imagine, the minister is the
3 only one -- the religious leader have contact with the
4 people every week. They have contact with the people
5 every week. And depending on what you share with them,
6 you can mold them or you can make them worse than what
7 they are.

8 So -- and, like in my case, I want to get up and
9 prepare like -- like a sermon, it takes me a long time
10 to do a sermon. I got to research, I got to pray, I
11 got to do this and do that, and I give my -- my full
12 sermon notes, you have it right there. It's a teaching
13 ministry. If you say, I'm going to look right there,
14 you see what I'm talking about, you got scripture
15 references, you can go research it, you -- you don't
16 understand it, you can call me and we can talk about
17 it. But that takes work. The average pastor is so
18 busy doing administrative work that he or she don't
19 have time to do the research that it takes. So -- and
20 that's why I say, it's so -- it all depends on how you
21 set it up, and your commitment to excellence and -- in
22 the end.

23 So the whole paradigm, we, as a people, religious
24 leaders, we got to start talking, we got to start
25 looking at this. The -- the folks come here to school,

1 they teach them some stuff, they don't teach them on
2 how to do things with the people. Come to the seminary
3 in the United States, they train you, you know, but you
4 don't have the -- the things that you need to serve
5 your own people.

6 Pastoral counseling, there are some instruments in
7 there that's good, but when dealing with husband and
8 wife who come from a different culture, it's a
9 different thing. And if you're not part of the
10 culture, you don't know what's going on, the dynamics,
11 then you can't serve that, see? So I'm saying, in the
12 seminaries here, we got to start looking at some of
13 those things, you know.

14 And, you know -- I don't know, excuse me,
15 Reverend, did you go to school here or in Liberia?

16 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Here in
17 America.

18 THE WITNESS: In America, yeah.

19 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: (Inaudible.)

20 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I don't know
21 about the seminaries at home, but the last time I
22 looked and I checked that they don't have too many
23 courses here towards indigenous things for the -- for
24 the people there. They got all of the New Testament,
25 talking about the Greek people and all that kind of

1 stuff, the exegesis. Fine. But as far as taking care
2 of the people's needs on -- on the regular level, most
3 ministers not prepared for that.

4 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: My last -- my --

5 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: It needs -- a
6 paradigm shift is needed for (inaudible).

7 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

8 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: My last
9 question --

10 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

11 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- to you is how
12 is the religious community, including not just
13 Christians and -- but from the broad spectrum, how are
14 you, as a group, addressing or attempting to address
15 the problems that the Diaspora, Liberian Diaspora
16 community, the particular problems we face? How are
17 you, as a group, attempting to deal with those
18 problems, addressing them in a meaningful way?

19 THE WITNESS: What I understand, we're
20 organizing the Liberian ministerial group, we're
21 composed of ministers. And, like, tomorrow morning
22 we're having a meeting at my church where all of us get
23 together, and we ask each minister to bring their --
24 their wives, so -- and that's why I was hoping to try
25 to get out of here soon, so as I can be there. So at

1 home we -- we are coming together, you know. We have
2 different services together, we have joint services, we
3 just had one last Friday. So we have things to --
4 those are things that we're trying to do to come
5 together.

6 Like I say, I've been talking to the ministers, as
7 I've seen most of them now, about the TRC process.
8 They understand it. I told them, look, I gave my
9 statement, sent a lot of others. You know, here, I
10 said, go give yours. They say, oh, yeah, Reverend,
11 (inaudible). Go there and do it. You see? So you got
12 to lead by example and you got to -- so that's, like
13 I'm saying, little by little we got to start doing it.

14 But when it comes to religion, I'm just saying,
15 it's a very delicate thing. People have their own
16 concept, they've got their own denomination, they've
17 got their -- their own laws in their religion, what you
18 can do, what you can't do, and that's why I think the
19 independent churches are free. So like in my case, I
20 don't have to report to any bishop, and what the Lord
21 lay on my heart to share with the people, I share it.
22 I share without no remorse.

23 I tell them, say, I cannot preach contrary to
24 Gospel. I -- I cannot come here and tell you, just do
25 this and pray, everybody get rich. That's a popular

1 philosophy but not looking at the religious context. I
2 can't do that, because the Bible is more than just
3 getting rich. Even if you get rich, what do you do
4 with the riches that you got? You got to share with
5 other people. So I'm into talking about the whole
6 context of the Bible.

7 And many ministers think because, now, if you
8 don't do that, that's going to mean you're not popular;
9 you don't -- you don't get the kind of crowd that you
10 want. But if -- if you're truthful and you know that
11 it's of God, then you press on it. But you want to be
12 popular, all you got to do, let the people just come
13 and just tell them something that they want to hear,
14 and then they go and say the Reverend can preach.

15 What did he say?

16 Oh, I don't remember, but he sure sounds good.

17 And in the end, you -- you don't have anything to
18 help you along your daily journey or to help you become
19 a better citizen of the world. See here? So that's
20 what it is in Liberia right now, is that even I
21 understand preachers here, in Liberia, looking at
22 international TV and try to imitate people like T.D.
23 Jakes, you know. I mean, T.D. Jakes is over here to a
24 different audience, you know, and you want to carry
25 that into Liberia and do it in Liberia, you know.

1 And people are -- sometimes they're not even wise
2 enough to not pick up on that kind of stuff, that this
3 is not our way, this is not how it should be, this is
4 not what it's all about. It's all about service, meet
5 the needs of others, you know. You see?

6 So --

7 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: (Inaudible.)

8 THE WITNESS: But, to -- to do that kind of
9 thing, you are a loner, because it makes other people
10 flock into the other place.

11 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Do you have an
12 interfaith, uhm --

13 THE WITNESS: No, we don't have interfaith in
14 At -- in Lib -- in Atlanta. When you come, maybe we
15 can talk. The -- through the TRC, we've been trying
16 very hard, even the meeting we're having for the TRC
17 process to help them going, we tried to get people of
18 the Islamic faith together, and we couldn't find an
19 imam from Liberia.

20 Each time we tell them, they tell us that because
21 of the Islamic faith, they got imams from -- from
22 Guinea and other places, and I've been trying to meet
23 them, they say they go to the mosque that's headed by
24 these people. I said, but you mean not one Liberian is
25 an imam here in the area? So in Atlanta we have none,

1 to say that, no. They just say they are religious
2 leaders but they are not an imam.

3 And so, like -- like (unintelligible) Syllah. So
4 if you know of -- of any down there, we'd like to know,
5 because that's one thing I was talking to the
6 ministers, we got to start talking to each other.

7 Some people say, well, no, I cannot talk to a
8 Muslim. I say, where in the Bible tell you that you
9 can't? I say we can. We're on the same team. But
10 then I think when it come to serving the community, to
11 reaching out to people, we can agree we'll work on
12 those things. And you agree that they can go and do
13 what they need to do in their -- in their mosque and
14 you do in your church. The areas we're going to
15 cooperate on, let's do -- let's do that. But as soon
16 as because somebody is, you know, Islamic, they say,
17 no, I don't want to do that, I don't want to talk to
18 them.

19 An example: When I came here the other day to
20 the -- the healing for the TRC thing, in the end they
21 had a guy there, he is a Liberian brother, and in the
22 end they asked me to do the benediction. And so I
23 invited him to come up, and I asked him to say a prayer
24 along with me. And, oh, was I crucified afterwards.
25 And so the other minister was there, he was the only

1 one (unintelligible) to say why I praying white and
2 Islamic God to come and say a prayer in there? I said,
3 Father, this was not a religious gathering. It was
4 thing to talk about faith and healing through the TRC.
5 So is -- is that a religious gathering, if some people
6 call everybody in? If it's a worship service, I say,
7 Christian worship service, then it's a different thing.
8 But this is the thing.

9 So -- and -- and so they spent time with me, they
10 were concerned that why would I have to invite our
11 enemy in there and to pray along with me? And so I had
12 told them, well, I didn't see there were any problem
13 with that, and I felt that it was a need, he was in
14 there, the only one, and I think he offered a prayer to
15 God, whoever he -- he prays to.

16 So it's this kind of problem we have. And people
17 talking about -- you talking about there were almost 20
18 ministers there.

19 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: It's the kind of
20 bigotry I've been referring to.

21 THE WITNESS: It is. And I want to say this
22 thing here, in fact, they also got the same thing I
23 told them the same day, I say, look, one of the
24 challenges of Liberia is going to be our religious
25 thing. We got to respect other people's religion, and

1 we can't be up tight or act so holier than thou that we
2 can't interact with other people. There's nothing that
3 prevents us from talking to other people of faith.

4 See, but it had to do with the concept, and I tell
5 them, I said, look if -- if you live the life, people
6 will come to you; you -- you don't have to fool anybody
7 to come to your religion. And -- and if you're good,
8 you live the life, they will naturally flock to you.
9 See?

10 So these are the challenges we got which are real,
11 is the religious thing. And I hope to see the day
12 where we continue to respect each other, and we still
13 live our respective lives as who we are as religious
14 people.

15 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Thank you very
16 much.

17 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

18 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Reverend
19 Harris, one last question for you.

20 THE WITNESS: Yes.

21 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: I would
22 appreciate if you can be brief --

23 THE WITNESS: Okay.

24 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: (Inaudible.)

25 THE WITNESS: I know that.

1 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: I was just
2 wondering what is the church doing or how is the
3 church -- the church or re -- or the religious
4 community addressing the issue of sexual impropriety
5 (inaudible)? I mean, you have pastors who will be
6 standing on the pulpit preaching every Sunday and wives
7 sitting there -- wives will be sitting there in the
8 church, one wife in the choir, one in the deacon --
9 deaconess role, and all that kind of thing? Pastors
10 (inaudible) --

11 THE WITNESS: I know.

12 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: It's just --
13 it's awful.

14 THE WITNESS: And that's what I'm saying, we
15 have moral challenges, or probably it's more than just
16 political. And that's what I'm referring to, the moral
17 issues, you know. The pastors in the church going with
18 all these sisters, and the people in the church not
19 even talking about it, they allow it to happen.

20 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: That's the main problem.

21 (Inaudible.)

22 THE WITNESS: And -- and that's why I'm
23 saying they're not talking about it; that is wrong, you
24 see? So how can you have the guts to even get up and
25 preach, you know --

1 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: (Inaudible.)

2 THE WITNESS: -- you see? So -- and not only
3 that, but the wives take over, that kind of thing, and
4 allow it go on, you know? And also, too, they don't
5 put theirselves into those kinds of things.

6 An example: I have a large pastoral staff, so
7 when anybody have the need, I never go to a single
8 person's home by myself. If I know the person is, I
9 send a female there or I take two persons with me. So
10 that -- that kind of cut down from you trying to get
11 into any kind of trouble, any kind of stuff like that,
12 see? So -- and we have to be taught from the pulpit.

13 And I guarantee you, most of the ministers at home
14 don't talk about that kind of issue with their
15 preacher, but everything else. They talk about how you
16 live a holy life and not exploit people, and how can
17 you be in the church, you know, going up with the
18 deaconess? If everybody do that kind of thing, then
19 you (unintelligible) the word of God. It's -- it is --
20 just isn't right.

21 So, again, the people in the church have to
22 understand that, and the -- the pastor set the pace.
23 You -- they -- like they will -- that would be absurd,
24 everybody would say, Reverend Harris got somebody in
25 the church, got a girlfriend. They wouldn't believe

1 that. I don't expose myself to this kind of thing,
2 that's not my way of doing things, it's not with me.
3 I'm so busy doing other stuff, I -- I got my work for
4 28 years, that's enough. See? So that's the kind of
5 thing that we got to start doing.

6 But I want to thank you all so much for -- for the
7 time.

8 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Thank you, Reverend, for
9 your time as well. I just want to raise one concern
10 about --

11 THE WITNESS: Yes.

12 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: -- my concern, interest --

13 THE WITNESS: Okay. Mm-hmm.

14 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: -- in access to resource
15 materials in the Library of Congress on Li --

16 THE WITNESS: Yes.

17 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: -- on Liberia.

18 THE WITNESS: Oh, yes. We can -- we can work
19 with that. I will show you how we can do it. I just
20 got a card, and there's a website. But in order to get
21 the card, you got to go there physically.

22 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: (Inaudible.)

23 THE WITNESS: And I -- I know you could go
24 there and talk to them on some of your work, they would
25 be interested, because they need to have that document

1 in there, see? Because what I was saying when we were
2 talking is that even though your museum is going to be
3 to build the archives, to archive your work and your
4 documents, the funding will be a problem, unless you
5 get grant funding from outside to build such a
6 structure.

7 Even at that, it would take a long time to raise
8 that fund, and right people to do it, design, and all
9 of that. And that's what I'm saying, is that you got
10 to start thinking about talking to some institu -- and
11 maybe the institution, in order to have bigger
12 libraries, they may be willing to want to be a host of
13 study materials that they can copy, maybe, and some of
14 the students here, or the big schools in New York or in
15 Atlanta, all of that, may want to start meeting some of
16 them, asking that kind of question, that these are
17 important documents and you want to start to preserving
18 them, and how can they be co-partners in doing that.
19 That way they can make copies, because, yeah, they got
20 all kind of resources. They copy that thing, you can
21 have some there in Liberia, and they can have it here
22 too. Because for years to come the work you're doing,
23 the research that you're doing will be very important.

24 People -- I was so impressed, I said, look, I went
25 to the Library of Congress, they had a book that the

1 man wrote, and based on information that he went to
2 Congress and got the notes, the minutes, he was able to
3 pull, from 1820 until 1860--something, the names of the
4 people that left, what their names were, where they
5 came from, what ship they were on, what their
6 occupation was, what they -- what they die from, where
7 they went, all that stuff. He had the information laid
8 out where he got access to information. So no telling
9 who else in the future may want to research some of the
10 things that we're doing, but you don't have access to
11 it, or if it become destroyed, God forbid there's a
12 fire or -- or kind of looting again and documents all
13 gone. And so that's what I'm saying, is that we need
14 to have some sort of discussion with institution here,
15 maybe the Advocates can raise that with them and they
16 can do the -- they can do some talking as to who we can
17 partner with as far as that. Anything I can do, you
18 know, I'm helpful, and anything we can do to start
19 looking at grants, you know, to -- to do that kind of
20 duplication. But it will be something to look forward
21 to, that all the work that you do don't just end and
22 just sit down, you know, don't just sit down, gather
23 dust in the warehouse.

24 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: (Inaudible) because the
25 archiving is very important --

1 THE WITNESS: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: -- to us and (inaudible)
3 is how we can duplicate some of the material that is --

4 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

5 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: -- in the Library of
6 Congress --

7 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

8 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: -- that can feed us,
9 because rewriting the history has to do with --

10 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

11 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: -- getting accurate and
12 truthful information --

13 THE WITNESS: They -- they -- there, they --

14 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: -- about the past.

15 THE WITNESS: -- they got it, they got the
16 whole thing there, and if you can't find it, they got
17 sources where they can get it from. And Tuskegee has a
18 whole lot on history, Tuskegee Institute got a whole
19 lot of things there. They even got some physical
20 things at the museum. Atlanta has a library there
21 that's called the Heritage Library, they got a lot of
22 stuff in there, and all around. But the Congress,
23 Library of Congress, they can -- they can do it. In
24 fact, the lady who I -- who I met there, I'll give you
25 her name. She can be the first place to start. She

1 went to Liberia, her father was at Seegeeye [ph] when
2 she was a kid, and just from going there and talking to
3 her, she found out I was from Liberia, she got so
4 excited, said she been finding a way to want to go to
5 Liberia, and she would be glad to be a Liberian again.
6 Her parents served there in Liberia for so many years
7 (inaudible) also. Mm-hmm. Yeah. So I'll give you her
8 name.

9 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Okay. And then we can --

10 THE WITNESS: Yes.

11 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: -- start a discussion.

12 THE WITNESS: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Okay. Thank you very
14 much.

15 UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: (Inaudible) card?

16 THE WITNESS: I will -- I will look at the
17 room. I think I got a few there. But I gave you my
18 number.

19 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: I think you gave me one.

20 THE WITNESS: Oh. Okay.

21 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: (Inaudible.)

22 THE WITNESS: Yeah. Okay. Oh, all right.

23 Oh, thank you. Yes. All right. Okay.

24 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Okay, Reverend.

25 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: I won't --

2 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

3 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: -- I won't ask for your
4 last word. I think you said --

5 THE WITNESS: (Inaudible.) But thank you all
6 so much for your time. Oh, yes. Yes.

7 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Thank you very much.

8 THE WITNESS: Thank you so much, yes. I
9 will -- I will give you a card tomorrow.

10 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Okay.

11 THE WITNESS: All right?

12 CHAIRMAN VERDIER: Yes. Okay. Thank you.

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1 REPORTER'S NOTARY CERTIFICATE

2

3 STATE OF MINNESOTA)
) ss.
 4 COUNTY OF CARVER)

5

6 BE IT KNOWN that I, Patricia S. Onken, Court
 Reporter, transcribed the foregoing from DVDs;

7 That I was then and there a Notary Public in and
 for the County of Carver and State of Minnesota;

8 That the foregoing transcript is a true record of
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10 That I am not related to any of the parties who
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 13 way my impartiality regarding the outcome of the action.

14 WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL this
 15 1st day of July, 2009.

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18 _____
 Patricia S. Onken
 Notary Public
 Carver County, Minnesota
 19 My Commission Expires 1/31/2010

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