

# TRC of Liberia: Diaspora Project

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## Overview & Update January 2008

# The Advocates for Human Rights

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Founded in 1983, The Advocates for Human Rights is a non-governmental, 501(c)3 organization dedicated to the promotion and protection of internationally recognized human rights locally, nationally, and internationally.

The Advocates for Human Rights documents human rights abuses, advocates on behalf of individual victims, educates on human rights issues, and provides training and technical assistance to address and prevent human rights violations.

# TRC Diaspora Project

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- Give Liberians in the Diaspora a role in promoting international justice and human rights as part of the truth & reconciliation process in Liberia
- Raise awareness of transitional justice mechanisms and the TRC process in the United States

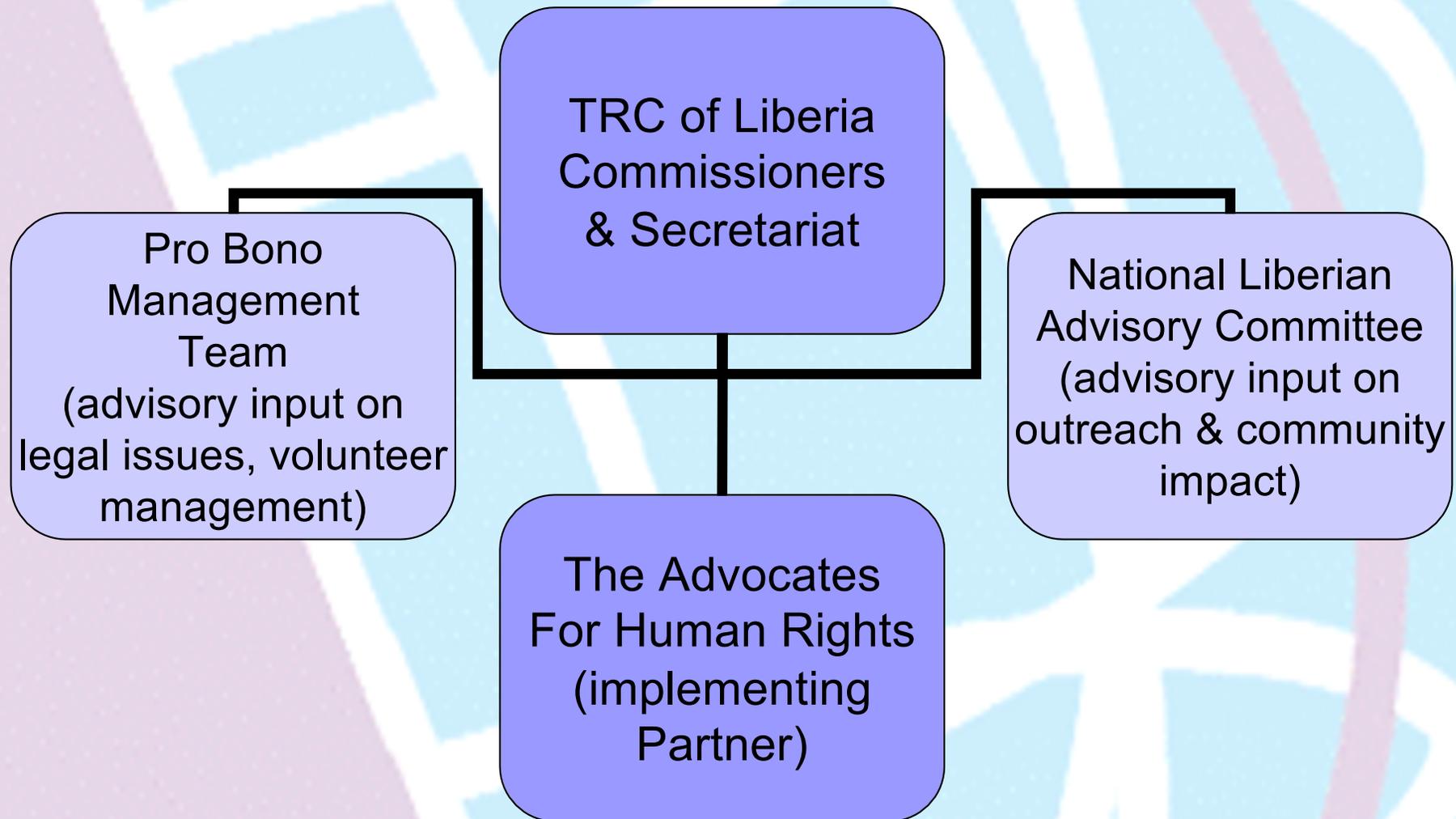
# Diaspora Project Structure

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- The Advocates does not receive any funding from the TRC of Liberia
- The Diaspora Project is funded entirely by donations, both cash & in-kind
- More than \$3.6 million in-kind donations to the project in 2007
  - \$3.4 million of pro bono time
  - \$219,000 of in-kind support

# Diaspora Project Structure

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# Diaspora Project Activities

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- Statement taking
- Outreach
- Public Hearings
- Final report



# Volunteers

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- Trained 400+ volunteers in 10 cities
  - statement takers, mental health professionals, immigration attorneys and outreach workers
- Developed 400-page volunteer manual
- Developed nine-hour training available on DVD or as webcam sessions
- Successfully replicated training internationally

# Statement Taking

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- Developed multiple ways to give a statement:
  - In-person
  - Telephonic
  - Print and send
  - Online

# Statement Taking

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- More than 400 Liberians in the US and UK gave or have signed up to give a statement
- A. The Advocates' volunteers gathered more than 700 statements in Buduburam, Ghana

# Data Analysis and Management

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- Fredrikson & Byron has developed web-based database to store statements
- Confidentiality is paramount
  - Volunteers can only view the statements they enter

# Outreach

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- National advisory committee
- Town hall forums with TRC Commissioners
- *Quest for Justice* informational video
- Monthly events around the US and UK to promote the mandate of the TRC and recruit statement givers

# Media and Publicity

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- News coverage of the TRC Diaspora Process in major outlets across the US
  - *Inside Africa, CNN International*, January 19, 2008.
  - Area Liberians Recount Horrors for Commission, *Washington Post*, January 5, 2008.
  - From Staten Island Haven, Liberians Reveal War's Scars, *New York Times*, September 18, 2007.
- Press roundtables and trainings held in Minneapolis and Atlanta

# Statement Taking Sites

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- Minneapolis / St. Paul, Minnesota
- Atlanta, Georgia
- Chicago, Illinois
- Newark/Trenton, New Jersey
- Staten Island, New York
- Washington, D.C. / Maryland
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- Providence, Rhode Island
- United Kingdom
- Buduburam, Ghana

# Support for Project Partners

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- Assisting with recruiting statement takers and Liberian Advisory Committee members
- Planning and coordinating trainings for statement takers
- Developing training and outreach materials
- Coordinating and communicating with project partner leaders

# Support for Project Partners

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- Communicating with volunteers about information and updates
- Coordinating media requests with local partners
- Monitoring information entered into TRC database

# Minneapolis / St. Paul

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- Minnesota Advocates piloted statement taking in fall 2006
- Statement taking officially launched January 2007 and is continuing

# Minneapolis / St. Paul

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- Minnesota partners:
  - Faegre & Benson
  - Fredrikson & Byron
  - Dorsey & Whitney
  - Lindquist & Vennum
  - Etc – will add in
  - Organization of Liberians in Minnesota

# Atlanta, Georgia

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- Atlanta Friends of the TRC
  - King & Spaulding
  - Kilpatrick Stockton
  - Carter Center
  - Emory University
  - Morehouse and Spellman Colleges
  - Georgia Tech
  - MLK Memorial
  - Liberian Association of Metro Atlanta
  - S.T.A.R.
  - Refugee Resettlement Services of Atlanta
- Statement taking began summer of 2007

# Chicago, Illinois

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- Chicago partners:
  - Schiff Hardin LLP
  - Organization of Liberians in Illinois
  - Northwestern University Law School Human Rights Clinic
- Northwestern Law School piloted statement taking in spring 2007
- Statement taking is continuing

# Buduburam, Ghana

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- Buduburam partner:
  - Liberian Refugee Welfare Council
- Under leadership of Commissioner Massa Washington, The Advocates piloted statement taking in May 2007
- More than 700 statements have been taken by Advocates volunteers in Ghana

# Staten Island, NY

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- New York / Staten Island partners:
  - Fried Frank
  - King & Spaulding, LLP
  - Staten Island Liberian Community Association (SILCA)
  - African Refuge
  - New York Center for Interpersonal Development
  - Columbia University
- Statement taking began mid-October 2007

# Newark/Trenton, New Jersey

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- Newark partner:
  - Seton Hall Law School
- Statement taking began in late summer 2007

# Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

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- Philadelphia partners
  - University of Pennsylvania Law School Transnational Legal Clinic
  - Law firms of Schnader Harrison Segal & Lewis L.L.P., Blank Rome L.L.P., Stradley Ronon Stevens & Young L.L.P., Reed Smith L.L.P., Pepper Hamilton L.L.P., Ballard Spahr Andrews & Ingersoll L.L.P.
  - Liberian Mandingo Association of Pennsylvania
  - Nationality Service Center
  - HIAS
  - Liberty Center for Survivors of Torture
  - University of Pennsylvania Law School
- Statement taking began in early summer 2007

# Providence, Rhode Island

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- Providence/Boston Team
  - Dechert, LLP
  - Liberian Community Association of Rhode Island, Inc.
- Statement taking will begin January 2008

# United Kingdom

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- U.K. partners:
  - Faegre & Benson (London office)
  - Mayer Brown (London office)
  - DLA Piper
  - Eversheds, LLP
  - Union of Liberian Organizations in the U.K
- Statement taking began in London October 2007, begins in north of England in February 2008

# Washington, D.C. / Maryland

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- D.C. / Maryland partners:
  - Akin Gump Strauss Hauer Feld LLP
  - American University
- Statement taking began late October 2007

# Research & Reporting

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- Recruited law firms to conduct research on topics as requested by the TRC
- Research will serve as background for The Advocates final report to TRC
- Research will inform presentations at thematic public hearings

# Public Hearings

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- Minnesota Advocates will hold thematic hearings in the U.S. beginning in spring 2008:
  - The Diaspora experience
  - Women's experiences of the conflict and in transition
  - Role of international actors

# Conferences & Public Forms

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- Minnesota Advocates in the planning stages for conferences in the U.S. on:
  - Reconciliation strategies
  - Future of Liberia
  - Role of the Diaspora in transitional justice

## E. Contact Us

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