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TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA  
DIASPORA PROJECT

PUBLIC HEARING  
HAMLINE UNIVERSITY  
June 13, 2008  
St. Paul, Minnesota

TESTIMONY OF  
MARIE VAH

TRC Commissioners:

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

Court Reporter: Mary P. Mitchell, RDR, CRR

1           The following proceedings were had and made of  
2 record, commencing at approximately 11:15 a.m.:

3           CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Shall we kindly rise.

4           (All rise.)

5           (Marie Vah administered oath and responded as  
6 follows:)

7           MARIE VAH: I, Marie Lahai Vah, do promise that my  
8 testimony I have come to give to the TRC of Liberia is the  
9 truth and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

10          CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Please be seated. We  
11 want to say good afternoon.

12          MARIE VAH: Good afternoon.

13          CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: And welcome to the TRC  
14 public hearings.

15          MARIE VAH: Thank you.

16          CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: This is a forum  
17 established for support of the government of Liberia and  
18 international community to give Liberians an opportunity to  
19 reflect on their past, in the hope that we can learn lessons  
20 from the mistakes of the past and find a way forward for  
21 lasting peace and reconciliation of our country.

22           And your coming today to share with us is a great  
23 contribution to that process. And we appreciate it very  
24 much.

25           I will introduce the panel of commissioners to you,

1 after which we'll ask you preliminary questions and then you  
2 can go into your testimony.

3           Sheikh Kafumba Konneh. Pearl Brown Bull. Gerald  
4 Coleman. Dede Dolopei. Massa Washington. John Stewart.  
5 And I'm Jerome Verdier. We say welcome.

6           MARIE VAH: Thank you.

7           CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: To begin with, can you  
8 kindly repeat your name.

9           MARIE VAH: My name is Marie Lahai Vah.

10          CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Where do you reside  
11 currently?

12          MARIE VAH: I live in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota.

13          CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Your age, please,  
14 your --

15          MARIE VAH: My what?

16          CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Your age or date of  
17 birth?

18          MARIE VAH: My age, I'm 50 years old. I was born  
19 1958, January 24th.

20          CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Your vocation?

21          MARIE VAH: Come again?

22          CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Occupation, what you do  
23 for a living.

24          MARIE VAH: Presently I'm a nursing assistant.

25 But back home I was a senior secretary at the National Bank

1 of Liberia.

2 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Senior secretary?

3 MARIE VAH: Yup.

4 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: At the?

5 MARIE VAH: National Bank of Liberia.

6 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: National Bank. When did  
7 you migrate to the U.S.?

8 MARIE VAH: June 5th, 1995.

9 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay, ma'am, thank you  
10 very much. You can proceed now with your testimony.

11 MARIE VAH: Well, I'm glad to be a part of this  
12 day today. But just before I talk about it, I would  
13 appreciate if I'm given a chance to talk about the goodness  
14 of God, too, because but for his grace I would not have been  
15 here today.

16 So I'm going to read from the Book of Acts, Chapter  
17 4:12: "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is  
18 no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be  
19 saved."

20 And it was by that name that I got saved.

21 In November the 23rd afternoon, at about 2 or 3:30, I  
22 reentered Liberia from the Bo Waterside, Liberia/Sierra Leone  
23 border, because it was announced a month before or two that  
24 there was a cease-fire and that shooting and killing has  
25 subsided because either ECOMOG or there was some negotiation

1 between Liberia and the international war and there was a  
2 cease-fire.

3 Believing there was a cease-fire, I decided to take  
4 the opportunity to go into Liberia from the Sierra Leone side  
5 to see if I could get my mother out of Bomi Hills, where I  
6 was born.

7 And as soon as I crossed the Bo Waterside, I got into  
8 the hands of the rebel then. And they ask a few questions.  
9 And I told them I had come from Ivory Coast, but I had flew  
10 into Sierra Leone with the hope of entering, reentering  
11 Liberia for my mom and the rest of my siblings. And they  
12 asked me which flight I came, I went -- I flew into Sierra  
13 Leone on. And I told them the Ghana Airways.

14 And the first thing that came out of those people  
15 mouth were, "Those were the war plane that was bumping us and  
16 these people are reconnaissance."

17 Effective immediately, I was stripped buck naked,  
18 tied, and thrown into a pickup. They managed to give me my  
19 bra and put my pants back on me.

20 I was not alone. I had a girlfriend who lives in  
21 Philadelphia now, she was with me. She was going for her son  
22 in Cape Mount, and so we decided to get into Liberia. And we  
23 stayed at Bo Waterside until 6 o'clock. They were waiting  
24 for one Colonel Dixon. I don't remember his first name, but  
25 I know they said they was waiting for Colonel Dixon. He was

1 the commander then in that area.

2           Finally Dixon comes. And they put us out of wherever  
3 jail they had us confirming. And then he went in a little  
4 hut and he started interrogating us, "Why did you reenter  
5 Liberia?" And I stated why we enter Liberia, like I just  
6 said.

7           And he said, "Well, why did you leave in the first  
8 place?" It was like there was no ending to any -- there was  
9 no end to any answer for any question.

10           If you say "I was born a Liberian," he would ask "Why  
11 were you born a Liberian?" If you say "I was born in Bomi  
12 Hills," "Why were you born in" -- and so there was no remedy  
13 to any investigation at that time.

14           And so I heard a little old lady trying to -- she  
15 was, I saw her trying to make her fire, but there was no fire  
16 between the rocks. But apparently she had heard who I was,  
17 because I got connection with Cape Mount and Bomi Hills,  
18 that's a family thing there. And apparently my name had  
19 traveled that I had been arrested. And then she --  
20 apparently she knew I was taken in light because I knew I was  
21 innocent. Little did I know everybody that was getting  
22 killed in Liberia, someone they were not Krahn, they were not  
23 Grebo, they were not Mandingo, but were just getting randomly  
24 killed. But you have to be in that position to know that's  
25 what was happening.

1           And then she tried to light the fire and the only  
2 thing I noticed, she was trying to put things together but  
3 she wasn't doing anything much, the only thing I heard from  
4 her was, "And Vah, be careful, this man only kills women."

5           And I turned. And she repeated, but I thought that  
6 she was, you know. "Be careful, he only noted for killing  
7 women." And I got serious and I came from her. I didn't  
8 notice her again.

9           And I look at my girlfriend. And then this Colonel  
10 Dixon was interrupted with somebody whispering and then  
11 people would come and whisper to him, whether to give him  
12 more information or not, that I don't know. And I turned to  
13 her and I said, "We are in danger." I said, "Because that  
14 old lady just said that this man only kills women."

15           So he put us in the car and they drove us all night  
16 until we got to Bomi Hills from Bo Waterside.

17           But in Klay, a Ghana girl was picked up from Klay,  
18 tied and stripped naked too. And then they brought her  
19 little mulatto son and threw him into the car -- or in the  
20 pickup then. And a few other of their members female were  
21 there were not tied. I think they had three female that were  
22 in the car who were part of them who were not tied. So it  
23 was me, it was Gloria, and this Ghana girl that were tied.  
24 And the baby was just thrown into the car.

25           And when we got into Bomi Hills about midnight,

1 there's a little hill that you call Koneh, that was where I  
2 was born and grew up. And we stopped in Koneh, but it was  
3 black dark. But I grew up in this place so I know it even  
4 after dark. And they told us to get down. We got down out  
5 of the car.

6 We went to a very beautiful little house, whose house  
7 I don't remember. And then they started investigation all  
8 over again: Why did we enter, and blah, blah, blah. And we  
9 started the same old explanation: "I came to get my mom, I  
10 was born here, my mom is a nurse here, I got my siblings  
11 here," and the long line of story. But they still refused to  
12 accept it. "I'm telling you, the whole town knows me. I can  
13 walk you to where I live, I can walk you to where I was  
14 going." That was nothing, they didn't want to hear that.  
15 That was absolutely not what they wanted to hear.

16 And then I notice they left me and went to Gloria.  
17 She explained her story. And then they went to this Ghana  
18 girl. And then they started mobbing her. By that time I was  
19 numb. I knew I was going to die. And they beat her and mob  
20 her. But it did enough until I thought she was dead, so I  
21 console myself.

22 And then they took the gun, the sharpness of the gun,  
23 and they ram it in her. When they ram it -- I'm sorry, but I  
24 came to say it like it is. And they ram it in her.

25 And I'm like, "God, I know by now you have taken her



1 life so there's nothing down there that she's feeling." But  
2 to my surprise, she managed to lift her arm up to try to take  
3 that gun out of her. And I collapse, knowing that she was  
4 still alive and she was feeling that gun being rammed in her.

5 And I kind of didn't know what to do. I'm sorry for  
6 this part being emotional. And I move my face. And then one  
7 of the men look at me and said -- I think he felt guilty and  
8 he said, "Yes, they did it to our women and I'm going to do  
9 it to her."

10 But I didn't say a word. But I start -- I was  
11 praying real hard. And when they took the gun butt out of  
12 her, I heard one of the women in the back saying, "You better  
13 throw that thing far from here, because when you people throw  
14 it away around here, it smells when you leave." A Liberian.  
15 "You better throw that thing far from here, because when you  
16 people throw it around here and you leave, it smells."

17 And then the little boy was twisted by his head, with  
18 his feet elevated from the ground. And he and his mother was  
19 thrown away like a garbage.

20 And I waited for my turn. And God stopped it. And  
21 took us to prison instead. It was God. I was not better  
22 than the Ghana girl and her baby, but it was just God's  
23 intervention. Put us in the car and they drove us to the  
24 police station.

25 And then they finally took the pants off us now. And

1 then they tie us again. And they throw us into prison for  
2 investigation tomorrow morning.

3 Usually from what I notice or from what I witness,  
4 when you are tied and you sleep in tabay, you don't leave.  
5 So at about 12 midnight, we were numb. We could yell no more  
6 because our arms were not feeling anything anymore.

7 And then the original people who arrested us went  
8 their separate way and left us to the provost to sit for the  
9 jail. I learned all of that while I was in prison, provost.

10 And he came from across the street and he said,  
11 "Where those two women?" That's the statement he use. And I  
12 heard and I'm like, "Gloria, they're asking for us." And she  
13 say, "What more do they want?" I said, "Well, you know, we're  
14 not leaving. We're just death here. It's just a matter of  
15 time."

16 And he order us out. And he said, "Write your  
17 statement." So that was an opportunity to be loose for a  
18 little while. And they loose us. And I wrote endless mess,  
19 just to stay from being tied. I just kept writing, kept  
20 writing, kept writing.

21 And then he said to me, "It's almost 1 o'clock, are  
22 you still writing your statement? I gotta go home." And  
23 then I'm like, he's about to tie us again. That was going to  
24 be the second round of tie into the raw flesh. This -- by  
25 then this flesh has opened and it has been divided like a

1 bridge. There was no blood. All the time I was tied, I did  
2 not see blood.

3 And I'm like, this man's going to tie me if I don't  
4 keep writing. But then by the grace of God again, he said,  
5 "Put 'em in prison and tomorrow morning tie -- retie them."

6 And they return us right in prison and we slept on  
7 the floor. And I saw a tire and I lay my head on the car  
8 tire. There was a car tire in there. And I lay my head on  
9 that tire for a pillow on the raw floor with naked butt then.

10 And by that time, just about the next morning 6  
11 o'clock, a lady came and she put that rope right back into my  
12 flesh, put it right back into my flesh. And I asked her,  
13 "Can you change the spot?" And she said, "No, if I change  
14 the spot they will know you did not sleep in tabay, so I have  
15 to put it back in the raw flesh."

16 And that's where it went. And she put it in there.  
17 And she pull it and I yell. And of course, after hours of  
18 yelling, I had to stop yelling because my arm became numb.

19 And then at about 11 o'clock, another man named  
20 Richard came. I don't know who he was, but I think he was  
21 another commander. This time we haven't seen Dixon or got a  
22 Dixon investigation when we went to the police station, I  
23 haven't seen Dixon after that.

24 So there was a new investigator that came this  
25 morning, his name was Richard. And he said, "Where are the

1 women?" And they brought us up when we're tied. Because  
2 they had retied us about 6 o'clock that morning.

3 And he said to us, he said, "Are these the people  
4 that slept in tabay? Provost? You joking with me? You  
5 think I don't know when I tie people and leave that they're  
6 not supposed to be alive?"

7 And the provost is like trembling. He was an old  
8 little man. And all along I kept praying. And then he said,  
9 "Untie them." And they untie us. And he said, "What do you  
10 want? Why did you come into Liberia?"

11 And I'm like, this is a Liberian asking me why did I  
12 come into Liberia. And I explained the story for the third  
13 or fourth time. And he said, "Well, I'm going to have you  
14 taken to Oliver."

15 If any Liberians here, as I'm sure, know the name  
16 Oliver. Because the commander then in the whole, the whole  
17 district from Do River -- is that Do River or Do Bridge? All  
18 the way down. Mano River, you name it, he was the commander  
19 there. Oliver.

20 And he said, "Well, we'll get Oliver to see you  
21 people." And they put us back in jail tied again. This is  
22 the fourth round of tying. Of course, you know I didn't have  
23 any feelings now. I was just waiting.

24 And when I look, my menstruation grabbed on me, I got  
25 messed up completely. I'm sorry about that, but I came and I

1 swear to God I was going to say the truth. And this is the  
2 truth. Not because I want to cram people down, but there has  
3 to be something done in Liberia about us living in peace.

4 And about 1 or 2 o'clock they open the prison  
5 compound and they said, "The commander wants to see you  
6 people." I was naked by then and I was bleeding, I was  
7 menstruating by then, I'm sorry. I am sorry. And then  
8 coming out, as dirty out as I was, and they yell, "Oh, she's  
9 nasty." But I didn't care.

10 And it's almost walk a distance from here to the  
11 beginning of the junction was where the Oliver has put some  
12 chairs and was sitting before some stools. In Bomi Hills we  
13 have Lebanese that built stools. And all these stools were  
14 closed by then because Lebanese have ran way or the Syrians  
15 have gone. And they have four or five chairs and was  
16 supposed to be walking to the tribunal. And someone then  
17 said, "Put them in car." "No, I cannot put this nasty woman  
18 in my car." And that's how they carry on. Until the Richard  
19 came and said, "Get in the car. Let's make the execution  
20 easier and faster." Was the statement he made. And they put  
21 us in the car.

22 And as soon as we got before Oliver, he said, "Why  
23 did you bring this woman to me like this? Find her clothes."  
24 Apparently that saved me, too.

25 AUDIENCE MEMBER: Amen.

1           MARIE VAH: And they rushing for me clothes  
2 because he didn't want to see me bleeding, so he found me  
3 clothes right away and wrap it around me.

4           And then he started his investigation: "Why did you  
5 come?" The same old explanation: "I came to get my mom out  
6 of here, my siblings. My mom is a nurse, yes, she works in  
7 the hospital from LMC to Bomi -- for to Gornmi Hospital, and  
8 I was born here." And the long story.

9           By that time the entire town had gathered. And  
10 everybody who kind of knew me would walk away. Because by  
11 night you have heard they have arrested me. And by morning  
12 they came to make sure it was me. I would look at people,  
13 they would walk away. I was dare not to say hello to  
14 anybody. And they would dare not to say hello to me, too.

15           And then a little boy came near me and says, "Sister  
16 Marie, are you ashamed?" And to be brave, for that little  
17 boy to stand up and say, "Are you ashamed," and I turned to  
18 him and I said, "No, I'm not." He said, "Don't be." And he  
19 walk away.

20           And then Oliver put his hand in his pocket and he  
21 took out 20 Liberian dollars. And he said, "Take them to the  
22 drugstore and dress this sore and bring them to my house."  
23 And then he was living pretty close to the nursing compound  
24 all the way near the hospital.

25           I'm sorry, I'm just trying to be exactly. There are

1 a lot of people who don't know what I'm talking about, but I  
2 hope there are people who know what I am describing.

3 And they drove us down to the drugstore. And this  
4 man started, you know, trying to see what he could do. And  
5 then one of the guys say, "You're wasting too many time with  
6 these people. You want to go get a body (inaudible) and  
7 throw them and get an injection?"

8 He said, "No, they send 'em here to be taken care of,  
9 I have to do the right thing." He said, "But you're wasting  
10 time." And he went and sat down back in his car.

11 And the man in the drugstore say, "I'm just trying to  
12 kill time, Marie, I'm just trying to kill time. But it's a  
13 matter of time before you people die. When they strip people  
14 naked, you are condemned."

15 He say, "I have hope when you are not naked. But  
16 when they strip people naked, that mean you are condemned.  
17 So I'm just wasting time, just a matter -- I'm just killing  
18 time here."

19 And I said, "Okay, go ahead, do what you can do."  
20 And just about that time the boy came again. "Oliver say you  
21 should bring these people to his house." And then Richard  
22 said, "I will bring them. If I wanted to kill them I would  
23 have killed them last night. So let he stop hurrying me or  
24 else I'm going to kill them here."

25 And he put us in the car, he drove us all the way to

1 Oliver's house. And we got there, Oliver investigated us  
2 again. That was his, that was his second investigation. And  
3 then he told them, "Take them back to the prison compound and  
4 I will take them to Ghanky. Take them back to the prison  
5 compound, I take them to Ghanky."

6 And they started arguing whether we should walk from  
7 nursing compound all the way to Vaitown, or whether we should  
8 take the car. And then they -- finally they decided to put  
9 us in a car. And they drove us to the police station and  
10 they put us in there. And they didn't tie. But by then, my  
11 arm couldn't stretch anymore, Gloria's arm couldn't stretch.  
12 If we stretch our arm, we're going to be stretching the  
13 opening, so we gotta keep the opening. So we had it all  
14 along while in prison and as it heal by itself.

15 And we stay in jail for three months. It was a daily  
16 investigation whether to execute us or not. And people  
17 trying to come in to us will be threatened, and some of them  
18 will be thrown in jail, some of them they will be beaten, and  
19 people stop coming.

20 But God was good, he kept us alive.

21 And then on my birthday, I decided, "Father, if I'm  
22 going to be executed, I'd rather die sick in this prison,  
23 because my God, I don't want God to hate me."

24 And that night this strong headache took me. And I  
25 knew, I thought I was going to die. But it lasted for a



1 while and then it stop. And then I knew God was good to me,  
2 I wasn't going to die. It's just a matter of time when he  
3 will come.

4 Well, to make long matter short, there was a friend,  
5 like I told you, I grew up in Bomi Hills, who would come  
6 every night and tell me, "Marie, they had a meeting today.  
7 And the argument was not easy, whether to kill you people or  
8 not." And this person would say, "Well, we are cheating.  
9 All the people on reconnaissance were killed. Why are we  
10 keeping these two women alive?" And the argument would be,  
11 and I said, "Because my God was always in our investigation."

12 And then one day the Oliver who had killed so much,  
13 until Charles Taylor sent a message to him and told him the  
14 next time he killed anybody, he himself will be killed ,came  
15 to us and say, "I'm taking you over to Charles Taylor." Oh,  
16 my God. How can I leave Bomi Hills to Gbarnga, when Monrovia  
17 was underneath other control.

18 I didn't even believe that. I thought they was going  
19 to kill us and throw us in the bush. But anyway, there was  
20 nothing we could do.

21 So that night they got us ready and they put us on a  
22 truck. This time the commander on the truck was Commander  
23 Mulbah. I really don't know his first name, but I know his  
24 last name. A nice-looking, huge young man who would not say  
25 one or two words to you.

1           And they put us in his truck and we started traveling  
2 from Bomi Hills to Cape Mount. And I don't know the route,  
3 but I knew I passed through Lofa, Fassama. And when we got  
4 into the high forest of the Fassama, they stop. And he got  
5 down and started shooting in the air. And I'm like, "Gloria,  
6 this is it." But again he got back in the truck and he pull  
7 off. And we got in Gbarnga 4 o'clock that morning.

8           To make long matters short, while I was in prison we  
9 got raped with the spoons -- spoons were used on us and you  
10 name it.

11           And there was a government official, Mr. Holmes, he  
12 was a superintendent for a long time in Liberia -- in Bomi  
13 Hills, and then he became senator of Bomi Territory. He was  
14 brought into prison one night while we were there with his  
15 shoes stuffed in his mouth and tied. And he stayed in that  
16 tabay. But he was a strong man. He slept in that tabay and  
17 I'm wondering today why he's still alive. And the next  
18 morning they took it off. I think his arm, he still got his  
19 arm this way right now. Presently he can't bring it down.

20           And I -- we would have to zip his pants up to pee, we  
21 have to feed him in prison, help him up in prison. Holmes.  
22 Most of the time he would tell me, "Marie, I have to  
23 urinate." I would zip him down -- so I started doing the  
24 nursing assistant job from home in prison. And I would show  
25 the cup that he would pee in and I tried to call somebody to

1 zip his pants up. I would feed him in prison.

2 And then one night, they managed to smuggle him out  
3 of there. Well, just before -- just after they smuggle him,  
4 Christmas came and they said they had to execute two people  
5 for the invasion, because that was in December 24th, before  
6 they dare to enter into the Ivory Coast for this war. And  
7 they are still surviving, so they had to initiate or they had  
8 to sacrifice two people. And the only two people they could  
9 sacrifice were the two condemned women.

10 And so one of the boys in the prison compound came  
11 and said, "Marie, the people want to kill you tonight. This  
12 time we can't fight it." He said, "But we're going to use  
13 the best techniques we know how. And if it doesn't work,  
14 well, I will tell your mom whenever I saw her that you die."  
15 He said, "We're going to lock the prison compound, we're  
16 going to cut all the candles off and all the lights and we're  
17 going to abandon the jailhouse. If they come and they cannot  
18 command anybody to open it, then maybe you people will  
19 survive. But if they shoot it open, then I know what happen  
20 to you."

21 And they left at about 12 midnight. They cut the  
22 lights off and they left. And of course, before we continue,  
23 I heard One Man One, that was his name, I don't know his real  
24 name. He came, he said, "Where are the prison guys? Open  
25 the door, let's get the condemned people out, we gotta make a

1 sacrifice for our invasion. We can't let this day pass.  
2 This is the - a voice of our invasion. We have to kill  
3 people. And we're not killing anybody but these condemned  
4 people. This time we're not having meeting. I'm coming  
5 back."

6 He went. And he came back about 2 o'clock, he came  
7 back on the hour. And I don't know where his boys were but,  
8 you know, they kept away. And by the grace of God, because  
9 nothing stopped him from shooting the jailhouse open, he  
10 could have shot it locks open. But he didn't. And I still  
11 say the grace of God.

12 And in the morning he came, first thing in the  
13 morning and he said -- I hate to use the words but I'm going  
14 to be precise, he said, "Oh, these butthole people leave."  
15 And he left.

16 And then the boys came back to their job. And we  
17 pray -- I pray for them because I thought that we had got  
18 them in trouble. But it didn't. And then our transfer came.

19 Our transfer came, but we, we had two pastors join us  
20 in prison. A Methodist pastor, he's in Cincinnati now; and I  
21 think an Evangelist, he's also in Cincinnati. They join us  
22 in prison. So we have about four condemned people on  
23 reconnaissance.

24 Gittens and Molley, those are the two names. Gittens  
25 is the minister, the Methodist minister. And the Evangelist

1 was Molley.

2           And so they put us in the truck and they drove us  
3 through Fassama, like I said, and we got to Gbarnga finally 4  
4 o'clock in the morning. And then the commander got out of  
5 the car, he took some money out of his pocket and he call  
6 whoever was in charge of the Gbarnga prison. And he give him  
7 some money and say, "I brought these people to Charles  
8 Taylor. So you take care of them until Charles Taylor sees  
9 them." Those were his statement.

10           And he got in his truck and he left. And we sat  
11 outside for a little while. And then the boy came, his name  
12 was Jay, and he said, "You know, I'm not going to play with  
13 reconnaissance people before they kill me, I'll put you, all  
14 of you in jail."

15           And he open a slot. That place was so slimy and  
16 messy from pee and poop, I don't know how the other people  
17 were surviving there.

18           We got in there, I'm like, okay. And I met two  
19 Nigerians, they were journalists. They had been there for I  
20 don't know how many months. They were all bones. But the  
21 assigns sewed them up. And we started praying.

22           And I said, "How did you get in Liberia?" He said,  
23 "We are journalists." I'm then, "Doesn't the international  
24 world know that you're here?" That was my question anyway.

25           And we stayed there. And the next morning they open

1 the prison and let the women out and let the men stay in.  
2 And they put us in a lot of little cage. Better than the  
3 ones we slept in last night. And I started praying.

4 Well, blessings left for us. Pastor Gittens had  
5 married one of Charles Taylor cousins out. She was a member  
6 of his church. And I think the news had traveled, because he  
7 was a pastor in Gbarnga, too. So that was blessing for us.

8 And his brother came and said, "Emmanuel, I thought  
9 you were in America." He said, "I came to get my little boy  
10 from Bandela village." What is the name of Bandela village?

11 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Mende Town.

12 MARIE VAH: Huh?

13 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Mende Town.

14 MARIE VAH: Mende Town, that's where his son was.  
15 He said, "But as soon as I cross borders I was arrested,  
16 because I have camera in my hand." So he say, "I'm going to  
17 Agnes Taylor now." And that's how he went to Agnes Taylor  
18 and got Agnes Taylor.

19 And she came and she said -- call Emmanuel out, and  
20 she call the two of them out, said, "What you doing?" Then  
21 she noticed the Evangelist have been to prison before. And  
22 she said, "What are you doing here again?" He said, "This  
23 time I came to escort my pastor." Because the first time he  
24 went to jail he was trying to distribute food at borders and  
25 he got arrested and Agnes free him.

1           Now she sees him in jail again, she says -- so she  
2 said, "I'm freeing you. This time you keep away from the  
3 soil of Liberia." She say, "I promise you that."

4           And they were about to leave and then the minister  
5 said, "We have two sisters here that are with us that have  
6 been in prison that we met in prison." And Agnes said to  
7 him, "Tell me their story." And Pastor Gittens said, "They  
8 can tell you their own story."

9           So she commanded them to let us out. And they let us  
10 out and we both told our stories. And she turned around and  
11 she said, "If we kill everybody, who are going to rule when  
12 we take over." Those were her statement.

13           And she say, "I'm going to let you go, anywhere you  
14 want to go." And they made us paper -- pass. And she give  
15 us our money and told us to go.

16           And Emmanuel Gittens, they say he must leave Liberia  
17 that night. I had told him I wasn't traveling with him. I  
18 don't blame him, though, because he wanted out. But I knew  
19 it wasn't safe along the Danané way, so I wasn't venturing.

20           So he went. Just about the time for him to enter  
21 Danané, he got rearrested, too. They had to bring them all  
22 the way back Gbarnga. He said, "Well, Marie, you were  
23 right." I said, "Mm-hmm, I know, sometimes I'm wrong but  
24 sometimes I'm right," and we laugh about it.

25           But we went to Dr. Kulah's house. We there for four

1 days. And I sensed there was going to be danger. So I told  
2 Gloria, "We gotta leave and we gotta go to a known place."  
3 Gloria won't believe me, because she's tired of running. And  
4 we didn't even tell Doc we were leaving, we just up and got  
5 in the car. And I went to school in Bedehville and so I know  
6 a lot of people in Kakata.

7 So one of these schoolmate of mine were driving a  
8 white van, he met me up, he say, "Marie, where you going?" I  
9 say, "I'm actually finding my way to Monrovia, but stop me in  
10 Kakata."

11 But I wasn't going Monrovia, I just didn't want to  
12 tell him where I was going, because you never trust anybody  
13 at that time.

14 So he drop us to Kakata packing station from Gbarnga.  
15 And then Gloria said, "Let's take off, we go on our way to  
16 Bomi," to her people. And I said, "No, we're not going to  
17 take car from here, we're going to walk." We're trying -- I  
18 trying to be security-minded.

19 And we walk and we found our way to Bomi's packing  
20 and we got in the car and that how we went to Bomi's. And we  
21 found ourself in a strange home, we couldn't stay -- we  
22 actually stay at her parent house for two days. And then  
23 Deacon Nuveh, that's lady -- lady husband, Deacon Nuveh, sent  
24 a message to Gloria's father and said, "Where is Gloria and  
25 Marie?" He said I was in Gbarnga up the hill, "And I heard



1 that Charles Taylor and Agnes Taylor making confusion for  
2 them to be rearrested, so if Gloria and Marie is in Bong  
3 Mines, you need to let 'em find another place to go."

4 So then they had to find somewhere else for us to  
5 hide. The statement he gave to Gloria's father was, "Charles  
6 Taylor said these people are on reconnaissance, they brought  
7 them over for them to be executed. I heard that you took  
8 authority and went and free them. And I want them  
9 rearrested."

10 And she said, "Go and find them yourself." That's  
11 the statement -- that's the answer she gave to her husband,  
12 her then husband.

13 And then they hid us. And then this morning my  
14 girlfriend came to packing station looking for car to see if  
15 we can get out of Bong Mines and out of Liberia. If we get  
16 out of Liberia and Bong Mines safely, fine. If we don't,  
17 we're just taking the risk. If we don't, fine. But nothing  
18 like making attempt to safety.

19 And then she phoned Dorothy Harvey. And she told  
20 Dorothy, "Marie and Gloria is here with me." And Dorothy  
21 say, "I'm on my way to Gbarnga, bring them and let me take  
22 them out of Liberia now."

23 So she put us on her Little Bessie she called that  
24 old truck. And as soon as we got in Gbarnga, the car refused  
25 to move. Apparently she wanted to stay there a little while.

1 You know, she was trying to help us, but at the same time  
2 trying to be with her family.

3 So she found somewhere and kept us there for four  
4 days. And I kept worrying, I was not at ease. But Gloria  
5 were comfortable. And then one day Dorothy came and say, "I  
6 gotta get you out of here today." She said, "Because Joe  
7 Tate had mentioned that Gloria did not come on  
8 reconnaissance, but Marie came on reconnaissance because she  
9 has connection with the Mandingo people, so it's true that  
10 she came on reconnaissance." So I gotta get her out of here  
11 today.

12 And I overheard it. And then that night they put us  
13 on a car. And she got in the front and they drove us out of  
14 Gbarnga, out of Liberia, and we enter into Danané safely.

15 And that is my condensed story. Kind of condense it.

16 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much,  
17 madam witness. And please accept our empathy with you for  
18 the terrible experiences you went through.

19 It is true that during the conflict people like you  
20 suffered grave cruelty, humiliation, and all sorts of  
21 degrading treatment. We admire your courage to come forward  
22 and speak as you have spoken.

23 Please understand you are speaking for thousands  
24 other women who went through similar degrading experiences  
25 during the course of our conflict.

1           Today, there is a very serious campaign to break the  
2           silence around violence against women, whether during the  
3           conflict, in our homes, or at the work site. And you've  
4           taken a step forward to support that great movement.

5           We are sorry that these things happened to our  
6           sisters, our mothers. From statistics gathered by the UN,  
7           almost 98 percent of women who were in Liberia during the  
8           period of the conflict suffered one form of abuse or another,  
9           irrespective of age, irrespective of religion, irrespective  
10          of convictions, irrespective of ethnicity. As if it was a  
11          massive movement to degrade the women of Liberia.

12          But we are immensely grateful that you could join  
13          others to come and share these experiences with us. Which in  
14          so many ways contribute to the work we've been charged to  
15          execute. So I say thank you. And I presume that's your  
16          husband?

17                   MARIE VAH: Mm-hmm.

18                   CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Yeah, I think I know  
19          Mr. Vah one way or another. I want to say thank you for  
20          coming to give her the support. In all of our travels around  
21          the country, we've heard of different scenarios where some  
22          men refused to support their spouses. Others will give  
23          support, others will run away, others would take revenge, and  
24          all of that.

25                   But as you said, God only knows why all of us are

1 still alive. Not that we are better than those who have  
2 gone, but he has his own purpose. So thanks for coming.

3 We'll ask you a couple of questions, maybe to throw  
4 further light on what you have said or just to clarify, so  
5 that we have a complete record of what happened.

6 Commissioner Konneh is leaving to honor religious  
7 obligations. I hope you understand.

8 MARIE VAH: Yeah, I do.

9 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Yeah, he wanted to hear  
10 your testimony before leaving. So thank you.

11 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much,  
12 Madam Witness, for coming to share experience with us today.  
13 And we're just sorry for what happened to you. And thank  
14 you, too, for taking the first step to speak. Because what  
15 you're doing now is speaking for thousands of all those women  
16 who were unable to come today because of what's happened to  
17 them, either because they are not -- they are no longer  
18 alive, or they don't have the opportunity.

19 And you talked about a lady, a Ghanaian lady that was  
20 killed, and her child. Do you remember the name of the lady  
21 and the child?

22 MARIE VAH: I met her that day when I got  
23 arrested. And she died the same day, so -- and there was no  
24 communication. I was worried about when I would die and how  
25 I would die. She was worried about hers. And so there was

1 no time for introduction. But we only met on the van to  
2 death.

3 I remember a few other people who died in prison, you  
4 know, their names, were mobbed and --

5 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Okay, then you talked  
6 about the journalists you met in Gbarnga in the prison, two  
7 Nigerian journalists?

8 MARIE VAH: Yeah.

9 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: What happened to them?

10 MARIE VAH: Well, we left them there. We met them  
11 there and left them there.

12 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: And you said while in  
13 Gbarnga, Agnes Taylor, the wife of Taylor at the time, was  
14 the one that were able to release you from prison.

15 MARIE VAH: Mm-hmm.

16 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: What mode did you meet  
17 Agnes Taylor in? Because there were rumors that Agnes Taylor  
18 participated. Did you see her in any uniform or?

19 MARIE VAH: Well, when she came to prison that day  
20 to release us, she was dressed in fatigue. She was dressed  
21 in fatigue from top to bottom.

22 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: And the lady that tied  
23 you -- one of the fighter, a lady who tie you in the morning  
24 and said that they had to tie you to the same place again  
25 because if they don't do that it means that you didn't sleep

1 in the tabay. What's her name again?

2 MARIE VAH: Don't know her name.

3 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you again for  
4 coming. And we'll say sorry. Thank you for taking the  
5 courage to come out. Because until we can speak about the  
6 ills in society, it will always continue to happen. Thank  
7 you for coming.

8 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Good afternoon --  
9 is it morning or afternoon? Whatever. Thanks for coming  
10 again. And let me join my colleagues in extending our sorrow  
11 for what you've been through.

12 I have just a few short questions for you. You  
13 referred to one -- is it Samuel Varney you were referring to?

14 MARIE VAH: No, Oliver Varney.

15 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Oliver Varney.

16 MARIE VAH: Samuel Varney was Prince Johnson. I  
17 never seen him, but Oliver. I guess they are related.

18 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay, so Oliver --

19 MARIE VAH: Oliver Varney.

20 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Oliver Varney was  
21 the one. Okay. And you also mentioned Sam Dixon?

22 MARIE VAH: Yeah.

23 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: And One Man One.  
24 Did you hear or see at any time whether Zigzag Marzah and  
25 also Byree, were they with that group in that area?

1           MARIE VAH: What are the names again?

2           COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Zigzag Marzah.

3           MARIE VAH: I don't think I know that, I've never  
4 -- I don't think I've heard that name.

5           COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: They were also  
6 active in our area at one point.

7           MARIE VAH: They were in our area, too?

8           COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. What about  
9 Byree? You ever heard people say or?

10          MARIE VAH: Byree?

11          COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Yeah.

12          MARIE VAH: No. Well, from -- I actually went to  
13 prison right from the car.

14          COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: When you started  
15 your testimony, you mentioned the date. Can you please  
16 repeat it for me? I didn't get the year.

17          MARIE VAH: I said November 23rd about 2 to 3  
18 o'clock in the afternoon.

19          COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Which year was  
20 that?

21          MARIE VAH: That's why I said the first  
22 cease-fire. But the year I don't remember. The first, the  
23 very first cease-fire.

24          COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. And besides  
25 Oliver Varney and Sam Dixon, whose name you remember, do you

1 remember the names of any of the other, any of the other  
2 torturers?

3           MARIE VAH: There was Mulbah, the one that drove  
4 us to Gbarnga.

5           COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Do you know his  
6 full name?

7           MARIE VAH: Oh, God, I don't. I don't remember  
8 his full name.

9           There was another assistant to Oliver, Miya or Mizzi  
10 or something, but I don't remember his name, Miya or  
11 something. He was the assistant to Oliver. But we barely  
12 saw him. We would just see that he was in a meeting with  
13 them, but he would not come to -- he was not a kind that came  
14 -- that come to the jailhouse and stuff like that, you know.  
15 And I guess he was one of those who was pushing our  
16 execution. And I don't know for what reason, God's grace,  
17 Oliver, who was notorious in killing, was the one that was  
18 stopping it. So that has to be a miracle from God.

19           COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. Do you  
20 know, besides Oliver Varney who was the commander, do you  
21 know if he had any other person in the rebel group higher  
22 than him at the time?

23           MARIE VAH: Come again?

24           COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Oliver Varney.

25           MARIE VAH: Mm-hmm.



1           COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Do you know if he  
2 had any other rebel boss, someone who was higher than him?

3           MARIE VAH: No, Oliver was the highest then. In  
4 that whole area. I think Miya was next to him. The name is  
5 Miya.

6           COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Miya?

7           MARIE VAH: Yeah, but I've forgotten his first  
8 name. If we go into history, I'm sure that we get his name  
9 out.

10          COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. And these  
11 were all rebels of the NPFL?

12          MARIE VAH: Sure.

13          COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: At that time do  
14 you know who -- which rebel group shared the border with them  
15 between?

16          MARIE VAH: No, there was no sharing of border.  
17 Only NPFL was there at the time.

18          COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: And ECOMOG was in  
19 the Monrovia area?

20          MARIE VAH: ECOMOG had not reached Bo Waterside at  
21 the time we arrested. ECOMOG had not even crossed Do -- why  
22 I call it Do? Po River. Sorry, I keep talking about Do.

23          COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Who shared the  
24 border -- who shared the border with Po River and the NPFL?

25          MARIE VAH: ECOMOG was at Po River for Monrovia.

1 So NPFL from Po River, all the way beyond -- extended to Bo  
2 Waterside and Lofa, you name it. The two, the two -- of the  
3 two, like the two Sierra Leone borders.

4 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: So by then there  
5 was no --

6 MARIE VAH: Also Foya, Foya and -- yeah, they were  
7 all under Oliver.

8 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: So there was no  
9 ULIMO yet by then?

10 MARIE VAH: Not yet, nope, absolutely no.

11 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: All right. Since  
12 your ordeal, were you able to get proper medical attention  
13 and also psychological help for the extreme trauma you went  
14 through?

15 MARIE VAH: I got proper medical attention and  
16 psychological help from this book (indicating). And it's  
17 carried me through; the Bible.

18 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. My last  
19 question. My last question: What will be your expectation  
20 of this TRC process?

21 MARIE VAH: Thank you very much. I've long waited  
22 for this question.

23 I don't expect you to work miracle. But I do expect  
24 you to try harder as you're trying. Not to just come and  
25 make me make a mockery of myself and tell the people I was

1 juked with spoon. And I saw womans mobbed. And I saw Varney  
2 mob. And I saw Sierra Leone. Just to name these people who  
3 supposed to be resting in peace, this little boy who was  
4 mobbed with his foot elevated, a 4-year-old.

5 But if we just try to go to other countries that have  
6 been in Civil War before and ask them how they're keeping  
7 their peace, from us hear every day that this pastor was  
8 killed because somebody tried to trick him, it's going to  
9 help us.

10 Because I may be well right now because I'm not in  
11 the environment that happened to me, so I'm not into -- I'm  
12 not being placed into that memory lane.

13 But there are other people who are still walking the  
14 face of the disaster, they're still in the same villages,  
15 they're still seeing the areas their parents were killed,  
16 they're still seeing the areas their brothers were killed.  
17 And they live in the day to day with hardship even added to  
18 it.

19 If the Liberian people that God has placed Liberia  
20 into their hand could just use the Bible, use others' example  
21 to try to stop. I'm not accusing anybody, I'm not, God knows  
22 that. Whether we believe it or not, some wars are ordained  
23 from God from the things we do or not, we don't know. But we  
24 need to learn from other people experience to bring Liberia  
25 back to where she belongs.

1           The things we used to do before would not help us.  
2    You know who am I. Corruption is not going to stop the boys  
3    from killing. They're going to remain in poverty and  
4    continue to kill us. We got to do everything we can by  
5    learning from neighboring countries and show. Nigeria was in  
6    war; she may not be perfect now, but she's getting there.  
7    Ghana was in war; she may not be perfect now, but she's  
8    getting there.

9           If we put our pride down and go to these people and  
10   ask them and see their examples and try to deal with Liberia  
11   the best way we can. If it mean iron hand, we have to do it  
12   to stop the atrocity, to stop the corruption, to stop the  
13   manhandling of people. That will help. That will help.  
14   Then we know Liberia going somewhere.

15          They predicted that we're going to be 150 years back  
16   from our war. Whoever predicted, they know themselves and  
17   we're trying to prove it by living it.

18          We got to prove them wrong. The other African  
19   countries went through this and they proved them wrong. We  
20   can't keep acting like babies as Liberians. We cannot  
21   continue to be babies. We gotta get up and fight for  
22   ourselves. We gotta do what it takes.

23          During the war we live in total breakdown of law and  
24   order. The war is over; we can't continue to live in  
25   breakdown of law and order.

1                   COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you,  
2 Mrs. Vah.

3                   VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Marie.

4                   MARIE VAH: Yeah, Ma.

5                   VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Thank you so much  
6 for coming. As you -- as you were talking, I really felt for  
7 you. Because all of the duty to your mother, you decided to  
8 come into your own country to take your mother away, and only  
9 to -- to be put through a whole lot of things.

10                  I saw myself in that same situation when I was being  
11 tortured at one time and my husband was right there and he  
12 couldn't say a word. And so when you say your whole village  
13 that even knew you, Conneh in Kakata is so small that knew  
14 you, knew your mother, and all of them couldn't even say a  
15 word in your defense, because we all had a fear of the guns  
16 hanging over us. And so for that reason, so many times I saw  
17 a little boy around my own home kick an older man, just about  
18 7 or 8 years old, and I asked my husband, "But why should  
19 this happen? Why we can't take this gun from this little  
20 boy? Because he's a small boy. Why should he do that?" But  
21 we couldn't do anything because he had a gun. And not  
22 thinking as an adult, he would have shot us for nothing.

23                  And so I just want to say -- I don't have any  
24 questions to ask you, but I just want to say sorry for what  
25 happened to you, through no fault of yours.

1           MARIE VAH: Thank you.

2           VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: And that I thank  
3 God that you had the strength to believe in his grace.

4           MARIE VAH: Yes.

5           VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: And to know that  
6 you are sitting here today because his grace took you  
7 through.

8           MARIE VAH: By his grace, yeah.

9           VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: And also to know  
10 that even though you've taught us that you don't expect  
11 anything, you've done a great deal. Because you gave for us  
12 to people who things happened to: The Ghanaian girl, her  
13 son, the Nigerians, all of those people you met and who  
14 things happened to. Today you've told the Liberian people  
15 what happened to them. And we know some of the things that  
16 happened during the war, through no fault of ours.

17           So I want to say thank you for coming. And may you  
18 continue to use God as that medical and person for  
19 everything, for all your needs.

20           MARIE VAH: Yeah, mm-hmm.

21           VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: And may he  
22 continue to bless you and guide you.

23           MARIE VAH: Yes, I promise he will.

24           VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Thank you so much.

25           COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Marie.

1           MARIE VAH: Yeah.

2           COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Originally I had not  
3 planned to say anything, because your story is too close to  
4 things that I experienced.

5           MARIE VAH: I know.

6           COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: But all I can say is  
7 that believe that God's time is coming in this century and  
8 everything will change.

9           MARIE VAH: Amen. Amen.

10          COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Marie. What  
11 happened to your mother, the subject of your journey that  
12 took you to Liberia?

13          MARIE VAH: She, she was taken away by -- she  
14 walk, she walked the same par -- she had to leave. When your  
15 family is arrested for treason, you got to, you got to, you  
16 got to hide. My brother was in Kakata, he didn't know, he  
17 found his way to Bomi. As soon as he got there that night  
18 they told him, "You gotta leave, your sister is in prison."  
19 He said, "No, she's in Sierra Leone." He said, "She's in  
20 prison? How did she get from Sierra Leone to prison?" So,  
21 she had to walk to Kakata from Bomi Hills.

22          COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Is she still  
23 alive?

24          MARIE VAH: She is.

25          COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Where is she?

1           MARIE VAH: She was here for seven years, she left  
2           sometime last year.

3           COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: What's your mother  
4           name?

5           MARIE VAH: Elizabeth Lahai.

6           COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Elizabeth Lahai.  
7           I will say your recommendations, I appreciate it, by us, and  
8           will form a cogent part of our records. Thanks for giving us  
9           food for thought.

10           Your statement plays a piece of the puzzle of our  
11           such history. Some of the names you called, like Oliver and  
12           the rest, are names that we heard throughout the 15 -- 14  
13           counties of Liberia that we visited, the political  
14           subdivisions. Some of the names that you've mentioned like  
15           Dorothy, Gloria, Dorothy who helped Gloria, Deacon -- Holmes,  
16           he's dead now.

17           MARIE VAH: Mm-hmm.

18           COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Deacon Nuveh, I  
19           call him Deacon because I knew them well, they are Baptist  
20           people, Mr. Gittens, are names that will go down in history,  
21           because we have these things audiotaped, and as we're  
22           speaking, even on the Internet. So they, too, will know that  
23           someone appreciated what they did, and that somewhere people  
24           have attitude of gratitude, and not everyone is ingrateful or  
25           ungrateful.



1           You called the name of Agnes Taylor, and you  
2 confirmed that's the first time that she was in uniform, like  
3 a soldier. But also the manner in which you portray her, for  
4 this woman, she could be like Esther in that great book that  
5 you carry with you to lead you. Because as a woman, she save  
6 you.

7           MARIE VAH: Mm-hmm.

8           COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: As a Liberian, she  
9 came to your rescue, when she was among the company of the  
10 so-called leaders considered the King.

11           So history at this point will remember and document  
12 that.

13           The Ghana girl with her child, her parents will never  
14 know whether she's alive.

15           MARIE VAH: Yeah, never know.

16           COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: But you've placed  
17 it, and now perhaps a relative or so will hear that, since  
18 they haven't heard from her, she has not abandoned them. But  
19 we will document her, too, as someone who died during the  
20 period of the war.

21           You can't remember their death, but you remember  
22 November 23rd. And we'll take judicial notice of the  
23 historical period.

24           Thank you for participating in the TRC process.  
25 Thank God for making it possible for us to come to the

1 Diaspora. Because many people -- you did not participate in  
2 the war, but you suffered as a result of the war. Thank you  
3 for being a part of history.

4           MARIE VAH: You're welcome. And thank you, too,  
5 for having me.

6           COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Marie, thank you  
7 very much for coming. As you narrated the story, very  
8 difficult to hold back our emotions, since we're all humans  
9 and we have our emotions as well.

10           You in your testimony threw light, provided some  
11 insight on the fate of those two Nigerian journalists, whose  
12 fate up until today has not been known.

13           It was known that they were taken by the NPFL,  
14 because they were at the Nigerian Embassy when the crisis --  
15 or when the fighting hit Monrovia. And it was known that  
16 they were taken by the NPFL. But nothing further was ever  
17 heard of them.

18           And to hear that they were in prison, starving, and  
19 to learn that human beings like those who were running those  
20 centers were there under such subhuman conditions.  
21 Fortunately for you and your friend, you were able to get  
22 out. But just imagine that the leadership of the NPFL knew  
23 that people were being kept under subhuman conditions and  
24 permitted that to happen is something that, in my opinion,  
25 can never be excused.

1           Again, I must commend you for your courage to come  
2 out to speak and speak to the hearts of the world to unfold a  
3 picture that perhaps we never knew existed prior to your  
4 coming here. Thank you for your courage. And I hope you  
5 have the strength to carry through. Thank you very much.

6           MARIE VAH: By the grace of God.

7           CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: By calling, you kept  
8 saying the name Sam Dixon. Did you --

9           MARIE VAH: No, I just said Dixon.

10          CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Just said Dixon?

11          MARIE VAH: Maybe his name was Sam, but I just  
12 know Colonel Dixon.

13          CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: But the name Bobby  
14 doesn't ring a bell or resonate?

15          MARIE VAH: Maybe. But, you know, they addressed  
16 them through their titles and the last name. And I didn't  
17 have a chance to leave into the community with them. So I  
18 can't place the first name to them. Maybe I've heard Bobby  
19 or Sam or whatever the situation is. I know Colonel Dixon is  
20 the name.

21          CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. I just want to  
22 take you from what Commissioner Stewart said to establish  
23 that the little that we can contribute to this process is  
24 important. Some people think their stories or their  
25 experiences don't mean much. Yet here you are, you were in

1 prison, you saw those two Nigerian journalists. And the  
2 issue of those journalists was made very popular when the  
3 Journalists Association of Nigeria sued President Taylor when  
4 he was in Nigeria to account for those two journalists. You  
5 know, and nobody knew what happened, just stories. But your  
6 testimony has thrown some light; that they spent time in jail  
7 and perhaps they starved or something like that. So their  
8 families, wherever they are, when this is released will  
9 understand how we got some information. And those are some  
10 of the things that people are looking forward to. That's why  
11 we encourage everybody to come in. We are immensely grateful  
12 that you took your time to come and share with us.

13 Is there anything else?

14 MARIE VAH: Yeah, in conclusion, I'm happy you  
15 gave me this opportunity. You may not be able to do some  
16 things, you may be able to do, but it's just a recommendation  
17 and a plea toward the Liberian people and the government for  
18 which you represent here today, that the American people did  
19 come to our aid when there was -- when God's time is the  
20 best, like we always say, when the fact it was time. And  
21 they did what they thought was right.

22 But I want us as Liberians to know that a lot of us  
23 that came over to America on repatriation came raw. I want  
24 to break the English word down; raw. Some of us came from  
25 being child soldiers straight to America. Some of us came

1 from being wives of men our father ages. The pregnancy, the  
2 teenage pregnancy and sleeping with little girls in the war  
3 was so popular. And our family over here tried to bring us  
4 over to safety. So we came with those mentality.

5 Today our Liberian kids are lingering in prison. And  
6 until we do something about it, let us all know those are  
7 part of war, too. That they came with no knowledge, they  
8 came with no understanding that they were coming to a totally  
9 different land with law and order. They came with a  
10 mentality of no law and order, because they grew up in a  
11 country with no law and order. When the war started, some  
12 kids were 4 years old. They grew into the war. And they  
13 knew nothing but war. And they were repatriated over to  
14 America with the notion, the idea of war.

15 Today, they exhibit those same attitudes, and they  
16 are lingering in prison.

17 I would plead with the Liberian government to do  
18 whatever it can to do something about the youth in prison,  
19 the Liberian youth in prison. They are not held responsible  
20 to be guilty of crimes. Some of them are true guilt, but  
21 others are our fault, as elders who led them into war and  
22 made them grow up in war and know nothing but war. So we  
23 cannot sit supremely and let 'em die, while we were at fault  
24 only because we were fighting for one thing: Power, position  
25 and greed.

1           Today our nation will not know anything because of  
2 that. I want to thank you. And God bless you. And have a  
3 safe trip back. And may God help you to carry on his work in  
4 Liberia.

5           CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much.  
6 Thank you.

7           (Appause.)

8           (End of testimony.)

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## REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, MARY P. MITCHELL, a Registered Diplomate Reporter and Certified Realtime Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing pages of typewritten material constitute an accurate verbatim stenographic record taken by me of the proceedings aforementioned before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, on the 13th day of June, 2008, at the time and place specified.

DATED: July 14, 2008.

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MARY P. MITCHELL  
Registered Diplomate Reporter  
Certified Realtime Reporter  
Minnesota Association of Verbatim  
Reporters & Captioners  
P.O. Box 375  
Marshall, Minnesota 56258  
U.S.A.  
www.mavrc.org