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TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

DIASPORA PROJECT

HEARING
HAMLINE UNIVERSITY
St. Paul, Minnesota
June 11, 2008

TRC Commissioners Identified in DVD:
Chairman Jerome Verdier
Vice Chairperson Dede Dolopei
Oumu K. Syllah
Rev. Gerald B. Coleman
John H.T. Stewart
Sheikh Kafumbah Konneh

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TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

1 (The following proceedings were had and made of
2 record, commencing at approximately 1:08 PM:)

3 (Witness sworn)

4 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Mr. Witness, I want to
5 say welcome and thanks for coming.

6 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: We appreciate very much
8 that you can take time off to come and share your experience
9 with the TRC.

10 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: The work of the TRC is
12 to eventually establish lasting peace and national
13 reconciliation for Liberia so that feelings of insecurity and
14 disunity will be matters of the past.

15 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

16 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I'll introduce the
17 commissioners here present.

18 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I'll ask you a couple of
20 questions, following which then you will give your testimony.

21 THE WITNESS: Thanks.

22 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: At my immediate left is
23 Commissioner Gerald Coleman.

24 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Nice to meet you.

25 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

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1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Next to him is
2 Commissioner Dolopei, Dede Dolopei. We have Commissioner
3 John Stewart here.

4 THE WITNESS: Hi, John.

5 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Oumu Syllah. And, of
6 course, I'm Jerome Verdier.

7 THE WITNESS: Yes.

8 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much
9 again.

10 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

11 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Will you kindly repeat
12 your name for the record?

13 THE WITNESS: I'm Pajibo Kyne.

14 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: In which state do you
15 reside?

16 THE WITNESS: Rhode Island.

17 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: When did you migrate to
18 the U.S.?

19 THE WITNESS: 1994.

20 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: What's your position?

21 THE WITNESS: I'm a statesman, a church man, an
22 educator, a clinician, but especially now a man going forth.

23 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Did you say clinician?

24 THE WITNESS: Yeah, a clinician. Clinical
25 psychology.

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1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Mm-hmm.

2 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

3 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Your date of birth,
4 please.

5 THE WITNESS: July 27, 1965.

6 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. With that brief
7 introduction, you can proceed now with your testimony.

8 THE WITNESS: Thank you very kindly, Brother
9 Chair.

10 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: (Inaudible)

11 **PAJIBO KYNE,**

12 having been first duly sworn to tell the
13 truth, testified as follows:

14 THE WITNESS: I'm glad to be in the state of
15 Minnesota, to be exact the city of St. Paul, and to be a part
16 not simply of history, but a part of an entity that is
17 focused towards a healing process of the nation Liberia.

18 Prior to coming to the United States of America, I
19 was a student at Charlotte Tolbert, where I graduated from,
20 student of the Baptist College, and while in the United
21 States I attended Springfield College and also the Harvard
22 University, Harvard University/Beth Israel Medical Center, a
23 clinical site in collaboration with Harvard University. I
24 worked with GROW (phonetic) organizations in the United
25 States, and presently I also serve as the cochair of the TRC

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1 in Providence, Rhode Island.

2 My experience during the Liberian crisis was that
3 I had much faith in the -- the government of the United
4 States. When the crisis began, at the time I worked at the
5 Ministry of Education of the Republic of Liberia as director
6 for nongovernmental programs. And so I was in the position
7 to have gotten some food for mine household as well as
8 friends that I believed were going to come over at mine house
9 for some food and some security.

10 But in the wake of that, we noticed that it was
11 not possible for us to have remained home in Brewerville, and
12 so we went at a place in Brewerville that is known as the
13 Voice of America compound. And I took mine family over
14 simply because the United States Marines had a unique
15 presence that I believe would have aided us in many ways.
16 Total amazement where I view, along with some twenty to ten
17 thousand persons, the American Marines began to air-lift
18 themselves, and they began to leave, and we saw them leaving.
19 When that occurred, hope went away.

20 Immediately when that happened, I saw tens of
21 persons, fighters, moving into our temporary refuge site in
22 Brewerville. And for the very, very, very first time, I
23 continue to say if any one of those persons had simply said,
24 "How are you? How are you doing?," I would have died,
25 because of the fright that it had, saw them coming in. And

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1 so I was trying to remove kind of that poling I had on top of
2 our makeshift dwelling, and I turned to my wife, trembling,
3 my knees were hitting together, pow, just I'm telling you to
4 have seen that happen. And as I looked, the Marines were
5 leaving. Thousands of persons at the mercy of those
6 fighters.

7 When we left, according to information received,
8 hundreds of civilians were massacred at VOA. Hundreds.

9 We went home. I went home along with mine family,
10 and friends and relatives that were present around the VOA
11 area went along with us home. All the food that we had
12 stored up ourselves, the food had to be shared until we
13 ourselves went out of every little drop of food you can --
14 anyone can think about. We began to starve along with those
15 that we took home to assist.

16 Mine two sons literally were dying from
17 malnutrition. What I had to do was to go around and dig up
18 the palm trees, you know, the little ones, little palm trees,
19 to get the cabbages from within them, and that's how we
20 survived, explaining that I had to cut -- hit -- literally
21 hit the palm trees to get the young seeds out, crack them,
22 and eat. And we were slowly dying until ECOMOG arrived and
23 developed a kind -- or established a barricade between
24 civilians and fighters.

25 What did I do? In the midst of the tension, the

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1 only remedy that I was left with was to dress my little boys
2 and send them at ECOMOG's base to beg for food when we
3 couldn't survive any longer. In the midst of that tension,
4 with firing going all over, they would go at the base and
5 eat, and they would return with food in plastic bags or
6 papers or leaves for us, the parents, to eat because we
7 couldn't get out. And I cried, because it was the only
8 solution left with for their survival and ours.

9 Prior to that, we -- when -- when the palm
10 trees -- when all the palm trees in the area went out of
11 reach, there were mango trees in the community, and the mango
12 trees were visited. So I took my two little sons, and we
13 walked towards the trees, not knowing there was an ambush in
14 that area already, and we were caught up in the ambush. We
15 were arrested. I was stripped naked, mine sons also. They
16 were little babies. And then the youngest one began to cry.

17 And then a rebel soldier turned to him and said,
18 "If you continue to cry, we will kill you before we kill your
19 father." While in the midst of such -- I would like to
20 borrow the word from -- borrow "nightmare," Charles Taylor
21 attacked that area, loosening the other group from -- the
22 focus from us. They have to run and get prepared.

23 One of the fighters then there turned to me and
24 said, "You get out of our way. You get out of here." And
25 then in the exchange of gunfires, I began to run with my

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1 sons. How we left in the exchange, God is the only one who
2 knows, because you could feel -- you could hear the sound of
3 the bullets, "whing." I'm telling you, you could feel the
4 heat, and we were -- and I left with those kids.

5 Up till now, I tell folks I have testimonies, and
6 if anyone who doesn't believe that there is a God, you come
7 to me and ask me whether there is a God, and I'll tell you,
8 because of my unique experience that God saves. And so we
9 got out.

10 I would like to just stop here, because folks are
11 tired, and entertain questions.

12 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you --

13 THE WITNESS: You're welcome, Brother Chair.

14 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- very much.

15 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

16 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: We are inspired by the
17 acknowledgment of God in your family being saved lives during
18 the crisis.

19 THE WITNESS: Yes.

20 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: And thereby saving the
21 lives of your sons.

22 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: And thank you for making
24 up your mind to come and share this with us --

25 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

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1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- after all this time.
2 We will ask you some questions.

3 THE WITNESS: Thanks.

4 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: So that it presents an
5 opportunity for us to exchange --

6 (Inaudible)

7 THE WITNESS: Can I turn to them? Can you turn
8 this around?

9 (Inaudible)

10 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. So whoever asks
11 you the question --

12 (Voices overlapping and inaudible)

13 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. So whoever asks
14 the questions, we'll proceed in the same order. Gerald
15 Coleman will be first.

16 (Inaudible)

17 COMMISSIONER DEDE DOLOPEI: I've got no questions.

18 (Inaudible)

19 THE WITNESS: Please ask me some questions.

20 (Laughter)

21 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. So, Mr. Witness,
22 thanks --

23 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

24 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- very much.

25 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

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1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: And Gerald Coleman will
2 begin, will lead the questions.

3 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

4 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Okay. Thank you
5 very much for the presentation you made.

6 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: First of all, I just
8 want to know, would you share with us a little bit about the
9 impact of the war directly on your family? For example, did
10 you lose any family members during the course of the war,
11 brothers, sisters --

12 THE WITNESS: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- any children, anybody
14 die of like starvation? This helps us --

15 THE WITNESS: Yes.

16 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: -- to just keep a
17 record of understanding.

18 And then the second question, just to make
19 everything one package, is I noticed in your testimony you
20 mentioned about Prince Johnson being brought in by Marines
21 from Nimba to Monrovia. Could you elaborate a little bit on
22 that too? That would be my second question.

23 THE WITNESS: Thank you. My older brother was
24 captured or taken from his home in Sinoe. He was unseated by
25 a group I think called LOA there, the group led by George

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1 Boley.

2 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: LPC.

3 THE WITNESS: LPC. Okay. Thank you. And he was
4 not killed, but according to the information we received, he
5 was put in a canoe; tied up, put in a canoe, and allowed to
6 go. And since then, he's never been seen.

7 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Sorry.

8 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

9 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Would you like to
10 mention his name for us?

11 THE WITNESS: Ishman Browne (phonetic).

12 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: You say he was your
13 brother?

14 THE WITNESS: My older brother. He was an
15 electrician. Yeah.

16 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: So your father and
17 mother didn't suffer --

18 (Speakers overlapping)

19 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: By the LPC; right?

20 THE WITNESS: The group led by George Boley.
21 Yeah, LPC. Information gathered that mine sister, she was
22 killed in Gbarnga.

23 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: So that has been
24 confirmed, then.

25 THE WITNESS: Confirmed.

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1 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Her name, please?

2 THE WITNESS: Girdlie (phonetic). Girdlie Kyne.

3 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: What year these two
4 incidents took place, your sister and Ishman?

5 THE WITNESS: Mine sister, I think it was
6 eighty-eight -- nineteen ninety -- either '92, '93, '94,
7 something like that, because, you know, you don't actually
8 know until later on you get the information, because we
9 couldn't go over, and so -- and the information came later.

10 My mother, she fled from the house with just a
11 piece of cloth around her waist, and her -- and her house was
12 set afire because she was in Kakata. And she lived in the
13 forest for some two years along with other friends.

14 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: What is your mother's
15 name?

16 THE WITNESS: Formeda Wach Chaka Kyne (phonetic).
17 Formeda. Yeah, Formeda Wach Chaka Kyne.

18 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE COMMISSIONER: Your sister was
19 Girdlie Kyne?

20 THE WITNESS: Yeah, Girdlie.

21 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Is she okay today?

22 THE WITNESS: My mother?

23 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Yeah.

24 THE WITNESS: She's still a little bit depressed.
25 She's living with me in the United States and going through a

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1 lot of treatments. Excluding out her grandchildren. A lot
2 of them got missing during the war. A lot of them got killed
3 by all factions in the crisis.

4 As for my father, he was carried away by Prince
5 Johnson group -- Charles Taylor group, at one time by the
6 AFL, another time by Prince Johnson group, and another --
7 because he lived somewhere right on the bypass there, you
8 know --

9 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Mm-hmm.

10 THE WITNESS: -- and another time when the -- by
11 the AFL. And he stayed long in each of those territories,
12 humiliated. Speak predicated upon those events, he took
13 sick. And in the absence of adequate medication and
14 well-trained doctors at the time, he died.

15 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: What was his name,
16 please?

17 THE WITNESS: Reverend Doctor Mawlue A. Kyne.

18 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Mawlue.

19 THE WITNESS: Mawlue. Mawlue A. Kyne.

20 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Please accept our
21 condolences for the widespread, painful loss that has
22 occurred in your family.

23 THE WITNESS: Oh, thank you.

24 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Last -- last
25 question was concerning about -- you explained something

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1 about how the Marines may have interfaced to help Prince
2 Johnson move from Nimba into Monrovia.

3 THE WITNESS: It is not a thing that I definitely
4 can attest to, but predicated upon information received from
5 individuals who had some association with groups involved, a
6 lot of us got to know that Prince Johnson was assisted by the
7 United States government to have left Gbarnga, to have got
8 into Caldwell, and from Caldwell he went forth.

9 According to the various information also, two
10 contradicting information, but that cannot actually --
11 actually be credited but need to be focused upon and
12 analyzed, that -- that same group had him somewhere in
13 the -- in the -- between -- around Kakata, because that's the
14 same bypass to Caldwell all the way from the back, coming
15 from Caldwell. And so if that's true, the true version of
16 the story, that from around Kakata area there, the back
17 roads --

18 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE COMMISSIONER: Beaumont.

19 THE WITNESS: Beaumont area into Caldwell, that's
20 the version. That yet will have to be authenticated.

21 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Okay. Also you
22 mentioned about the VOA massacre.

23 THE WITNESS: Yes.

24 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Hundreds of people
25 died?

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1 THE WITNESS: Yes.

2 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Do you happen to
3 know who did that, whose group was involved in it?

4 THE WITNESS: When I was at VOA, the group that
5 went into VOA happens to be Prince Johnson group. Mm-hmm.

6 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: What time --
7 approximately what time of our history that took place, the
8 '80s or --

9 THE WITNESS: It was 1989.

10 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: You mentioned over
11 100 persons, you think, died?

12 THE WITNESS: Over 100 persons were killed,
13 according to the in -- infor -- because I was at VOA. I
14 mean, I was -- I was there. I lived there. And those who
15 fled came back with information, because I was in -- I was --
16 I was living in Monrovia. You could find people coming with
17 tears. You could find them coming crying, telling the story
18 as to what transpired there.

19 UNIDENTIFIED MALE COMMISSIONER: (Inaudible)?

20 THE WITNESS: Brewerville. Brewerville.

21 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Okay. Thank you,
22 Doctor. I'll leave the rest -- the other questions for
23 the --

24 THE WITNESS: Oh, thank you, please. Thanks.
25 Yeah.

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1 (Inaudible)

2 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: You said your
3 children -- where were you when your children used to leave
4 to go to get food --

5 THE WITNESS: I was at home. I sent them to go
6 and beg for food.

7 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Home where?

8 THE WITNESS: Brewerville.

9 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Oh, Brewerville.

10 THE WITNESS: It was the only solution left.

11 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: And where are the
12 children now?

13 THE WITNESS: They are big boys now in America.
14 The two of them are out of high school now.

15 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Thank God.

16 THE WITNESS: Praise be unto God for that.

17 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: You said you were
18 caught up --

19 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: (Inaudible)

20 THE WITNESS: I don't want to have them caught up
21 in it.

22 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Do you want to name
23 them?

24 THE WITNESS: No.

25 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: You said you were

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1 caught up in an ambush.

2 THE WITNESS: Yes.

3 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Who set up the
4 ambush, NPFL or (inaudible) --

5 THE WITNESS: It was not set up for me.

6 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Yeah, no, for --

7 THE WITNESS: It was a thing that occurred. I
8 walked into an ambush that was already set up, and so I
9 became the victim --

10 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Yeah.

11 THE WITNESS: -- along with the kids. That was
12 Prince Johnson group in Brewerville.

13 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Prince Johnson
14 group were --

15 THE WITNESS: -- in that part of Brewerville.

16 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: In that part of
17 Brewerville.

18 THE WITNESS: Yeah. They were there. They -- we
19 didn't know. We went to look for mangos in order to survive.

20 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: How did you get
21 out -- out of there?

22 THE WITNESS: Liberia?

23 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: No. Out of --

24 THE WITNESS: Out of that area?

25 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: -- the area of the

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1 ambush.

2 THE WITNESS: There was a kind of attack between
3 Charles Taylor -- Charles Taylor group attacked their -- that
4 position, and the fighters, in order to consolidate their
5 position and move forward, we had to be set free, and that
6 was an intervention by God, I believe.

7 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: In whose custody
8 you were at the time?

9 THE WITNESS: No, we were not put into any
10 custody. We were tied up. It was --

11 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Right, right.

12 THE WITNESS: It was just a thing that occurred.

13 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Right.

14 THE WITNESS: They got another attack, we were
15 asked to leave, and that's --

16 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Okay. Where you
17 were tied up, who was in control of that area?

18 THE WITNESS: Prince Johnson group.

19 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Prince Johnson. So
20 NPFL came to attack --

21 THE WITNESS: Charles Taylor group.

22 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Yeah, that's --

23 THE WITNESS: Yeah, NPFL, yeah.

24 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: You were able to
25 (inaudible). Okay. Thank you.

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1 THE WITNESS: Mm-hmm.

2 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Thank you.

3 THE WITNESS: You're welcome, sir. Thanks a lot.

4 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Mr. Kyne, thank you.

5 THE WITNESS: Thanks very much, Brother Stewart.

6 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: You say your father
7 was living on the capital bypass area?

8 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

9 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Do you have any
10 brother in the bypass called Friday, Friday Kyne?

11 THE WITNESS: Farly (phonetic).

12 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Friday?

13 THE WITNESS: Farly, Farly. Farly is in Rhode
14 Island.

15 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Now --

16 THE WITNESS: He happens to be a brother. Not
17 actually a brother, but a cousin.

18 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Okay.

19 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

20 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: That area you were in
21 Brewerville --

22 THE WITNESS: Yes.

23 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- the incident you
24 described, this was in 1990; right?

25 THE WITNESS: 1990 I want to believe. Yes.

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1 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: So when ECOMOG came,
2 what was the extent of Prince Johnson's control in
3 Brewerville? How far in Brewerville did he control?

4 THE WITNESS: At the time ECOMOG came, Prince
5 Johnson controlled the territory as far as Cower Junction
6 (phonetic), New Kru Town, Dwala, Cower Junction. Prince --
7 even during the presence of ECOMOG, Prince Johnson controlled
8 those areas.

9 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Yeah, especially in
10 the Brewerville area.

11 THE WITNESS: In the Brewerville area. Prince
12 Johnson controlled every area.

13 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: The whole Brewerville?

14 THE WITNESS: The entire Brewerville, prior to the
15 coming of ECOMOG. And even with the presence of ECOMOG,
16 ECOMOG simply maintained buffer zones. But they couldn't go
17 into the off sketch (phonetic) of where they were, and so
18 where ECOMOG's presence was limited, the rebels took control.

19 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: This is insight,
20 because for a long time -- because in 1990 I -- when I run
21 the Hotel Africa Area, Prince Johnson was in control.

22 THE WITNESS: Yes.

23 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: And the information
24 that I had -- because ECOMOG was based in that area.

25 THE WITNESS: Yes.

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1 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: The information that I
2 had was that Charles Taylor group was controlling
3 Brewerville. Now you've given a new insight.

4 THE WITNESS: The part of Brewerville that Charles
5 Taylor's group controlled beyond, I think, St. Paul Bridge,
6 near St. Paul.

7 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: No, he was not
8 (inaudible).

9 THE WITNESS: He was fought off.

10 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: It was not beyond
11 St. Paul. (Inaudible) village.

12 THE WITNESS: Beyond Ricks Institute.

13 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: Yeah, beyond -- no,
14 no. Not beyond Ricks Institute. As soon as you come from
15 VOA junction, that settlement that you have --

16 THE WITNESS: Yes. That's -- that's --

17 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: (Inaudible)

18 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Jacktown Motown
19 (phonetic)?

20 THE WITNESS: That's --

21 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: No. You pass
22 Jacktown --

23 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Wayco (phonetic)?

24 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: -- and VOA
25 junction.

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1 THE WITNESS: Yes, that's what I'm saying --

2 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: (Inaudible) to that
3 village. (Inaudible) town, but you have three big churches.

4 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Lakiria (phonetic)?
5 Who was in control of Lakiria? Prince Johnson?

6 THE WITNESS: Prince Johnson had Lakiria. But
7 beyond Ricks Institute --

8 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: NPFL?

9 THE WITNESS: Charles Taylor group.

10 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Yeah. Beyond Ricks.

11 THE WITNESS: Beyond Ricks Institute --

12 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Okay.

13 THE WITNESS: -- all the way --

14 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE COMMISSIONER: (Inaudible) --

15 THE WITNESS: Okay. Beyond -- okay. Memet --
16 okay. Mementown (phonetic).

17 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE COMMISSIONER: -- (inaudible).

18 THE WITNESS: Okay. Mementown.

19 COMMISSIONER KAFUMBAH KONNEH: No, it was -- it
20 was closer --

21 THE WITNESS: Charles Taylor -- yes, but they had
22 a kind of V-connection. So you could have Charles Taylor go
23 right here, so you could have Charles Taylor group right
24 here, just right here, but at the same time they were spread
25 all the way in. So it was not a thing that they had a unique

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1 setting. They had themselves in a kind of V movement.

2 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: So who was the
3 commander at that time that Prince Johnson commanded --

4 THE WITNESS: No, I don't know.

5 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: You don't -- you
6 don't --

7 THE WITNESS: I don't know. I don't know the
8 commander.

9 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: And what kind of
10 atrocities did you witness in that area by Prince Johnson at
11 the time?

12 THE WITNESS: One of the things that I witnessed
13 was that -- I couldn't leave the house, but one time I
14 decided I stayed too long in, and ECOMOG, I believed, had
15 provided the necessary security, according to mine belief,
16 and so I decided to leave the house. Walked from Brewerville
17 all the way to Dwala market, said I was going to buy, how
18 they call that stuff, the kind of fish, man. The popular
19 fish they had in the market at that time.

20 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE COMMISSIONER: Mackerel?

21 THE WITNESS: Mackerel. Because it was one of
22 my -- only the fish that I used to like to eat them.

23 (Inaudible) The same fish. Okay. And I went all the way,
24 and I met a friend while walking, got some fish and got some
25 other things, and we decided to go back to Brewerville.

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1 Right on the bridge, I think St. Paul Bridge, because the
2 bridge that divides Dwala from going into Virginia.

3 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: St. Paul.

4 THE WITNESS: That's St. Paul Bridge. Okay.

5 There, the fighters from Prince Johnson were just hitting
6 folks with their gun, beating a whole lot of folks, and there
7 the superintendent -- one of the superintendents of the -- of
8 the Pentecostal churches, I really can't remember his name,
9 but I can describe him, fat, not too fat, but good build,
10 tall, bright, then he said to them, "Gentlemen, why is that
11 you guys who say that you have come to liberate the people
12 are doing what you're doing? It is not good. Stop doing
13 that."

14 So I am of the opinion that as he saw them hitting
15 folks, you know, the civilians, beating them with their guns
16 and what have you, he was walking along with his wife, and
17 then he was just a part of a little group that they were
18 coming to do hit again, and then so he held onto the gun, and
19 he said, "No, don't do that," as a means of advising, you
20 know, trying to come in to negotiate, right where I heard,
21 "Oh, this man is all reconnaissance, this man is here with
22 different intention, this man is so-and-so. Oh, he's our
23 enemy." They started fighting, he and the other soldiers
24 started fighting over the gun. Some of them got on him, on
25 his back. They sent for reinforcement.

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1 His wife was standing by my side. I didn't know
2 his wife that well. I knew him because by virtue at the time
3 that I was a member of what they call the CREDO. CREDO
4 provided books and little things. And since at the time, I
5 worked at the Ministry of Education, I was the director for
6 nongovernmental programs, I was then a member automatically
7 of that body. And so I associated with him, but at a limited
8 level.

9 And so I saw the whole thing happening. Took him,
10 and more than 25 soldiers opened fire on him at the same
11 time. And all that we saw as we stood there, seeing a
12 lifeless body going over the bridge into the St. Paul River.

13 His wife -- when that happened, his wife
14 immediately almost went crazy. I didn't want to even stand
15 by her for a second. You guys know what would have happened
16 to me. I left, because there was nothing within mine power I
17 could have done. I just walked out. In fact, I went to New
18 Kru Town, slept in New Kru Town that evening. I didn't go
19 back, because when that happened, they prevented civilians
20 from going across the bridge.

21 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Do you remember the
22 name of the superintendent?

23 THE WITNESS: No, but anyone who knows -- he's
24 from Lofa. Anyone who knows about a superintendent within
25 the Pentecostal churches who was missing or is not -- cannot

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1 be accounted for, I think, will be able to address the
2 situation and identify a name.

3 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE COMMISSIONER: Excuse me.

4 Those were Prince Johnson's fighters?

5 THE WITNESS: No -- yes, yes, yes.

6 And so that's how he died.

7 I don't know. One Bill used to be at the Ministry
8 of Education. He was the chief education officer for
9 Montserrado County. I think he might know him, because they
10 were all -- we were all close together. The two of them were
11 close together. I really don't know his name.

12 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: You're not talking
13 about Bill Harris?

14 THE WITNESS: Bill Harris. Bill Harris will
15 really know him, because he and Bill were always together.
16 Because I was -- Bill at the time was CEO, yeah, continuing
17 education officer for the schools.

18 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: You mentioned that
19 when you walked into this ambush in search of food, you were
20 tied, and then shooting broke out.

21 THE WITNESS: Yes.

22 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Who untied you? How
23 did you -- oh, in tabay?

24 THE WITNESS: We were tied, not tied to the extent
25 that we couldn't help ourselves loosed up. Okay? We were

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1 tied. They were about to go ahead. Had mine sons, they had
2 me tied, but it was a thing that I could just loosen. If you
3 are in a desperate situation, you have desperate means of
4 getting things done. And so although I was tied, but I was
5 told to go. And mine kids -- my children were also there. I
6 had to do something. I untied mineself, having been told go,
7 to let go of mineself and the kids. And so I -- it was a
8 thing that I just forced out and -- I can't really explain.
9 Certain things are beyond explanation.

10 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: How old were your sons
11 at the time?

12 THE WITNESS: One was, at the time, just one and a
13 half years old. The other was just two, two plus months.
14 And we ran. And that's what they went through.

15 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: And all the while you
16 were there, did you see Prince Johnson?

17 THE WITNESS: If you were to put Prince Johnson in
18 front of me, I don't know him. No. I did everything I could
19 to stay away.

20 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Were you still in
21 Brewerville during Octopus?

22 THE WITNESS: No, I was in the United States, I
23 think, by that time.

24 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Octopus was 1992.

25 THE WITNESS: 1992?

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1 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Yes.

2 THE WITNESS: Yes, I was in Brewerville.

3 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: What was your
4 experience like during that time?

5 THE WITNESS: Gunshots rained on the houses like
6 to say you had thunders coming from all over.
7 "Blah-blah-blah-blah-blah-blah." In the evening you could
8 see them -- you could see -- you could see bullets flying
9 past (unintelligible). (Unintelligible) were moving in
10 columns. And our homes were rattled with bullets. All we
11 could do was to go down on the floor, slip beneath the
12 floors. I don't know how to even say it. But on your face,
13 it on the floor, crawled on the floor, in order to be saved.
14 It was not an easy thing. It was not an easy thing we
15 experienced.

16 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Besides the killing of
17 this superintendent, this pastor --

18 THE WITNESS: Yes.

19 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- did you witness any
20 other atrocities?

21 THE WITNESS: No. I didn't see any other thing.

22 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: And after that
23 incident, how did such a traumatic incident impact on your
24 kids? Did they -- did you have -- did they experience any
25 kind of adverse reactions as a result of what they --

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1 THE WITNESS: Yes.

2 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: -- went through?

3 THE WITNESS: They were traumatized. They would
4 shout at night, shake, stubborn. And so when they came to
5 the United States, a lot of work was done. They had to go
6 through a lot. At the time I was at Harvard going to school,
7 so we tried to get all the necessary health care for them,
8 and they went through the necess -- they had the necessary
9 health care that anyone would have. But even though they had
10 all that, it is yet a problem for them. They have not
11 actually overcome it, what they saw.

12 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Now, you say your
13 brother was killed by LPC.

14 THE WITNESS: Yes.

15 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Is this -- are you
16 talking about eyewitness accounts from people who were in the
17 area?

18 THE WITNESS: People who were in the area who
19 later on informed us. They didn't say he was killed, but he
20 was tied up --

21 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Placed in a canoe.

22 THE WITNESS: -- placed in the canoe on the Sinoe
23 River.

24 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Sebia (phonetic)?

25 THE WITNESS: Sebia. And allowed the water -- the

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1 canoe to go on the Sebia river. If anyone here has -- if
2 you've been to Sinoe, Sinoe River --

3 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: We had hearings in
4 Sinoe.

5 THE WITNESS: Okay. You know Sinoe River, and you
6 know the current of that water, river. And there he was
7 placed to go. And since then, we never heard from him.

8 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: And who did this
9 witness report was in charge of the -- of the group that did
10 that? Is there any commander name?

11 THE WITNESS: They tried to identify, to make --
12 to connect some names, but -- and some faces, but --

13 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Do you remember any of
14 the names they gave you?

15 THE WITNESS: No, not definitely. No.

16 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: And this was in which
17 year? 1994?

18 THE WITNESS: Before 1994. Before 1994. He was
19 on the (unintelligible) when the -- when -- he happened to be
20 a Kru man. Okay? And it was on a travel line at the same
21 time. I called the information. He didn't want to get
22 involved in being a fighter and what have you. All -- I
23 really can't say -- okay? I really can't say. And that's
24 how he died. And my mother has to go through that every day,
25 even though she's with me in Rhode Island. I have to just

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1 keep on talking to her every day.

2 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Your mother was in
3 Sebia at the time?

4 THE WITNESS: My mother was in -- no, she was in
5 Kakata.

6 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Oh, she was in Kakata.

7 THE WITNESS: Yeah, Kakata.

8 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Okay. Thank you very
9 much.

10 THE WITNESS: You're welcome. Thank you.

11 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Mr. Pajibo.

12 THE WITNESS: Yes.

13 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much --

14 THE WITNESS: You're welcome. Thank you.

15 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: -- for sharing your
16 experience, and feel sorry for what happened to your
17 relatives --

18 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

19 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: -- during the course of
20 the conflict.

21 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

22 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Now, you talk about
23 your children.

24 THE WITNESS: Yes.

25 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: They were so young --

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1 THE WITNESS: Yes.

2 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: -- two year and three
3 years.

4 THE WITNESS: Two -- one and a half, two years
5 plus. You know, we just got them, bam-bam.

6 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: But you didn't
7 mention --

8 THE WITNESS: I'm sorry. (Inaudible)

9 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: You didn't mention
10 anything about their mother. Is she okay? Did anything
11 happen --

12 THE WITNESS: The mother is fine. The mother is
13 fine. And because of her, we are alive today. She became
14 the breadwinner. She used to go out when it was time to look
15 for a little food, we looked for food. She became a business
16 woman, in fact. She would go to Cape Mount, by -- my mother
17 is from Cape Mount. She would go to Cape Mount and buy
18 some -- buy -- get some foodstuffs, come and sell foodstuffs
19 at the Dwala market. And through that, after a while we
20 began to live. But she, too, had to go -- she had to crawl.
21 She had to go through a lot. She went through a lot. She
22 went through a lot in order to have us where we are today.
23 If it had not been for her, I wouldn't be where I am today.
24 I would have died. Because I couldn't get out there to look
25 for food any longer. When that happened, I decide to steal

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1 away. In fact, the trees were gone. There were no more
2 trees with plums. The trees that were there, folks went to
3 work and made coal out of them until ECOMOG came, and then
4 until the presence -- with the presence of ECOMOG, we began
5 to have the relief. How do they call it?

6 UNIDENTIFIED MALE COMMISSIONER: Sefu (phonetic).

7 THE WITNESS: Okay. Sefu, relief.

8 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Sefu, yes.

9 THE WITNESS: Okay. And let me confess, the very
10 first day I got our beans, I ate like -- I don't know. Some
11 folks said to me I was blessed I didn't die --

12 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Yes.

13 THE WITNESS: -- because they say you eat a lot of
14 it, you -- I ate until I had my shirt open. I fed my sons,
15 and I don't know -- I did the cooking that day. I really
16 ate. I can tell everyone what happened. I ate. I cooked.
17 Oh, man. I didn't look for a spoon. I ate with my hands.
18 "Aargh, aargh, aargh!" I said man, I was looking like a wild
19 animal. Thank you.

20 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: And thank you very much
21 for that information.

22 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

23 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: And you said you're a
24 clinical psychologist?

25 THE WITNESS: I got a certificate in that.

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1 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Okay. And, I mean,
2 just -- your mother -- you say your mother is here?

3 THE WITNESS: My mother is in America.

4 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: She is here.

5 THE WITNESS: I have two master's degrees.

6 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Okay.

7 THE WITNESS: One in social science and one in
8 rights and justice, looking at religion and what have you.

9 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: You say as a result of
10 the war, your mother is kind of depressed.

11 THE WITNESS: She is depressed, but she's the --
12 her depression brought about high blood pressure.

13 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Okay.

14 THE WITNESS: And then her heart. She's on -- she
15 has more than six medications that she has to take every day
16 now.

17 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Is she talking about
18 this, the -- her experience now, or is she still --

19 THE WITNESS: I don't -- I don't like to have her
20 talk about it. She talks about it, but I try to go in --
21 because the more I give her a chance to talk about it, the
22 more I will have to deal with it again with her. I, too, I
23 don't like to go over it. And when we sit down, she talks
24 about it.

25 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: But don't you think

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1 that would be good for her to work with some, you know --

2 THE WITNESS: She's worked --

3 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: -- other person besides
4 you?

5 THE WITNESS: Look, that's why I say she's gone
6 through a lot already. She's gone -- she's met coun -- she's
7 gone through counseling.

8 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Okay.

9 THE WITNESS: She's gone through a lot. But
10 you're talking about my mother.

11 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: I know.

12 THE WITNESS: And those -- my -- the ones that I'm
13 talking about happen to my oldest, and older. So I'm the one
14 she looks up to now. And so I don't like to hear her trying
15 to go through it, because when she begins to go through it, I
16 go through it, then I have to come and deal with her. It is
17 a vicious circle thing. Even though she has gone through
18 counseling, it is yet a problem for her. It is still up to
19 today a problem.

20 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Your brother that died,
21 he had children?

22 THE WITNESS: Oh, a lot.

23 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: And where are they?

24 THE WITNESS: A lot of them are in Liberia. They
25 are in Liberia. They are in Liberia. Some were killed, as I

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1 said. Some got missing. They haven't been found. And other
2 relatives and friends also died during the whole thing. Some
3 got on board a ship and got drowned, run into gun -- they run
4 into Nigeria at that time.

5 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Okay. Thank you very
6 much.

7 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

8 (Inaudible)

9 THE WITNESS: Thank you very kindly, and thanks
10 for your eloquence. I sat in there and I was listening to
11 your questions (inaudible).

12 (Inaudible)

13 THE WITNESS: Am I still on camera?

14 (Inaudible)

15 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Well, Mr. Witness.

16 THE WITNESS: Thank you, Brother Chair.

17 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Yeah. I want to say
18 thank you --

19 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

20 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- for coming to share
21 this experience with us.

22 THE WITNESS: Yes.

23 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: People don't know, but
24 most of the time when witnesses share their experience, it
25 resonates in our minds because we had almost similar

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1 experiences.

2 THE WITNESS: Yes.

3 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I was in that area
4 during that time.

5 THE WITNESS: Wonderful.

6 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I can relate very well.
7 So we say thank you, and your testimony has shone further
8 light on what happened in that area.

9 THE WITNESS: Yes.

10 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: That's why you asked
11 (unintelligible).

12 THE WITNESS: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Because we've got it in
14 bits and pieces, and by coming, you've added additional
15 information to fill in some of the gaps.

16 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: So thank you very much,
18 and your testimony has just ended.

19 THE WITNESS: Oh, thank you. Thank you kindly. I
20 appreciate your kindness.

21 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. Is there anything
22 else you want to tell us, advice or what we shall be doing --

23 THE WITNESS: My advice is this: We need peace
24 that will last. But in order to arrive at lasting peace,
25 there will have to be some confession. Folks will have to

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1 admit their guilt, their wrongs. A lot of folks will have to
2 come and tell the Liberian people what roles they played.
3 Then they come asking for healing, asking for forgiveness.
4 Without that, I as an individual find it difficult for us to
5 attain peace when you, who have committed a crime against the
6 people, will ask for reconciliation, and you cannot admit
7 your wrong you've done. You cannot look at the folks in the
8 face and say, "At the time, looking at the circumstances we
9 had, these things had to be done. Now that I or we can
10 reflect, I, we, ask for forgiveness." Then the healing
11 process will be genuine.

12 Another thing that I see with the nation in the
13 process of healing is that if our government, if people will
14 heal, if we will rebuild, those who will be employed will be
15 leaders. Let's not just employ anybody. That's one of the
16 problems I'm seeing as far as I sit here. Not because one
17 has emerged from America, he comes with a master's degree.
18 You don't even know what school he even graduated from. He's
19 put in the classroom to teach or he's there to rehabilitate,
20 when he doesn't have the skills to do the work. We -- at
21 that -- at that rate, we are revisiting the wounds and we are
22 developing a community, a generation, of ignorance again.
23 After many years, he's not -- he never did one plus one, but
24 he's sitting in the classroom to be the teacher, to teach one
25 plus one, because he has a degree. Folks must -- the

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1 leadership there must be very careful. When a man leaves
2 from this place and goes home with a degree, these schools
3 are here. Call the school.

4 Another thing again that I find detrimental to the
5 growth and development of the nation is that there are a lot
6 of mushroom colleges that have come up. If we are not
7 careful as a nation, all these folks will have come forth who
8 have gone to these colleges, graduated with the notion or the
9 basic understanding that they are educated, whereby they are
10 not. Look -- let us look at the social problems the nation
11 will be faced with, with these individuals who think they
12 have attained education when they have not. It is a social
13 problem that folks may not see now, but have -- but will have
14 long-term effect upon the nation, because these are the same
15 ones that will be governing.

16 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Yeah.

17 THE WITNESS: These are the same ones that will be
18 imparting and giving instruction. How will they handle the
19 redevelopment, the healing of the wounds of the nation, when
20 they themselves have not exposed themselves to learning? But
21 they are the ones. And so my recommendation is a man comes
22 from the United States, a man comes from anywhere here, don't
23 just see that paper, call the school. Call the school.

24 Another thing that I'm bad (phonetic) about, who
25 are those in those multiple of universities or colleges back

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1 home, where are the teachers coming from that are passing on
2 instruction? Where are the teachers coming from? What are
3 the (inaudible) they have? What libraries do they have?
4 What -- we are looking at how to reconcile, how -- because
5 one of the reasons the whole thing started has to do with
6 illiteracy. If the general public had the education that
7 should be there, folks would not have brainwashed them. If
8 the healing must go on, if we will have to revisit what
9 happened, we must begin to look at every angle of our society
10 and build up and patch. And one of the areas that I found to
11 be against the growth and development is education.

12 So my recommendation is, not everybody who comes
13 with a paper must be accepted into the (unintelligible). Let
14 the authority there sit down. "Where did this man go to
15 school? How was his discipline?" Even look at his GPA.
16 That's my recommendation. That's how I see the building of
17 the nation. That's how I see reconciliation coming forth.
18 We are going back to Barclay time. We shouldn't do that. If
19 the healing must go on, healing has to go on in every angle.

20 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much.

21 THE WITNESS: Okay. I won't talk too much, and I
22 rest my case.

23 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: How often do you preach?

24 THE WITNESS: Thank you. I like that. Thank you.
25 Thank you.

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1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. Thank you very
2 much.

3 THE WITNESS: You're welcome. Thanks. I am
4 blessed to be a part of this.

5 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Yeah, you were very
6 patient to wait until we --

7 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

8 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- have this set up
9 here.

10 THE WITNESS: Yeah, thank you.

11 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Very appreciate it.

12 THE WITNESS: Thanks to everybody.

13 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. You're welcome.

14 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Bye-bye.

16 THE WITNESS: Bye.

17 (End of testimony)

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