TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

DIASPORA PROJECT

PUBLIC HEARING
HAMLINE UNIVERSITY
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St. Paul, Minnesota U.S.A.

TESTIMONY OF:

SACKOR ZAHNEE

RC Commissioners:
Chairman Jerome Verdier
Vice Chairperson Dede Dolopei
Oumu Syllah
Sheikh Kafumba Konneh
Pearl Brown Bull
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(The following proceedings were had and made of record, commencing at approximately 3:34 p.m.)

MR. SIRLEAF: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. We're about to start the afternoon section, and we want to say welcome again. Now, at this time, we'll call on the next witness, who is Sackor Zahnee.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Shall we rise for the oath.

SACKOR ZAHNEE,
being first duly sworn,
testified as follows:

TESTIMONY OF SACKOR ZAHNEE

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Please be seated. Mr. Witness, we say good afternoon.

THE WITNESS: Good afternoon, sir. How you doing?

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I'm okay. How's yourself?

THE WITNESS: I'm fine. Thank God.
CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: That's good.
We want to welcome you to the TROC.

THE WITNESS: Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: This is a public forum internet for us to share experiences in terms of what transpired in our country and in our life between 1979 and 2003, in the hope that by shared experiences, we can learn from the past in order to chart a better course for the future of our country, and we're doing this all around where we think we can find Liberians who don't live in Liberia, and now we need diaspora. We have come out here because we believe even though you Liberians are away from the homeland, but you have your own experiences, you have your own role to play, you have your own contribution to make, and besides that, you are all still Liberians, so that's why we are here. We appreciate it that you could take time out of your busy schedule to come and join us.

THE WITNESS: Thank you very much. If you don't mind, (unintelligible). I don't make that much.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. I'll introduce the commissioners to you so you get to know the commissioners.
THE WITNESS: Okay.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Who will be interacting with you over the next hour. Sheikh Kafumba Konneh's at the end of my left, Commissioner Sheikh Kafumba Konnen. Next to him is Commissioner Pearl Brown Bull, Commissioner Gerald Coleman, Commissioner Dede Dopolei, Commissioner Massa Washington, John Stewart and Oumou Syllah. We will ask a couple of preliminary questions, following which then you will proceed with your testimony.

THE WITNESS: Okay.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Please restate your name.

THE WITNESS: My name is Sackor Zahnee.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: How you spell that?

THE WITNESS: S-A-C-K-O-R. The Kru pronunciation is Sacko. My last name is Zeahnee, but when I went to school they call me Zahnee, so I accepted it at school. Sackor Zahnee.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Sackor Zahnee.

THE WITNESS: Yeah.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Do you want to spell Zahnee, too?
THE WITNESS: Sorry.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Please spell Zahnee.


CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Zahnee. Your date of birth or age, please.


CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Where do you currently reside?


CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Come again?


CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Oh, southwest.

THE WITNESS: It's called Little Monrovia.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: New Monrovia?

THE WITNESS: Little Monrovia.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Oh, Little Monrovia. Your vocation or occupation? What do you do? What takes up your time?

THE WITNESS: Well, I work as a lab tech at GSK, Glaxo SmithKline, but I'm just doing it for the money. That's not my profession or anything.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: You work as a
lab technician?

THE WITNESS: Yes, at a drug manufacturer, Glaxo SmithKline.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. When did you leave Liberia for the U.S.?

THE WITNESS: October 1996.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Is that when you arrived in the U.S. or you left Liberia?

THE WITNESS: Yeah, that's when I came, and when I left, I came here.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: October, '96?

THE WITNESS: Yeah.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay, Sacko, thank you very much.

THE WITNESS: Thank you, sir.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: You may proceed now with your testimony.

THE WITNESS: Thank you.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. First of all, I'd like to start off by -- I'd like to thank God for giving me the opportunity to be here today to be a part of this public dialogue, which I hope would -- would seek to find out the truth about the very experiences that we all experienced during our civil war in Liberia.
And, secondly, I'd like to thank my parents who's there for being throughout the turbulent time of the civil war, making sure that we was alive and protected, and the fact that they gave me permission today to come out here to, for the first time, put on the public record just a tiny bit of our family history.

And, thirdly, but most importantly, I'd like to thank the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Liberia, you guys, and also the Advocate for Human Rights Group. Thank you very much, Laura Young and Sarah Pawletti. But not to finish off, I'd also like to thank Hamline University for being a part of history with us today and letting us use this building.

I understand I only have about time as far as spent, I only have about 25 minutes, but because of the TROC and the human right advocate group, I'm so glad that an ordinary citizen like myself who is, by all means just a nobody, will finally get to -- the opportunity to -- to at least we understand that though it may not be that important, but our human rights is not going to be taken for granted, and I hope that you guys will -- thank you for listening to me for that. Thank you for including me in the process. Where do I begin?
The civil war in Liberia affected me and my family in so many ways that is so profound, from the death of so many family members, to the emotional end, the emotion of pain and scars that is associated with witnessing and surviving through what I think is quite a prolonged, peak campaign of ethnic cleansing.

If you mind me, I would just glance at my notes every now and then so I can reconnect to see where I was at in my testimony.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Are those your personal notes?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: From your own recollections?

THE WITNESS: Yes, handwritten.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: You will share them with us at the end of your testimony?

THE WITNESS: I have no problem.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay.

THE WITNESS: Sure. Though -- so, I was going to say, though my experiences may have some unique aspect to it, by and large, I think for most of the victims of the civil war in Liberia, we all experienced, have common and shared experiences, like dodging stray bullets and rockets, going through
diseases, starvation and hunger, and et cetera, et cetera, fear and intimidation and all that stuff, but the focus of my testimony today that I want you to understand is I want to focus my testimony on the issues that has to do with ethnic identity in pre-Liberia, and during the war, and I would like to focus on the negative impact that my ethnicity, my ethnic affiliation had, was the consequence during the civil war, what my ethnic affiliation resulted into during the civil war. So, in order to tell that story, I will have to narrate to you a series of events that will take us -- take me from where I started off being a proud member of an ethnic group to a point where me and my family, we had complete loss of confidence in our society and the respect for humanity so that we were forced, in order to survive, had to deny everything about my true identity for a very long period of time just in order to survive.

For me, this is a story about how political mismanagement of the different social identity in Liberia, and to a larger extent, because they want us to think that well, certain tribes have -- don't like each other or hate each other, but what I feel was -- was inter-elite rivalry that resulted into what I plainly consider to be a crime against humanity. So,
me and my family became victims only because we was us, 
only because we were who we are, and that is, we was 
Krahn. I'm about to get into the story.

I was born in 1982, like I mentioned 
earlier, in Monrovia. My father, John Zahnee, and my 
mother, Frances Dartoe, she later remarried and her 
last name was Sua, they both came here from the 
southeastern part of the country. My mother was from 
Sinoe and my father was from Grand Gedeh, so that 
directly put me into the heap of the action when the 
war started. But mind you, I was only seven years old 
when -- 1989, I was seven years, but the war really -- 
I like to think I was eight because 1990 was the real 
war. 1989 was just the beginning and the trigger of 
the stuff that happened.

When I was born, we lived -- my father 
worked for the Liberian Electrical Corporation, and my 
mother worked for -- as a kindergarten teacher at the 
SOS kindergarten. That's where I went to school, and 
me and my brothers went to elementary school. For the 
most part during my time in Monrovia, I lived with my 
two brothers, John Zahnee and Fernade Zahnee, and my 
mother, but I had two other siblings, my two older 
sister, Mercy and Wiladay. Mercy lived in Sinoe and 
Wiladay lived in Bombi Hills, so we started off on --
but just to make sure, my dad, just for the record, my
dad worked for LEC way back when it was -- he started
in 1971 during the Tubman Administration when it used
to be called the PUA. I don't know if you remember
that. Excuse me.

So, my ethnic identity was something that I
inherited. My father was Krahn, so if you know the
story of Liberia, you take on -- your tribe is the
tribe of your father, that's your tribe. So, I didn't
speak the language, never been to Grand Gedeh. By and
large, my father's tribe was just something I
inherited, so in other words, I had no other connection
to the Krahn ethnic group except that my father was a
Krahn.

I was born in Monrovia in 1982, never went
to Grand Gedeh, never spoke their language, and never
benefitted from anything because the picture that I'm
trying to draw for you is I was born in 1982. That was
the beginning of the new era in Liberia, one that we,
me and my family, may not have supported or have any
kind of an increment, in no way, shape or form
supported the actions that -- especially when it comes
to the coup in 1980 that took the life of the late
President Tolbert for which I sat and listened to his
daughter. It was a painful experience, so I just want
to apologize to her family and the entire nation for

going through such a trauma, but back to my story.

When we lived across the bridge, we lived

in -- I was born in Beaumont Bridge. That was on

Bushrod Island. Later on in life, we move over to

Logan Town but in -- by 1986, after the coup -- I mean,

after the -- the invasion and the elections that Doe

won, I have a vivid recollection of the coup -- not the
coup, I'm sorry, but the invasion, the Quiwonkpa

invasion. I was still a kid, was living in Logan Town,

but I remember that because nobody went outside that
day, and people were saying all kinds of anti-Krahn

sentiments that I really didn't understand because I

was scared.

However, after that, my father was fortunate

enough, he was an electrician and he did private

contracts, so he used to do his work for this Lebanese

guy, John Fox. But the Sabo people call him John

Blume, that's the other name, because he used to play

that trick, you know, the card games, win/lose, so when

the people lose, it would be like blew me, it's a long

story, so they call him John Blume. That's how we knew

him, as John Blume. He befriended my dad and because

my dad would do work for him on a consistent level, so

he said, "Well, why don't I just -- I would like to
help you with this" -- this is something my dad told me
now because he knew I was coming here, so he put the
whole story down -- "so why don't I just like help you
with your rent every month so that way you can do my
work, and then I help you out with your rent money,"
but then later on he decided, well, I have a tiny,
two-bedroom house right next to mine, right next to his
big house. I'm just trying to get to the point where I
ended up in such a -- we moved onto Ninth Street, and
you know Sinkor, that's a more affluent part of the
city compared to, say, other places that I lived like
New Kru Town and other stuff like that.

The reason why I was saying that was to say
was to disconnect because other people may look at it
and see how we started to rise up right after 1980.
What I'm trying to say was it had no -- it had nothing
to do with the new ruling class, which were the Krahn.
But growing up in my family, in my household, being
Krahn was something that we was proud of, we was taught
to be proud of, more especially the fact that the Krahn
became the new ruling elite, and there was -- they was
running everything, and they was -- they was actually
forming a hegemony, exactly what became -- what the
military regime accused the previous regime of: rampant
corruption and all kinds of stuff. What I'm saying was
the new class was doing the same thing, so -- but we, my family, did not benefit from anything like that. My dad still worked at LEC as a laborer and my mom still worked her kindergarten job as a kindergarten teacher.

The picture -- another picture I want to show -- that I'm trying to draw your attention to before I get into the war part of my story was when we moved on Ninth Street, like I said, the Lebanese guy gave my dad this house that was in his backyard and a much bigger fence. If you know where George Weah stayed at on Ninth Street, we used to share a common -- a common border right there. But, if you know, there is from that fence is nothing between the fence and the ocean, so later on when the war intensified, we -- that became a theater for murder by the AFL soldiers who was engaged in ethnic cleansing against the Manos and the Gios. So, that's why I'm trying to draw you a picture and that's why I've wasted your time to tell you how I got on Ninth Street. Well, I've only got 25 minutes.

To move things ahead, 1989 came. They -- almost the start of the civil war. At the time I was spending -- I was living with my uncle. I was spending the time with my uncle on the Old Road. My uncle's name was Bestman Julu. He was second in command at the Liberian telecommunication. I was living with him on
the Old Road, and my dad and the rest of my other
family stay on Ninth Street. Well, first, it started
off, I started on Ninth Street, but based on the stuff
that was happening, my mom decided it is not right for
us to be seeing stuff like that because we lived right
next to the beach, and the soldiers knew my dad was
Krahn, so for some reason they didn't think -- they
felt comfortable, so they would shoot people right in
the yard. They would go all day looking for the Gio
and the Mano people, and then bring them and shoot
them, but -- a couple people got shot in the yard
because they knew they was going to die, so they kept
fighting, kept fighting instead of them walking
politely to the beach, so they got shot right there.
And my father had to, because soldiers wasn't going to
remove the body, my father had to drag the body out to
the beach, and that was -- I'm trying to -- it was a
constant process that was happening. Once the war
intensified and, say, places like Buchanan was already
taken and it was getting closer to Monrovia, that
became -- that became a routine event, looking for Mano
and Gio people and bringing them.

I want to tell you a story about this one
guy who, when we was kid growing up, he used to make
the coal pot for when you put the coal -- what we call
coal pie in Liberia, he used to make that, and we had no idea he was Gio or anything, as far as we was concerned. We used to call him an American Joe. He used to talk with some kind of an American accent and had a story that he was deported from America, so we had no idea he was Gio or anything. So one day during the war, we saw Afra (ph) run into the house and he was crying. "So, my darling, what happened?" So he say, "Well, they been looking for me and they just missed -- they just missed me." So, my dad said, well -- because my dad was quite comfortable with the soldiers. My stepmom used to sell cane juice and other (unintelligible) market stuff, so the soldiers would always come there to drink cane juice and buy cigarettes and stuff like that, so my parents was cool with them. And at this time most of the soldiers who was still fighting was Krahn, to be honest with you, like a huge percentage was them who was still fighting was Krahn. So, Afra kept crying, he came crying to my dad, so my dad said, "Well, we're going to keep, we're going to hide you up in the -- we're going to keep you here," because my dad was pretty comfortable, and then it didn't even take too long the soldiers was coming. So my dad put Afra up in the ceiling. He was supposed to be there, and they came in and they say, "Oh, you a
Krahn man and you here keeping Gio people, we heard that stuff, and if we find any here, we're going to kill you too because you keeping Gio people." But for some reason, they was just dumb enough not to look up in the ceiling.

They didn't -- they didn't find Afra, but he heard what they were saying, so when he got down -- I mean, the guy we called American Joe, his real name was Afra, so when the soldiers left, he told my dad he wasn't going to try to -- he didn't want to endanger his family, so what he was going to do was try to escape and get over to the rebel side; maybe he could be safe down there. So my dad said, "Okay." But when he got out, he didn't even go too far. He didn't even go too far. It wasn't even quite 30 minutes later when the soldiers brought him right back into the yard and shot him.

So, I saw so many -- so many people got killed in my yard before my mom decided that enough is enough, you'll be better off if you go to the Old Road and live with your uncle, so we moved to the Old Road, but my other brother stayed. My mom was afraid I was too young to be able to handle these kinds of stuff. So, one of my other brothers stayed, and my other brother who moved -- we move to the Old Road with my
uncle.

Now, my uncle, he was -- he was active in the government because he worked as a -- he was second in command to Usquaquia (ph) at the telecommunication when it was functioning, the one on Lynch Street. But during that time, during the curfew time, the soldiers, the same AFL soldiers but at that time they was known as Krahn soldiers, they would come to my uncle's house. I later found it out that they were harassing. They would come look in the house. They was -- I found out later that they thought he was conniving with the rebels, so they always used to come there and harass him. So as the fighting got closer to Old Road and the guys that took over the EAW, once they took over EAW, my uncle say it wasn't safe enough, so him and my grandfather, my maternal grandfather, they stay in the house and he asked the rest of the family to go down to Twelfth Street to his son's mother's house, my cousin's mom house. She lives on the Twelfth Street. So we left and we wanted to find out, but I didn't find this out until a year later when I got back from the rebel territory that the day that we left and the rebel took over the Old Road, my grandfather and my uncle got executed. They was beheaded, just to be real graphic. And the only reason was because they got beheaded by
the NPFL rebels, and it was mostly because they was Sabo. And that draws another dimension to the story because at that time, the rebels were not distinguishing between Sabo and Krahn anymore. The fact that these two people belongs, they share -- they belongs to the same language group and they was perceived to be Doe's and the Krahn's number one allies, so there was a linking to the same thing, so my uncle and my grandfather was killed because of that.

Well, so when we got to Twelfth Street, things wasn't -- things wasn't too good. The food problem was getting real drastic. And it was at the time that the INPFL -- I'm running out of time here -- the INPFL had captured Bushrod Island, and including the port, so the fact that they had the last food that was in port, my mom thought it would be a good idea for us to move across the bridge to go to another uncle, a Thomas Dati, because the impression was that they have more food there. So we went down to -- we -- it was me, my brother, Fernade, and my uncle who got killed, Bestman Julu, his son, Bestman Julu, Junior, it was the three of us who took that journey across the bridge in order to get food, and then for my other uncle, Thomas. It was during that time that I personally saw Prince Johnson, the head of the INPFL, shoot his own soldier
in front of me. I saw that with my own eyes, but I heard so many other stories about him killing innocent people, but the one that I saw with my own eyes was he killed his own soldiers. I think he accused them of looting or something, and he killed them. And he was sitting underneath a cotton tree and sing gospel songs all day, but I saw that with my own eyes, so I just wanted to put down in the public record.

Well, to make a long story short, there really wasn't that much food across the bridge, so we had to go all the way back to Ninth Street, but we left mainly because my mom came in, and when she saw me, I looked so bad and malnourished, she said, "Well, you can't stay here. You're going to have to go back to your uncle because I don't think anybody is caring for you, I told your dad, because I don't think anybody is caring for you here." So, we went back to Ninth Street, me and my three brothers and my dad and my stepmother.

But at the time, my father had moved from the house that we originally lived in on the beach because it was getting too much and the community was deserted, so he moved up to -- it was a compound where previously were held by some Episcopals, Episcopal missionaries. They was Caucasian, white ladies, who
did a whole lot of social work in Liberia, but it was
-- they were Christian people. So, we moved, but at the
time they had -- everybody had left the community, but
my father stayed behind because he was crying "Doe was
still alive." As long as Doe was alive, there was
still hope for some things, so we stayed on Ninth
Street, but at the time we were in the compound where
the missionary lived.

So, right about that time, it was around
September, when Doe died, my father was "there's
nothing else to do again," so we just had to abandon.
But the tricky thing is instead of us going to --
towards the barracks, when he finally gave up that we
should leave, we were already surrounded by the INPFL.
So he, when he came home that day, because
he realized that we were already surrounded by the INPFL
and that there was no way we were going to make it to
the barracks, so in less than like 20-35 minutes, while
we were packing, we had to go through a whole new
socialization. We were about to embark on a whole new
journey where everything we knew about our past and our
true identity was supposed to be suppressed in order to
live. One mistake would have led to our death. So,
for like 25 minutes, my dad was lecturing us on how the
new life was going to be because we were headed towards
the rebel-held territory, not going to Grand Gedeh, but we was going to my stepmother's father's house.

My stepmother's parents lived in Bong County, the headquarters of the NPFL, in this town called SKT, Sergeant Kollie Town. That's where my parents lived. It was like 15 minutes from Gbarnga, Charles Taylor's capital. It was like five or 10 minutes from the university, fee -- what's the university -- Cuttington University, and Phebe Hospital in Suakoko, Carey, and all these places to hide. That's why I came.

For the first time to travel, we went to the rural parts of Liberia. So when we got there, because I'm out of time, that was the most -- it wasn't painful at the time; it was just scary knowing that one mistake and you were dead. We was in the lion's den, and we were the people that these people was looking for, and based on my experience that I already had with ethnic cleansing that went on on Ninth Street by the AFC soldiers, that was one of the most terrifying thing ever.

Just one thing I didn't mention -- and I'm running out of time here, we walked -- we walked on -- on the journey from Ninth Street to go to Bong County, my father got arrested not because of his -- not
because he was Krahn, because soldier was looking in his luggage, and he's one of those guy who like to keep old paper. He mistakenly left a old pay stub. Whatever he was keeping that for, I don't know. He left a old pay stub, but on the pay stub it was the NDPL, they had -- they had the word -- they had the symbol NDPL, the National Democratic Party of Liberia, so he said, "That's it. You have to be one of them, you have to be," so he got tied, what the soldiers called what we later learned to be the dogfight tabay. If I may demonstrate it for the people. You would tie with some of the hardest strengths, and you had to make sure that the elbows had to touch, yeah, the elbows had to touch. That was one -- that was one of the method of torture that they had. So, they tied my father up and told us to leave; they was going to kill him. So, there we were, on the road, crying. My ten-year old brother, who was the oldest at the time, he was the bravest one amongst us. As soon as we left that scene, I was crying, my other brother was crying, my stepmom, everybody crying because as far as we was concerned, my father was gone. They was going to kill him.

And we met this -- for the first time, we met this child soldier. He was -- I've got one minute -- he was just about our age, and he was so
eager. He had his big sack of 50-pound bag of rice with him, but for some reason he took a liking to us, and he was so eager to show us this Krahn -- the Krahn person that he killed a few days ago, so we had to go see this Krahn person that he killed, knowing that we ourselves were Krahn and by saying the wrong thing, we would have been dead.

Now, mind you, I was eight years old (unintelligible), but he was a child soldier but was only after the rice. Maybe by one way or other, we was able to convince him to give us some rice, so we followed him, and he show us the dead body. There was -- it was -- it was -- the guy had a military uniform on, and this kid was telling us he killed this guy, and so the reason why I'm saying that was it was no normalcy for me anymore. Once the war started and I started seeing all these things, there was nothing normal anymore. Chaos and just violence became the norm.

So, I just want to make sure that I included a part where my father got arrested. Luckily for us, while we was -- after we went through the rendezvous with this guy, we told him no, we was fine, we didn't want to be soldiers, because he invited us. He said he knew where he was going to take us so we could get our
guns and stuff and be part of the NPFL, but we told him no, we was on our way to Bong County, so he said okay, but we got -- we got a bowl of rice from him, parboiled rice. At the time, it was like gold. You know what it was in Liberia: rice was like gold.

So, luckily for us, when I was going, I heard my dad, "Come, boy," he was calling us. Well, he still had his luggage, and he was screaming. He was calling our names, "Now, turn around (unintelligible)." And we look and realized it was our dad, so we said, "What happened?" He said, well, some -- a senior officer came in and saved him, but his arm was all bruised; it was really bruised. So when we got to Bong County, he had to wear long-sleeved shirts for over -- for like two or three months until the scars were healed because if that didn't happen, he would have been suspicious for something.

But when we got to the town, we was fortunate enough that my parents -- my stepmother's family live on the outskirt of SKT, so my father, rather than having to deal with going to the town and dealing with the common people, so what he did was he did his business in the bush because my father, he was not -- he was not -- he was not -- since he was not highly educated, he spent a lot of time in the
hinterland, so he learned the ways of the rural economy, so that's how we started making a living. He would cut the palm nuts, you know, palm nuts, and then we would take it to the market and we would sell it. And then we tried to make life normal though in the back of our head, we was quite aware that nothing was normal here.

And another point, since I'm out of time, was my stepmother's sisters used to date some of the rebels, some of the soldiers, and a couple of the guys that they used to date -- well, I have to wrap it up now because I'm (unintelligible) spent, but there's just one thing that I would like to say before I close is I'd like for you guys to take a look at the situation that we find ourselves in today as a country, and the manner in which the conflict was resolved.

If we look at African countries like Somalia and some other -- Sudan, they have a prolonged civil war that has intermission. Sometimes they would stop for four, five, ten years, but the conflict would erupt again. I'm afraid the same thing is going to -- might happen in Liberia if we don't do the same thing -- the same thing might happen in Liberia if we don't act, if we don't do the right thing. And what I think is the right thing is to address the fundamental issues that
first led us into this conflict.

    We can start with 19 -- the Rice Riot and all these other triggers that led into the full-blown civil war, but what I personally believe was the reason for the war has to do with the inequality. And I think it is quite a consensus now that inequality led to the instability that finally led to Doe taking over, and because he didn't know any better, events accumulated into the civil war. So, I think we should address the fundamental issue of the war and ask -- more even distribution of the wealth of the country.

    And, secondly, when the war came, during the war, we -- new conflicts developed that wasn't there before the war. And I tried my best to follow the news in Liberia, and to be honest with you, I was quite frustrated to find out that -- I'm not trying to be picking on anybody here -- that a person like Prince Johnson, the former head of the INPFL, that I saw kill innocent people, I mean his own soldiers, with my own eyes, that he is sitting today as a senator without -- without answering no question about nothing that happened. And I read a quote in the news -- on one of those online site that he said the only way he will face you guys to talk is if Samuel Doe come up from out of his -- out of the grave and testify about what
happened to Tolbert; then he will come to you guys and testify. And even the president has been dodging you guys for such a long time.

I think that sends a very bad precedence, because if we can't get past this stage, we are bound to repeat the same mistakes. That's the only reason why you are here today, so that we don't have to repeat the same mistakes that led us into one of the most violent periods of our history. So, I don't know what you can do about that, but those people, it has -- well, see, the people try to confuse the difference between reconciliation and straight out impunity. What Prince Johnson and so many others is going through right now is just impunity. They are not being held responsible for nothing, and that's not reconciliation.

I'll just close right here, so I'll give the other people a chance to have their testimony. Thank you all for listening.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much. We are sorry that you had to be prompted --

THE WITNESS: That's okay.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- in terms of time, but the Commission would have preferred to listen to the witness, and maybe we have questions so that witnesses truly express themselves in the best way
they know how in any campaign.

THE WITNESS: Can you say that again.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: I said we are sorry that you had to be prompted in terms of time limitations.

THE WITNESS: Oh, that's fine.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: As far as the Commission, we would prefer that the witness truly express his or herself, and then we can waive our questions, just to save time, so when we ask you questions, if there is anything significant you left out, you can bring that out in -- during your response.

THE WITNESS: Okay, sure. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- to the questions.

THE WITNESS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: We also want to extend to you sympathy for the death of your relatives and loved ones --

THE WITNESS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: -- during that turbulent period, and the experience you went through. The past director said this is the reason why we have the TROC, so that we can avoid repeating the
mistakes of the past. Two quick questions.

THE WITNESS: Sure.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: You had to go through identity changes just to survive. Did you and your family members change your names?

THE WITNESS: No. It's funny because I was just having a conversation in the hallway. My name -- my name -- my father named me after his -- no, we didn't change our name. My father named me my first name. He tried to name me after his grandfather. His name was Sacko Asmo Sawmo Krahn. But my mom, she was the educated one, my dad didn't read or write, so when she went to the hospital, she put an "R" at the end, and it became Sackor, it is a Kru name, and my last name is Zahnee, but my dad call it Zeahne, so we was able to pass.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: With Sackor?

THE WITNESS: Yeah, we was able to pass, but I made a mistake one time while I was in the rebel-held territory, and I went and told a Bassa guy, who I already told -- because we posed as Bassa. My dad spoke fluent Bassa. That's how we went -- that's how we got by. When we got to the checkpoints, he would speak, (speaking Bassa). We was taught all that to -- so we could be able to get by, were just taught,
so the name wasn't an issue.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. Let's go to Ninth Street.

THE WITNESS: Hmm.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Ninth Street.

THE WITNESS: Yeah.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: On the beach. You said there was constant killings. How frequent were the killings? How long did it last? Did it happen for two months and on a daily basis? What was the average number of persons killed in that area?

THE WITNESS: Well, it didn't start immediately when the war started. It intensified as the fighting got closer. You remember -- do you remember Lutheran? We lived on Ninth Street and Lutheran was right there on 14th Street, and they killed almost thousands of people in Lou King. So, to a certain point I think it wasn't -- say, it wasn't like every day, but in the week' time, you would see two or three. Another week, a hot week, it would be four or five, or sometime you might see two or three in a day.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: How long that went on for?

THE WITNESS: It went on till -- until
the rebel got in the city and they -- they -- until
they was convinced there wasn't no Gio person living
around because if you was Gio, you was dead, or if you
were Mano in the coup, anybody could just say you was
Mano or Gio --

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: So you think
less than ten persons were killed in that area?

THE WITNESS: Less than ten? No, I
think it was more. I think you could count it up to --
it was something that was done consistently. You could
say up to 40 to 50 because, you remember, it was
intervals when I was there on Ninth Street when the
killing started.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Up to 50?

THE WITNESS: I can say.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you
very much. Now, Sheikh.

COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH:
Thank you for your testimony. In your general
statement you talk about political mismanagement. Was
it done by the government and government officials or
were done by private individuals?

THE WITNESS: I think it was done by
government officials and the policy that they pursue,
most especially the military regime, and when -- even
after the election in 1985.

What I was trying to get at was you find that in a lot of other society where -- but mostly African society, where the inter-elite, the inter-elite rivalry, have -- it comes down to affect the common person, because they started off with the Doe and Quiwonkpa stuff. That's how the Gio and the Krahns got that rift, but it was just between Quiwonkpa and Doe and whoever else was involved.

I want you to understand that wasn't historical -- it wasn't a historical divide between. Anyone amongst the Gios and the Manos and the Krahns, or any other tribal (unintelligible), as far as I'm concerned that had to accumulate into people, had to kill at least at every opportunity that they get. So, I think it was political mismanagement on the side of Doe to blame every (unintelligible) for Quiwonkpa's invasion. That was one of the main point. And the subsequent, when the civil war came, they did the same thing to the -- they targeted every Krahn because of Doe mismanagement, or Doe -- whatever deeds that Doe was into. Does that answer your question?

COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH:

When you came to America?

THE WITNESS: I came in '96, right
after the April 6th war.

COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH:
Are you speaking more than Jesse Jackson?

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Mr. Witness?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: You say you were born 1982?


COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: And you left Liberia in 1996?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: So you talking about a political mismanagement thing of the time before you were born, and even you were born after Doe came?

THE WITNESS: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: So what you're talking about is not the facts as you know really what happened; it's what you read about, what you heard, right?

THE WITNESS: And also what I could experience.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: What your experience between 1982, you were one-year old and
1996 --

THE WITNESS: I was 14.

COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: -- you were 14 years. We heard your experiences. Thank you very much for participating in the TROC process and telling the truth of what you know and experience.

Thank you.

THE WITNESS: Thank you, ma'am.

COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you for your presentation. I want to ask you a question that may be a little difficult for you, but just try your best. If you feel it's not possible, then just leave it alone.

THE WITNESS: I try.

COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: You happened to be at a very nexus point between Krahn trying to exterminate a whole tribe, Gio minor, and then Gio minor trying to exterminate Krahn. You lived through both of these experiences.

THE WITNESS: Yes.

COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: So what do you think is the way forward? I'll make it simpler by just asking you that question.

THE WITNESS: Thank you for the question. It's difficult -- it's a difficult question
to answer, but I think it's -- to answer the question, it has to go back to what I was trying to tell the Sheikh over here. Before the war, I don't think -- like, my personal experience before the war, I don't think there was a real rift between the two ethnic group, for all intent and purposes. There was intermarriage; there was cooperation.

I'm another witness. I have one daughter; she's three years old. When I came to the states, her mom is Mano, so I said that I just married -- after what I've been through, I had to go back to a Gio girl again. So, the whole thing was a myth; that's what I'm saying. The fact that they say that we hate this -- you supposed to hate this tribe or this other tribe, hate this, it's a myth. It was done for political expediency. And because Doe wanted to -- he wanted to do the same thing he accused the Congress of, and that's dominance by one ethnic group, so he did everything in his way to demonize the Gios, but in our everyday lives, I think Gio and Mano gets along pretty well. If you go to Philadelphia where I'm from, there's a huge contingent of Gio and Mano people there. We seems to get along pretty well.

So, maybe the best way forward is, you know, we're always looking for -- we're always looking for a
silver bullet. As I was watching -- there is a
documentary, "American Stepchild: Liberia," there's
just a brief clip in it when Doe killed Tolbert. It
was this guy giving -- I don't know if he was giving a
sermon or what he was doing in front of the mansion,
and he was -- he was -- he was, he was making that
analogy that Doe taking over -- he even went as far as
saying this is like Jesus Christ, so, what -- what --
all I'm trying to say is -- what I'm trying to say is
this is all political pandering. These people really
don't hate each other. So what we could do is instead
of looking for a superstar, or the savior, we can
invest in institutions like the TROC. Exactly what
you're doing can help move the way forward.

COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: The
reason I asked you that, and I'm glad you brought the
other point up about Quiwonkpa. You see, the rift
before '80 was that there was this cleavage between the
so-called have and the have-nots. Quiwonkpa wasn't a
native. Now the native came and took over, but then
suddenly they had a cleavage amongst themselves, so in
the whole, what can our nation learn from this?
Especially you, as a young Liberian, you know, going
forward, can you say that we have reconciled our
differences in the sense that we have shed each other's
blood, or is there still some other thing that needs to be done to reconcile that unresolved difference?

THE WITNESS: That's what I was trying to get to at the end of my presentation. We -- if you look at the war ending, they -- they -- Doe was about to run over Monrovia and take over Charles Town, and thank God for Condoleezza Rice and Colin Powell and, amen, President Bush: they intervened. So, technically, the real issues that -- that led us into the war was not addressed right there.

So what the -- during the war we developed other conflict, like the Gios killing the Krahns and the Krahn killing the Gios. So, I think that's out of the hand of -- like I was saying, we have to address the foundations of the problem, and that's creating a level playing field.

A simple thing like -- I came over here before I understand people. There's something called primary education; everybody go to school for free once you pay your taxes. People pay taxes in Liberia, but you've still got to pay school fees. And the lady who spoke before me, Mrs. Tolbert, Tolbert's daughter, she was so eloquent how that helped so many people gain education because he knew -- by the way, Tolbert was my favorite president -- because he knew that education
was the way, you know, to move forward. So simple things like acts that we sure that it's not just words, but it's deeds, like, say, we have primary education. Everybody in every county, like my father never went to school because when he was born, his father was paralyzed, and in the rural setting, he had to be the man, but if we had simple things like primary education, he didn't have to worry about that. Maybe he would -- still would have gone to school. But if the people in certain counties feel like we don't have access to anything while the people in Monrovia are enjoying everything, and thank you for asking the question because it just lead me to one of my most -- it may be controversial, but what I was saying was we have to change certain principles within the constitution.

If you study the history of Liberia, we copied pretty much everything from the United States: the constitution, the flag, the national anthem, the pledge of allegiance. I didn't even have to learn that one when I came over here. I just flipped the words from -- they don't have. So -- but intentionally, America had the fed -- a federalist -- the political structure is a federal state where you have tiers of powers. Each state has its own right to take care of
their own economic business and their own -- they even
got their own educational standards and all that kinds
of stuff.

But in Liberia, what the Americo-Liberians
did, I'm not trying to push anything back, they
intentionally created a unitary form of government, and
that was done intentionally so that it was much easier
for you to control the masses once you had just one
central government to -- if you have one central
government that runs everything, that mean you don't
have to worry about the other powers. So, a simple
thing like -- that's why I'm thinking Doe had a chance
to -- he wrote a new constitution, but he never even
addressed something like that. So, I think a simple
thing like a federalist state, and I think the current
administration is moving to that direction.

I think they've got this thing where they
give out a million dollars or so to county development
funds, and every year is a yearly thing, so where you
give -- instead of us -- once again, instead of us
looking for Jesus Christ to come save us, we have to
have confidence in our people. If you give people --
if you give -- if you have federal powers where the
counties are in charge of their well-being first, maybe
every county won't make it, but some counties will make
it; some counties will provide stuff for their people. That's what I'm saying, like give people the chance to breathe, like the Nimbadians, who benefit from the iron ore that comes from the Nimba mountain. They should get the first cut before the central government get their second cut. We all should function within a federal system. We all should -- or federalist -- we all should function and have the ability to do our own stuff within the overall national structure. That's what I feel.

COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you.

THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Thank you for coming.

THE WITNESS: Thank you, ma'am.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: And my sympathy for the death of your relatives.

THE WITNESS: I appreciate it.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: You say your uncle, Bestman Julu, died along with your grandfather?

THE WITNESS: Yes.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: What's the name of your grandfather?
THE WITNESS:  James Dartoe, last name is D-A-R-T-O-E.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI:  You did not have the opportunity to end in your story, which you have hear of.

THE WITNESS:  That's okay.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI:  And --

THE WITNESS:  It's going to be in the record.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI:  So there are some information we did not get, so I just want to ask, apart from your uncle and your grandfather, did any other person die from you during the civil war?

THE WITNESS:  Yes.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI:  Can you please name them for us?

THE WITNESS:  My sister, my older sister, that I mentioned earlier, Wiladay, she died.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI:  Willanette?

THE WITNESS:  Her name is Wiladay.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI:  Wendy?

THE WITNESS:  Wiladay.
Wiladay?

MR. ZAHNE: Yeah. She died.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Julu, her last name was Julu?

THE WITNESS: No, her name is Dartoe.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Dartoe?

THE WITNESS: Uh-huh. She took my mother's family's name.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: And how did she die?

THE WITNESS: Just -- that, we don't know. We have no grave. She didn't live with us, so we were separated during the war. The only thing we know, we never find her. We kept -- people kept telling us, well, she went to Nigeria, but then some other person told us they died in her house when rocket hit it, but we got no evidence, but we never seen her since then.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: What is her husband's name?

THE WITNESS: Her husband.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Yes.

THE WITNESS: She didn't have a husband.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Oh,
okay. I thought you said she died with her husband.

THE WITNESS: No, I said somebody else told us, somebody who's supposed to know her location.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Okay.

Thank you so much. I hope we get --

THE WITNESS: And my youngest sister, her name was Princess Dartoe. She die from cholera when we went to -- when we went to Bong County.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Princess Dartoe?

THE WITNESS: Yeah. I mean, Princess Zahnee, I'm sorry. Then during the April 6th war, my uncle, we call him Pe-Pe, he got executed. He was trying to cross from the Bushrod Islands.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Your uncle, what's his name?

THE WITNESS: Pe-Pe, we call him Pe-Pe.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Pe-Pe?

THE WITNESS: Yeah, Pe-Pe Dartoe, but he fought when ULIMO came. He went to Bomi Hills and he took up arms, so.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: He got executed by whom?

THE WITNESS: He got executed by the forces that came to -- I'm not sure which, because
during the 1996, April 6th war, all the other warring factions came to Monrovia, but the story that we got was ULIMO-K who killed him. He got executed at the new bridge trying to cross because he understood that because that he fought for ULIMO-J and the area he was in got over, the ULIMO-K are just coming to Monrovia during the April 6th, so it wasn't safe for him to be across the bridge, so he was trying to get over to the barracks where his ethnic people was. That's when he got caught.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Okay. Thank you so much.

THE WITNESS: You're welcome, ma'am.

COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Mr. Witness, for a very young man, I must commend you -- your ability to remember and recount the experiences, and also your commitment to follow the history of Liberia and just sort of stay with the country, even though you here, but you seem to be on top of what has happened there, so congratulations.

THE WITNESS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: The theme of this diaspora hearings is confronting our difficult past for a better future, that the diaspora experience, so my question, my first question, to you
centers around the experiences of Liberians in the
diaspora, and, basically, the youth. I consider you a
member of the youthful class. You, like many other
young Liberians, migrated here during a time of, you
know, actual conflict in a country. What has been your
experience or maybe the experience of your community as
a youth, and how has what happened to you in Liberia
impacted what is happening with you now in the United
States in terms of assimilating into the culture,
embracing the various issues that this new society
brings your way as a youth who has experienced a lot of
trauma? Can you throw some light on that for us?

THE WITNESS: Because America is such a
wonderful place to be, so it is really not that
difficult living here, so -- but you a mother, I'm not
-- I'm sorry, but you may be a mother, so most Liberian
families, we was taught to -- we don't even say I love
you that much to our parents so, for a larger extent,
we suppress our innermost feelings. For a long time I
really didn't -- I never put this story together as one
collective event until I came here and was doing a
school newspaper and they kept bugging me: You've got
to get your paperwork done. I'm like, oh, I've got a
nice story. Maybe I can just tell them the story about
the war.
That was the first time I actually let out my feelings about it, but I don't think -- because we suppressed the feelings so strongly, I don't think -- and my parents was there for us, they would make sure we was in line, so I don't think that the trauma that we went through down there, it didn't affect us to -- I think it did positively because when we came, we lived in what they consider the ghetto area. It was bad, it was bad stuff, but when we looked at it, we knew what bad is, so the shootings and the robberies and those stuff really didn't bother us because we was used to worse. So, I think it was not traumatic, it was actually helpful in a certain way that it was -- we just brushed these things off because we know what -- what's real suffering is. So we go to school and the people say, ah, this inner city school is not well-funded, and the school looked like a heaven, so it was quite different. I think we had -- we had a great experience. We was just happy to be here, so we didn't look back. We just moved forward.

COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you. A follow-up to my question, I -- you're from Philadelphia.

THE WITNESS: Yeah.

COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: I live
in the Philadelphia area myself. I fled Liberia in 1999 and went back home two years ago to join the Truth Commission, and one thing we saw happening to the community there was that in the past four years, there have been a lot of problems with Liberian youths in the Philadelphia area. A lot of them are being picked up now by police, some even involving the issue of murder, drugs and, you know, those kinds of things, which has been very disturbing for Liberians in the Philadelphia area and also Liberians in, you know, the United States overall. How -- how is your community, again as a youth, how are you guys coping with all of this negativity now that seems to be coming out of the youthful population in Philadelphia, and how does it affect the community's own outlook on people like you who came from, you know, home and a troubled past?

THE WITNESS: I think you hit it right on the nose. You really are from Philadelphia. The problem really didn't start until like a few years ago, and not like it wasn't a problem, but it got worse like four or five years ago, just like you said.

We try to make fun of other people from Buduburum and say these other people from Buduburum are different people, but it's not having a good impact, but some -- what it did was it motivated someone like
me to try to take up leadership because I had an experience where in Liberia, it was so -- it was quite common in the community, the first social organization that you belong to is a soccer team. So when we came over here, we tried to do the same thing, and we set up -- I set up this soccer team. It was youth, mostly youth.

But I had to go to college, so the team broke down. But on that list of my players, like half of them, was doing the same thing that you was talking about, was getting arrested, was selling drugs, was getting -- like the worst thing, so that prompted me like -- when I came back from college and was -- it kept getting worse, so that made me to realize the importance of the soccer team and the various -- the local -- there really wasn't that much leadership within this community until now. We starting to see action, like Acona (ph). And I think -- I'm sure you're aware of Acona and some other -- it has prompted other Liberians to take up leadership because we know, by and large, that we don't behave like this, but who's to tell what these -- the people who is behaving like this, who's to tell whether they are not -- they are not responding or this is not a result of what they experienced during the war. All we can do is to try to
help them make it work.

But in overall, my answer to that is I think it has sparked awareness in the community, and we are getting some positive responding, including myself. I'm helping with the youth coaching and try to straight -- be a positive role model to some of the younger guys and just try to talk to them. We play soccer, but we don't try to keep it at soccer because it's a game. We're trying to use soccer to get to them, and if -- if you give them a few time, it's going to get better instead of getting worse.

I think one thing is that we associate with the rap music, and don't get me wrong, I'm a big fan of hip hop, but I'm not a big fan of the gangsta' rap, but most of the kids who come in, they listen to the gangsta' rap and they can't distinguish between, because their favorite artist is saying stuff that they think is true, and they can't distinguish between the lifestyle that somebody is just rapping and what is true that somebody actually is doing, and so I think it's the culture, too, the music and the attitude, and some people are just bad.

COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you very much.

THE WITNESS: You're welcome, ma'am.
COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Thank you very much. You -- it's like my colleague said, as a young person, you come across to me as somebody who has a lot of hope, determination, and ready to play a role in seeing that the community is, I would say, robbed of it's -- this hopelessness that you like characterizing. What would you say are the -- are the major challenges, problems, that young Liberians, male and female, face here in America, especially in the inner cities? What do you think are the major challenges and problems, and how you think they can get around it, though you already listed that using football as a way of kind of therapy in getting people together and inspiring them to aspire to a better life rather than getting them in drugs and things like that. So what would -- you said are major challenges, and what kinds of dreams do these kids, young people, have for their homeland, for their country? Do they ever look forward to going back or just a lost ship on the sea?

THE WITNESS: Thank you. Well, I really haven't given that question a lot of thought. But the whole negativity thing is just a recent event, but if there was one thing that I can put my fingers on is if you look at African-American community, they're facing a lot of issues right now because at one point
all the dads lefts: either your daddy's in the prison
or he just abandoned you. I'm not saying that we
having the same problem here, but the fact that some of
us come from single parents' homes and our parents, you
know, to make a living -- you know we Liberians, we
workaholics, we work way too much, so sometimes in the
household, my experience, I barely never got to see my
mother when I came. We saw her late in the night and
early in the morning, on her way from work or on her
way to work, so there really wasn't that much
supervision. She just entrusted us to behave in a
certain way, but that may not be true for everybody,
but I think that could be a problem where after school
kids don't have nothing to do, there's no supervision
at the house, and they go astray sometime. But by and
large, I think I won't consider it -- it's alarming,
but -- well, it's cause for concern, but I don't think
it's alarming yet.

I think, for the most part, young Liberians
are engaging themselves in very positive things, and
doing big things for this country just is going to have
to take time. A personal friend of mine making it to
the NFL is somebody that I knew from we played video
games together, and all kinds of other things like lots
of kids, lots of people my age, goes to college and
taking up leadership positions and got their mind on Liberia. Why -- there may be one or two bad apples. I think, by and large, I think we -- it's not a big problem. I think we okay compared to -- it could be worse, but I think we okay. It's not -- with the exception that maybe when these parents can create more time to spend with the kids and the community gets more involved with the after-school program.

And one thing is also is to reconnect. Some kids is growing up here and they have no idea where Africa is on the map. It's not there for us because they went to school here, and when you go to school here, there's not too much attention paid towards the geography and the African culture and stuff like that, so you get disconnected and you behave in a certain way. But because you know where we come from, we -- the discipline -- discipline is a little tougher over there, so I'm not quite sure what -- because I don't think it's a big problem, that's all, but it is a growing problem, but not -- I don't think it's anything major yet. Until then, we can just do -- take up leadership position, mentor, and be positive role models.

COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Thank you very much.
COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much for coming to share experience, and have my sympathy for the death of your relatives you lost during the war.

THE WITNESS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: You talk about your experience in Gbarnga and the little kid you met. He told you that he kill a Krahn man, and you, too, at that time were very young, but can you guess the age of that kid at that time?

THE WITNESS: Just by going by height, my older brother was ten years old, he wasn't taller than my brother, so maybe he was -- he was a child soldier. He was about -- he could not have passed -- if he was just short, he could not be more than 15. He was either between 10 and 15 because his gun was almost big as he was.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Okay. I want us to go back again on Ninth Street. You say over 40 person were killed on Ninth Street?

THE WITNESS: Yeah, I think it was a lot more.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Yes. And your father lived there, and he talked for one of the persons who you --
THE WITNESS: He talked for several other people.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: He talked for several other people?

THE WITNESS: Uh-huh.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: And the relationship between he and the soldiers at that time, they didn't make any change?

THE WITNESS: No. It was just like -- because he was quite confident that they wasn't going to do nothing to him.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Not him, now, the people that they were killing all the time, people they used to bring on the beach to kill.

THE WITNESS: Oh, these people that they was killing was not -- except for Afra, that I knew, these people were not neighbors. They would go somewhere and bring these people. Quite possibly they was going to Lutheran and getting people and bringing them before the massacre happened. They was taking them from other places. I can't even guarantee you these people was Gio or anything. But we didn't interact with these people. Most of these people we didn't know. The only time my father interacted was when there was somebody's from the neighborhood, but by
that time, if you was Mano or you was Gio, you knew better that to try to get out of there. So, there really wasn't too many people still left in the community; there really wasn't too much interaction going.

Most of the people who stay around was either Krahn or they have some kind of a -- some kind of a confidence that they was going to be okay, but if you was Mano, if you was Gio, you had no business there. You had to leave. So, they -- we didn't interact too much with these people, except for Afra. I knew him -- I knew him when I was a kid before the war, and then they shot him like right there when I was there looking. And I saw so many other people got shot, even when I went to (unintelligible), the same thing continued. Killing people was the norm. There was no law and order.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: So, I checked when your father had a pay stub of NDPL on the pay stub?

THE WITNESS: I didn't hear the question.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Your father had a pay stub and on this pay stub it was marked NDPL?

THE WITNESS: Yeah, the NDPL was
somewhere on the pay stub.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: So -- and what's happened as a result of the soldiers seeing that, anything?

THE WITNESS: Yeah, that's when he got tied, that when he got arrested and tied. And then they also accused him, because he was an electrician, he used to -- the stuff that they wear to climb the pole, you have to -- you laced it around your muscles, but because he wore that routinely, it left a little mark on his leg, and they also accused him of being a soldier. They said those were marks that was made from military boots. So, that's when he got tied with the tabay thing, and they tied him. The thing is they tied you so back your elbows touch, your chest is popping off, like a razor blade can cut you open because your elbows are touching. Believe me, I can't even imagine it right now. It's very painful being like this, but your elbows, they tie you so bad, your elbows have to touch. That was quite common. It was called tabay. Before they even did it to you, they asked you which you want: the chicken tabay or the dogfight tabay. They had various types and you just picked your own poison.

COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you
for coming.

THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: I just want to ask, what was he doing with the pistol?

THE WITNESS: What did he do with the pay stub.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: What was he doing?

COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: The pay stub. Okay.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Oh, a pay stub. Okay, okay, okay.

THE WITNESS: A check stub.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: A check -- okay, okay, okay. So where is he now? Where is he?

THE WITNESS: My father.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Yeah.

THE WITNESS: He lives in Darby. We all migrate over here.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Oh, okay. And your mother?

THE WITNESS: Yeah, she was the first to come over.

VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Okay.

Thank you.
THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Mr. Witness, is there anything else you have left to say you haven't said?

THE WITNESS: Except the fact that I think I know you, I think I do, but somebody told me it was your brother I was thinking about, but I think your brother is Teja CWA (ph).

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Yeah.

THE WITNESS: Yeah, it was your brother, not you, but same last name.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Yeah.

THE WITNESS: Other than that, there is nothing. I want to give other people a chance to come up here and say their testimonies.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: The Sheikh is suggesting if you have anything else, you can communicate --

THE WITNESS: Yeah, it's going to be -- I'm going to leave my statement, I'm going to leave it here before I leave.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay. Thank you very much. We appreciate you coming and sharing your experience, and you went a little bit beyond your experience you had, recommendations and suggesting that
we address the fundamental problems which put us in
inequality in a distribution of opportunities and
resources in our country. We think that's a very
profound statement coming from a young and enterprising
Liberian as you are.

THE WITNESS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much.

THE WITNESS: Thank you very much. God bless you all, God bless Liberia, and God bless America.

CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay.

(Applause.)
REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Holly Nordahl, a Registered Reporter, do 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 11th day of June 2008, at the time and place specified.

DATED: July 29, 2008.

/s/___________________________
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