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TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA  
DIASPORA PROJECT

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

TESTIMONY OF  
WILHELMINA HOLDER

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

- Court Reporter:
  - Sherri Flagg, RPR, CLR

1           The following proceedings were had and made of  
2 record, commencing at approximately 12:50 p.m.

3                                   \*           \*           \*

4                                   WILHELMINA HOLDER,

5                                   first duly sworn to tell the truth,

6                                   testified as follows:

7                   CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Please be seated.

8 Welcome, Madam Witness.

9                   THE WITNESS: Good afternoon, sir.

10                   CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: We are certainly  
11 delighted that you took off your time to come and join us at  
12 these hearings for the purpose of doing some introspection  
13 and reflecting on our past, sharing our experiences in the  
14 hope that we can come to grips with the reality of what  
15 transpired and find a way towards lasting peace and  
16 reconciliation in our country.

17                   We also want to establish the truth because a lot  
18 of myth and falsehood have been formed over time, and at this  
19 stage we think that the truth is necessary. And this  
20 Commission was established for that purpose, hoping that by  
21 an understanding of the truth, we can be truly liberated from  
22 our biases, from our faults, so that we can be a better  
23 nation that our children and grandchildren will inherit. So  
24 we thank you for coming again and we say welcome.

25                   THE WITNESS: Thank you for inviting me. It is a

1 real privilege.

2 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you. We will use  
3 this time now to personally introduce the Commissioners, and  
4 following that we will ask you a few preliminary questions  
5 and then you proceed with your testimony.

6 At your immediate right is Commissioner Sheikh  
7 Kafumba Konneh, next to him is Commissioner Pearl Brown Bull,  
8 next to her is Commissioner Gerald Coleman. At my immediate  
9 left is Commissioner Dede Dolopei, at my immediate right is  
10 Commissioner Massa Washington, next to her is Commissioner  
11 John Stewart, and then Commissioner Oumu Syllah. I am Jerome  
12 Verdier.

13 To begin with, can you kindly confirm your full  
14 name for our records.

15 THE WITNESS: My name is Wilhelmina Holder, my  
16 maiden name Tolbert.

17 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Your maiden name is  
18 Tolbert?

19 THE WITNESS: Yeah, my father's name was Tolbert.

20 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Your date of birth,  
21 please.

22 THE WITNESS: August 29th, 1945.

23 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Where do you reside  
24 currently in the U.S.?

25 THE WITNESS: I reside in Plymouth, Minnesota.

1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Vocation?

2 THE WITNESS: By profession I'm presently the  
3 executive director of a nonprofit organization called Women's  
4 Initiative for Self-Empowerment. But my profession is I'm a  
5 public health physician.

6 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Can you say when you  
7 left Liberia and migrated to the U.S.?

8 THE WITNESS: I came to Liberia August 3rd, 1985.

9 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: You left Liberia August  
10 3rd, 1985?

11 THE WITNESS: Yes, I left Liberia, sorry. I left  
12 Liberia August 3rd, 1985.

13 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much, and  
14 you may proceed now.

15 THE WITNESS: I would like to first begin by  
16 thanking God Almighty for the opportunity to be here in the  
17 land of the living to tell my story because, but for the  
18 grace of God, I would be dead. That's the first person. I  
19 give him the praises and the glory for all He has done for me  
20 and my family thus far and all He is capable of doing for all  
21 of us in the future.

22 I also want to thank this Commission. I think  
23 it's fantastic and wonderful and is in the interest of  
24 Liberia and of our children yet unborn. But what you're  
25 doing today will benefit our children, and so I'm here very

1 excited to tell the story and I hope you will give me leeway  
2 to tell it the way I want to tell it. But it's going to be  
3 completely truthful. I have no reason to misinform because I  
4 know the importance of the truth.

5           Yesterday I read a passage that I think I would  
6 like to read again, that truth is so obscure in these times  
7 and falsehood so established that unless we love the truth,  
8 we cannot know it. And it is by Blaise Pascal. And I know  
9 that everybody on this team loves the truth. There is a  
10 purpose for you all to be here and I thank you for that.

11           I thank all the supporters, the Advocate for Human  
12 Rights here in Minnesota, all the international supporters,  
13 the -- many people had to give up their time and money to  
14 make this possible. So I cannot name the names, but I  
15 especially say the Advocates for Human Rights because it was  
16 them that encouraged me to come and speak and people that  
17 supported me, Laura and Mark, they encouraged me to speak and  
18 I'm thankful for that.

19           And I also want to thank my daughter, Yende  
20 Anderson, who heard about this. And she came forward, she  
21 say, "You know, you have to tell your story, you have to tell  
22 your story." She's a young lady, my daughter, and I would  
23 like to thank her for encouraging me to tell the story.

24           So I really want to start by maybe a little bit  
25 about myself, my family. My father was a God-fearing man and

1 my mother similarly; and they were people full of love and  
2 devotion for truth, devotion for education, devotion for  
3 sharing. And those people have inspired me and I'm standing  
4 on their shoulders today because what I am, I'm their  
5 product, I'm their fruit. And anybody knows by your fruit,  
6 you will know them. If you want an orange, you go to an  
7 orange tree. And I represent my parents here today and I'm  
8 pleased I can speak on their behalf.

9 I also want to say why I wanted to talk to this --  
10 to this body because I know the truth is important and we  
11 have to find the truth in order to heal. It's like the  
12 analogy of an abscess. There's this pain and suffering but  
13 you have to cut the abscess to get out the pus, get the pus  
14 out and clean it out in order for healing. And I know this  
15 is painful for many people and -- but the cleaning and  
16 telling the truth, that's the only way we'll heal. So I'm  
17 happy to be part of this.

18 And I'm also concerned that a member of my family  
19 speak. Many of us had to leave. We parted the Diaspora out  
20 of Liberia so I want to represent my family. I'm not  
21 speaking for all of them because everybody's an individual.  
22 My story I tell is my story. But I can represent people that  
23 were being -- a lot of violence and abuse were perpetrated on  
24 us, and I wanted to tell the story because -- not because I'm  
25 angry and -- because I'm not, in fact. All my anger and pain

1 dissipated within a year. I was privileged to have a little  
2 Bible like this and I brought it to show, a New Testament.  
3 When the coup took place, I read it every day and it,  
4 cleansed me and healed me.

5           So I'm here to talk out of love because only  
6 through love we can achieve anything. And I want for people  
7 in Liberia to realize that the only way we can achieve is  
8 through love. We have to get rid of the pain and the  
9 suffering. I've achieved what I've achieved in this country  
10 because I didn't carry baggage. If you carry a baggage, if  
11 you carry all your stuff from yesterday, we have to -- it's  
12 good to tell the truth that we know it. And the reason we  
13 need to tell the truth and archive it is so that we can  
14 remember that this will never happen again, at least not to  
15 this extent.

16           It's not that we'll always have peace. Of course  
17 not. But during time of conflict, there's a way to solve  
18 conflict. There's a right and just way, there's a legal and  
19 right way. And this is the reason why we have to get this  
20 out.

21           Will I ever forget? Oh, no, why should I forget?  
22 It's all right for us to remember because we don't want it to  
23 happen again. And history is something that we have to  
24 remember. We can't erase history. We've got to remember  
25 that we have to remember history because it's important; it

1 tells us where we came from and those places that we don't  
2 want to go back again. We have to remember so we do not go  
3 back again.

4           So this is why I'm here to talk in front of this  
5 body and use the time of this lady typing away and the  
6 photographers and all of that, to tell the story not just for  
7 you in this room but for people outside this room, people out  
8 around the world, because what I'm saying will affect other  
9 people in other countries also. So I thank you for that.

10           And I realize that shortly after the coup, I  
11 learned that you have to love your neighbors and also love  
12 your enemies and do good to them that use you and abuse you.  
13 I learned very quickly that vengeance is mine, I will repay,  
14 you know, the atrocities. I never once thought about picking  
15 up arms and doing anything to harm anybody because I learned  
16 from the good book, the Bible, the Holy Bible, that it is God  
17 that will take care of those that harm you because I also  
18 learned that if you live by the sword, you will die by the  
19 sword. And I learned also that whatever a man soweth, that  
20 shall he reap.

21           And it's not that I'm happy for evil to come on  
22 anybody. It's not -- because God is just, it's not me. But  
23 I never wish harm to anybody, even Doe. In fact, I was sorry  
24 for Doe. I was so hurt when I -- somebody gave me a video  
25 "From Hero to Zero," that they slaughtered this man. It was

1 so painful, I cried for him. And funny, when he killed my  
2 father, I couldn't cry because I was running for my life.  
3 But I could cry for Doe, even though he killed my father.  
4 And the reason I wanted him to be alive because he should be  
5 here today to tell his story. He has a story, too, to tell  
6 and unfortunately we can't hear his story and that saddens me  
7 today.

8           I said about -- Mr. Hunder talked about the Weh  
9 Syen murder and we learned that there was 17 men that staged  
10 a coup. And out of those 17 men, I believe all of them died  
11 within the ten years and it was very sad. And only I believe  
12 one is alive in North Carolina. I don't know his name, but  
13 somebody told me he's alive and maybe he should be telling  
14 his story here.

15           So that's a little bit to tell you why I wanted to  
16 come and testify. I have no hatred in my heart for anybody.  
17 Even those people who planned the coup or who led the seed of  
18 hatred to have destroyed our country the way it is. Every  
19 time I think about it it makes me disturbed, and I would like  
20 to ask each one of them individually: Why did they do that?  
21 But it's done already so we have to move forward, so we're  
22 here to move forward today.

23           Personally my family was -- my mother, they call  
24 her "the Via lady," that's why she wasn't killed when they  
25 killed my father. But nobody knew that her father's people

1 had roots in America, they came from America, Little Rock,  
2 Arkansas, in fact. So we were a mixed family, a family of  
3 ancestors -- we had ancestors that came from the states and  
4 my mother's mother never left Liberia.

5 But I -- the reason I bring this up, because there  
6 was the history that was told yesterday and I wanted to let  
7 Mr. Konneh know that I encourage him to get other people  
8 together to tell the story because the story cannot be told  
9 from one person. There's no expert, very few experts in this  
10 world, I would say. But, you know, whenever you want to tell  
11 the story, make sure you -- whatever you going to write, do  
12 research to make sure it's true and completely truthful.

13 But I think the story has to be told, it has to be  
14 told from different angles and people have to bring many  
15 people together to write the story. And this is one of my  
16 recommendations: a history book of Liberia, accurate history  
17 book, not what some American guy said or somebody that came  
18 to visit Liberia for a short time came and said. We need to  
19 tell the story, we need to get people from the villages,  
20 chiefs and so on, to tell part of the story because there is  
21 people out there that can tell an accurate story.

22 So sorry if I deviate a little bit, but I want to  
23 -- so my family: My father, he was a farmer. I think he  
24 took it from the farms, he was a -- his ancestor came from  
25 South Carolina.

1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Who was your father?

2 THE WITNESS: My father, William Tolbert. He  
3 didn't come from there, his grandfather came from there. But  
4 they were from South Carolina and they were farmers, and my  
5 father and his father were farmers. They were first farmers;  
6 they had horses, cattle. And so no wonder he thought rice --  
7 that we should be able to produce our own rice. But he was  
8 first a farmer at heart. He became a businessman, a  
9 politician, and finally vice president for 19 years and  
10 finally president of Liberia. But deep at heart, he had a  
11 love for his country.

12 And I mean, I can't -- I couldn't understand it  
13 when I was smaller because my house was always full of people  
14 from all tribes. Nobody ever talked about tribes in our  
15 house, but people talked different languages, different  
16 dialects that we called it then. But it was okay. People  
17 were bringing the children to my father to send to school.  
18 Some of them came young, some of them came while they were in  
19 college.

20 Elijah Taylor were one of those that came from --  
21 his father, the chief, Tamba Taylor, he came to our home, he  
22 stayed with us, he went to college in Monrovia. So -- but my  
23 father's base was in Bensonville, they call it Bentol as a  
24 city. But in Bensonville, that's where we lived and grew  
25 and that's where I have a love for -- for everybody. I mean,

1 there were people in my house who -- and also I thought it  
2 was important that my father -- we prayed every morning,  
3 every evening. In the morning there was prayers, in the  
4 evening there was prayers. And that's when I first got to  
5 know about God and everybody in my house, we all learned.

6 And so a little background, my father being vice  
7 president for 19 years, of course he saw -- and during that  
8 period he was prepared to know what to do for Liberia. So  
9 when he became President, when Tubman, when President Tubman  
10 died, he already knew certain things he wanted to change and  
11 he tried to do things rapidly. And -- but obviously it  
12 wasn't rapid enough for people, but he had wonderful plans  
13 for Liberia.

14 He felt that there should be change in the strict  
15 code of ethics, professional ethics. People should go to  
16 work on time. A few people were fired from their job. If he  
17 found a minister not in office when they were supposed to be  
18 in office, I think one or two people lost their job. So in  
19 the meantime trying to change Liberia, he was also creating  
20 enemies.

21 Another thing that he got rid of was the public  
22 relation officers who were people that were being paid to be  
23 watchmen in the community. But he thought that was not  
24 right, he got rid of that. And then there were a lot of -- a  
25 group of people that didn't like that.

1           He also changed the dress code. Official of  
2 government, most of them had to wear coat and tie and if you  
3 went to a big ball, it was tailcoat and so on. And he --  
4 when he was sworn in as president to take over after Tubman  
5 died, he was in the sweatsuit and he just thought that was  
6 the most comfortable dress so he continued wearing it. So  
7 the dress code changed to be more casual, which was good  
8 because then every single person could come to the table, to  
9 balls and parties, and they were comfortable. And I thought  
10 that was a good thing.

11           But as all these things -- first he spoke about  
12 the youth as the "special jewels," he had scholarships and a  
13 whole lot of things. Vice President Bennie Warner spoke  
14 about it yesterday, so I will not repeat about it. Maybe  
15 it's because they say she would speak good about her father,  
16 but I would speak good about anybody, whether it's my father  
17 or not.

18           So the Rice Riots, we heard about it yesterday so  
19 I'm not going to say much. But it was then -- when I got to  
20 Liberia in 1973, after graduating from medical school, I -- I  
21 was -- I had the opportunity to stay in Canada where I  
22 studied medicine. And I could have done my internship, but I  
23 was so eager to go back to help with the development of  
24 Liberia. I left everything, rushed to Liberia, I said I'm  
25 going to do my internship in Liberia.

1           And while I was there, I realized that  
2 preventative medicine was the best. Children were dying from  
3 measles, whooping cough, tetanus, all of those things,  
4 diarrhea, diseases. So I wanted to help the children of  
5 Liberia, so I went to London School of Hygiene. I did  
6 tropical public health and I thought I was in my dream job  
7 when I came back and I became the Deputy WHO Program  
8 Coordinator for Liberia. I worked tirelessly, tirelessly. I  
9 worked within -- I became the National WHO Program  
10 Coordinator, World Health Organization Program Coordinator  
11 in 1978 and the coup took place in 1980 but during those two  
12 years, were able to write the first health plan, national  
13 program plan for Liberia with the assistance of the UN DP,  
14 the international health establishment in Liberia, and the  
15 Department Ministry of Health. So I was very pleased for  
16 that.

17           The reason I brought that up because I wanted to  
18 show you that -- and how did I even become a doctor? I  
19 remember when I was just finishing high school, my father  
20 told me, "Hey, what are you planning to do?" And I was -- at  
21 that time I had just learned German and French, and I was the  
22 only one in my father's -- among my father's children that  
23 left Liberia to go abroad to study before I finished my first  
24 degree. And I would say that the reason I left was because  
25 my best friend, Wilhelmina Tubman, President Tubman's

1 daughter, was going to Switzerland and his father -- her  
2 father, President Tubman, asked my father for me to go with  
3 her, so I went with her.

4           And it was a blessing for me because I learned how  
5 to -- I learned about diversity. I mean, I saw diversity in  
6 my home, but I learned about diversity outside Liberia. I  
7 was in the International School of Geneva. But just to say  
8 the reason I brought it up, I wanted -- at that time all I  
9 knew I loved to see interpreting. I went to United Nations,  
10 saw the interpreters. I said, oh, I want to be an  
11 interpreter.

12           And the reason I say that, I remember now I liked  
13 to talk a lot. But my father said, "Interpreter?" And I  
14 say, "Yeah, I want to be an interpreter." He said, "Well,  
15 how will you help Liberia? How will you help your people?"

16           I looked at him -- I mean, at that time I was 16  
17 or so. I said, "Well, I can represent Liberia at United  
18 Nations." He said, "Oh, think twice about it."

19           So I went back and I said, well, you know, I'm  
20 good at science and my mother told me I was good at caring  
21 for people; maybe I should look at science. So I went and  
22 started studying science and then I became a doctor. But I  
23 say this because my father was the type of person he would  
24 encourage people to get the best out of themselves. And he  
25 went to different places in the rural area, like Vice

1 President Warner said he went to Vahun; yes, he went to  
2 Vahun. He got a young fellow from Vahun called Armah and  
3 James Armah was in this area; he would have never gone to  
4 school. And James Armah was brought and he studied in -- he  
5 was living with my sister, Christine Norman, Christine  
6 Tolbert Norman; and now he's in the states and he's an  
7 engineer.

8           But my father took people from different areas.  
9 He had a knack of finding people that -- he said this person  
10 is bright. He always said this person is bright. I think I  
11 got some of his tendency because now I sense people's spirit.  
12 I can see somebody that's evil and I can say, oh, and shun  
13 him. But he had a knack of saying this person would be  
14 achieving.

15           And he loved Liberians. And when I say he loved  
16 the youth of Liberia, he knew that our -- our future depended  
17 on the youth and education was key to that. He even went to  
18 the rural area, brought a fellow that had no arms. In fact,  
19 he said e was traveling and they had this fellow in the  
20 kendijah. He didn't know, the people say it was meat. He  
21 say, "No, no, no, let me see what's in that kendijah." And  
22 they opened the kendijah -- and by the way, he spoke fluent  
23 Kpele because he lived with the people. My mother spoke  
24 Kpele and Via because she lived with the people, too.

25           "So take that down," he say. He spoke to people

1 in Kpele. There was a human baby that they were going to  
2 throw away, and this fellow, he didn't have arms. So my  
3 father took him and he stayed in our house. He went to  
4 school, he was his clerk. He used to type with his arms,  
5 with his nubs.

6           So that's the type of person, the father, I knew.  
7 And because of that, I myself, now I'm working in this  
8 country working -- I've worked with all groups; people in  
9 prostitution, people that are drug addicts. I help in  
10 directing refugee immigrants to get integrated in the  
11 community, helping foreign-trained professionals get their  
12 license. So I learned from my father to help others who are  
13 less fortunate than myself.

14           So I gave you a background like that because I  
15 wanted to at least tell you where I'm from and who I am. So  
16 where do I go on. (Examining document.)

17           The 1979 riot, we heard about it yesterday and we  
18 also heard a little bit today about -- there was a question  
19 about Baccus Matthew and whether they wanted to kill Baccus  
20 Matthew. There was no plan to kill Baccus Matthew. That was  
21 a rumor. My father released Baccus, was forgiving Baccus  
22 Matthew. Baccus Matthew aunt was related to my father  
23 somehow or other. I mean, grandmother, sorry, his  
24 grandmother. And his grandmother came and asked forgiveness  
25 for Baccus, even though Baccus Matthew himself was not

1 repentant. His grandmother and my father pardoned Baccus  
2 Matthew. There was no -- there was going to be no execution  
3 of anybody.

4           So the atmosphere in the Liberia Rice Riot, I  
5 always wonder why it was staged at that time. We were right  
6 about to have the OAU in Liberia, Organisation of African  
7 Unity, a great period of our history and development. And it  
8 was -- the Rice Riot was about three months before July, I  
9 think, if I remember right, the OAU was coming to Liberia.  
10 So it was really sad. But, you know, Liberians rally around  
11 and the OAU was a very -- I thought it was very successful.  
12 The Hotel Africa were built, all those villas were built, and  
13 it was a wonderful celebration.

14           And right about that time, the rumors about coup  
15 were coming out. I mean, people were saying the coup --  
16 there would be a coup. And I was a bit worried. I went to  
17 my father because my mother-in-law, Burleigh's mother,  
18 Catherine Holder, used to have dreams. And she came and told  
19 me that she had a dream and she said she saw five groups of  
20 people plotting against my father. So I said, "Yeah, we've  
21 been talking." And then there were some strange things  
22 happening in the government. I don't know the -- people were  
23 dissatisfied.

24           And she said, "But the strange thing I saw -- four  
25 of them I know, I know the groups, but the fifth one I do not

1 know." And then everybody knows the outcome. The fifth  
2 group was -- she said when the coup took place, she said,  
3 "Oh, that's the group I didn't know, the soldiers." And she  
4 didn't know them and neither did I know Doe. But when I saw  
5 him that morning, I was sorry for him because I knew he was  
6 not capable of ruling a country. He was not, because he was  
7 one of those that wasn't fortunate to get educated. And I'm  
8 sorry that he wasn't, he didn't. But time -- if only the  
9 coup hadn't taken place, he would have probably gotten  
10 educated. But this man with barely a high school -- he  
11 wasn't even a high school graduate, was then celebrated to be  
12 our president. And I was saddened to hear even from this  
13 United States people saying that for the first time we have a  
14 native person ruling Liberia.

15 Now, don't ever think I don't believe that  
16 everybody has a right to govern the country. But why would  
17 you want a person that's not literate? There are a lot of --  
18 there were a lot of educated people that could be said that  
19 he didn't have ancestors that came from the United States  
20 but they celebrated the man. And now people are saying he  
21 was not good. How did they expected him to be good, a good  
22 leader without education? So that's why I felt sorry for  
23 Doe. He was bound to fail.

24 And then he had people around him that were  
25 hypocrites. And I know some of the things they told him. I

1 mean, we saw after the coup took place, there were --  
2 apparently I heard there were supposed to be three people and  
3 there ended up 13 people. And I know it because my husband  
4 was supposed to be the 15th to be executed. He said he was  
5 in this room and that day Doe called them out, they called  
6 the 13 people. And then, by the way, the historian yesterday  
7 said it was 14. There were not 14 that were executed, there  
8 were only 13 people. And Johnny McClain was set free, the  
9 14th. And they told my husband, "Your day's coming tomorrow.  
10 You go right back." And they closed the door behind him.

11 I have to jump because the story is a lot. But I  
12 wanted to bring that out, that I don't know the details who  
13 put those names on; but I believe because they said it's  
14 true, apparently Doe called for Frank Stewart not too long  
15 afterwards--he was the budget director--to ask him questions  
16 about the budget and Frank Stewart was no more.

17 Also, and somebody said that -- okay, anyway.  
18 Okay, let me say a little bit about what happened, what the  
19 experience I had, the violence against my human rights and  
20 the torture I experienced. Fortunately, by the grace of God,  
21 I didn't experience physical torture. I mean, I wasn't  
22 beaten. But I know family members that were beaten. My  
23 husband explained his torture, and in a way I'm sorry he  
24 cannot be here. I was trying to encourage him to come but  
25 this weekend he -- his -- both his feet were swollen. He had

1 a sore on his foot and his feet got swollen so he cannot put  
2 his feet in shoes. He's not going to come because of that.

3 But I have his book here and I'm not trying to  
4 sell his book, but I gave a copy to the Commission so they  
5 can read his experience from this book. And he had no reason  
6 to tell the story. This is a vivid book. And there are  
7 parts of the book that I can -- I will try to put on a sheet  
8 of paper so that we can make copies for the Commission to  
9 have if you so desire. But his story is told in this book  
10 and he was beaten every day from April to December by  
11 different people with sometimes he said the inner rim of a  
12 tire. He said one day they beat him so much he passed out.

13 And as they were beaten, they would put inside his  
14 ear. And there was some -- one or two people that knew him  
15 that started the beating, and they were putting inside of his  
16 ear and he fainted. And then he didn't die, thank God. But  
17 he tells his story. And he was in post stockade, too. He  
18 said they gave him dry rice. He asked a question about what  
19 was happening there. He was on the floor, he had nowhere to  
20 sleep. And he said after the execution of the 13 people, he  
21 was taken to Belle Yallah, I think, he and Wilfred Clark were  
22 on the same plane. And Wilfred Clark was saying, "Why are  
23 they taking me to Belle Yallah? They made a mistake, they  
24 made a mistake." So my husband -- anyway, he thought it was  
25 funny that this man would say they made a mistake. He was in

1 charge of the security at the mansion, and he -- my husband  
2 was wondering: Why is this man telling me these things?

3           Anyway, he went to Belli Yallah. He said when he  
4 got there, he had on some trousers. They took a razor and  
5 cut the trousers on his body, they cut the leg of the  
6 trousers and they gave him a short trousers out of that. And  
7 that's the pair of trousers he stayed in for about 15 months  
8 or maybe close to that. But he said he was on the floor all  
9 the time. There were 15 to 20 in one room, barely could make  
10 it. The bucket would be full. People had to use the bucket  
11 in the room for bathroom.

12           But it's a long story and I cannot go into it, but  
13 people were beaten physically. Fortunately I wasn't and my  
14 sisters weren't. We were not raped and I'm sure many people  
15 wanted to but they didn't. God covered us, I'm telling you,  
16 and I believe he did.

17           So I will tell you a little bit of my experience  
18 in just pieces to tell you my experience. When the coup took  
19 place April 12, I was home. My husband was called by my  
20 father to the mansion and he went, a very brave man, he went.  
21 And all I knew he came back and said, "You have to leave  
22 right away." So I said, "What?" And then the telephone was  
23 ringing. So my sisters were saying they're shooting at the  
24 radio station. I had to pass by the radio station, but I  
25 decided I would leave. And my marriage vows say you have to

1 honor and obey your husband so I said I would so I did. And  
2 he saved our lives because he kept saying, "You have to leave  
3 now, otherwise anything happens, I won't be responsible." So  
4 I left.

5           But just go back a little bit: Two days before  
6 the coup, my husband and I realized that they had changed the  
7 guard. The soldiers, they were -- they didn't usually have a  
8 weapon with them, but this man -- there was a new guard on  
9 post. That was the -- I believe the Thursday we noticed  
10 that. And Friday was this big 100-voice choir because they  
11 were celebrating the centennial celebration of the Baptist  
12 church in Liberia and we went to that.

13           But this guard was there on Thursday. My husband  
14 said, "You know, I'm going to change him on Saturday." But  
15 this guy was -- he had a gun on his side all the time. And  
16 my husband said, "Where's the old fellow?" He said, "Oh,  
17 they just changed us, you know."

18           But that night, my husband -- because he noticed  
19 there was different guy, when he came in the yard, he jumped  
20 over the fence to come and tell me to leave. And he said,  
21 "Be careful, but I will be trying to protect you all." So  
22 when we left out of the yard, I had to tell this man the  
23 story. I said, "Well, you know, I'm just going for the  
24 weekend." He said, "Where are you all going this time of the  
25 morning?" I said -- well, because by then it was -- must

1 have been about 2 a.m. in the morning. The coup took place  
2 maybe an hour before then.

3 "Where you going?" I say, "I'm -- I'm going to my  
4 mother-in-law but I'm going for the weekend. We always go  
5 for the weekend." But he was new so he didn't know what I  
6 was saying anyway, but he knew I was leaving. And so I left.  
7 It must have been 3 or -- I don't know.

8 But as I was leaving, I could hear the gunshots at  
9 the -- at the radio station. But do you know, once I got in  
10 the car, there was myself; I had a lady that was taking care  
11 of the children, Mary, Mary Smith, she was with us; and I had  
12 six children, I had three biological children and three other  
13 children I was caring for. The oldest one was a girl whose  
14 father worked with my father, and when he died, my father  
15 promised him that he would take care of her. So she came --  
16 before I even had my first child, she came to my house so I  
17 took her as my child. Her name is Mary and now she's a  
18 master's -- she has a master's in special education. She  
19 lives in Atlanta. And then I had my three biological  
20 children and two, a niece and a nephew.

21 So we all got in one car and we drove. I was  
22 petrified, most of the children were sleeping. My youngest  
23 was 11 months. So I had to take these six children plus Mary  
24 to safety and I was scared. So all I could tell them, "Mary,  
25 let's pray." So we were praying. And we didn't see or hear

1 a thing from the time I left my house until we got to  
2 Crozerville. And I know there were fighting around, so  
3 that's why I know God took care of us.

4           So when the coup took place, the next morning at  
5 -- when I got to Bensonville, first when I got to  
6 Bensonville, Bentol then, some of my father guards was  
7 outside his house because we had to pass his house to get to  
8 my mother-in-law's house. And they asked me, "What happened  
9 to Monrovia?" I said I didn't know. They said, "Oh, we hear  
10 there's a coup." And I said, well, I didn't know which side  
11 they were on because, as I told you, we know there were a lot  
12 of plots but some people were in the government, in my  
13 father's cabinet. Vice President Bennie Warner said the  
14 information about the rice got out before they even made a  
15 decision.

16           But so I said I didn't know. So he said okay.  
17 I've forgotten his name now but he said, okay, wherever -- I  
18 said, "I'm going to my mother-in-law's house." He knew my  
19 mother-in-law's house. He said, "We'll take care of you, you  
20 will be okay." I was saying I hope he doesn't "take care of  
21 me."

22           Anyway, I went to my mother-in-law's house and I  
23 stayed there that day. My mother-in-law, when I got there,  
24 she was awake. We got there about 5, about 5 a.m., and she  
25 said, "You know, I just had -- woke up from a dream." She

1 said, "There will be a lot of death." I said, "Oh, I think  
2 something has happened, I mean, they're shooting in Monrovia.  
3 There's -- I think there's a coup." She said, "Oh, my God."  
4 But she said the meat -- they were throwing meat to the dogs,  
5 there was so much meat. She said, "Oh, there's a lot of  
6 death."

7           So 6:00 we're waiting for the radio, it didn't  
8 come. 7:00 Samuel Doe said the country belonged to the  
9 soldier and everybody heard that news. So my first thought  
10 was, oh, I want to get my father's body because my father  
11 always told me that he wanted to be buried right away. He  
12 was not afraid of death. I told him every time my  
13 mother-in-law had those dreams, I went to him. He said, "I  
14 know your mother-in-law, she sees things, God speaks to her  
15 in dreams," but he said, "I'm not afraid of death."

16           You know, when my father became president, the day  
17 he swore in after Tubman's death, that evening he came and  
18 gathered the -- his children together and he said, "You know,  
19 I've educated all of you"--and many of us, some of them were  
20 married, many of us were married--he said, "Now I want you to  
21 realize that Liberia comes first and -- God first, Liberia  
22 and then you all third." And at first I was hurt, but then I  
23 realized what he meant because he had given us the education.  
24 He told us, he said, "You know, whatever is in here  
25 (indicating), if you don't crazy, you will always have it."

1 But material things you will never have. So get an  
2 education." So he told us that, so we knew Liberia was first  
3 and he really died for his country.

4           So when he died, that's why I say I couldn't cry  
5 because I cried the day he was sworn in as president because  
6 I knew he would be killed. It's strange because we see from  
7 history people who are selfless, gave themselves up, and people  
8 think that they're weak. They're not weak. Because you're  
9 meek and humble doesn't make you weak. You're meek and  
10 humble because you're strong and he was strong and good.

11           So that day when they killed him, all I wanted was  
12 to get his body, to bury him. So that's -- that's Saturday.  
13 I said, "I'm going to find my father's body." I laugh now  
14 because it was foolish. I left my six children with Mary.  
15 Mary, she never went to school but she had a heart of gold.  
16 And I left Mary with my children. And then -- no, no, sorry,  
17 I told Mary, "Can you go with me?" I wanted somebody in the  
18 car with me. So I left the children with my mother-in-law  
19 and Mary was 12 years old, and I said I was going to look for  
20 my father.

21           So we drove to -- and then I didn't know where my  
22 husband was because he told me to leave and he said he was  
23 following us, but he never followed. So I say, "I'm going to  
24 find my father's body and find my husband." So I drove to my  
25 house and I got there. Just before I reached my house -- my

1 house was on Sugar Beach Road going to Schefflin Road going  
2 to the airport. Just before I reached, Ms. Mary, this lady,  
3 she was very wise, she said, "You know, just wait, don't go  
4 to the house yet. Let's talk to my friend."

5           And she had -- there was a group of small homes  
6 before my house. We stopped and she had a friend and she  
7 spoke in Basso and the friend was just crying. And I said,  
8 "What she's talking?" She said, "Oh," she said, "don't go to  
9 the house. Yesterday the whole day there was shooting at  
10 your house, they were destroying your house. People were  
11 moving things out and it was full of people, soldiers,  
12 everything." Then I said, "What?" So I turned around. Mary  
13 never -- we didn't know where my husband was and we sure  
14 weren't going for my father because I realized I had to now  
15 live for my children. So we didn't go.

16           So they destroyed my house that very day. So it  
17 was good I left the house. Otherwise I would have been  
18 destroyed, too. So we went and I was so stunned. I just sat  
19 down because I just didn't feel -- there was nothing I could  
20 do. I thought this coup was to just take power and they  
21 would take Liberia to the next step. I was very naive.

22           So I was sitting on the -- Sunday night there was  
23 a lot of shooting at my brother's, A.B.'s home. A.B. house  
24 was not far from my mother-in-law's home. And I -- I didn't  
25 sleep for the first five days after the coup. So I was awake

1 and I heard all the gunshot and I was praying for A.B. So  
2 Monday when I got up, my one -- Mrs. Oshoko, she's a nurse in  
3 Bensonville, she came and said -- you know, I'm -- I know her  
4 very well, close family friend. She said, "You know, they  
5 went to pick up A.B. yesterday but he disappeared, I mean, he  
6 escape."

7           And I was thankful. I said, "Well, at least they  
8 didn't kill him." She said, "No, they didn't kill him but  
9 they're coming for you today." I didn't believe her. I said  
10 "Why? What did I do?" I mean, I never worked in the  
11 government, I've been working in healthcare. She said, "Oh,  
12 they said they will find you and skin you alive." So that's  
13 when I really got scared. My mother-in-law said, "Oh, you  
14 have to go in hiding." I said, "Why?" She said, "You have  
15 to." I say, "But where?" So she say, "Just go to the  
16 neighbor and tell them who you are and they will protect  
17 you."

18           So I left in faith. To cut it short, these people  
19 I didn't know, but they took me in. I was 35 years old then.  
20 My angel sent by God, a 17-year-old boy, they call him Du Boy  
21 because he set up a plan, he said, "When the soldiers come  
22 for you, I'm going to lock you up in the room upstairs and  
23 you stay there until I take you out." I said what? So I --  
24 then he said, "No, you just do that." I said okay.

25           And there I was, I mean, I had to surrender myself

1 and I did surrender myself because then I had nobody but  
2 myself and God and I had this -- the Testament. My  
3 mother-in-law, just before I left, she said, "You take this.  
4 It's okay and you will be okay and the children will be  
5 okay." And I said okay. And I really trusted that I had  
6 nothing else.

7           You know, it wasn't even half an hour after I went  
8 to that house Doe came on to give his message to the nation.  
9 And while he was speaking, he said that he took over to help  
10 the poor and it was good that the family heard that and he  
11 was there to take people out of poverty. And I didn't -- I  
12 can't remember the details, but the part I remember because  
13 the family used that when soldiers came. So half an hour  
14 later the soldiers surrounded my mother-in-law's house and  
15 they started shooting in the air. I was already up in the  
16 room locked under lock and key by this 17-year-old I never  
17 knew before. But I heard my children screaming and shouting  
18 and I just knew they were all dead.

19           And then I heard them knocking and kicking things.  
20 You know, the houses were thin houses, very thin, you could  
21 hear everything and they were close together in Crozerville.  
22 And then it was quiet. And then the same group of soldiers  
23 came to the house I was in, and I heard the children  
24 screaming again. There was shooting in the air. This family  
25 had, I believe, seven or eight children. But the oldest was

1 17 and the youngest, I don't know, maybe three or four. But  
2 I just felt that, oh, this -- I'm dead, because I didn't even  
3 feel that these people will protect me. But they did. Not  
4 one of the children said a word that I was there.

5           The soldiers came in the house and were knocking  
6 over chairs and screaming, "If we find Wilhelmina Holder and  
7 Burleigh Holder, we'll skin them alive and bury them." And  
8 my heart--I mean, I can feel it now--those people, they came  
9 to my door and I took my glasses off and I said my last  
10 prayer, gave myself to God, because I said -- well, at that  
11 time I didn't know whether -- I knew my father was dead. I  
12 didn't know what had happened to my mother, I didn't know  
13 where my husband was, I didn't know where my -- none of my  
14 sisters were. I knew my brother was maybe in hiding and  
15 maybe dead, and I just knew my children were dead. So I was  
16 ready to die, took my glasses off, put it down, said my last  
17 prayer and presented -- gave my whole life and self to God.

18           And then, all of a sudden, it occurred to me:  
19 What if your children are alive? Who will take care of your  
20 children? Then I prayed: Save me Lord. And he did because  
21 this man -- this soldier was outside the door at that time,  
22 and he said, "Oh, there's a -- I'm going to shoot this door  
23 down." He told the lady, "Move, move, I'm going to shoot the  
24 door down."

25           And as I prayed, I heard him say, "I'm thirsty.

1 Do you have cold water?" The woman screamed, "Yes, I have  
2 cold water," and she rushed to get cold water. And he  
3 yelled, "I didn't come for cold water. I came for Wilhelmina  
4 Holder and Burleigh Holder." In the confusion he moved from  
5 the door and went around the rest of the house, went  
6 downstairs, saw another little hut with a padlock and he blew  
7 the door down with a machine gun. I heard a loud thump and  
8 the gun. And then I -- then I breathed a sigh of relief and  
9 for one hour, that family stood still, they didn't move and I  
10 didn't move. And unfortunately I needed to use the rest  
11 room, so I went to the window and I called and they  
12 remembered.

13           So that was part of my torture at the beginning.  
14 I was -- we had to stay in the bush for three days. In the  
15 night I -- the same boy would take me from -- tried to find a  
16 place to stay. Eventually I managed to find my children and  
17 eventually I left and went to Monrovia.

18           When I got to Monrovia, I went to my sister, Sadie  
19 DeShield's house. And we more or less had to turn ourselves  
20 in. I went to the convent first and the convent took me to  
21 the mansion. And the mansion then -- they took me to the  
22 mansion and we more or less turned ourselves in. And when I  
23 went back to my sister, my foster sister's house, in about  
24 half an hour they called me back to the mansion to find out  
25 why I was at the mansion. And I explained that I was turning

1 myself in, and they told me to stay at my foster sister's  
2 house. So I was under sort of arrest but not quite house  
3 arrest.

4           And from there, I was taken to a house arrest when  
5 they wanted me to give up my job. They came and told me I  
6 had to resign from the World Health Organization. I said no.  
7 And Cheo Cheapoo told me that "If you do not resign, you will  
8 go under house arrest and not only that, you have to have  
9 your own house to go under house arrest. So I will place you  
10 under house arrest." Me and my three sisters, we were placed  
11 under house arrest.

12           And this was horrible because the day we were  
13 under house arrest, we were told that only my sister, Wookie  
14 Tubman that was free, could come and bring us food. But some  
15 family members came and brought us food and they were  
16 arrested then. And Cheo Cheapoo called on his walkie-talkie  
17 and before long some of the PRC--and George Boley, he came  
18 too, to look at us. And they put us in a room and told us  
19 that they had to think about what to do for us, what would be  
20 our fate. And we were terrified because they could have  
21 killed every one of us.

22           And during the six weeks we were under house  
23 arrest, all hours of the night people would come knocking at  
24 the door to just gloat at us. The only thing that blessed  
25 us, we communicated with the red beret police that were

1 taking care of us, and they were kind enough to have a sense  
2 of protection to protect anybody from doing any harm to us.  
3 The person that really was harmed was my mother. She was  
4 under -- she was in prison for one month in the mansion jail.  
5 She was on the bare floor, she didn't have even a piece of  
6 cloth to sleep on for over two weeks before one of the  
7 soldiers were merciful and brought her a mattress. But she  
8 tell her story in her book, so I don't have to go through  
9 that.

10           And she -- her story, she says that when the coup  
11 took place, when they shot -- when they were about to shoot  
12 my father, they told her, "You are Via so I'm not going to  
13 shoot you." And they shot my father, he was killed right in  
14 front of her eye. And she said that after the shooting,  
15 these people were -- she couldn't tell but they had black --  
16 they were all -- they had masks on their face so she couldn't  
17 tell, but she did hear them saying that now -- after they  
18 shot my father, they said, "Now we can get our \$25,000." So  
19 for \$25,000, that's what he was worth, 25,000.

20           Anyway, my mother, they call her out to be -- to  
21 say that she had to give \$1 million for her release. And she  
22 told Chea Cheapoo, she said, "You know, you just put it on  
23 the radio and tell people that Mrs. Tolbert needs a million  
24 dollars. I'm sure some of my friends around the world would  
25 get a million dollars." So I feel that it was greed and envy

1 that put lots of this problem onto Liberia, and they were  
2 just after money and power.

3           So I was told that I only have a few minutes so I  
4 don't know how to shorten this. But I just want to summarize  
5 and say I survived and it was difficult because I didn't have  
6 a job. After they got -- after we came from house arrest,  
7 after six weeks we were released from house arrest, one of my  
8 sisters had to stay in house arrest until December of the  
9 year. And I felt that I should stay in Liberia because my  
10 husband, when he came from political -- when he came out of  
11 prison, which was after 20 months, December the 23rd when he  
12 was released, he -- all of a sudden, he felt a lot of pain in  
13 his ear and all of that. He wanted to go for -- to come for  
14 health reasons to the United States. He was literally driven  
15 from the U.S. embassy, told him that he could not get any  
16 visa, he was on the black list. So we decided to stay in  
17 Liberia.

18           After a year the government called me for a job.  
19 I worked with combatting communicable diseases program for  
20 children. I worked with the children's program preventing  
21 malaria, diarrhea, et cetera; and I was privileged to travel  
22 sometimes because that project was funded by U.S. AID.

23           So within five years -- I mean, first of all, they  
24 call us for a government ID card, national ID card, and this  
25 is when I realized this tribalism started. They asked me my

1 tribe. At that time I was so frustrated. "Tribe?" I said,  
2 "I have no tribe." And this one man said, "Oh, don't mind  
3 her. She's one of Tolbert's daughter." And then I said,  
4 "Yes, I'm the fifth daughter and I'm proud to be his  
5 daughter. What else?"

6 Then he said, "But your father spoke Kpele, your  
7 mother Via and Kpele. What are you?" I said, "I don't have  
8 a tribe, I don't need a tribe. We are all Liberians." So  
9 this national ID card had "tribe" on it. This is when this  
10 tribalism started because when I was younger, I mean, we  
11 never celebrated the fact that we came -- my ancestors came  
12 from Liberia. We celebrated the freedom and the liberty that  
13 Liberia -- while Liberia was established for all, all people  
14 who were blacks. That's what we celebrated and we were  
15 integrated in the Liberian community and that I'm proud of.

16 So within five years after the coup, I was  
17 privileged to hear about the Hubert H. Humphrey fellowship  
18 program and I applied. And one general at the Ministry of  
19 Health helped me out, General Barclay. He said, "Don't  
20 worry, you applied. Have some faith." And sure enough, I  
21 applied. Out of 27 Liberians that applied, I was one of  
22 them. So I applied and this is how I got out of Liberia and  
23 I was able to take my children. Otherwise it would have been  
24 difficult for me to get a visa and be reunited with my family  
25 in the United States.

1           So my husband would come off and on. And then  
2 when the war broke out -- his last visit was in December so I  
3 told him, "You're not going back to" -- December 1989. So  
4 1990 when the war broke out, I told him, "You're not going  
5 back." So we lost everything we had again. But it was okay.  
6 Life in the United States, I got integrated, fortunately. It  
7 was a struggle but my children got an education. I visited  
8 Liberia twice, in year 2000 and 2006. And I'm pleased to say  
9 the first visit I stayed two days because it was hard, I --  
10 it was just too painful to see the destruction. But in 2006  
11 I stayed two weeks and I'm eager and I'm planning to go back  
12 soon.

13           My two children went to -- my oldest and second  
14 child went to Liberia, and they are all gear up to help in  
15 the development of Liberia. And I'm determined to follow my  
16 heart and do something for Liberia. I'm determined to help  
17 with the development and I'm determined to empower Liberians  
18 in the United States to get profession that will make them  
19 ready to go and open small businesses and with grassroots  
20 development to grow Liberia. Everybody don't have to be an  
21 official of the government or a government person. You can  
22 work wherever you are. Each town and village need all of us.

23           So everybody wherever you are, if you can hear my  
24 voice: Get your profession. All right, be carpenter,  
25 business, plumbers, whatever. But go and be determined to

1 help develop Liberia. That's the message I've given to my  
2 children and that's the message I give to everybody. Thank  
3 you.

4 (AUDIENCE APPLAUSE)

5 If I have time, I will give my message to the TRC.  
6 But you all have questions, so I will give you the privilege  
7 to ask some questions.

8 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much,  
9 Madam Witness, for taking your time out to share your  
10 experience with us. You seem to have some perspectives on  
11 development in our country over the last period of Tubman.  
12 In the same vein, we extend to you our sympathy for the death  
13 of your father and other family members who might have died  
14 during the course of the conflict. We hope that the blood of  
15 all Liberians who have past and gone before us will better  
16 (INAUDIBLE) our country and lasting peace and reconciliation  
17 can be the resulting fruit. Thank you very much, and  
18 Commissioners will ask questions.

19 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you,  
20 Madam Witness, for your testimony and for your message. You  
21 know, some of us were mature when your father came to power,  
22 and there are many Liberians and there are many areas where  
23 Liberians can point their fingers of appreciation for the  
24 work that your father did for Liberia. But there are also  
25 areas where fingers will point at that they express their

1 dissatisfaction and concern.

2           For example, your father inherited a story where  
3 it was said by many politicians or political activists from  
4 the indigenous group that, yes, today you can find native  
5 Liberians in the cabinet, in the legislature, in the foreign  
6 service; but there is far more important positions in  
7 government which were never allowed to be occupied by the  
8 indigenous Liberians. That's the Presidency, the Vice  
9 Presidency, the Speakers of the House of Representative, the  
10 President of Pro Tempore and the -- the Chief Justice of the  
11 Supreme Court. That was the complaint that your father  
12 inherited; it was not the doing of your father.

13           But in the case of his administration, two of the  
14 five positions were occupied by the Tolbert family from one  
15 mother and one father, and the tier of the five positions  
16 were occupied by someone who only yesterday I got to know  
17 that he was indigenous Liberian but were a closest neighbor  
18 to Bensonville that is Bishop Warner.

19           Your father was president of Liberia, your Uncle  
20 Frank Tolbert was president of pro tempore. So your father  
21 inherited non-equitable distribution of political power. But  
22 with that representation and backed by the fact that two  
23 persons from one mother, one father live in the same place  
24 were elected as far back as 1943 in the House of  
25 Representative, people felt that that was too much for one

1 family. What is your view about that?

2 THE WITNESS: Well, my view, my father when he  
3 became president, Frank Tolbert was in his position so he  
4 didn't elect Frank Tolbert. We hope that the people of  
5 Liberia -- it was not in his administration. Frank Tolbert  
6 became -- got his position.

7 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: The president  
8 of pro tempore position, he got that.

9 THE WITNESS: He was president of pro tem before  
10 my father became president. I mean, my father didn't appoint  
11 him. People talked about my father appointing Steven Tolbert  
12 as Minister of Finance, but Steven Tolbert was qualified to  
13 be Minister of Finance. I mean, look at the great United  
14 States when Kennedy was in power, his brother was also in the  
15 government. I think -- I mean, if that's one of the reasons  
16 they had a coup, it's sad because my father, in all intent,  
17 he never wanted to be president longer than his term. He had  
18 told me and everybody he was leaving, he was going to go back  
19 to his farm.

20 He had intended to help Liberia. I mean, as I  
21 say, that he had been vice president for 19 years so he saw  
22 some of the problems. You cannot do things in -- he was not  
23 even there more than -- not even ten years, so how can you  
24 make changes that quickly in ten years?

25 But I think if somebody's qualified -- you know,

1 Steven Tolbert was amply qualified. Frank Tolbert -- I  
2 wasn't -- I was in school a lot, as I said--I was in  
3 Switzerland, then in Canada--and so I wasn't there when all  
4 these appointments were made. But I don't think you could  
5 just fire Frank Tolbert because I was his brother. People  
6 put Frank Tolbert there before he became president. But  
7 people talk about nepotism, but I don't think my father was  
8 that type. He was looking for qualified people. He looked  
9 all around and he represented the diversity as far as he  
10 could as fast as he could, I think, and he did well until  
11 some of the people in his inner circle was upset with him.

12 But he was on the right path and if only they had  
13 allowed that, not because of his life because I said -- I  
14 forgot to say, he even had his own plot, he had his own  
15 grave, his own casket. He didn't care. But he was fighting  
16 for the Liberian people and he wanted representation. So I  
17 can't answer anymore. I'm sorry, I was never a politician, I  
18 was a medical doctor.

19 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you  
20 very much.

21 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Madam Witness,  
22 thank you for coming to contribute to history because you  
23 were a participant, and thank you for saying what you know.  
24 I asked the witness before, Mr. Hunder, since he worked at  
25 the Stockade, whether he remembered a list of the names of

1 those who were in prison. But you just reiterated that  
2 because it was on December 23rd, 1981 when President Doe--I  
3 think he was then president--or Doe declared general amnesty  
4 for all Doe's politicians in the True Whig Party officials to  
5 come home and also to open the jailhouse, and that when many  
6 people came out, including your husband we have just said.

7           So since he's written his book--and I haven't seen  
8 a copy of it--could you, because we asked him to remember the  
9 names and I'm citing Counselor Holder who also even if he  
10 didn't put the names in the book, just for history because we  
11 are supposed to -- that's part of our work, document those  
12 who died before the period 1979 and to 2003--in fact, anybody  
13 directly or indirectly, as a result of this Civil War--and  
14 declare those missing. So those who we don't know what  
15 happened to them, after a certain period of time, even  
16 legally when someone is missing, you declare them dead or --  
17 so it's in our TRC Act.

18           So you could ask Mr. Counselor Holder, I know him  
19 as Counselor Holder from State Department, I worked there  
20 since 1970 with him; could he please also, since he couldn't  
21 come, it will be until Saturday, remember the list of those  
22 who were in jail for us to be able to document them, you  
23 know. Thank you for coming to tell your story to the TRC.

24           THE WITNESS: I will. I will ask him for that.  
25 And the book -- actually I gave a copy of the book to Mark

1 Hamil who is from Dorsey Whitney law firm, and I said that  
2 pages of the book that related to the coup could be printed  
3 out and give you copies.

4 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: How much for that  
5 book?

6 THE WITNESS: It's just \$20. My husband was  
7 handicapped, he had a stroke when he came to America, and so  
8 his left hand -- I mean, it's not working properly. So he  
9 had to use his right-hand, one finger. So he took a long  
10 time to write the book.

11 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: I have a copy of  
12 Mrs. Tolbert's *Lift Him Up* book and the speeches of the  
13 president and the speech that he made also right after the  
14 1979 Rice Riot at a centennial (INAUDIBLE) in May, that book  
15 I quoted three or four times when I had to make speech. It  
16 was in there, he talk about unity, reconciliation in that  
17 book. So I also recommend those to look at it, if you have a  
18 copy, we can make a copy for history.

19 THE WITNESS: I have a copy of the speeches. I  
20 can give you a copy of that.

21 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: I have the book.

22 THE WITNESS: You have it, okay.

23 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Thank you also for  
24 the presentation you've just made to us. I just have a few  
25 questions. Some may be delicate, but I hope you can just

1 give me the best you can.

2 I'm concerned, you know, your father was the vice  
3 president of this -- of our country for many years under what  
4 Liberians sometimes called Tubmanism. So during that time,  
5 was he comfortable in that position? When you consider the  
6 changes that he really tried to bring forth to move the  
7 country in a new direction, I wonder whether that was just a  
8 sudden relapse or change of money or was it something that  
9 was really paining him all along and just the opportunity  
10 came, you know, et cetera. I don't know whether you'd like  
11 to shed some light on this.

12 And then the other one, you mentioned about four  
13 or five groups in a vision. If you don't mind, I would like  
14 to know about the other four groups.

15 And, third, you mentioned the name George Boley  
16 who visited you. Is that the same George Boley that is  
17 linked to the LPC during this wartime? That's my third.

18 And the issue of money and greed, I notice you  
19 mentioned that some of the soldiers said that now we can get  
20 our \$25,000. The history will say that this war was just  
21 motivated by people who wanted to be liberated from a  
22 leadership that was corrupt, but now here the key  
23 implementers of this coup are thinking about money business.  
24 So somebody had to have the money to give it to them, so it  
25 means that we need to start looking at who had that money and

1 who was really concerned about using the greed or simplicity  
2 of the people to overthrow the government.

3           So those are some of my four or five questions I  
4 would like for you to add light on.

5           THE WITNESS: Please remind me if I forget, I  
6 wasn't writing.

7           COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Yes.

8           THE WITNESS: My father was vice president and I  
9 believe he was loyal to Tubman and that was the right thing  
10 to do. He believed and I believe that a person, as a head of  
11 state, you know, is a position that -- granted by God and  
12 nobody should -- there's a way, there's a legal and right way  
13 to get people out of power. And he was patient to wait until  
14 his time came as president.

15           I think one of my father's speeches when he was in  
16 high school, he felt that he would be president of Liberia so  
17 he went through the rank. And so during Tubman time, no  
18 doubt there were things he wanted to change but, you know,  
19 you can be the change you want right around where you are.  
20 So when my father -- where my father live, where he work,  
21 people he work with, just ask them what type of person he  
22 was. He did that change right around himself even where --  
23 in his office, he had people from different groups working  
24 with him, different ethnic groups.

25           So it's not that he didn't try to implement some

1 of those changes where he worked, he did. Punctuality at his  
2 work, among his children, studying hard; those are the things  
3 that he instilled in us. Now, I'm sure he were anxious to  
4 make changes and so that's what he did. They call him speedy  
5 because he was changing fast and trying to change things  
6 fast, but obviously lots of people thought it wasn't fast  
7 enough. So that was -- that's all I can say. That's the  
8 first question.

9 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: The second one, you  
10 said a group, a friend or family member had a vision or...?

11 THE WITNESS: Yes, she -- you know, I don't think  
12 many of them -- some of them are dead now. It's not  
13 necessary to call names, I think, because, you see, what I --  
14 what I believe that many of us had part to play in this coup.  
15 It's not that you -- the person who did the shooting is the  
16 only one that is to blame. But what about people that sat  
17 down and saw things happening and said nothing? What about  
18 people who watched the execution and rejoiced and danced in  
19 the street? How can you execute 13 human being like dogs,  
20 worse than dogs?

21 And then I was told the day after the execution, a  
22 cousin of mine and another fellow came to my -- to our house,  
23 to Ms. DeShield's house, Sadie DeShield -- Sadie was married  
24 to Leanard DeShield. And they sat down and said--I will  
25 never forget that, that was some of the torture--that they

1 were looking for a hundred more poles to put up. They  
2 couldn't find a hundred poles so they just used the 13 they  
3 could find. And all my male relatives were in prison, every  
4 one of them, except a few -- not all but most of them were in  
5 prison, all my immediate, my brothers, they were all in  
6 prison. So they were going to kill a hundred people plus.

7           So you need to look and find out who are those  
8 people that were motivated. And they say they had a change.  
9 What change they were looking for to destroy people like  
10 that? So I'm not going to call names because -- I have  
11 another thing I want to read out here: "All there is for the  
12 triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing."

13           I don't know who wrote that, but it's a saying  
14 that all is there is for the triumph of evil is for good  
15 men--I include women and men--to do nothing. What happened  
16 in Liberia? People sat by. I mean, I remember when they  
17 killed my father, did I see anybody to come and bring me  
18 water, to even say I'm sorry? Maybe they were afraid, yes,  
19 but they still could have lodged a complaint, this is wrong.

20           You know, and when April 14th took place, 1979  
21 when there were -- my father -- my husband gave a speech to  
22 the soldier when he was resigning as Minister of Defense. He  
23 said the story was "Rat Trap Not for Rat Alone." And many  
24 people have repeated it in different form and fashion. He  
25 wrote the story and my daughter illustrated the book because

1 she's an artist.

2 But in this book, it was trying to tell Liberians,  
3 warning them that the trap you're setting for a group of  
4 people like Tolbert and his government is not just for them.  
5 It will affect Liberia from time, yes, down -- many years  
6 down the road, and that's exactly what happened.

7 When the coup took place, they said, oh, it's just  
8 the Tolbert family. A whole lot of things were crazy, were  
9 this, were that. They strip people naked, some of my family  
10 members, they strip them. And they had to roll in the  
11 street. Some of them, they were raped; some of them branded  
12 were stuck in their flesh. A lady crippled, she were pushed  
13 down the steps and died. In one month so many of my family  
14 members were killed.

15 My father and with 28 people that were brave  
16 enough to fight were all put in one mass grave, and his body  
17 is still there. And people say, oh, it's just them. My  
18 goodness, Liberians, I'm not going to call the four group,  
19 it's not necessary. Many people stood by and watched. And  
20 the government -- I mean, Doe took on lots of -- Baccus  
21 Matthew, all those -- Chea Cheapoo, all those people were  
22 part of this, they organized it. They must not put the  
23 blame on Doe. They helped Doe destroy Liberia.

24 And so we need to have them in front of this  
25 tribunal and in front of Liberia to say the part they played

1 and ask for forgiveness. That's how our country will be  
2 saved. So I'm sorry, I don't want to call the names. I  
3 don't think it would do any justice.

4 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Yeah, I agree with  
5 you. The next one was about Boley, the same Boley that --

6 THE WITNESS: George Boley, who was Minister of  
7 State for Presidential Affairs, that George Boley and the  
8 same Chea Cheapoo that killed his own foster father for  
9 whatever reason.

10 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Okay. And the last  
11 one?

12 THE WITNESS: And George Boley came and -- in my  
13 presence, when he came to our house, we were under house  
14 arrest, he had the nerve to tell me that my father sent  
15 him -- he said, "You know, your father sent me to school, he  
16 paid my way through school and your brother gave me the first  
17 pair of shoes, Bill Tolbert."

18 And those boys that came to our house when we were  
19 at Leanard DeShield's house, they kept saying, "Junior will  
20 never leave." They were talking about A.B. They had planned  
21 to kill every one of us like the Russian Revolution. He kept  
22 saying, "Don't you know the Russian Revolution?" Randall  
23 McClain, he asked for forgiveness for coming and doing that  
24 to us, but I will call his name because not that I have  
25 nothing against him; he was hanging with some of those boys

1 so he came and he revealed things to us that was frightening.

2           And that day I don't know what, I almost -- I lost  
3 it that day. I was so -- he said that "Don't you know that  
4 Junior will never live?" So I already knew that A.B. would  
5 die. I was under house arrest when they caught my brother,  
6 and the night before I dreamed that they caught my brother  
7 and I dreamed that he was killed. So when they caught my  
8 brother, I cried the whole day. But he was -- and I went to  
9 visit him in prison on 18th of July on his birthday. Doe  
10 gave us permission to go and visit him.

11           And I visited him and he shared his -- the power  
12 of God, that he was sorry, that he said he couldn't stay  
13 still. He had to find out about his mother. He said -- you  
14 know, I said, "Why did you talk on the telephone? See, now  
15 they caught you." He said, "You know what? I couldn't" --  
16 first of all, he couldn't leave the country. He said, "I  
17 didn't want to leave, my mother was still here. I didn't  
18 know what were happening to my mother." And he was so eager  
19 to find out the safety of his family and so on, that's why he  
20 called and that's when they caught him. But they killed him  
21 and buried him.

22           Quiawonkpa, when he came to America, he wrote an  
23 article in I think it was Newsweek and I kept the article,  
24 but I don't know, I've lost the paper moving from one house  
25 to the next. But in this paper, he described that they took

1 A.B. out and told them to dig the grave, and while they were  
2 digging their grave, they shot them and they cover him when  
3 he was still mourning. And up to this day, we don't know  
4 where my brother's grave is.

5 If anybody knows, could they please tell us. We'd  
6 tell -- we'd like to put a monument there and we'd also like  
7 to put a monument where my father was buried. And we want  
8 permission now. Hopefully they will grant us permission.  
9 I'm sorry, I deviated a little bit.

10 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: No, thank you.

11 Okay, another thing I just noticed, you added  
12 something interesting. You said this seemed to have been a  
13 planned effort by those who staged the coup to exterminate  
14 your whole family, in a sense.

15 THE WITNESS: Yeah, I mean, but you know, those  
16 socialist boys that came from America, those they say that  
17 planned from here, when my father was at the United Nations,  
18 they had his -- they had him in a casket, a dummy in a  
19 casket, and demonstrated in front of United Nations with my  
20 father. So they wanted to kill my father so it's not  
21 anything new, it was obvious, the intention was.

22 And then they kept -- they had the social -- they  
23 knew about the Russian Revolution. They said they would  
24 exterminate all of us, a hundred more poles. What did you  
25 think they were thinking about? And when they kept saying

1 "Junior will never live," of course I knew A.B. would die.

2 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: The reason I brought  
3 it up is it seems parallel to other issues.

4 THE WITNESS: That somebody else said, yes, yes.  
5 I'm glad -- that's why I didn't bring it up in my testimony  
6 because other people alluded to it a little bit before.

7 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: Okay, thank you.

8 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Thank you for  
9 coming and my sympathy for the death of your relatives.

10 I have only one question and it surrounds all of  
11 those who died with your father because we are supposed to  
12 document all of those who died during the war. And so if you  
13 can remember, I'd like you to please share that with us, all  
14 of those who died along with your father.

15 I was living on Gulley Street when they -- how you  
16 call that thing they -- bulldozer came in the grave that day  
17 and they brought the bodies. I remember a little child.

18 THE WITNESS: A what?

19 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: A child. I saw  
20 that child go in there and then I left, so that memory is  
21 something that has stayed with me for a long time. And so if  
22 you can share that with us, we highly appreciate it.

23 THE WITNESS: You know, I don't know -- I don't  
24 know of everybody that died. I know Charles really was one  
25 of them and some of the SSS people on the floor that night.

1 But -- and one of my -- my brothers, my father's foster  
2 children were killed also. There was a child's body, one of  
3 them.

4 Another one my -- at the Executive Mansion where  
5 the coup -- where they killed my father, there were a lot of  
6 children and one -- whether they intended to do it or not,  
7 one of the children were killed. One was killed and another  
8 one, a bullet went in his back and he's Blama Tolbert, he's  
9 now in Liberia. But he said he had to drag himself from the  
10 floor. He pretended he was dead and when they moved my  
11 father's body, he said he dragged himself down eight steps  
12 with a bullet in his back. So he was one of the brave ones,  
13 he survived.

14 I'm sorry, I don't know. I will try to -- if I  
15 can remember, I will try to put some of the names down for  
16 you, but I'm sorry, I don't know all the names.

17 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Thank you. Thank  
18 you.

19 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you, Madam  
20 Witness, for coming. You partially answered one of my  
21 questions so I will just add a part two to it. You stated  
22 that on the morning of the coup, you were going to town to  
23 retrieve the body of your father. From all indication, you  
24 never had the opportunity. My question is: Did you try to  
25 seek the permission from the military government at the time

1 or any other government to go back and claim your father and  
2 give him a proper or decent burial?

3 THE WITNESS: Well, I -- I -- I would just go -- I  
4 was going to go to the military government, but when I found  
5 out that my house was already surrounded and the destruction  
6 that had taken place at my home and the general atmosphere,  
7 Ms. Mary Smith's friend was telling her -- telling us "you'd  
8 better go back" because they were yelling and screaming  
9 "Death to the Tolberts." So for safety, I decided to leave,  
10 not to go.

11 But I remember that A.B. and I met that Saturday  
12 afternoon, and he said that he was going to get in touch with  
13 the Baptist convention to see whether they would try. And  
14 apparently they tried, at least that's what they said. I  
15 wasn't in the delegation that went, never, because I was  
16 afraid for my safety so I didn't. So I believe that they did  
17 try and they were denied.

18 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. The name  
19 George Boley keeps coming up in the story of the coup and  
20 your family. George Boley?

21 THE WITNESS: Yeah.

22 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: His name keeps  
23 coming up in the story of the coup and your family. I'm  
24 curious and also because this is a reconciliatory process,  
25 I'm just wondering one of the witness stated earlier that

1 Boley had a relationship with your family, he was an adopted  
2 son of your father. And you just confirmed that Boley  
3 himself told you that your father educated him, sent him to  
4 school, your brother gave him shoes or whatever.

5           It would seem to me--and I stand to be  
6 corrected--that a lot of personal issues, you know, spill  
7 over nationally. What was the relationship with Boley and  
8 your father or your family and what happened?

9           THE WITNESS: I don't know. I mean, I never -- I  
10 didn't know Boley before the coup. I never met him myself.  
11 He never stayed in our home. But he -- he told me that he  
12 went to Ricks Institute and my brother, Bill Tolbert. Now,  
13 all my brothers and sisters went to institution of learning  
14 in Liberia. My brother went to Ricks and Boley went to Ricks  
15 so that's how they got to know each other. And my brother,  
16 he also confirmed that Boley was educated by my father and  
17 Boley told me that.

18           But I don't know what happened. I mean, there  
19 were -- there were not much rhyme or reason. I think -- I  
20 don't know, envy. I don't know. I don't know what's -- why  
21 people did what they did. But I know that the heart of man  
22 can be very wicked. And it is only the spirit of God or some  
23 inner spirit of strength that can give you the -- can empower  
24 you to do what's right. And some people, if they -- if the  
25 devil get in them, they can do anything.

1           But I don't know why -- why he had animosity  
2 against my family. I know that he put -- he was instrumental  
3 to keeping Christine Norman under house arrest for a longer  
4 time than we were because they both work in the Ministry of  
5 Education, apparently. But I don't -- I don't know. He can  
6 -- I have never had -- if I had -- I haven't met him since  
7 the coup, but I intended to ask him some questions and find  
8 out. I haven't met Chea Cheapoo, too. I would like to ask  
9 him some questions, but I don't know.

10           COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Christine Norman  
11 is your sister?

12           THE WITNESS: My sister, Christine Tolbert Norman,  
13 yes. She's in Liberia at this moment.

14           COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. What is the  
15 relationship now with Mr. Boley and your family? Do you know  
16 if --

17           THE WITNESS: I have no -- we have no relationship  
18 with Mr. Boley. But my father educated many -- my father  
19 used to spend some of his own money to educate people. Many  
20 of them got government scholarship, but many of them he  
21 educated himself. He didn't -- I mean, the money he had he  
22 shared a lot with people of Liberia.

23           COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: My last question:  
24 You said many wonderful things about your father, I mean,  
25 naturally. Just out of curiosity, how would you like him to

1 be remembered, especially by Liberians?

2 THE WITNESS: A man that was willing to die for  
3 his conviction, doing the right thing, and a man that was  
4 willing to serve his people, all of his people, and a man  
5 that really wanted development for Liberia.

6 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you.

7 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Thank you very much,  
8 Madam Witness, for providing such insight and perhaps another  
9 perspective as we engage in this exercise of introspection.  
10 And I'm particularly pleased that you have stated repeatedly  
11 that you have no rancor in your heart and you've put the past  
12 behind, you've forgiven the past, although not forgetting it,  
13 prepared to move on and end this and, in this context,  
14 prepared to do a critical examination of ourselves, what  
15 happened in the past.

16 I would like to ask a few questions, one or two.  
17 Your mother, in her book, peace be to her ashes, she states  
18 that -- she says that your father was a lonely man, that his  
19 officials in his absence would gather on the fourth floor and  
20 discuss all kinds of things about him, talk about impeaching  
21 him; and there were times when we even learned that there  
22 were attempts by people within his ranks to overthrow him by  
23 force.

24 So I use this backdrop. Would you say -- you said  
25 that some group of Socialists that were responsible for your

1 father's death, but against the backdrop of your mother's  
2 revelation that even his own officials were not supporting  
3 him and she even mentioned to him, according to what she's  
4 written in her book, that he was like a lonely tree in the  
5 forest. So how can you reconcile all of what was going on,  
6 attempts by his officials to undo him as against -- as  
7 opposed to what you describe as planned by Socialists to get  
8 rid of him?

9 THE WITNESS: Well, I did say -- I never said that  
10 the Socialist group was responsible for my father's death. I  
11 said clearly they had a big part to play in the destruction  
12 of Liberia, they have to acknowledge that because they sowed  
13 a seed of hatred--and I repeat that again: They sowed a seed  
14 of hatred in Liberia that will be very difficult to get out  
15 because their truth is not really the truth.

16 They were the one that encouraged all this killing  
17 in Liberia. Doe didn't even know some of the people he  
18 killed. They identified the people. They had one of them go  
19 to Crozerville to identify where I was. There were people --  
20 I had to hide in the bush because people were then checking  
21 in the different houses, shooting doors down where I went,  
22 where I used to help -- we used to help, my husband and I,  
23 carry rice to people.

24 So I didn't say that they were responsible for my  
25 father's death. My father was killed by a masked man, my

1 mother couldn't see who killed him. But they were  
2 responsible for the -- for some of the agitation and  
3 disruption in the community in Liberia. We cannot -- that's  
4 my feeling. If it's my perception, that's how I felt.

5           But now that my father was lonesome, I did say  
6 that my father was a person who wanted a lot of changes.  
7 People ridiculed him for wearing the sweatsuit, but he wore  
8 it, he told me, it was important to decrease the gap,  
9 economic gap. Why shouldn't everybody else be present at the  
10 table for discussion? And it helped, I know it helped  
11 because I saw people go into functions that didn't normally  
12 go.

13           So there were things he were doing that was  
14 disturbing to some of these so-called inner circle. And  
15 another thing my father -- my father knew about the PRO in  
16 Liberia, he dismantled that. Some people were getting their  
17 income from that, so some people were disturbed about that,  
18 maybe if not theirselves, their relatives were getting income.  
19 It was a profession in Liberia which was -- he felt wasn't  
20 necessary. And when my mother said he was lonesome, it's  
21 because my father -- people would come and tell him stories  
22 and he would literally ask the person -- he would call the  
23 person and the next person and tell him, okay, you tell me  
24 what you said about this person.

25           And the reason he did that is because he was --

1 for 19 years he saw that happening, he saw people getting in  
2 trouble, he saw people going to prison, he saw people  
3 disappearing. And he didn't want to be part of that. That's  
4 why I knew my father did not sign any execution order for  
5 Baccus Matthew or those people. He forgave them before the  
6 coup took place.

7           So the fact that my mother thought he was  
8 lonesome, my father was never a person to have -- I mean, he  
9 wasn't a smoker, he didn't used to drink. So he didn't have  
10 buddies that would come and sit down and drink. He was busy  
11 about his business. He used to stay up nights preparing for  
12 what he needed to do. He was serious about development.

13           So some people were not, some people were used to  
14 relax. So do you think they would be jumping? Of course,  
15 for them, too, sometime that change was a bit too rapid. So  
16 I think -- I think that's why. He and I never discussed it.  
17 But I, too, when I went to talk to my father about his death,  
18 he looked sad and lonesome. You are lonesome when you --  
19 when you -- he knew his death was imminent. He built his  
20 grave, his own grave. He built it. He had his own casket.  
21 I think he gave it to Green when he died, but he was given  
22 his own casket. But it was useless anyway because he said he  
23 wanted to be buried within two to three days after his death.

24           So he was different, he was different than many  
25 people in Liberia. That's why he was lonesome.

1           COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Now, as a student  
2 leader in the '70s, I interacted on quite a number of  
3 occasions with your father. And I remember specifically in  
4 1979 following the Rice Riots, was then detained. When the  
5 late Albert Porte came to visit and said he had received  
6 information that your father was about to appoint Mr. Chesson  
7 as Minister of Justice and he had warned him against it and  
8 he didn't feel that it would bode well, that it would have  
9 propelled him in the wrong direction and would have created a  
10 crisis in the country.

11           And in one of his writings, Mr. Porte states that  
12 he did go to the president, interceded with him not to go  
13 ahead with the appointment, but he still did anyway. And we  
14 saw how he conducted himself; mass arrests during his tenure,  
15 all of this culminating right there before the coup.

16           So I want to understand why this situation was so  
17 so -- perhaps you were not there because you were so far away  
18 from politics. But there was concern that your father was  
19 incapable of restraining the excesses of his family members,  
20 particularly his younger brother, Steven, who was Minister of  
21 Finance. What could you say to that?

22           THE WITNESS: The excesses? What do you mean by  
23 excesses?

24           COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Like, for instance,  
25 there was the case involving -- there was an article written

1 by "Liberianization of Government Business," in which there  
2 was a feud between your uncle and the Whigs concerning  
3 monopoly over -- well, it had to do with monopoly. It said  
4 Liberianization of Government Business accused him of using  
5 his official position to create a monopoly to his benefit,  
6 and that's basically what I'm talking about.

7 THE WITNESS: Well, I don't know -- I don't know  
8 anything about that so I'm sorry, I have to pass. I don't  
9 know about that. But --

10 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: And then lastly --

11 THE WITNESS: Everybody know that Steven Tolbert  
12 was -- he died in a plane crash. We don't know how, why,  
13 and, you know, whether there was foul play. But he died five  
14 years before the coup, so he was not around around the coup  
15 time. He was a strong businessman, a man that -- like every  
16 businessman, he was seeking his own interests a lot. But he  
17 didn't have -- he didn't affect my father. He had his own  
18 private business, you know.

19 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Lastly, right before  
20 the coup in 1980, there was a Congress of the True Whig  
21 Party, in which there were many young Liberians at the time,  
22 Emanuel Shaw and others, who were agitating for change in the  
23 True Whig Party and expected that the Buchannan Congress  
24 would deliver on the kind of changes that they were  
25 expecting.

1           And according to them, to their surprise, it was  
2 not the case; that rather than change, the current Congress  
3 were used basically the same kind of leadership in and the  
4 same direction. So don't you think this could have  
5 contributed to what eventually led to the coup.

6           THE WITNESS: I don't -- I don't know about that  
7 particular conference. But I know -- I don't really think  
8 that's what led to the coup. But I know that before the  
9 coup, when Tolbert was -- President Tolbert had organized so  
10 many groups to discuss development, to discuss -- they had  
11 different focus groups, different task forces about  
12 development. And I myself after the Rice Riot for the first  
13 time I thought, oh, I should be engaged in order to dispel  
14 some of the myths about my father.

15           So that was the first time I started learning  
16 about some of these different parties. And my father  
17 encouraged freedom of speech, he encouraged multiparties, PAL  
18 and MOJA, everybody know those groups. He encouraged them.  
19 He sent -- Vice President Warner talked about him giving  
20 these boys some of his own private money, gave them cars to  
21 go into rural areas and see his development.

22           So I don't see what more he could have done, you  
23 know, except shed his own blood. But I really believe that  
24 this man was sincere for development, I'm telling you he was.  
25 He was also -- when I graduated from medical school, he was

1 so proud. But he still didn't even go to my graduation. He  
2 sent my mother because he was busier with business for  
3 development in Liberia.

4 So my father was serious. I don't know anything  
5 about a conference that you spoke of. I wasn't there so I  
6 cannot shed any light on it. Sorry about that, Mr. Stewart.

7 COMMISSIONER JOHN STEWART: Thank you very much.

8 THE WITNESS: You're welcome.

9 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much for  
10 sharing your experience. We're very sorry about what  
11 happened to your family.

12 You said all of your relatives were in prison and  
13 you guys were put under house arrest. Besides your father  
14 and brother, did you lose any other relatives during that  
15 time?

16 THE WITNESS: Yeah, I corrected myself, all my --  
17 almost all my main relatives were -- but my immediate family  
18 were in prison. I lost -- my Uncle Frank Tolbert was  
19 publicly executed with the 13 people, and then A.B. was  
20 privately executed and they lied for over a year about it,  
21 and when all the political prisoners were released, that's  
22 when Doe announced that he was killed. And my mother was  
23 fooled all those years, the whole 20 months, thinking that  
24 her son was still alive. So he was killed.

25 And as I said, one of my father's younger child

1 was killed. And who else now... My aunt shortly died, she  
2 wasn't killed but she shortly died. My cousin, she was in a  
3 wheelchair and pushed down--I don't know by who--but she was  
4 killed. So I don't know how many of my cousins were killed,  
5 but I know my immediate family was; my brother, my uncle and  
6 my father were killed around the coup time.

7 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: What's the name of the  
8 younger child, if you remember?

9 THE WITNESS: It was a foster child, one of my  
10 father's foster children. Mumu, I'm sorry, Mumu (ph).

11 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you for coming.

12 COMMISSIONER GERALD COLEMAN: I'm about to say  
13 something, but it's a delicate point but it's an opinion that  
14 I think is important to say at this point. You know, from  
15 1970, every ten years Liberia lost its president, starting  
16 from Tubman's death in '71, your father's death 1980, Doe's  
17 death in 1990 and 2000 the vice president. I believe it's  
18 important that, as a part of reconciliation and healing, that  
19 at least the nation should express to you and your family and  
20 the families who -- all of those other leaders a great  
21 apology. So I'm doing it on my personal behalf now, but I  
22 hope that one day it will be done at a larger level. Thank  
23 you.

24 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Madam Witness, you  
25 said that you had an advice or recommendation to the TRC

1 Commission, but time did not permit you to say it here. We  
2 need all the advice we can get because we represent the  
3 cross-section of Liberia. So could you please, because of  
4 time, maybe you could write it and give it to us, because we  
5 really need all the advice and recommendation. So to leave  
6 that out because of time would be leaving out part of our  
7 history and we need it.

8           So could you, before you leave, maybe write to us  
9 and let us have it? I would appreciate having it.

10           THE WITNESS: I wrote a statement and you can have  
11 a copy of that. But before I leave, I want to say: To  
12 accomplish great things, we must not only act but we must  
13 dream and not only plan but we must believe. This is from  
14 Mr. France. Atolli France (ph) wrote that to accomplish  
15 great things, we must not only act but must dream. We must  
16 have a vision in Liberia, how we want Liberia to be. We must  
17 not only plan but we must believe.

18           This Commission, I am just in awe of each of you  
19 that have taken the time from your life to come and do this,  
20 but the Liberian people have to also believe in what you're  
21 doing. So I'm -- that's one of my major recommendations that  
22 us in Liberia, we have to take this to heart. And I myself,  
23 I'm very blessed to be able to come and give my testimony.  
24 I'm not -- nothing that I said I want any punishment for  
25 anybody because I think there's enough bloodshed. We have to

1 now look forward and dream about what we want to see in  
2 Liberia. And I -- I applaud you and I'm very grateful I had  
3 the opportunity.

4 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Thank you so much.

5 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Madam Witness, just  
6 before you go, we appreciate the context in which you've  
7 given your testimony, explaining the good deeds and the dream  
8 of the late president for the country which he extended to  
9 you as a daughter showing love for our country. There are  
10 three questions that I just want to ask you and get very  
11 brief responses to them: One has to do with the signing of  
12 the death warrant of Yancy (ph) and others. How much did  
13 that impact the inner relationship of the establishment at  
14 that time? You were very close to your father, perhaps you  
15 might have gotten some impressions.

16 Then, secondly, did you at any point in time  
17 notice the exclusivity of rice and privileges in Liberia  
18 prior to the 1980 coup?

19 And then the last one has -- I know you have  
20 concern about the country, you have spoken a lot about the  
21 root causes of the conflict. Have you had, at any point in  
22 time, realized that land is an issue that could be the source  
23 of greater conflict in Liberia?

24 THE WITNESS: Yeah, I was -- I will start with the  
25 first question and go back.

1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay.

2 THE WITNESS: Because that was part of my  
3 recommendation, that we have to really look at the land issue  
4 and property issue in Liberia because that really will be a  
5 source of great conflict if something's not done. There's so  
6 -- I mean, we understand a period of some people say 14, some  
7 people say 17 years of conflict, things went awry. But the  
8 issue about land in Liberia will be a major problem and we  
9 have to take that seriously. We have to bring all forces to  
10 deal with it as soon as possible before it gets worse.

11 People are sitting -- many of the Liberians in the  
12 Diaspora want to go home, and the challenge is where will  
13 they live? Their homes that they thought they have, somebody  
14 else is in it or somebody said it was never your home. I  
15 have property myself and there's a dispute. My mother gave  
16 me a property, one of Charles Taylor's -- I believe his  
17 sister has built a house on it and there's an issue. The  
18 house where I lived in, there was a grenade went through it.  
19 I went there for the second time -- I went in 2000 and 2006.  
20 And 2006 this man comes out and says it's his property, that  
21 my husband never bought the land. And so this is a  
22 situation. If people want to go back to help the  
23 development, they don't have a place to stay. So something  
24 needs to be done about that.

25 You talked about -- you asked about the execution.

1 I'm sure, I mean, I know -- I never talked to my father  
2 directly about it, but I know that his heart was heavy  
3 because he didn't -- I think it was a difficult decision to  
4 make. And the death sentence -- I think that's the only one  
5 he ever signed, but I know it bothered him. I don't know the  
6 details, you know. And I wasn't in Liberia when it happened.  
7 But any time somebody has to be executed, it's -- it's sad  
8 because it's not just a person you execute; you have to think  
9 about their children.

10 But it probably was only laws of Liberia that --  
11 and the Old Testament said when somebody kills, he should be  
12 killed. But I myself, I don't know, it's something that  
13 people have to discuss. And I hope in Liberia there will be  
14 a forum where people either are to accept the death penalty  
15 or not. And in some countries they don't have that anymore,  
16 but in other countries -- but Liberia has to come to a  
17 decision one way or the other. I don't know what it is now  
18 on the books, whether they still have the death penalty. But  
19 it's something -- it's a controversy, so to speak.

20 But I know it affected some families. Otherwise I  
21 don't know the details. And I never asked him about it. And  
22 you said something else about...?

23 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: The exclusivity of rice  
24 and privileges in Liberia prior to 1983.

25 THE WITNESS: Let's see, history is something we

1 can't erase, the coming of settlers. The historian was  
2 saying you had a group of people that came to Liberia that  
3 had more knowledge than those that were actual natives and  
4 they came together to form a country. Of course, these  
5 people had the education that made them already have --  
6 you've got the disparity already and so disparity persisted.  
7 But so, of course, in every country there's the poor and the  
8 rich and the rich have certain privileges. And so, of  
9 course, there was -- Liberia was no different, there was this  
10 disparity.

11           And, you know, my father knew to get rid of  
12 disparity was education. That's why he stressed education.  
13 And he was trying but, you know, we didn't have much --  
14 Liberia had very little money, and people thought Liberia had  
15 so much money. That's why they were so eager to take over.  
16 And within one year after the coup, we saw that they couldn't  
17 even pay all the -- they couldn't even pay for Christmas  
18 because when my husband was at Belle Yallah, he was sent to  
19 Belle Yallah, one of the soldiers came to him and said, "You  
20 know, it's Christmas and we don't even have our pay. When  
21 Tolbert was there, we had our pay before Christmas." So they  
22 thought there was a lot of money but there wasn't.

23           So people were trying their best and I know during  
24 my father's time, his heart was very heavy about that and he  
25 did his best to decrease the disparity. But unfortunately

1 the war has made a disparity even worse. We have more poor  
2 people in Liberia who is more disenfranchised. People were  
3 living on their farms and growing their crops. They were  
4 much better off than being crowded in Monrovia.

5           The first time I went to Liberia I saw people  
6 walking in the street, they had no clothes. They were just  
7 walking in the streets. And that was sad. That is why I am  
8 trying to see how I can help in the development. We all have  
9 a part to play to reduce the disparity, and no doubt there  
10 was and no doubt there is something we have to fight even  
11 harder for because the disparity is even greater.

12           CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much.  
13 You have said a lot. One last word before you leave?

14           THE WITNESS: God bless Liberia and God bless you  
15 all. And I pray that we will -- we'll remember that we're  
16 all one, no matter what tribe we're from. It's not about  
17 tribe and it's not about who you are. We have to look at our  
18 character, the content of our character, who -- and we also  
19 have to have a vision for where we want to go and let us work  
20 together as one people because united we stand. Let us make  
21 sure that we don't have external forces coming and destroy  
22 our country. We know that many of the big powers have  
23 opportunities to help and build us. Let us work together  
24 with them for the development of our country rather than the  
25 destruction of Liberia.

1           We thank you very much and we pray for your safety  
2 as you go out and in, and we pray that your report will be  
3 accepted and Liberian people will together -- because the  
4 president alone cannot do it. No one -- you all cannot do  
5 it. Everybody together have to first implement the change  
6 around themselves and help and be the change, the one to see  
7 in Liberia. Thank you very much.

8           CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much.  
9 Thank you, Ladies and Gentlemen, for joining us in today's  
10 session. We will take a 20-minute break and resume at about  
11 3:30. Thank you.

12                   (Time noted: 2:55 p.m.)

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## REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

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

DATED: July 14, 2008.

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