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TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION OF LIBERIA

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DIASPORA PROJECT

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8

PUBLIC HEARING

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HAMLIN UNIVERSITY

10

June 12, 2008

11

St. Paul, Minnesota

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TESTIMONY OF

14

MARIE Y. HAYES

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TRC Commissioners:

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Chairman Jerome Verdier

18

Vice Chairperson Dede Dolopei

Oumu Syllah

19

Sheikh Kafumba Konneh

Pearl Brown Bull

20

John H.T. Stewart

Massa Washington

21

Rev. Gerald Coleman

22

Court Reporter: Cindy L. Schultz, RMR, CRR, CLR

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1 (The following proceedings were had and made of
2 record, commencing at approximately 2:29 p.m.)

3 THE WITNESS: I, Marie Yarsiah Hayes, do promise
4 that my testimony I have come to give to the TRC is the truth
5 and nothing but the truth, so help me God.

6 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Hello, Ms. Yarsiah.
7 Welcome. I say thanks for coming.

8 The TRC process was established after a peace
9 agreement in Liberia to provide an opportunity for all of us
10 to reflect on the past, share our experiences, learn our
11 lessons, understand the root causes of the conflict, all of
12 which will provide a basis for us to move forward in harmony,
13 peace and reconciliation. We thank you for coming to share
14 your part of the experience with us.

15 As a commission, we put all of this emphasis
16 together, and then we have a comprehensive understanding of
17 what transpired, which will put us in a position to make the
18 kind of recommendations that Liberia would expect of us. So
19 we say thanks.

20 I will introduce the commissioners to you: Sheikh
21 Kafumba Konneh is at your extreme right, Pearl Brown Bull,
22 Gerald Coleman, Dede Dolopei, John Stewart, and Oumu Syllah.
23 I am Jerome Verdier.

24 Having done that, we ask preliminary questions
25 about yourself before you go into your testimony. Can you

1 kindly repeat your name?

2 THE WITNESS: My name is Marie Yarsiah Hayes.
3 Some people might know me as Marie Kolu Yarsiah, and some
4 might know me as Marie Yarsiah Combay.

5 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: So you have three names?

6 THE WITNESS: Names that I had before. My
7 official name is now Marie Yarsiah Hayes.

8 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Okay.

9 Your date of birth?

10 THE WITNESS: November 7, 1956.

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

13 THE WITNESS: New Hope, Minnesota.

14 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: What is your vocation?

15 THE WITNESS: I'm an educator, an international
16 student coordinator at Luther Seminary in St. Paul,
17 Minnesota.

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

20 THE WITNESS: I arrive August 24th, 1990.

21 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you. You may
22 proceed now.

23 THE WITNESS: I wanted to thank you for inviting
24 me here, and I appreciate what you are doing, and I
25 appreciate what is going on in Liberia in this process of

1 reconciliation. Reconciliation is prelude of --
2 Reconciliation is what we are doing now, coming together and
3 telling the truth of what happen in Liberia and perhaps
4 working together as a group to resolve any future problem
5 that may come up. And I hope that history will judge us
6 accordingly.

7 Like I said, my name is Marie Yarsiah first. I am
8 the daughter of the late Paramount Chief Flomo Yarsiah of the
9 Belleh District, which was Lofa County, that is now Gbarpolu
10 County.

11 I say that because my father, the late Paramount
12 Flomo Yarsiah, was a very good friend of the late President
13 William R. Tolbert. Through this friendship, William R.
14 Tolbert was supposed to raise us, five of us, five of his
15 children, at the Fassama Mission School, five of my father's
16 children. There was James Yarsiah, John Yarsiah, Annie
17 Yarsiah, Mary Yarsiah, and myself.

18 In the early '70s my father came to Fassama and
19 said, "My friend want for you to go and live with them."
20 President Tolbert was then the vice president. The
21 missionary way is God, so I did not come to live with them.
22 I remain on the mission, and I was being sponsored by
23 Tolbert, along with my siblings.

24 When we completed the program at Fassama Mission
25 School, we came and we were living with our older brother,

1 William Yarsiah, who was then working for Tolbert's farm as
2 one of the -- as an assistant manager and later became the
3 manager. William, James Yarsiah, Isaac Yarsiah, and I, later
4 Annie came, and we were all living with him. Tolbert paid
5 part of our lunch and our rent and provided for our upkeep.
6 We were there going to school. I was attending S-- I
7 attended SDA and ended up going to B.W. Harris High School,
8 where I graduated and matriculated to the University of
9 Liberia.

10 During that time there were a lot of other issues
11 that started, and I tell you, for my own upkeep, like pocket
12 change and all of that, I was employed at Executive Mansion
13 in the office of the private secretary to the president,
14 Julia C.W. Kromach. I worked with them directly. Some of my
15 work included typing letters, filing, at time taking the
16 letter into the president for signature. So I was, like,
17 what you might call an intern, but my position was cadet. I
18 worked there from 1975, when I was a senior in high school,
19 until I graduated from the University of Liberia.

20 In my junior year at the university, I met
21 Mr. Elijah Combay and we decided to get married, and since
22 Tolbert was acting as a guardian for us, we sought his
23 permission, and he provided us the necessary assistance to
24 get married.

25 We were married then, and I went ahead to complete

1 my university degree, because that was part of his
2 requirement, that he had told my father that he wanted to
3 make sure that I went to school and complete college. So
4 getting married, yes, he would accept me getting married, but
5 I should go ahead and finish. So I was able to graduate and
6 at the same time continue to work at the Mansion.

7 Then came the 1979 Rice Riot. I was no more
8 living with William since I was married, of course, and then
9 I had already moved to the University of Liberia campus.
10 James was -- who had graduated from Charlotte Tolbert High
11 School, was involved in the student movement. I think some
12 of his colleague, one of them is here, I see Stewart, I met
13 them several times. They were all involved in this and that.
14 And, also, one of my cousin, who is in the -- who was in the
15 audience earlier, Tolo, Tolo decided to try not to associate
16 so much with me because of my work at the Mansion. He did
17 not want to be -- for me to be considered a spy at the
18 Mansion, giving that information.

19 When the rice riot happen, there was this thing
20 about they had this poster up "Wanted Dead or Alive." Prior
21 to that I was sitting in my office when the security people
22 met in Tolbert office, they came out, I think it was Clarke,
23 it was one of the SS person, came directly to me, "Where is
24 your brother?"

25 And I said, "Which brother?" I said, "He went on

1 the farm." So when they ask for my brother, I always tell
2 them, I say, "He's gone on the farm to pay the workers, on
3 Tolbert farm, I assume."

4 And he said, "But where is --" "No, it's not that.
5 I'm looking for the other one they call James."

6 And I said, "I don't know where James live."
7 James left my brother's place. I said, "I don't know where
8 James live."

9 And he said, "Well, when you find him, let me
10 know. Don't tell anybody. Come and let me know."

11 And in the evening we got the news that they had
12 this flyer up -- this poster about that these gentlemen were
13 wanted dead or alive. I think they had it a \$500 or
14 something, or \$5000.

15 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: 5000.

16 THE WITNESS: \$5000 for -- for their heads. And I
17 got so angry, the next day when I went to him and I said,
18 "You knew about this. Why were you asking for my brother?
19 Did you want me to give my brother so that you can get this
20 reward?" And he joke about it and he left.

21 We've also got news that my brother was brought
22 into the office. That very day I was about five months
23 pregnant with my first daughter. That very day they had
24 extracted my tooth. I was home when my husband came running
25 to the house saying he got a message from the Mansion -- from

1 that Mansion that he was to report me to the Executive
2 Mansion immediately.

3 When he went and dropped me off, I went in and I
4 said, "You know, they just extracted my tooth." And I said,
5 "I'm not going to work today. Why are you calling me, and
6 why didn't they send security officers and they say, You
7 should come and get me?"

8 I went to the Mansion. I saw James with
9 Bishop Brown and Bishop Reeves. I was excited to see him,
10 but I was also perplexed. I sat down, but before I could say
11 hi to James, I was taken and immediately rushed into the
12 President's office.

13 And when I went in the office, Bishop Warner, who
14 was then the vice president of Liberia, and Holder, the
15 defense minister, and the justice minister, and they all were
16 sitting in there waiting for somebody else to come. And they
17 kept whispering around me. And I was sitting in the office,
18 and I -- I told them, I said, "You know what, I'm not feeling
19 too well. I don't want to sit here in this office all to
20 hear what you all have to say. But I -- I need to get out of
21 here."

22 And Tolbert said, "I want you to sit, because I
23 want you to be a witness to this." And he went on explaining
24 to the rest of the people who all were here about our family
25 and all of that.

1 And Bishop Warner said, "Well, if nobody
2 appreciate what you have done for the family, this lady will
3 appreciate it."

4 And he said, "I want you all to look at her.
5 She's pregnant. But I'm still responsible for her even in
6 this time. If her husband mess up, I will deal with him
7 accordingly," you know, like a father talking.

8 And we all sat down, and with that James was
9 brought into the office. Tolbert refused to shake James'
10 hand. He shook hand with everybody else, and he -- Tolbert
11 put his hand on his back and he said, "I'm not shaking your
12 hand. If you want to be my enemy, then I'm not shaking your
13 hand."

14 And we sat there, and the questions they asked
15 James had nothing to do with the April 12 or the April 14
16 incident. Tolbert only ask him to confirm if he knew me and
17 who was his father, if, in fact, he was the biological father
18 of the late Flomo Yarsiah or just somebody from rear by Flomo
19 Yarsiah, because he don't think that somebody like him would
20 be opposing him, Tolbert. So James was rushed out of the
21 office immediately, and I went home. And James -- They were
22 in jail.

23 The following week my father came to town and he
24 said, "Let's go to -- let's go. I'm going to see Tolbert."

25 When he got there, Tolbert said, "Please ask my

1 friend to wait until later we sit and talk." My father and I
2 went into the office. He got angry with Tolbert. He threw
3 the papers at him. The security went at him, and Tolbert
4 said, "No, please. That's my friend. He has the right to
5 get angry."

6 I remember vividly my father said, "I send my
7 children to you to be guardian for them, and you have him on
8 the list of people who want their head. You take the pistol
9 and shoot me. I don't want to see your face until my son is
10 free, and not only my son, but everybody else who associated
11 with him, because these are children -- they are our
12 children. We got a right to correct them," and he walked
13 out. And Tolbert call him, and he turn around and walk out.

14 The very next day Tolbert came out with an amnesty
15 to -- to release everybody. So I don't know whether it was
16 because of this or it was because of meeting with other
17 people, but I guess because it was that.

18 The 1980 coup took place. Because of the '79
19 riot, our graduation ceremony from the university had been
20 postpone until February 1980. So right after that I told
21 him, "I cannot continue to be a cadet at the Mansion, because
22 I've already graduated." They give me a letter of
23 appointment to start as admissions officer with the assistant
24 minister for Economic Affair as of April 1. Then, of course,
25 April 12 coup took place. I've just work in my position for

1 two weeks. I didn't get my first pay.

2 So right there, when the coup took place -- That
3 night I was home when the coup -- in the house, living, in
4 fact, right behind the armory on Lynch Street. And at
5 1 o'clock when I heard the shooting, when I asked the
6 soldiers, he told the coup has taken place and Tolbert was
7 killed, and a Krahn man was now president.

8 And we all tried to find a way to escape, and we
9 could not escape. And the soldiers confided that we had been
10 very good to them in the night after the rice -- after the
11 rice riot, what we call the rice riot happen. Most of the
12 soldiers -- When the Guinean soldiers came to protect
13 Tolbert--and most of the soldiers used to live right under
14 our window--we help them with some cane juice. So they were
15 very close to us. They tell us, "Stay right here. We take
16 care of you guys. We guide you." So we remained there.

17 On Monday I decided to go to work. On Monday I
18 went to the Mansion, and it was all in the chaos. We
19 wondering where we were going to be. So I go back in my
20 office and start working. I didn't see my boss. And it was
21 -- We were -- we were all around there, and there were
22 meetings going on that we were not to continue on there.

23 To call a long story short, we were asked to
24 leave, because when I talk with Willie Givens later, who was
25 in and out, because Willie Givens would be taken in the

1 evening and kept in a cell behind the Mansion, in the day
2 they will bring him back into the -- in the Mansion to do
3 some work, to write -- to write speeches and do things, and
4 then later on they would take him back, and finally decided
5 to keep him on. And he wanted me to work directly with him.
6 But he was told, no, he couldn't hire me, because we all were
7 close to Tolbert. Keeping him there should be have him
8 certify. So I left.

9 I was looking for a job for about three months,
10 and somebody told me, said, "Go to GSA. There's a young man
11 who took over at GSA, his name is Charles Taylor. He's
12 looking for people who are, you know, managers or people who
13 graduated from the university." I went there, and Charles
14 Taylor hired me, but I was hired to work as administrative
15 assistant to the deputy for administration, Blamo Nelson.

16 One week into working with Blamo Nelson, a
17 security officer came and met me sitting at a desk. "What
18 are you doing here?"

19 I say, "I'm working here."

20 And he left. He went into Taylor and said, "That
21 woman, that one of Tolbert women there. Why your got her
22 working here?"

23 And Charles Taylor call me in his office and said,
24 "Why didn't you tell us?"

25 I said, "Tell you what?"

1 "That you are one of Tolbert women."

2 And I said, "I don't know what you mean about
3 being 'Tolbert women.'" I say, "One thing I will always say
4 is that Tolbert did not give me money, he didn't give me a
5 bank account, but he left me a millionaire."

6 He said, "What you mean about that?"

7 I said, "He gave me one thing that you all cannot
8 take away from me, that's my education. So if it's because
9 of my association with Tolbert you don't want to keep me
10 here, I'm ready to leave."

11 And he said, "Go back to your desk and do your
12 work. Anybody come here, I will answer the question."

13 And I said, "You are be a good guy. I continue my
14 work at GSA."

15 Until 1981 we started this bulk-purchasing system.
16 The bulk-purchasing system, if there is a man that I know
17 that when he wants something done, he will find the best help
18 that he can get to have it done. Taylor went to the General
19 Services Administration in the United States in Washington,
20 D.C., and sought assistance to establish the bulk-purchasing
21 system.

22 And an arrangement was made with Alexander Grant &
23 Company to come and set up this system in Liberia. The bulk-
24 purchasing system that was set up was a very good system if
25 the -- if the implementation process was followed. That I

1 work -- I work as one of the -- the secretaries trying to put
2 this together, work with people. Blamo and I, sometimes we
3 stayed late working on this project. And finally the Cabinet
4 approved the bulk-purchasing system.

5 It was that the General Services Agency was to be
6 the chair, and if there is a contract, a bid for purchase or
7 for maintenance or for any major thing, that the minister of
8 commerce and the minister of finance representatives would
9 come together and decide on the best person or the best
10 agency to do the work.

11 But after the first meeting with these folks,
12 Taylor sat down in a meeting and said, "I am the director
13 general of GSA, and there is no one who's going to tell me
14 who I should hire to do this or who I should contract. So,
15 Blamo, if you want to sit down and meet with those people,
16 that your business. I'll make my decision when I have to
17 make it."

18 A few months after that, there are people who been
19 wondering, "Where did Taylor get the name Ghankay?" I think
20 I will tell you. Taylor had been going to the Barracks every
21 now and then. He goes to Quiwonkpa, he sits there, he come
22 back, and if wanted, he can go sits with Blamo. And he said,
23 "Blamo, man, these boys are giving me a hard time. I told
24 them I'm a Gola man, but I ain't got no country name. Your
25 find one. Where can I get one?"

1 And he said, "Well --" And I was passing. He
2 said, "Marie, come here."

3 I said, "what?"

4 And he said, "Ain't you understand Gola?"

5 I said, "Well, I understand some."

6 And he said, "Help me a minute. I need a name."

7 And I said, "Taylor," I said, "DG"--we call him
8 DG--I said, "I'm thinking about a name, but I don't know if
9 you like it." I say --

10 He say, "What?"

11 I say, "Ghankay."

12 He said, "What does that mean?"

13 I said, "Well, it means somebody who is sometime
14 hard-headed." I said, "But it could be somebody who is very
15 strong, or it could be somebody who is a warrior."

16 He said, "Oh, I like that." He said, "Spell it
17 for me."

18 And we sat down. I said, "Well, it's a country
19 name. I don't know." We started writing the name.

20 And he said, "Okay, Blamo, I'm going to tell Grace
21 Minor and I'm going to tell Katherine Montgomery," at that
22 time who was the executive secretary, "from now on my name
23 will be Charles Ghankay Taylor. In fact, they will put
24 Charles G. Taylor. If someone ask me what the 'G' stand for,
25 I will tell him," and he walk out of the office. And that

1 how he got his name, Charles Ghankay Taylor. So he dropped
2 the "MacArthur" and said, "From now on they will put Charles
3 G. Taylor." So he was done. When they ask, he said, "My
4 name Ghankay. My grandfather gave me that name because I was
5 too hard-headed.

6 And when the bulk-purchasing system started, the
7 first meeting order we got, I was not part of that meeting,
8 it was an order of stationery supplies that was order from
9 the U.S., Balmoni International, B-A-L-M-O-N-I. Balmoni
10 International was given this contract for \$1 million, and the
11 stationery supplies came in.

12 And then it was decided, okay, we're going to buy
13 some spare parts for heavy-duty equipment. But that request,
14 actually it came from the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Public
15 Works, and Rural Development, because they have most of their
16 heavy-duty equipment out, broken down. They needed to be
17 repaired.

18 When the request came in, Taylor said, "I want to
19 find out where we get the money from to buy this. Marie, we
20 assign you to the Ministry of Finance for one week. I want
21 you to go there and look at the books. Work with Abraham
22 Alieu in the General Account office. Identify all the funds
23 that have to do with the purchase of spare parts."

24 I went there one week. I was given all of the
25 ledgers to go through them, and it would come out to about

1 \$1.2 million. I went back, gave my report. And Taylor said,
2 "Fine. Blamo, I want you to go out to investigate the
3 possibility of what are the spare parts that we need, who --
4 who we can get to do the work." He left; he came to the
5 United States.

6 And we knew immediately that the main supplier of
7 these heavy-duty equipment was Libtraco. So we got Libtraco,
8 we sat down with them. They got people out in the field, and
9 because they knew most of the equipment we needed, they knew
10 what spare parts were needed, we needed this, and they
11 submitted a bid for about \$1.1 million or so.

12 And Blamo said, "Well, okay, let's negotiate."
13 Because when you go to people, you say, "\$1 million," they'll
14 say, "Money too big. Let's come out to 900,000." So we
15 agreed and we drew our contract to be paid in three
16 installment for Libtraco to get the spare parts and do the
17 repair or the works.

18 Taylor came back from the States and said--I was
19 in the office--he said, "Blamo, what is the result of your
20 work?"

21 Blamo said, "We met with Libtraco." "Marie, go
22 bring the file." Ojuku -- Ophelia Bowen-Ojuku was the
23 director of the financial management at GSA. Go and bring
24 the vouchers and everything that we have prepared."

25 She came in. We sat down and showed everything to

1 Charles Taylor of what had been done. And Charles Taylor
2 said, "Blamo, I told you to investigate; I didn't tell you to
3 enter into a contract. In fact, I have found a company
4 that's going to provide all these spare parts."

5 And Blamo said, "Well, who's going to do the work?"

6 He said, "What we got motor pool for?"

7 He said, "So from now on, Ophelia, I want you to
8 go and change these voucher to International Earthmoving
9 Equipment. He put his hand in his pocket, he took out the
10 address and gave it.

11 I was sitting there, and later on, when I got to
12 review the file, Balmoni International and International
13 Earthmoving Equipment were the same address, they just had
14 change the name. I became a little bit suspicious. Why
15 would Balmoni International and International Earthmoving
16 Equipment have the same address? But I didn't pursue it.

17 We took all the items and we -- we -- the voucher
18 was prepared, the first payment was made. I went with
19 Taylor, we went to the Mansion, we went to the minister of
20 finance. We went step by step from the minister office down
21 to the -- the -- the -- the payment office to make sure that
22 our order was processed and the money was transferred to
23 Mr. Morlu in -- John Morlu, who was then handling the
24 finances for the government in the United States for the
25 money to be sent on to the International Earthmoving

1 Equipment.

2 We processed -- Those document were processed.
3 The next time we started looking for the items to come, we
4 got a fax that said that the -- the spare parts are being
5 sent. The people needed a second payment.

6 We waited. The spare parts did not come. The
7 entire payment was sent. They say they didn't receive the
8 entire payment. I said the full payment was sent in place of
9 that. So, in essence, the total amount exceeded to \$900, the
10 total amount of payment.

11 And once that payment had been sent, in that
12 interim there was a change. Charles Taylor had -- was
13 transferred from GSA to Minister of Commerce as the new
14 minister of commerce. And Clarence Momolu, who was then
15 deputy minister of commerce, was brought into GSA as director
16 general. Blamo Nelson was his deputy, and I was on maternity
17 leave.

18 While on maternity leave, Grace Minor and Rosetta
19 Clarke, who was the personnel director, call my house -- or
20 they came there and they started saying that there was some
21 tensions developing at GSA because Clarence Momolu was asking
22 for a lot of questions, and they think that he's going to
23 make some changes.

24 The same week was not over, Blamo Nelson came to
25 my house and said, "You need to talk with Clarence."

1 I said, "Why should I be talking with Clarence?"

2 He said, "Well, Clarence want to make some changes
3 that I don't think is right. He's asking the question, but
4 he need to wait for me to give him the information."

5 And I said, "Blamo, you are now Clarence deputy.
6 You need to give him the information he seeks. And I don't
7 know Clarence. I heard of him. We met once because we had a
8 common border for property," I said, "but I don't know him."

9 He had the assumption is that because Clarence is
10 from Lofa, I'm from Lofa, so we should be able to understand
11 each other. I said, "This is not the case."

12 He said, "Well, I want you to cut your maternity
13 leave short and come to work, because I think when you have
14 common ground, we can all work together and resolve this
15 issue."

16 I went to work on Monday. When I went to work on
17 Monday, Clarence knew I was back at work and called me in and
18 asked me to be his administrative assistant. And so now I
19 was caught between the two people, and I say, "Clarence, I
20 need to think about it until, you know, we know what's going
21 on."

22 Doe was out of the country. Clarence made his
23 changes. Of course, John Ramsey, who was the minister of
24 state for Presidential Affair, change -- went back and voided
25 Clarence decision and made a big national issue. And when

1 Doe came back, Doe sided with Clarence and dismissed
2 everybody, and that how I became administrative assistant, or
3 special assistant and assistant director general of GSA.

4 Just then a report of the spare parts issue came
5 up. Clarence ask me to go and write what I knew about it.
6 The files were in my office. I pulled up the files. I wrote
7 the report. Clarence said, "Okay, take this report, write a
8 letter exactly as this report, and I will sign it to send to
9 the Mansion to address this."

10 While I was doing that, somebody called Taylor and
11 told Taylor that, "Marie is writing a report on this whole
12 thing." And Taylor decided -- I don't know what was -- that
13 was the main thing, but he -- he left. He left the country;
14 he came to the United States.

15 And the case was brought in. I told -- I told
16 Jenkins Scott at that time, who was the minister of justice,
17 that if they needed me to come with them to the United States
18 to testify, I was ready because I work on the project. But
19 they say it was not necessary for me to come, so I did not
20 come, that they have all the information that they needed.

21 We heard Taylor was found guilty, but he was
22 pleading and he was in jail. That was the last time I heard
23 about it. They didn't come back for any other document to
24 say they needed to send this.

25 But the next time when I heard, was that Taylor

1 was being -- was in -- who has attack Liberia from the
2 Ivory Coast. And I started hearing remarks all of who were
3 there saying, "We're going to get -- We're going to get
4 Taylor. We going to get Taylor. We going to get him this
5 time." So I figured that it was time for me to leave.

6 By that time the election had happened, and I was
7 now deputy director of operation at GSA. I took my case and
8 send it out of country. I was out of country somewhere
9 between Kolahun and Foya when I saw Senator Kpoto's vehicle
10 come to the village and said, "The President needs you right
11 away. You need to go back to Monrovia. There's a plane
12 waiting on a farm."

13 I went, got on the plane and went back to
14 Monrovia, went to Doe's office. He asked me, "Where is
15 Clarence Momolu?"

16 And I said, "Mr. President, I don't -- the last
17 time I saw Clarence, he said his foot was hurting him and he
18 was going to Zorzor for treatment."

19 He said, "That's not true. Clarence has fled."
20 He said, "This war is come --" This was, like, 8 June -- June
21 1990. He said, "This war is getting to be a problem. All
22 those that I have trusted have left me. Your people from
23 Lofa came here and told me, say they will support me any way.
24 Do you know that Washington has already fled, Flomo
25 Washington?"

1 And I say, "I don't know. I don't know where
2 Flomo Washington is."

3 He say, "Well, all your Lofa people running away
4 from me and everybody here, so I don't know what you doing on
5 that side. You need to be here on the ground. I want you to
6 come here and be in the Mansion and do what needs to be
7 done."

8 And I said, Mr. President, I can't promise you
9 that I will come and stay in the Mansion ground when I got my
10 children out of country. I will go to GSA, I will do my
11 work. If you need me, send for me. But over the weekend I'm
12 going to see my kids."

13 He said, "But they tell me that government
14 officials are taking cars away. Even my press secretary,
15 Patrick Kugmeh, took my car from the Mansion. Did you all
16 give them private plates?"

17 I said, "Mr. President, GSA does not issue private
18 plates. It's the minister of finance that issue private
19 plates. So if your press secretary took your car and turned
20 it over to private plates, I don't know about it."

21 "But why can't GSA stop the people from taking the
22 cars?"

23 "And, Mr. President, I am not the security. GSA
24 issue government plates. If these people take the plates out
25 and go to the finance ministry and get private plates, they

1 leave the country, I'm not responsible."

2 He sat up for a while. He said, "You say you were
3 in there?"

4 I said, "Yeah."

5 "How are my Dolees?" The Belleh and the Krahn
6 refer to each other as Dolees. He said, "How are my Dolees?"

7 I said, "They are -- they are okay. Things are
8 still going outside. But your Dolees, they need any
9 protection, they can come and they tell you."

10 He said, "Why, Marie?"

11 I said, "Let me -- let me tell you one thing," I
12 say, "I always tell you the truth because we are Dolees. I
13 said, "This war has come to a stage that we need to get out
14 and let peace be in place."

15 He stood up and he said, "Marie, I'm glad you
16 reminded me that we are Dolees, because I cannot touch you.
17 I can't do anything to you," he said, "but don't ever tell me
18 to leave again."

19 I say, "Okay. I'm sorry." I said, "But don't
20 expect me to stay around here." And I left.

21 That weekend I went to Vaihun, and then there was
22 this riot in Monrovia; I couldn't come back. I had to walk
23 from Vaihun up to Sosomonlahun area and was able to get a
24 vehicle to go back to the village where I was. And that's
25 how -- I stayed there until I came to Sierra Leone. And even

1 being in that village was difficult. We took our vehicle,
2 which was our private vehicle, and hid them in the Poro bush,
3 but people got aware -- they got -- they got to know about
4 it.

5 We came from the farm one time and were told that
6 the rebels were looking for one Marie Combay who was hiding
7 in the area. And the villagers asked us to please leave
8 their town, because they didn't want their town to be
9 destroyed. So we left.

10 We got to Foya. The guy who they appointed to be
11 rebel commander did not know my last name. He was a close
12 friend to my ex-husband, his brother, and they thought that
13 my husband -- my ex-husband's name was Kpehe, so when we say
14 we wanted to leave, we pay him \$50, he escorted us. An
15 individual was looking for Marie Combay, and his friend said,
16 "If I find her, I'll be the first to give her to you." But
17 he escorted us.

18 We went to Sierra Leone. And I stay at
19 Sierra Leone for a couple of weeks. And we went to the
20 embassy to try to get visa for the kids, because I already
21 had a diplomatic visa.

22 And we came -- I left because this time they have
23 scheduled for the kids to go for interview was in October, so
24 I left the kids and came to the United States and came to
25 Chicago around -- I came to the United States August 24th,

1 1990, like I said earlier, moved to Chicago in September, and
2 later on came here to Minnesota.

3 The process of applying for political asylum took
4 a while. I got here to Minnesota through The Human Right
5 Advocate. I was able to get recommendations of possible
6 lawyers that -- who help me on a -- not pro bono, but reduced
7 pay fee basis. I got an asylum approved. My family was
8 going to come and join me. And since then we have lived in
9 Minnesota.

10 And I -- As someone coming from Liberia, living in
11 Minnesota have been that my main goal is to see how Liberians
12 can make it here. While I was here, I work on a master
13 degree, got a MBA. And since my being in Minnesota, I have
14 worked with the Luther Seminary, created an office that I now
15 have, and I have job working with people from all over the
16 world, and at the same time want to make sure that Liberians
17 who are especially involved with theology are properly
18 trained to do what they do. And I work with the Liberian
19 community. And part of what I try to do among Liberians is
20 to make sure that we act together.

21 The prior speaker was talking about when the
22 leaders of a community here, taking on responsibility to
23 bring Liberians together. Yes, we try to do that. But at
24 the same time we inform Mr. Patrick Zeon and others that the
25 best thing to do is to cooperate with the leadership.

1 If the leader -- If people call meeting, if they
2 are tribal meetings, I think you rightly said it,
3 Commissioner, was that Syllah or Sa-lee-a? that when you call
4 tribal meetings, you find more attendance than when you call
5 Liberian meetings. I don't know why this -- this is so, but
6 our cooperation is needed.

7 Sometime you call meeting for people who interest,
8 especially when we're talking about the adjustment of
9 temporary protective status without a permanent residence.
10 The main people who are affected do not come to the meetings.
11 They all want to seek their own economic means, and they get
12 frustrating at time.

13 I'm not -- I came here. I have my own style
14 adjusted to live in United States. I can live here as long
15 as I want to live here, but, at the same time, there are
16 people here who are in the United States that need to perhaps
17 have their style adjusted. It's not being done. What is the
18 problem? We don't know.

19 America say they don't want to be responsible for
20 everybody. Yes. But, at the same time, we don't want to
21 have everybody return to Liberia at one time and become a
22 burden for the government of Liberia. That's why -- why I --
23 I hope that we can all reconcile.

24 There are maybe three basic recommendations that I
25 will have. One that have to do with the women and the girls.

1 It's not in my statement that I made earlier, but I saw this
2 happen a lot from the Tolbert time up to the Doe time, when
3 official of government visit the interior, they have tendency
4 to find the young virgin for the official of government.
5 Sometime it is a very young girl who is between the age of 12
6 and 16. That have to stop.

7 I'm glad now that we have a Ministry for Gender.
8 Those are special abuses of young children that need to stop.
9 Parents condone those idea because they expect money from
10 these government officials. Those need to stop.

11 If you are government official and you are
12 traveling, carry your own woman with you. Don't expect the
13 townpeople to found somebody for you.

14 Young people that want to get educated -- young
15 girls that want to be educated are being -- go out and look
16 for what you call godfathers. Now, my understanding of a
17 godfather is somebody who stands in the church with your
18 parents to be able to provide support for you when your
19 parents are not able. But as godparents become sexual
20 partners, that needs to stop.

21 The other recommendation that I need to make is we
22 -- is in both area. When I was at the U.S. -- Liberian
23 Embassy about a week ago in Washington, D.C., we were talking
24 about the same thing. There are a lot of young people that
25 come to this country, either through the -- what we call the

1 refugee repatriation process or they came here for some
2 reason; now have gotten themselves involved into crime. They
3 are being deported. I think the Ambassador said something
4 about 4000 Liberians in jails in this country that need to be
5 sent back home. These people are being deported.

6 What is the government doing to rehabilitate these
7 people before they are let loose into the Liberian society?
8 Things like that need to be taken care of, because these are
9 the people that are contributing to the armed robbery and the
10 insecurity of the people there in Liberia. At the same time,
11 we here as a community, we also try to work with our young
12 people, prepare programs for them and provide educational
13 opportunities for them so that they are not involved in these
14 criminal activities, then we send them back to Liberia.

15 And then the last thing will be -- We keep talking
16 about DED or TPS expiring. Yes, it's expiring, and the U.S.
17 government would expect for our people to go back home. Is
18 Liberia prepared to absorb all of these people? If they are
19 not, this is the time now for Liberian officials to work with
20 us in the Diaspora to let the U.S. Government know what
21 capacity Liberia has to receive the people here. And if
22 those capacities are not available, they should let the
23 people know, which will help in a decision-making process for
24 the U.S. officials to say we will let Liberians stay here or
25 not. And believe me, I don't think you are ready to receive

1 them. Thank you.

2 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much,
3 Madam Witness. Your first recommendation brought a thought
4 to my mind which has to do with Gbalatuah. I think the new
5 president had a mission on Gbalatuah. And it's wildly
6 believed in Liberia that the system you just spoke against,
7 where young girls, young virgins, were given to government
8 officials a breeding ground for something like that. And
9 being close to the president at that time and working in the
10 Mansion, has that influenced this recommendation? Would you
11 say, is that practice continuing today?

12 THE WITNESS: I heard about Gbalatuah. I never
13 went to Gbalatuah. And it might be the same information that
14 you heard, I heard that there were girls there, there were
15 women there. People said that if you -- if you a male, you
16 go to Gbalatuah, you go buy the women there. It was the same
17 information that I got, but I cannot confirm that this is
18 what was going on.

19 What I'm saying I'm saying from the fact that --
20 I'll give you one example. There's someone that I consider
21 to have been one of the most honorable persons in Liberia.
22 That was the late Harry Moniba. I went with Harry Moniba to
23 Belle Yella, and I -- I did something as a decoy for him.
24 Clarence Momolu was my boss then. I took his girlfriend with
25 me as a decoy.

1 When we got there -- Not knowing that my mother
2 had been asked to be the -- the chairperson to find the right
3 girl for him, when we got there, later in the evening my mom
4 came to me saying, "I'm having problem. I can't find a young
5 girl in this town."

6 And I said, "What for?"

7 She said, "Well, they told me I'm to find somebody
8 for the Chief here, and, you know, we need someone to warm
9 his bed."

10 And I told my mom, I said, "You don't have to. I
11 brought somebody for him already just to do that." But it
12 was an understanding between Harry and myself.

13 And Harry will always consult me. During the 1985
14 election, he had gone to Tuzon. According to what he explain
15 to me, he had gone to Tuzon with Doe and they brought a young
16 girl to him. And he told me, he said, "Marie, can you
17 imagine they brought this young girl, and when I look at this
18 girl, she almost like Alicia's age?" Alicia was -- is one of
19 his daughter, and Alicia at that time was about 13, 14.

20 He said. . .

21 And I said, "Why did you do?"

22 He said, "I refuse her. I told her, 'Thank you.
23 I don't condone that. That is a dirty girl.'"

24 And I said, "No, Harry. You just made a big
25 mistake, political voo-voo."

1 And he said, "What do you mean about that?" The
2 minute I came into the office we were talking, his wife,
3 "Marie, are you trying to encourage Harry to sleep with these
4 girls?"

5 I said, "No, I'm not encouraging Harry to do that.
6 I'm just telling you that he made a political mistake." I
7 say. . .

8 He said, "What do you think I should have done?"

9 I said, "Tell them thank you. The girl is a
10 travel thing. It's a cultural thing they did that. Tell
11 them thank you. The girl still -- when they leave, she can
12 stay somewhere around there in the morning. Give her a few
13 dollars, tell her thank you; to go. You don't have to sleep
14 with her. But by refusing, it means that you refuse a gift
15 that was brought to you."

16 So there are -- there are a lot of those that are
17 happening. So I won't think -- I won't say Gbalatuah was
18 the -- is the main reason that I said -- that I made the
19 recommendation.

20 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much.

21 Were the spare parts ever received?

22 THE WITNESS: Pardon me?

23 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Were the spare parts
24 ever received?

25 THE WITNESS: No.

1 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much. We
2 appreciate you coming and sharing your experience with us.

3 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: All the commissioners
5 will now ask some questions.

6 Sheikh.

7 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you,
8 Madam Witness.

9 You had five brothers and sisters that were
10 responsible to -- I mean by President Tolbert. Are they all
11 alive?

12 THE WITNESS: Unfortunately, Annie pass away in
13 1992, but all the others are still alive.

14 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: And after
15 your father's intervention for your brother James and the
16 others' release, do you remember at any time whether they
17 were rearrested?

18 THE WITNESS: Not James, but there were others
19 with him that -- there were others that were rearrested.

20 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: How do you
21 describe -- or how can you describe the late
22 President Tolbert?

23 THE WITNESS: From my own perception, I will say
24 that he was a leader somewhere -- trying to bring in what we
25 called a native Liberia, maybe trying to bring in--actually,

1 that's not the term--being a bridge builder between the two.
2 And I will agree with some people when they say he was too
3 fast in bringing, what we'll call, the country people into
4 the government and also with those who say that he was too
5 slow in bringing the country people into the government.

6 His economic policy of self-sufficiency and
7 working for ourself to rebuild the country was a good one. I
8 like those policy, not being very dependent on government to
9 do everything for you, but to do -- to be like JFK said, "Ask
10 not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for
11 your country."

12 There were people who criticized his business
13 tactics, with my brother being the manager for his farm, and
14 people kept saying that he was involved into every little
15 thing. And knowing -- There was a lady, Marie, who was a
16 marketer at one of the meetings in Bensonville who stood up
17 and accused Tolbert of being involved with every little
18 business and that he -- in fact, when he come to the Mansion,
19 they don't know what he's always doing, that they couldn't
20 get to see him.

21 And Tolbert tried to solve that by actually
22 inviting Marie to share his office for a week. And a desk
23 was put into Tolbert's office, and Marie sat down there for
24 three days and decided that was enough, she wanted to go to
25 her market.

1 But I think he had some very good economic plan
2 for Liberia, and the -- the coup might have been a good thing
3 to involve every particular Liberian into the -- the
4 government, but I don't think it solved Liberia's problem.
5 We should have given Tolbert a chance.

6 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Your
7 testimony tends to confirm and affirm two important issues:
8 One, yes, it is true that Mr. Taylor absconded government
9 funds and, two, that the government of Doe, minister of
10 justice, failed to get relevant documents from you to
11 prosecute the case. Can you tell us whether there was some
12 complacency in this (unintelligible)?

13 THE WITNESS: If there was some what?

14 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Some
15 complacency in the deliberate refusal of bringing you along
16 or even getting the documents that were going to substantiate
17 the fact that, indeed, Mr. Taylor got some funding from the
18 government.

19 THE WITNESS: I don't know if there was any
20 complacency or what you meant. I don't know what you meant.
21 I'm recalling what I'm -- What happen here is that when I was
22 not asked to come and testify and be a witness and we heard
23 the news that Taylor had been convicted, so it -- I just
24 thought that it's true, that it was not necessary for me to
25 have come, that they probably have all the information. But

1 at no time was I aware that there was additional information
2 that were being requested until I heard today from
3 Ambassador Cohen.

4 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Is that
5 statement of Ambassador Cohen questionable?

6 THE WITNESS: No, because he was here. He knew
7 what was requested. I'm saying that I'm -- I'm not aware if
8 there were additional documents that were being requested
9 until I heard from him today. It's possible that these
10 additional documents were being requested, but I was not made
11 aware of it.

12 COMMISSIONER SHEIKH KAFUMBA KONNEH: Thank you
13 very much.

14 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Marie, as a
15 witness, in speaking your truth quietly but eloquently, you
16 clearly enlighten our minds about many of the rumors, the
17 myths and facts within that period concerning three of our
18 leaders. President Tolbert, who educated five of your
19 siblings, no relationship, how he could listen, like some
20 people thought he didn't listen, how he cherished friendship
21 because -- just saw all the softness of him that people
22 said -- how your father could come in to him to the Mansion
23 as a friend and throw the paper on his desk and said, I
24 didn't send -- what you call -- I need to recall it, and the
25 way your father talked to him, and next day he release not

1 only your brother, but all those accused, and that was prior
2 to 1979 riot that we had.

3 THE WITNESS: After that.

4 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: After the 1979
5 riot. You've given us -- you've given us the key to one big
6 clue of the myth and rumors surrounding him. So we know now,
7 just as you said, you are not sure whether that was the
8 cause, but scholars and some of us now can analyze in writing
9 the history for which our humanity dictates that we do.

10 You also talk about Doe, his relationship -- not
11 only the feelings for his Krahn compatriots, but also --
12 because I'm not to summarize, so -- but it's important -- but
13 also the Dolees -- or what do they call it? Dolees? the other
14 tribal people?

15 THE WITNESS: Dolees.

16 COMMISSIONER PEARL BROWN BULL: Dolees.

17 There are many things you talk that anybody
18 listen, as your own radio and for history, they can analyze
19 any and every portion of your statement here today, your
20 presentation.

21 But you also talk about Taylor, working as -- with
22 him at GSA, what kind of administrator he was.

23 Thank you. I'm proud of this indigenous woman who
24 sat here and spoke the truth quietly, clearly, but
25 eloquently, and speaking from the heart your recommendations

1 also. Thank you.

2 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

3 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Thank you, Marie,
4 for coming to us and for sharing this unique experience with
5 us. I want to assure that you've shown light on so many
6 other aspect of our work, and that it will go a long way in
7 helping -- helping us to realize our mandate.

8 I have only one question. Did anybody die from
9 you during the war?

10 THE WITNESS: Yes. I mean, the rebels enter our
11 village. And, you know, I -- I don't really want to go into
12 groups -- groups on things and stuff like that, but my mother
13 really went through a lot of those pains because she did not
14 know where I was. She was in the forest -- the Bedeh Forest,
15 hiding when the rebels enter our area. And our town is a
16 small town, about ten or 12 villages, Kenata. When they --
17 And the way the rebels got there, for the Bedeh area, you
18 have to meet people from that area that will escort them
19 there.

20 One of my late father brother's son--you know, we
21 don't have what we call first cousin, we have
22 brothers--escorted the rebels to the village who say that I
23 have build a modern house there. He had no idea what type of
24 house I had there.

25 My mom wanted to go home and stay after my

1 father's death in a plane crash in 1982, and we build a house
2 similar to the one that was in the village for everybody to
3 stay in. We only had some essential facilities. Now, you
4 have to go in the house before you know. But all this got
5 that I was building a house. And they assumed that because I
6 was working for government, I had built a modern house there,
7 and he took the rebels there. He stayed on the outskirts of
8 town so that rebels can enter.

9 When they got there, they didn't find me. My
10 mother was there, and she was brave enough to come out and
11 say, "If you looking for Marie, I am her mother. What do you
12 want?"

13 They said, "We looking for the house."

14 She said, "Yes, the house, you can come and take
15 it."

16 They got angry. They called my cousin out, and
17 before my mother they cut -- they cut his throat. And she --
18 she stood out there and couldn't cry, because they ask all of
19 them to clap their hands.

20 Besides that, some -- some of my brothers were
21 recruited -- not -- well, let me -- let me be specific. Not
22 brothers, but cousins. And then my -- my uncle, four of his
23 children, I don't know their names, they were young men, they
24 were all recruited, both were ULIMO and NPFL; they were
25 killed in the war. So there are a lot of people.

1 My mom would hide in the bush after that incident
2 with my -- with my cousin. The rebels found them in that --
3 she was boiling water to fix something. One of the guys
4 there took the water and put it on her feet. To this day she
5 got those scars on her foot.

6 My little brother, who is in Minnesota right now,
7 Mulbah Yarsiah, where the little spies that go into town to
8 see if the rebels were not there and go back, they grab him
9 one time, they tabay him. If you see Mulbah now, he has the
10 scar right on his hands here (indicating). My older brother,
11 William Yarsiah, that I used to live with, his older son,
12 William Yarsiah, Jr., was killed in Gbarnga.

13 I mean, there are a lot of -- we all lost a lot of
14 people. We all lost -- went through a lot of experiences.
15 The more we sit here and talk about them, it just make us
16 depressed more. But what we need to do is to forget about
17 these things, come to some sense of understanding of why did
18 the war happen, and reconcile among ourselves. Because if we
19 continue to dwell on those things, other people that die from
20 us, it throw us backward. And that's the kind of spirit that
21 I have.

22 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: Thank you so much.
23 I'm sorry for putting you through this, but we are also able
24 to -- to do a list of all of those that died during the war.
25 This is the reason why I took you there.

1 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

2 VICE CHAIRPERSON DEDE DOLOPEI: I'm sorry, you
3 have my sympathy, and I wish you all the best.

4 THE WITNESS: Thank you.

5 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you,
6 Mrs. Hayes.

7 You worked with Mr. Taylor at the GSA when he was
8 director general. What kind of a person was Mr. Taylor? How
9 would you describe him? And then part two to my question,
10 was there an attitude of corruption about him or his
11 administration prior to the incident you just explained
12 about, the alleged purchasing of the equipment that you said
13 never show up?

14 THE WITNESS: What kind of person Taylor was.
15 Taylor is an ambitious person. Maybe ambition isn't the
16 right way, but he's a go-getter. He would do anything to get
17 what he wants. My friend, Bai Gbala, is in here. I know he
18 would say that they were part of the group here that left
19 with Taylor to go to Liberia to ask Tolbert to resign.
20 Taylor stay because he knew what he wanted. And because when
21 I worked with Kromah, I knew there was something in the
22 making for Taylor to get a job with Tolbert under the Tolbert
23 administration, so he did not come by with a group.

24 And when the coup took place, I didn't -- I didn't
25 know Taylor. I knew the name, Charles MacArthur Taylor,

1 because the name came into our office. They were trying to
2 find a place for him -- for an appointment in government for
3 him. The day I met him at GSA, I knew his name; I didn't
4 know him. But when I met him, I knew him to be a very
5 ambitious, go-getter, power-hungry person.

6 At GSA, we had a contagion of soldiers headed by a
7 captain under Taylor's command. For that reason, when Doe
8 ordered that all Cabinet ministers should be commissioned as
9 major, deputy ministers as captain, GSA at that time was on
10 the level of a deputy minister, the director general, Taylor
11 refused to be commissioned as a captain. He said, GSA should
12 be on the level of a captain, and demanded to be commissioned
13 as a major. He refused to go to the commissioners ceremony
14 as a captain.

15 He was call separately as a minister of defense
16 and commissioned as a major before he could put on a military
17 uniform. Taylor ran GSA as a military field. He would
18 sometime refer to me as a lieutenant. And he'd say, "You are
19 a lieutenant. You need to go and be commissioned."

20 And I would say, "DG, I do not want to be a
21 military personnel."

22 I was issued a pistol and asked to go to the
23 Executive Mansion for training to use it. I took it and hid
24 it. I never went for training. I refused to use it. Taylor
25 would give command that way. So when the war actually

1 started and people say, "Let Charlie make haste to come to
2 town."

3 I said, "You guys don't know Charlie." I said, "I
4 would rather be with the devil I know than the angel I do not
5 know." That's the kind of person I would describe Taylor to
6 be.

7 From my youth Taylor is a go-getter. If Taylor
8 wants something done, he very charming. He can even charm
9 you to do for him what you never wanted to do for him.

10 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Just a follow-up
11 to that question. From what you just described, Mr. Taylor
12 seemed to have been entrusted, you think, militarily. Do you
13 know whether he had a military background before he came to
14 GSA or before the war of 1990?

15 THE WITNESS: I do not know of any military
16 background for him.

17 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. You seem
18 to -- for some reason, I guess by way of fate, you came into
19 connections with presidents; you knew President Tolbert and
20 then also President Doe and then later Taylor. Just for the
21 sake of my understanding, and I want you to be, you know,
22 just very brief and to the point, how would you compare and
23 contrast between the two presidents, President Tolbert at the
24 time and also President Doe, in terms of, one, their
25 personality; two, their vision for the country and, you know,

1 their different policies and then how they ended up?

2 THE WITNESS: President Tolbert was a
3 knowledgeable person. He was educated. He was an economist.
4 He knew where he wanted the country to go. He -- His problem
5 -- his problem was that he couldn't get the people to
6 understand how he wanted the country to be run. And there
7 were oppositions, including my own brother, to him, and some
8 of his friends, and that was -- that was the only problem,
9 trying to listen to some of these people and -- and help to
10 resolve the issue.

11 Doe was a military person that did not have any
12 economic training, but he was also a fast learner, because
13 the Doe of 1980 was not the Doe of 1983. He had changed his
14 speech, he was learning, but, and I will always say it, Doe
15 allow the few people around him to damage him. And he had
16 some good people working with him. Some give him good
17 advices; some were being very troublistic. And those that
18 were being very troublistic, and I say that Doe consider
19 people of his tribal group, I believe personally are the
20 people who got Doe where he is today.

21 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Okay. Thank you
22 very much.

23 Just one last question. From your description of
24 both presidents, you clearly stated briefly the good side and
25 also the other side that wasn't so good. If you're familiar

1 with Shakespeare, do you think that both heroes -- I mean
2 that both presidents were, perhaps, in the category of tragic
3 heroes, or they were just bad people who got what they
4 deserve?

5 THE WITNESS: They were good people who got
6 sidetracked.

7 COMMISSIONER MASSA WASHINGTON: Thank you.

8 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Thank you very
9 much, Marie, and thank you for providing some light and
10 insight which, up 'til now, I was probably in the dark. As a
11 matter of fact, I knew your father. Your brother and I were
12 in prison.

13 THE WITNESS: Please talk a little bit louder.

14 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: I said thank you
15 very much for --

16 THE WITNESS: Okay.

17 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: -- providing some
18 insight. As a matter of fact, your brother and I were on the
19 same wanted poster. And we were happy at that time that --
20 for the stand -- for the stand he had taken and expressed
21 himself to the President. But we also knew that the OAU was
22 right around the corner and the President did not want any
23 interference with the OAU and was, in a way, forced to
24 declare amnesty.

25 But on the issue of the GSA, do you believe that

1 Blamo Nelson, who was deputy to Charles Taylor, do you
2 believe that he acted in complicity with Taylor's attempt to
3 defraud the government?

4 THE WITNESS: No, I don't believe that, simply
5 because after this incident, Blamo and I sat down in the
6 office. He was frustrated. He told me, he said, "Marie, I'm
7 frustrated. After all of this work that we have done and
8 Taylor could come and do this, I'm ready to resign."

9 And I said, "Blamo, this is not a time to do
10 that."

11 So I was even surprised when Clarence came into
12 the picture and Blamo was still trying to locate the spare
13 parts as he said and have not turned over the complete
14 document to Clarence. I said, "Blamo you remember when you
15 told me that you wanted to resign? This is the time for you
16 to clear the picture."

17 And Blamo was called in, in fact, as the minister
18 of defense, to give a statement on this -- or not minister --
19 minister of justice to give a statement on the spare parts
20 thing. He did. And what happened, the letter that -- based
21 on the statement that I wrote the letter, now, Clarence, you
22 understand, was somewhat almost similar to what Blamo wrote.
23 So he was let go.

24 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Although, we
25 learned later that both of them became very close friends,

1 but now you still -- don't believe that they acted in -- in
2 complicity with him?

3 THE WITNESS: Blamo -- Blamo and Charles had been
4 friends for a long time. In fact, when Charles took over
5 GSA, people were saying Doe appointed Taylor. Taylor served
6 at GSA for a year before Doe ever appointed him. He went to
7 GSA and took it over. When Charles Taylor took over GSA,
8 he -- he went -- the story I got from Blamo, the morning --
9 that Monday morning that Blamo had gone to work at finance,
10 he was -- he was in a bureau working on finance, Charles
11 Taylor went to the Barracks to Quiwonkpa, took some -- took a
12 military vehicle with military people in it, he went to the
13 ministry of finance and told Blamo, "Get in the car and let's
14 go." And he came to GSA. Timothy Thomas was acting then.
15 He told Timothy Thomas, "From now on you are deputy for
16 operations. I am now the director of GSA, and this is my
17 deputy for administration." That's how he took over GSA.

18 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: How long did
19 Taylor serve in that position?

20 THE WITNESS: He was there from 1990 to 1983 --
21 1980 to --

22 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: To 1983.

23 THE WITNESS: -- 1983.

24 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: What would you
25 say -- Can you give us an idea of the figures involved in the

1 purchases that were done over the years 1980 to 1983? What
2 would you say could possibly be the possible volume of
3 imports that were handled through that agency and passed
4 through that agency?

5 THE WITNESS: I would not be able to provide you
6 with that information. That's something that can be done by
7 the minister of finance. The General Services Agency was set
8 out to be -- part of his responsibility was to purchase for
9 government. However, before the -- before the approval of
10 the bulk-purchasing system, and even after that, all purchase
11 order for purchases for the government of Liberia were passed
12 through GSA.

13 So, in essence, if you were a minister of defense
14 or, let's say, the minister of internal affairs and you
15 wanted to buy a desk, you went to a vendor and arranged --
16 where even GSA was not involved in the purchasing
17 arrangement, you went and arranged for the purchase of that
18 desk and you prepare a voucher for payment to the vendor.
19 GSA would have to approve of the transaction before the
20 voucher go to the minister of finance for payment.

21 So there are a lot of vendor -- there are a lot of
22 vouchers that passed through GSA, including even those that I
23 signed specifically for people who had buildings that were
24 being rented for government. If you had a building that
25 would be rented, GSA arrange for that building to be rented

1 for people to live in there or for government offices. So
2 when you get paid, that voucher came out of GSA before the
3 minister of finance would sign it. It had to be -- It has to
4 go through GSA before the minister of finance would make the
5 payment.

6 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Now, GSA as an
7 agency still exists today. And there were reports coming at
8 a time that there were a lot of kickbacks that were received
9 as a result of negotiations for government purchases. During
10 the time serving with Taylor, was this -- did this kind of
11 situation continue?

12 THE WITNESS: I heard about it. I had inkling
13 notions that it was happening, but I tried to avoid it, not
14 being directly involved with it.

15 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Now, there were
16 reports that this International Earthmoving Equipment Company
17 had a representative in the U.S. who was, supposedly,
18 allegedly, Mr. Tom Woewiyu. Did any of that company
19 attention -- or can you confirm or deny that that this man
20 was linked to this International Earthmoving Equipment which
21 did turn out to be a sham?

22 THE WITNESS: Stewart, I said earlier that what I
23 found out was Balmoni International and International
24 Earthmoving had the same address.

25 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Who were those

1 behind this Balmoni?

2 THE WITNESS: When Clarence Momolu and I came to
3 the United States, I think it was early 1994 [sic], we had
4 gone to Europe, and we came -- we came here. We decided to
5 go and find out, just from the addresses that were given,
6 where, in fact, is International Earthmoving Company? This
7 is the address. It was a dilapidated building that nobody
8 has been in for I don't know how many years. The address did
9 not exist.

10 We got in the taxi, we went there. We got to --
11 The taxi say, "Here is the place."

12 We said, "That's not true. This should be a big
13 place." It did not exist.

14 Through the State Department were able to track
15 that money because we knew where the money was deposited
16 through Chase Manhattan Bank. We were able to find out that,
17 in fact, that money had been transferred to a Swiss account.
18 We don't know whose Swiss account.

19 In 1986, we came to -- I think it was '86, a lot
20 of our activity with a group of people, we were here to
21 promote -- or to ask Liberians to return home. And in
22 Rhode Island, I met Tupee Taylor.

23 Tupee came to me and she said, Marie, you know
24 Charlie -- or, "You know Charles. That money, he didn't take
25 it."

1 Dhillon -- B.S. Dhillon. You know B.S. Dhillon,
2 had this building material stored somewhere around BTC area,
3 and also he had a jewelry shop somewhere on Broad Street.

4 She said, "B.S. Dhillon is the one who took all
5 this money and is blaming my husband for it."

6 And I said, "Tupee, why don't Charles go back to
7 Liberia and say this?" I said, "Because when Charles left,
8 it was not long B.S. Dhillon left, he close up all his stores
9 and left -- he left the country. So if it is true that
10 B.S. Dhillon is the one who had this company and took all
11 this money, why don't you -- why don't Charles go back?" I
12 said, "You know Doe. Doe will maybe put him in jail for a
13 few months. When he find out the truth, he will let him go
14 and probably give him a new position." I said, "Let him go
15 and explain that it was Dhillon who took the money and not
16 him." But I know -- I know -- That never happened, you and I
17 know.

18 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Were you able to
19 get any details of that Swiss account, the number or anything
20 like that?

21 THE WITNESS: No.

22 COMMISSIONER JOHN H.T. STEWART: Okay. Thank you
23 very much.

24 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much,
25 Mrs. Hayes, for giving us all clarity as to what really

1 happened and how this business ended up.

2 Actually, I have one follow-up question, and that
3 is, how -- Taylor's appointment at the GSA, you say that
4 Taylor was not appointed, but he had close contact with some
5 of the PRC member, and one day he went to pick up his friend,
6 the finance minister, came to GSA, told the former director
7 that now he's the director. Does that mean that Charles
8 Taylor knew -- I mean, he had a relation with the 17 people
9 before the coup? Because he was so close to them, he was
10 coming into interaction with them, and Doe being the
11 president at the time never say anything and accepted him in
12 that position as GSA director.

13 THE WITNESS: It is my understanding that Tupee --
14 Tupee was a relative to Thomas Quiwonkpa. And so Taylor saw
15 that as a means of being closer to Thomas Quiwonkpa. He was
16 mostly all the time in the Barracks.

17 When I hear the story now that Taylor was trying
18 to revenge the 17 people, I laugh, because Taylor is a man
19 who would sit and reminisce over somebody being killed.
20 Taylor would go up to Quiwonkpa's office. When he'd come
21 back, and he would always come and sit in Blamo office and
22 talk and reminisce about what is happening in the Barracks.

23 I remember one day he came and he sat on there and
24 put his foot on Blamo's desk and he said, "I told Thomas he's
25 too -- he's too soft." Thomas is too soft. But I hire

1 Harrison Pennue. He said, "Harrison Pennue was the deputy to
2 Quiwonkpa during those early days." He said, "I met Harrison
3 Pennue." He said, "This guy come there and Quiwonkpa ask him
4 the question if he beating around the bush. Harrison Pennue
5 just took the man downstair and took care of him. He come
6 back and said, "Chief, that one is finished." He would sit
7 and reminisce about those things.

8 So, I mean, those are -- those are things that
9 happen. And Blamo would sit there and tell him, You know,
10 did you -- "Charlie, Charlie, Charlie, Charlie, you got to
11 forget about these things." But, again, when he does that,
12 he takes his marijuana and smoke it, it was okay.

13 COMMISSIONER OUMU SYLLAH: Thank you very much for
14 coming to share these experiences with us.

15 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Somebody said you have
16 just given us a unique experience, a unique testimony. And
17 in a lot of ways I tend to believe yours is unique because it
18 goes into the hearts, into the minds of very important
19 players during the theatre of the war. So I want to thank
20 you very much for coming and sharing your experience with us.

21 Is there anything else you'd like to say you think
22 you didn't say throughout the testimony?

23 THE WITNESS: Again, I would like to say thank you
24 for being here, for making this history to have a TRC in the
25 Diaspora for the first time. And I want to also say thanks

1 to the Minnesota advocates -- or to The Advocates for Human
2 Rights for being a part of this process and for allowing us
3 in the Diaspora to work with them to get this process moving.

4 I only hope and pray that what we do is not left
5 in the dust to rot; that something good will come out of it
6 and that Liberians can move forward and say we did the right
7 thing. Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN JEROME VERDIER: Thank you very much.

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REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, CINDY L. SCHULTZ, a Registered Merit Reporter, Certified Realtime Reporter, and Certified LiveNote 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 12th day of June 2008, at the time and place specified.

DATED: July 4, 2008.

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