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Becoming Transnational Citizens: The Liberian Diaspora's Civic Engagement in the United States and in Homeland Peacebuilding

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BECOMING TRANSNATIONAL CITIZENS:
THE LIBERIAN DIASPORA'S CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE
UNITED STATES AND IN HOMELAND PEACEBUILDING

by

JANET E. REILLY

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science
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Abstract

BECOMING TRANSNATIONAL CITIZENS:
THE LIBERIAN DIASPORA'S CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES
AND IN HOMELAND PEACEBUILDING

by

Janet E. Reilly

Adviser: Professor Susan L. Woodward

This study examines the relationship between civic participation in homeland peacebuilding and immigrants' political incorporation and integration in their local communities in the United States. It explores the impact of state (U.S. and Liberia) policies and local context on individuals' civic participation locally and in transnational activities. The study demonstrates the mechanisms through which state policies and local context influence Liberians' political participation in the United States and their transnational citizenship, defined as full legal membership and civic participation. The relationship between civic engagement in the United States and in transnational activities is not an adversarial one. Engagement with the diaspora correlates positively with integration in the United States and vice versa. In fact, those Liberians who participate most actively in their local communities in the United States are also the ones who engage most frequently in transnational activities. The ability of Liberians to participate fully in their local and transnational communities, however, is affected by U.S. immigration and reception policies that have promoted integration for refugees and asylees but, at the same time, trapped many Liberians with TPS/DED in a legal limbo. The study highlights the social nature of political involvement and the importance of context in promoting Liberians' political belonging in the United States and as transnational citizens.

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Abbreviations

ABC	*American Baptist Churches v. Thornburgh* (U.S. Supreme Court Case)
ACDL	Association for Constitutional Democracy in Liberia
ACS	American Community Survey
AFDC	Aid to Families with Dependent Children
CARE	Campaign to Re-elect Ellen
DED	deferred enforced departure
DHHS	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
DHS	U.S. Department of Homeland Security
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
DOS	U.S. Department of State
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EOIR	U.S. DOJ Executive Office for Immigration Review
EU	European Union
EVD	extended voluntary departure
FY	fiscal year
GDP	gross domestic product
GGAA	Grand Gedeh Association in the Americas
GNI	gross national income
IDF	World Bank Institutional Development Fund
INS	U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IRCA	Immigration Reform and Control Act
JCPP	Joint Community Police Partnership
LAMCO	Liberian-American-Swedish Minerals Company
LICANY	Liberian Community Association of New York County
LIMANY	Liberian Mandingo Association of New York
LISANY	Liberian Students Association of New York
LCM	Liberian Community of Minnesota
LPR	lawful permanent resident

LRF	Liberian Renaissance Foundation
NGO	nongovernmental organization
NPFL	National Patriotic Front of Liberia
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OLM	Organization of Liberians in Minnesota
OPODL	Organization for the Promotion of Development in Liberia
ORR	U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement
PRM	U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
PRS	Poverty Reduction Strategy
RPC	PRM's Refugee Processing Center
SES	Senior Executive Service
SCAA	Sinoe County Association in the Americas
SILCA	Staten Island Liberian Community Association
SNAP	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
SSI	supplemental security income
TANF	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
TPS	temporary protected status
TRC	truth and reconciliation commission
ULAA	Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
USD	United States Dollar
USRAP	U.S. Refugee Admissions Program
WRAPS	Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System

Introduction

> Oh, I can see myself [living] permanently in Liberia. I say, as long as my kids are grown and they can fend on their own, yeah. Yeah definitely, I see myself leaving here and… or, as my husband puts it, we are global citizens so anywhere in Africa for that matter. He's from Togo by the way. Yes, [my children were born in the States] and they say, "I'm African-American, right, mom?" I'm like, "Yeah, but…" (laughs) you know [MN2, 38-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1992, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, October 13, 2010].

This dissertation examines the transnational lives of Liberian immigrants in the United States, illuminating the impact of state (both host and home state) policies on the civic participation of Liberians in their communities in the United States and their diaspora engagement in homeland peacebuilding. It is a study of citizenship, specifically transnational citizenship. The starting point is an understanding of diaspora as "created" rather than inherent and a process rather than fixed or static. There is no single explanation for why individuals engage with diaspora, carving out spaces and identities between home and host states. This dissertation, however, sheds light on the factors that influence this process through an in-depth examination of Liberian individuals living in two communities in the United States—New York City and Minneapolis-St. Paul. This study demonstrates the ways that individuals are increasingly becoming transnational citizens— moving towards citizenship in a transnational space.

The question then is how to define citizenship (i.e., what types of activities make one a citizen) and who or what motivates individuals to identify as transnationals? Who or what is creating diaspora? What are the mechanisms through which individuals become politically involved? I draw from the immigrant incorporation literature on structuralism v. behavioralism to argue that full citizenship is defined by both full legal membership and participation

[Bloemraad 2006]. I focus on the structural determinants of participation at three levels—the host state, the home state, and the municipal level. In other words, I set out to understand Liberian individuals' civic participation and engagement with the diaspora. While individual agency is obviously a factor, I explore what role state and local policies play in determining participation.

This dissertation was originally conceived as a study of the influence of state policy (both host state and home state) on diaspora civic participation in homeland peacebuilding activities. The method of study began as a comparison between the Liberian immigrant communities in New York and Minnesota. Although the original focus was on activities directed at the homeland, in order to fully explain Liberians' experience, the scope of the study was widened to also look at Liberians' integration and civic engagement locally in their communities in the United States.

Argument

Full citizenship is comprised of full legal membership and civic participation in a system. Liberians are increasingly becoming transnational citizens, carving out spaces and identities in between their host and home states. For the purposes of this study, citizenship = full legal membership + participation. The subject of study is the transnational lives of Liberians, yet there is obviously no formal transnational legal status. Instead, I look at Liberian immigrants' legal status in the United States (refugee/asylee v. TPS/DED[1]) and with respect to Liberia (specifically the issue of dual citizenship), and the effect of legal status on diaspora civic participation. While I argue that state policies remain the most important factor in determining individuals'

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[1] temporary protected status (TPS) / deferred enforced departure (DED)

engagement with the diaspora, I also examine structural determinants at the local/municipal level, arguing that local context is equally important in motivating diaspora engagement.

The study makes three contributions to the literature on immigrant political incorporation and transnational/diaspora citizenship. First, it demonstrates that context matters. The policies to which Liberians are subject have shaped their incorporation in the United States and their engagement with the diaspora. Second, it highlights the social nature of political involvement [Bloemraad 2006, 66] by identifying the mechanisms through which policies affect individuals' participation. Third, it puts a "human face on global mobility" [Favell et al. 2007].

Road map

Chapter 1 introduces and explains the reasons for selecting the particular case of Liberian immigrants in the United States, with emphasis and background information on the Liberian communities in New York City and the Twin Cities area of Minnesota, and the methods used in my research. Chapter 1 also includes a review of the literature concerning the question of why individuals choose to civically engage with their local communities and in homeland peacebuilding activities and the types of roles that they undertake. In particular, the chapter addresses the various literatures and theories regarding the relationship between citizenship and migration, the concept of diaspora, the role of diasporas in peacebuilding, and the impact of home and host state policies on immigrant incorporation, political mobilization, and citizenship.

In chapters 2 and 3, I review U.S. federal policy and local policy, respectively, toward the Liberian diaspora. With respect to the United States, I outline immigration and reception policies to which Liberians were subject during the period of study, from 1980 to 2010, and trends in naturalization and participation rates. An analysis of U.S. federal policy toward

Liberians—namely, the differences between refugee/asylee status and temporary protected status (TPS)—reveals the important role of host state policy in shaping Liberians' transnational citizenship. Chapter 3 compares participation and naturalization trends in Minnesota and New York, focusing on differences at the municipal and neighborhood level. Chapter 4 then turns to developing attempts by the Liberian government to reach out to its emigrants and recast them as citizens and participants in Liberia's post-conflict growth and development. Chapter 5 summarizes the study's conclusions.

1   Becoming transnational citizens

> Where citizenship is built on exclusions and is based on the rights and responsibilities of the individual, diaspora emerges from the communal. Where citizenship relies upon the language of universalism, diaspora insists upon difference [Cho 2007, 469].

Transnational, or diasporic, citizenship seems to be an oxymoron. Traditionally, citizenship has been territorially linked to the state system, whereas diaspora challenges the space-time concept of the state, emphasizing cultural belonging or membership in a nation. Yet, diasporic citizenship and transnational citizenship are now terms used regularly in reference to the transnational activities and lives of migrants and to the increasing tendency of states to reach out to emigrants and grant them dual citizenship. The terms highlight the extent to which individuals' transnational activities and identification create new diasporic spaces, ultimately constituting the two most fundamental aspects of citizenship—full legal membership and civic participation. While individuals' behavior is important in this regard, the question remains, "What explains civic engagement with the diaspora?" This study reveals the ways in which state policy structures and influences individuals' political mobilization. By examining the transnational lives of Liberians in the United States, the study helps to illuminate the mechanisms through which individuals engage with diaspora and negotiate "the push and pull between exclusion and inclusion" [Cho 2007, 473] that defines the concept of citizenship.

Specifically, it demonstrates: the effect that host state (in this case, U.S.) immigration and reception policy has on Liberians' integration in the United States and their civic engagement in the United States and with respect to Liberia; the impact of local context on Liberians' civic participation in New York and Minnesota; and the role of the home state (in this case, Liberia) in creating diaspora and encouraging Liberians' participation in transnational activities. The

relationship between civic engagement in the United States and in transnational activities is not an adversarial one. In fact, those Liberians who participate most actively in their local communities in the United States are also the ones who engage most frequently in transnational activities. Engagement with the diaspora correlates positively with integration in the United States and vice versa. However, there are exceptions. For some Liberians, particularly males, participation in transnational—typically, overtly political—activities is a response to their low level of integration in the United States and an attempt to avoid downward assimilation into a racist society.

This chapter begins with a review of some of the core concepts employed in this study. It then turns to a review of the literature relevant to the study. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the Liberian immigrant community in the United States—focusing specifically on Minnesota and New York and explaining why I chose these two communities as case studies—and an overview of the six most significant migration waves between the United States and Liberia.

Core terms

Diaspora: Just as nations are socially constructed, so too are diasporas. Below, I review the meaning of "diaspora" more extensively. Briefly, however, I use "diaspora" to refer to a transnational community. This study demonstrates how state and local policies influence individuals' transnational activities and their identification with the Liberian diaspora. Transnational is used to "communicate the fact that people's lives span borders, while acknowledging that borders, nation-states, and national identities still exist and are of consequence" [Mahler 1999, 692].

Identity: The term "identity" is laden with meaning and the subject of much debate and study. I do not attempt to engage with the vast sociological, anthropological, philosophical, or political literature on identity. Rather, for the purpose of this study, I focus on the behavioral rather than the psychological indicators of identity, and consider actions to be evidence of identity. In other words, transnational political behavior is used as evidence of transnational citizen identity. Individuals who participate in activities that can be labeled as "diaspora activities" are considered to be identifying with the diaspora and as transnational citizens.

Citizenship: Full democratic citizenship—a term I borrow from Irene Bloemraad [2006]— comprises both rights and responsibilities. It confers legal protection and security but also obligates citizens to contribute to and to participate in governance. My study utilizes the concept of "full citizenship" developed by Irene Bloemraad in her 2006 comparison of immigrant incorporation in Canada and the United States.

According to Bloemraad, full citizenship (alternately referred to as "political incorporation") includes not only full legal membership (i.e., naturalization), but also political participation in the host state—what she refers to as "participatory" or "substantive" citizenship [2006, 5]. Bloemraad focuses on the social nature of citizenship, arguing that missing from immigrant political incorporation literature is "the social nature of political learning and mobilization as well as an analysis of the mechanisms that link individuals with political systems" [2006, 66]. While she does not claim that host state policies are sufficient to ensure political incorporation—individual choices are equally important—Bloemraad concludes that host state settlement and diversity policies affect the political incorporation of immigrants.

(Political) Participation: I use this somewhat interchangeably with the term "civic engagement" to describe the social nature of citizenship—the idea that full citizenship requires active participation in a political system. Political in this sense refers broadly to politics as the process through which groups with potentially conflicting interests arrive at common decisions. It is not restricted only to formal government systems. According to the Center for Civic Education, "Civic life is the public life of the citizen concerned with the affairs of the community and nation as contrasted with private or personal life, which is devoted to the pursuit of private and personal interests… [] Political life enables people to accomplish goals they could not realize as individuals. Politics necessarily arises whenever groups of people live together, since they must always reach collective decisions of one kind or another" [Center for Civic Education].

Defining diaspora

"Diaspora" means many things to many people. Beginning in the late twentieth century, diaspora studies emerged as a distinct area of scholarly study, drawing on and combining knowledge from a number of disciplines, including sociology, political science, history, linguistics, law, and anthropology. Although there have been countless works on diaspora published since 1991 when the academic interdisciplinary journal *Diaspora* was first launched, the term diaspora remains extremely difficult to define, being used frequently to refer to groups with very different origins and characteristics.

A diaspora may include refugees, migrants, expatriates, or exiles, and their children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and more. In all cases, the individuals share a link to a common national heritage or homeland, but this homeland may be real or imagined, in the sense

of Benedict Anderson's imagined communities [Anderson 1983]. While some scholars include those individuals who are linked by blood to a group defined by national origin or homeland but who do not actively identify with the group, the minimal criterion is generally that an individual be a member of a "group that recognizes its separateness based on common ethnicity/nationality, lives in a host country, and maintains some kind of attachment to its home country or homeland" [Lahneman 2005, i].

Examining for a minute only the first part of this definition—"separateness based on common ethnicity/nationality," the question may arise, "To what degree is 'separateness' in the host state a necessary condition for diaspora?" Does integration in a host society negate diaspora identity or can recognition of a shared ethnicity/nationality be sufficient? According to Gregory Kent, "A level of consciousness of being a diaspora, that is, being away from 'home', being not entirely, or at all, at home in the hostland, is critical, too" [Kent 2005, 2]. This raises interesting questions in terms of the relationship between incorporation in a host state and diaspora identity, many of which are explored in this study.

In terms of defining "diaspora" and classifying different types of diasporas, Robin Cohen's *Global Diasporas*, published in 1997, is the seminal work. Cohen distinguishes diasporas based on the particular cause of migration and separates diasporas into six categories: victim diasporas (e.g., Jews, African slaves, Armenians, Irish, and Palestinians); labor diasporas (e.g., Indians who migrated throughout the world as indentured labor under British colonialism); imperial diasporas (e.g., ancient Greeks, Spanish, Portuguese, and British); trade diasporas (e.g., Lebanese and Chinese); "homeland" diasporas (e.g., Kurds and Sikhs, for whom, Cohen argues, the homeland is an *ex post facto* construction); and cultural diasporas (e.g., Caribbeans living in

the United States) [Cohen 1996; Cohen 1997]. Significantly, Cohen notes that his categories are not mutually exclusive and diaspora groups can fall into more than one category.

More recently, however, Stéphane Dufoix has criticized diaspora studies for defining diaspora as static and assuming the existence of communities separate from their identity as diasporas. He emphasizes that diasporas may be created or may disappear over time separate from the existence of communities of emigrants. In other words, diasporas are not pre-existing; they can be consciously created both by home states and by emigrant activists and often unify previously heterogeneous groups of individuals.

Arguing that it is, therefore, fruitless to try to define diaspora and that, in fact, there are no diasporas, Dufoix offers instead a method for evaluating the interaction and relationship between a home state and its emigrants. Dufoix's framework is an ideal type with four different "modes": the Center-Periphery Mode, where interactions between the home state and groups of emigrants are controlled by the home state and there is minimal interaction between emigrant groups; the Antagonistic Mode, where different emigrant groups view themselves as originating from a common homeland and interact to organize against the home state; the Atopic Mode, where different emigrant groups view themselves as originating from a common homeland and interact with one another but have no activity (positive or negative) aimed at the home state; and, the Enclaved Mode, which is the same as the Atopic Mode but where there is minimal interaction (flow of ideas, people, resources) between emigrant groups [Dufoix 2008].

Diasporas in conflict and peacebuilding

Studies on post-conflict reconstruction and transitional justice tend to focus on the effects of war and the efforts to rebuild and heal exclusively within the country emerging from conflict

[Ikenberry 2001; Forman and Patrick 2000; Hayner 2000; Kritz 1995; Harvard Law School Human Rights Program 1996]. Where attention is paid to the role of diasporas in homeland politics, the emphasis is normally on their negative involvement in promoting conflict. The dominant body of literature on diasporas and their relationship with homeland conflict and peacebuilding focuses on diasporas' role as peace-wreckers and spoilers of peacebuilding efforts [Smith and Stares 2007; Kaldor et al. 2003; Kaldor 1999; Wayland 2004; Shain and Arysinha 2006]. Due to the fact that many diasporas are created by violent conflict in their home countries, scholars emphasize that the relationship between a diaspora and its home country is "as likely to be defined by a desire for transformation, contestation and political change as it is by nostalgia, continuity and tradition" [Adamson 2001, 155].

Highlighting the fact that diasporas are not immediately accountable for and do not suffer the consequences of political power struggles back home, Benedict Anderson refers to diasporas as "long distance nationalists" [1992, 13]. According to Anderson, "The two most significant factors generating nationalism and ethnicity are … mass communication and mass migrations" [1992, 7]. Arguing that nationalist movements are often created by expatriates, Anderson characterizes the diaspora individual as living comfortably in a host state, to which he (Anderson emphasizes that these activities attract more men than women) may not feel particularly attached, and playing identity politics "by participating (via propaganda, money, weapons, any way but voting)" in homeland conflicts [1992, 13]. Anderson emphasizes the importance of print journalism in facilitating the shared identity of a nation. Don Mitchell, however, criticizes Anderson's approach arguing the need to examine,

> the *practices* and exercises of power through which these bonds are produced and reproduced. The questions this raises are ones about who defines the nation, how it is defined, how that definition is reproduced and contested, and, crucially, how the nation

has developed and changed over time… The question is not what common imagination *exists*, but what common imagination is *forged* [2000, 269; original emphasis].

Research on diasporas' role in conflict is normally broken down into three types of activities: 1) financial contributions (including remittances and business investments); 2) military or political involvement in homeland politics; and 3) advocacy or lobbying in the host country [Horst 2007]. Studies in this area conducted to date, however, have disproportionately emphasized the negative impact of diasporas, linking the existence of a large diaspora abroad with an increased likelihood of prolonged conflict in the homeland [Mohamoud 2006]. Sarah Wayland, for instance, in discussing political and military contributions from diasporas talks about "transnational opportunity structures" arguing that diaspora contributions may exacerbate or prolong conflicts in the homeland [2004, 417]. While emigrant remittances and investment are typically encouraged by home states, other types of activities may be viewed as meddling in a state's internal affairs. For example, in response to the Liberian diaspora's heavy financial contributions to candidates in the run-up to the 2005 Liberian presidential election, the Liberian government issued a directive prohibiting candidates from campaigning outside Liberia.

Although most studies do focus on what Eva Østergaard-Nielsen refers to as the "dark side of diaspora politics" [2005, 1], particularly the link between diaspora remittances and the funding of violent conflict [Ballentine 2003; Collinson 2003; Koser 2001; Adamson 2002], the most recent studies have also examined the positive role that diasporas play as peacemakers [Smith and Stares 2007; Østergaard-Nielsen 2005; Cochrane 2007; Spear 2006]. As part of the "Transformation of War Economies" project funded by The UK Economic and Social Research Council, Joanna Spear investigates possible roles for diaspora from Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Sierra Leone in homeland peacebuilding. She considers four different areas of peacebuilding where diaspora can play a role: the political realm; the socio-cultural realm; the

philanthropic realm; and, the economic realm [Spear 2006]. Emphasizing diasporas' positive contributions in the economic realm, Abdullah Mohamoud distinguishes between individual and collective remittances and asserts that it is normally only a minority group of militants and hard-liners within the diaspora who seek to promote conflict while the majority of diaspora individuals have a positive impact on post-conflict reconstruction through the provision of individual remittances, business investment, civil-society construction, or professional expertise in policy formation.

Organizations such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the World Bank have long been interested in the economic impact of diasporas' remittances on homeland development, and a few recent studies have highlighted the contributions of remittances from Liberians in the United States to development in Liberia [Lubkemann 2008; Briant 2005]. Beyond remittances, diasporas impact homeland development through investment in infrastructure, knowledge transfer, and direct involvement in politics [Brinkerhoff 2008]. In addition to sending money, diasporas often act as mediators or bridges between home and host societies and are able to "transmit the values of pluralism and democracy" [Shain and Barth 2003, 450]. Due to their removal from the immediate conflict, diaspora individuals may be more likely to adopt inclusive identities that challenge ethnic or religious polarization [Orjuela 2008]. Adopting Kenneth Boulding's typology of the three types of power—threat, exchange, and integrative—Feargal Cochrane refers to this as "integrative power," i.e., the power to bind people together. Arguing that diasporas possess both threat and integrative power, he concludes that in the case of the Irish diaspora, the latter has been the more lasting and influential [Cochrane 2007, 24].

Conflict-generated diasporas

The Liberian diaspora is often referred to as a "conflict-generated diaspora," which is a term used as a synonym for what Cohen refers to as a "victim diaspora," the prototypical diaspora. Although Cohen defines the victim diaspora rather generally as one in which a population is spread to two or more destinations by a traumatic event in the homeland [1997, 2], he later adds another defining feature—the desire to restore and return to the homeland [1997, 4]. Victim diasporas, therefore, are characterized by two essential elements—"the traumatic dispersal from an original homeland and the salience of the homeland in the collective memory of a forcibly dispersed group" [Cohen 1997, 4]. The examples that Cohen uses to illustrate the concept of victim diaspora are the Jews, African slaves, Armenians, Irish, and Palestinians.

Others, however, may also include in the category of conflict-generated diaspora groups such as the Kurds and Sikhs, whom Cohen refers to as "homeland" diasporas, since the concept of homeland was an *ex post facto* construction. When using the term "conflict-generated diaspora," therefore, it is important to define whether one is referring to the broader category of forcibly displaced populations outside their country of origin or whether one is narrowing the definition further to only those groups for whom return to a territorially defined homeland is integral.

For some, such as Gabriel Sheffer, who defines "ethno-national diaspora" as a "social-political formation, created as a result of either voluntary or forced migration, whose members regard themselves as of the same ethno-national origin and who permanently reside as minorities in one or several host countries" [2003, 9], even the distinction between forced and voluntary departure is non-essential. Regardless of the presence of a concept of return to a territorially defined homeland, however, diasporas created by forced displacement inevitably can be

distinguished from other types of diasporas based on their experience of conflict and the special needs of those who have survived war, trauma, violence, etc. For example, Liberians, such as those who testified at the public hearings of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in Minnesota in 2008, often cite the lack of rehabilitation for child soldiers as an obstacle to successful integration in the United States. The Liberian diaspora in the United States is also particularly interesting due to the fact that the Liberian state was originally born of the idea of the return of a conflict-generated diaspora (in this case African slaves) to a homeland and so, in some ways, the current wave of Liberian emigration is the second generation of a conflict-generated diaspora.

Citizenship and migration

To examine the emerging concept of transnational citizenship, it is first necessary to understand how the concept of citizenship has changed and developed over time in interaction with migration. Beginning with the Athenian city-state in the Western tradition, citizenship has typically been defined as membership in a political community. Balancing the forces of inclusion and exclusion, Athenian citizenship was limited to a very narrow segment of the population, with women, slaves, and migrants falling outside its protections, but was civic in nature, requiring all those recognized as citizens to participate fully in the polity.

Aristotle's concept of citizenship was contingent upon service in public office. Today's liberal democracies, however, do not require such direct participation. While some, such as Australia, have made voting compulsory, the United States has adopted a *laissez-faire* approach to citizenship, requiring only the most minimal contributions from citizens, such as the payment of taxes and obedience to the law. Christian Joppke traces the historical development of citizenship

in the Western world, and in an examination of the relationship between citizenship and immigration in the post–World War II era, argues that citizenship has "converged on a liberal model of inclusive citizenship with diminished rights implications and increasingly universalistic identities" due to the rise of the international human rights regime [2010, *vii*]. Comparing developments in Western Europe, North America, and Australia, Joppke distinguishes among three dimensions of citizenship—status (membership in a state), rights, and identity—demonstrating convergence among state practice in the West. Although not suggesting that immigration has been the causal factor, Joppke observes that immigration and the ethnic diversification of society and citizenry have been accompanied by a decline in social rights guaranteed by the welfare state and an increased attention to minority and alien rights. Interestingly, Joppke does not delve into the political participation dimension of citizenship, an important fourth dimension, according to Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul [2008, 156], arguing that, in confrontation with immigration, citizenship has emerged more as "the Roman citizenship of passive rights-holding than the Athenian citizenship of active political participation in the political community" [Joppke 2010, 147].

Local, homeland, and transnational participation: the relationship between host state integration and transnational activism

Political participation, however, is a key—and many would argue "the" key—element in realizing full citizenship. Full democratic citizenship [Bloemraad 2006] comprises both rights and responsibilities. Full citizenship goes beyond legal status. It confers legal protection and security, but also obligates citizens to contribute to and to participate in governance. Bloemraad et al. [2008] speak of four points: legal status, rights, political participation, and social belonging.

Immigrant political mobilization may take a variety of forms and aim at various purposes. According to the "reversibility" concept, the closer in distance a sending state is to the receiving state, the less likely emigrants are to naturalize, since the possibility of return is considered greater [Portes and Mozo 1985]. Although Liberia is not geographically close to the United States, the close historical relationship—felt disproportionately greater by Liberians than by Americans—coupled with the fact that the United States has historically been a staging ground for Liberian elite political ambitions, has, arguably, heightened many individuals' expectation of return.[2] Examining the relationship between integration in a host society and transnational activities, however, Adrian Pantoja finds no connection between the "myth of return" and immigrant integration among Dominicans in New York, for example [2005].

While immigrant politics (immigrants' mobilization to address issues such as socioeconomic integration and problems with racism and discrimination) may seem separate from and even at odds with homeland politics (mobilization in the host state aimed at directly or indirectly impacting politics in the home state), Østergaard-Nielsen demonstrates how, in the case of Turks and Kurds in Europe, the two often overlap and are inseparable [2009]. Transnational political engagement with homeland politics can and does coexist with political incorporation in a host state society. While noting that immigrants continue to practice "closet transnationalism" [Joppke and Morawska 2003], downplaying their homeland identities and ties in response to exclusionary demands for them to fully assimilate, she highlights how Turks and Kurds have begun to integrate their homeland political identities with their political incorporation in host states. Pointing to work [Østergaard-Nielsen 2001; Guarnizo, Portes, and

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[2] In speaking about the special relationship between Liberia and the United States, a number of individuals interviewed referred to the fact that prior to the 1990s, Liberians who traveled to the United States were typically granted 10-year visas. B-2 visas, issued for tourism and often in conjunction with B-1 visas for business, are non-immigrant visas and can be granted for periods of one to ten years. Multiple entries and stays of up to six months are permitted.

Haller 2003; Levitt 2003] that has shown that "migrant political participation and identification at the local and transnational levels is not a zero-sum game" [Østergaard-Nielsen 2009, 195], Østergaard-Nielsen stresses the need for studies, such as this one, that illuminate how migrants translate transnational political identification and agency into local political incorporation in the host state.

Managing immigrants: host states' incorporation of immigrants

The classical theory of assimilation first formulated by Robert Park [1950] and later developed by Milton Gordon [1964], which described the experiences of European immigrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a process of acculturation, social integration, and identification with white Americans, has been revised by a number of scholars to account for the diversity of immigrants' experiences in the United States [Morawski 1994; Alba and Nee 2003; Kasinitz et al. 2004; Kasinitz et al. 2008]. For example, the concept of segmented assimilation has been developed to describe the fact that some individuals may experience upward mobility while others within the same immigrant group may instead experience downward mobility. Alejandro Portes and Ruben Rumbaut explain these divergent paths as a factor of three background determinants: human capital; family structure; and modes of incorporation [2006]. In their discussion of different modes of incorporation, Portes and Rumbaut emphasize the context of reception, which is a function of "the policies of the receiving government, the conditions of the host labor market, and the characteristics of [immigrants'] own ethnic communities" [2006, 92-3]. Possible governmental responses toward foreigners are described as a continuum marked by three main types of action: exclusion; passive acceptance; and active encouragement [Portes and Rumbaut 2006, 93].

Comparing naturalization rates in the United States and Canada, Bloemraad argues that government policy plays a crucial role in the integration process. Noting the downward trend in naturalization in the United States (in 2004, fewer than 40 percent of foreign-born residents had become citizens, in comparison to 80 percent in 1950 [2006, 1]) and the fact that a far larger number of immigrants eventually naturalize in Canada (in 2001, 72 percent of all foreign-born residents had become citizens [2006, 2-3]), Bloemraad compares the "laissez-faire" immigrant integration model of the United States, which assumes that "immigrants' individual choices, within a framework of individual rights and antidiscrimination legislation, will incorporate newcomers into a unified citizenry" [2006, 233], with the multicultural policy and ideology of the Canadian government. Bloemraad's description of the United States' "laissez-faire" model is based on Richard Alba and Victor Nee's conceptualization of economic and social assimilation, which argues that government's primary role in advancing immigrant integration is to ensure equal rights and create antidiscrimination legislation [2003].

Arguing that "full citizenship" (alternately referred to as "political incorporation") includes not only full legal membership (i.e., naturalization) but also political participation in the host state (what she refers to as "participatory" or "substantive" citizenship [2006, 5]), Bloemraad concludes that host state settlement and diversity policies affect the political incorporation of immigrants. While she does not claim that host state policies are sufficient to ensure political incorporation—individual choices are equally important—it is clear from Bloemraad's analysis that the United States, with the exception of government interventions for refugees, is moving away from the policies necessary to promote full citizenship for immigrants. The framing of immigration within the context of homeland security post–September 11, 2001, as evidenced by the replacement of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) with the

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) under the umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), is a particularly worrisome development.

Most recently, Jennifer Hochschild and John Mollenkopf [2009] have developed a model of immigrant political incorporation, tying together a number of convergent theories regarding incorporation as "(1) a process (2) for individuals or groups, (3) encompassing views as well as interests, (4) involving various forms of political activity, and (5) including changes caused by as well as changes to immigrants' political activity" [2009, 16]. The model further takes into consideration the particular context for a given host state or immigrant population.

New gateway cities

In terms of factors affecting immigrant political incorporation, new trends in where immigrants settle in the United States also have been noted [Waters and Jimenez 2005; Singer et al. 2008; Singer 2004; Massey 2008]. Prior to the 1990s, immigrants settled almost exclusively in traditional gateway cities such as New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago. Since the 1990s, however, new areas referred to as "twenty-first century gateways" have emerged marked by post–World War II development, growing immigrant populations, and predominantly suburban settlement [Singer et al. 2008]. Audrey Singer develops a typology to describe the trend over time, distinguishing among former gateways; continuous gateways; post–World War II gateways; emerging gateways; re-emerging gateways; and pre-emerging gateways [2004]. The Twin Cities of Minneapolis is a re-emerging gateway due to the fact that it attracted significant numbers of immigrants at the beginning of the twentieth century, but then lost popularity as an immigrant destination in the middle of the century, and is now again experiencing large influxes of immigrants.

In a study of recent immigration trends in the Twin Cities and the area's designation as an emerging gateway, Katherine Fennelly and Myron Orfield [2008] find that while large numbers of Asian, African, Latino, and East European/Russian immigrants have migrated to the area, attracted primarily by the availability of jobs, problems such as racial profiling and neighborhood and school segregation have created impediments to immigrant integration. A study on the "Changing Shape of Minnesota" [Greenberg et al. 2004] identifies troubling trends in attitudes toward immigrants, particularly outside metro areas, in "exurbia."[3] Although support for public investment in "public education, transportation infrastructure, healthy and clean environment, and public safety" remains high, Minnesotans outside urban areas view immigrants as a drain on public resources, particularly public schools, and feel that immigrants are shunning integration [Greenberg et al. 2004, 3]. The study finds a need for a "renewed commitment to community" in Minnesota, noting that while there is still a strong commitment to volunteerism among Minnesotans, civil society and community are on the decline [Greenberg et al. 2004, 4].

Managing emigrants: sending states' engagement with diasporas

Immigrants' transnational activities are, of course, not a new phenomenon [see, for example, Morawska 2001]. While acknowledging this, however, Luis Eduardo Guarnizo [2001] points to the new developments and trends in transnationalism, distinguishing between transnationalism from below (migrants organizing to send remittances, fund schools, etc.) and transnationalism from above (directed by a sending state in an attempt to create a "deterritorialized state") and focusing on the latter in his study of Dominicans and Colombians in New York and Salvadorans

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[3] According to the study's authors, "Exurban counties are the fastest growing areas of the state with the newest residents moving here rather than Minnesota's cities or rural regions. The differences between exurbia and the rest of the state are more cultural and political than demographic. Exurbia occupies the middle ground between urban and rural Minnesota" [Greenberg et al. 2004].

in Los Angeles. It is this state-directed transnationalism from above that has generated a great deal of interest and attention among scholars recently.

Traditionally, transnationalism literature focused on globalization as a process that transcends and makes obsolete the state; transnational activities were often described as those that take place "beyond-the-nation-state." Federico Besserer, for example, referred to transnational citizenship as "de-territorialized citizenship that is not bounded to the notion of the nation" [1998, 2]. In the past, scholars paid a great deal of attention to the role of individual agency among immigrants in maintaining ties with their homelands and promoting transnationalism. Nina Glick Schiller et al. [1992] and Linda Basch et al. [1994] defined transnationalism in migration as the process by which individuals transcend the nation-state. Immigrants' cross-border ties and relationships opened up new social and cultural spaces, allowing them to maintain active lives in both their host and home states. Rather than looking at inclusion/exclusion from the perspective of the state, scholars focused on "transnational social fields" [Portes et al. 1999] and "transnational social spaces" [Faist 2000]. "Diaspora has arisen as part of the postmodern project of resisting the nation-state, which is perceived as hegemonic, discriminatory and culturally homogenizing" [Vertovec 2009, 192].

Recent scholarship, however, on diaspora and transnational politics has challenged this notion, instead drawing attention to the increasing trend among emigrant states to grant dual citizenship to and strengthen ties with dispersed populations [Smith 2003; Barry 2006; Gamlen 2008; Margheritis 2007; Itzigsohn 2000; Levitt and de la Dehesa 2003; Østergaard-Nielsen 2003a; Bhagwati 2003; Yeoh and Willis 2004]. States, seeking remittances and investment from emigrants, have actively encouraged their participation in homeland politics, extended citizenship rights to emigrants, and cast emigrants as "heroic citizens" [Barry 2006, 34]. Linda

Basch et al. [1994] focus attention on the activities of emigrant states in de-territorializing the state, extending rights and privileges to emigrants, and seeking to maintain economic ties with their diasporas. New terms, such as "external citizenship," have been used to describe not only the legal status of dual citizenship (which states are increasingly granting to emigrants), but also the "lived experiences of participation in national life" [Barry 2006, 11]. For example, Jean-Bertrand Aristide referred to Haitians in the United States as the Tenth Department—Haiti is divided into nine administrative districts, referred to as departments—reflecting their importance to the country.

As noted above, Dufoix has challenged traditional definitions of "diaspora" on this basis, arguing that just as states are not unitary actors, neither are diasporas homogeneous entities [2008]. Similarly, Robert C. Smith's work emphasizes the role of the state in creating transnational space and diasporic identity by reaching out to emigrants and including them in homeland politics [2003]. These approaches are useful because they encourage examination of the ways in which home states—through "instituted processes"—create diasporic communities and help to explain the different "thicknesses" of diaspora membership [Smith 2003].

Adopting Karl Polanyi's [1957] concept of membership in a political community as an "instituted process," Smith analyzes how migrant membership practices are embedded in "four institutions and processes: home state domestic politics; the home state's relationship to the world system; a semi-autonomous transnational civil society created in part by migration; and the context of reception of migrants in the United States" [Smith 2003b, 297]. The political community's significance emerges "within the context of the larger relations and institutions within which it is embedded" [Smith 2003b, 298]. In order to better understand the relations between home states and their diasporas, Smith proposes examining the state's changing

relations with the "global system, its domestic politics, and migrants' ability to exercise autonomous or semi-autonomous political action with respect to the homeland" [2003a, 726].

Looking at transnationalism through the lens of anthropology, Aihwa Ong emphasizes the role of human agency in the process of globalization, yet she challenges the idea that globalization has weakened state power; instead, she argues, globalization has resulted in "graduated sovereignty," which she describes as a "series of zones that are subjected to different kinds of governmentality and that vary in terms of the mix of disciplinary and civilizing regimes" [1999, 7]. Graduated sovereignty "subjects different segments of the population to different mixes of disciplinary, caring and punitive technologies" [Ong 1999, 22]. Alan Gamlen, comparing 70 countries' policies (Liberia is not included, unfortunately), develops a typology of "diaspora engagement policies." The policies, loosely defined, are grouped into three "higher-level types of diaspora engagement policies":

- o capacity building policies, aimed at discursively producing a state-centric 'transnational national society', and developing a set of corresponding state institutions,
- o extending rights to the diaspora, thus playing a role that befits a legitimate sovereign, and
- o extracting obligations from the diaspora, based on the premise that emigrants owe loyalty to this legitimate sovereign [Gamlen 2006, 5-6].

In this context, the Liberian TRC's effort to include the diaspora in the reconciliation process can clearly be understood as an attempt to incorporate (or, further strengthen the incorporation of) the diasporic population into its imagined political community [Anderson 1983; Smith 2003]. The Liberian government has in recent years taken significant initiatives aimed at engaging the diaspora. For example, at an August 2008 Diaspora Engagement Stakeholders' Consultative Forum held in Monrovia, President Johnson Sirleaf urged emigrant professionals to volunteer their services in Liberia and endorsed a number of initiatives,

including the compilation of a Liberian Diaspora Professional Directory, designed to strengthen diaspora involvement in rebuilding Liberia [The Executive Mansion, August 3, 2008]. The Liberian government still refers to persons who left Liberia decades ago as Liberians and has actively encouraged and recruited them to participate in the TRC process and to give testimony before the TRC.

In November 2007, a representative of the Liberian Mission to the United Nations presented an overview of the Liberian government's strategies to promote diaspora participation in Liberia to a panel at one of UNITAR's (United Nations Institute for Training and Research) Migration and Development Series events. The presentation focused on the opportunities that increased diaspora participation would afford, namely economic (remittances and investment), technological, capacity building (including better work ethic and time management skills), intellectual property, and political lobbying in the United States [Barnes 2007, 9-11]. Individual strategies to engage the diaspora and encourage return to Liberia were also outlined.

Host state policies and their impact on transnational citizenship and identity

While there is an increasing interest in the role of the home state in creating transnational and diasporic identity, there has been limited in-depth research into the impact of host country political institutions on migrants' and refugees' transnational political activities. Transnationalism literature's discussion of institutions tends to focus on three main actors: the home state; political parties in the home state; and migrant organizations in the host country [Itzigsohn 2000]. Nonetheless, it is logical to assume that political opportunity structures within host countries, particularly reception policies, which lead to divergent outcomes in terms of legal

status, also affect diasporas' political mobilization and transnational activity regarding homeland peacebuilding.

The term political opportunity structures may refer to many different actions, however. Sarah Wayland uses the term transnational opportunity structure to refer to the opportunities available through the support of diasporas to those who seek to prolong conflict in the home country. "Despite unfavourable conditions in the home country, factors abroad may protract an otherwise non-existent or short-lived insurgency. Such factors constitute a transnational opportunity structure" [Wayland 2004, 417]. Other scholars have focused on the positive link between transnationalism and integration [Faist 2000; Kivisto 2001; Snel et al. 2006]. Snel et al., for example, argue that transnational involvement in general does not impede immigrant integration [2006].

François Pierre-Louis, Jr., in an examination of the role of hometown associations in fostering transnational identity among Haitian immigrants in New York City, argues that transnational practices are promoted by developed states in an attempt to "provide a segmented assimilation process to immigrants of color" [2006, 8]. Pierre-Louis traces the growth of ethnic hometown associations in New York from the 1970s, when there were only 10 such organizations, to the more than 40 such organizations in existence in 2000. The narrative parallels the experience of Liberian immigration to the United States in a number of key ways. According to Pierre-Louis, although U.S. foreign policy has largely cast Haitian immigration to the United States as an economic migration of poor low-skilled migrants, Haitians arriving in the United States prior to the 1990s were largely highly skilled and highly educated professionals who migrated for political reasons. They established many of the original hometown associations as means of social networking among members in the United States rather than with the intent to

influence politics in the homeland. Although these associations have evolved into powerful political forces in Haiti, they have also served to define Haitian identity in the United States as distinct and separate from that of other groups of African descent, thus attempting to shield Haitians from racial oppression in the host state.

Focusing on the political opportunity structures available to immigrants in host countries and comparing the political participation of Turks and Kurds in Germany and the Netherlands, Eva Østergaard-Nielsen concludes that "transnational political practices should not be reduced to a function of the political opportunity structures of particular receiving countries" [2001, 261]. This is for two main reasons: (a) more inclusive political structures may serve to exclude dialogue on homeland politics; and (b) homeland political movements may draw on a different range of resources than their immigrant political counterparts, including those outside the local political institutional context [Østergaard-Nielsen 2001, 261].

Another factor affecting the political incorporation of individuals in host countries is legal status. While conflict-generated groups such as Liberians traditionally enjoyed special protections and expedited paths to citizenship in host countries, the global roll-back of asylum in recent years has decreased access to refugee protections. With the end of the Cold War, refugees lost their geopolitical strategic and military value. In particular, European states, under the guise of European Union (EU) harmonization, have introduced various measures—the "safe third country" and "safe country of origin" concepts, visas and carrier sanctions, readmission agreements with transit countries (particularly Eastern European countries that seek to join the EU), and offshore processing proposals—to deny individuals access to asylum procedures.

Diaspora transnational mobilization (diasporic citizenship and belonging)

What kinds of issues are diasporas mobilizing around? Studies of diaspora politics often focus on globalization and transnationalism as processes promoting universal human rights norms and post-national citizenship. Terrence Lyons and Peter Mandaville, however, argue that rather than resulting in cosmopolitanism, diaspora transnational mobilization is typically an "extension across space of traditional norms, social structures, and informal institutions" [2012, 15]. The authors note that,

> While politics has been delinked from territory with regard to processes and actors, this does not mean that transnational politics generally focuses on universal issues or global approaches to social justice. Rather, much of the new transnational politics is intensely focused on specific locations, nations, identities and issues. Politics remains fundamentally about local issues even while political processes are increasingly globalized [2012, 3].

> In contrast to a transnational politics that takes the transformation of the human condition as its object, we find today many types of transnationalism that articulate highly particularist, parochial, and often territorially and ethno-nationally specific visions of the political [2012, 7].

Examining the diaspora identities of African immigrants in the United States, John Arthur argues,

> The immigrant identities of these immigrants are embodiments of complex forms and genres of cultures and traditions that are lived concurrently in multiple domains in the United States and in Africa. Although the lives of these immigrants may cross multiple borderlands, the expectations and outcomes are the same: to use international migration to alter the economic and cultural circumstances of the relatives at home. In a sense, the immigrants who are described in this book are creating new "places and spaces" for themselves within the nexus of globalization and its attendant structured inequalities [2007, 7].

> Arthur contends that African immigrants not only create new "places and spaces" but

new identities that are then transmitted back to Africa as a social movement transforming the continent.

> For many Africans who are able to establish immigrant identities in migrant host societies, it bears mentioning that these identities, once formed, are nonlinear. Their identities become circulatory: lived, and experienced in their host societies, and at the

same time transposed, acted out, shared, modified, and recreated back in Africa. When these identities are given African contents and meanings, the goal is often to use and appropriate these identities to restructure, redefine, and change the social, cultural, and economic landscape of the continent. In so doing, these immigrants become agencies of social and cultural changes, using the process of international migration as a strategic social movement designed to mobilize the collective resources of Africans to transform the present and future orderings and structural realignment of the normative and belief systems prevailing on the continent [Arthur 2007, 10].

Liberians in the United States are playing important, innovative roles in peacebuilding in Liberia, as investors and norm entrepreneurs, among others. Drawing on their experiences and political engagement in the United States, they are re-shaping what it means to be Liberian and to live in a democracy.

Case selection: New York and Minnesota

For this study, research was conducted with two Liberian diaspora communities in the United States, in New York City and in the Twin Cities of Minnesota. I chose to focus on Liberians for the following reasons: the role that they are playing in homeland peacebuilding, in particular their participation in the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission;[4] and the fact that a large number of Liberians were granted refugee status and TPS in the United States, which allows for a comparison of U.S. reception policy.

I chose to compare Liberians living in New York City and those living in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis and St. Paul) for a number of reasons. Liberians living in New York City and those living in the Twin Cities are two of the largest concentrations of Liberians in the United States. Estimates are that approximately 25,000 Liberians live in the Twin Cities (the largest

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[4] The Liberian TRC was inaugurated in February 2006 with a four-year mandate covering the events in Liberia from January 1979 to October 2003. In 2007, the Liberian TRC became the first TRC to take statements from individuals in the diaspora, and in 2008, the Liberian TRC held public hearings in the United States and in Ghana before concluding work in 2009. Although the Liberian case is unique in this sense, the TRC is just one peacebuilding mechanism to which the diaspora contribute. For example, the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA) sent a delegation to the Accra Peace Conference in 2003 and participated in election monitoring in Liberia in 2005.

number of Liberians in the United States) and 5,000 to 8,000 live on Staten Island in New York City (the most densely concentrated population of Liberians in the United States). The two areas differ in that Minnesota is a re-emerging gateway city, which has only relatively recently experienced a large influx of Liberian immigrants due to refugee resettlement since 1992 and secondary migration to the state; while in New York (a continuous gateway city), U.S. Census data show that Liberians have migrated over a longer period of time and on a more individual basis. The two areas also offer comparisons based on state and municipal policy in that—in parallel to Bloemraad's analysis of immigrant incorporation in the United States versus Canada [2006]—New York City has adopted a more *laissez-faire* model of incorporating Liberians whereas the Twin Cities have pursued a more proactive multicultural policy.

Methodology

The objective of this study was to determine the impact of state policy on diaspora civic participation. Because there has been relatively little research done involving Liberians in the United States, I began by compiling demographic data about Liberians in New York and Minnesota. I then recorded and compared types and rates of civic participation (both transnational and local) in each community through a structured, focused comparison, in order to understand what factors influence local and transnational civic participation. Data were collected through documentary and archival research and face-to-face interviews. I conducted semi-structured interviews with 40 Liberians in New York City and Minneapolis-St. Paul, which I then coded in two ways. First, I used Atlast.ti to code the interviews for both demographic data and to assign individuals' civic activities to various categories of participation, organized under two broad categories—local (U.S.) participation and transnational (aimed at Liberia)

participation. I then went through the interviews again and, for each individual, assigned a weight to each category of participation [Appendix I]. I also tracked online Liberian media (forums and news sites) and included individuals' activity on these sites as evidence of transnational participation.

In addition, over the course of the study, I attended Liberian community events—Liberian Independence Day celebrations; church services; parades; soccer games; plays, poetry readings, musical performances, and other cultural events; political campaign events; nongovernmental organization (NGO) symposiums, etc.—and was generously invited into people's homes. In 2008, I attended the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission Diaspora Public Hearings at Hamline University in Minnesota.

Background on the Liberian community in the United States

According to American Community Survey (ACS) 2012 data, 73,131 persons (+/-6,896 margin of error) living in the United States were born in Liberia. The greatest number of these—11,464 persons—resided in Minnesota. Table 1.1 shows the top ten states with the largest numbers of persons born in Liberia.[5] After Minnesota, the greatest number of persons born in Liberia lived

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[5] Based on ACS 3-year estimates, 2010-2012. I used ACS 3-year estimates, because it is more recent than 5-year estimates and more accurate than the 1-year estimates. The ranking based on 5-year estimates is below, for comparison.

Number of persons in the United States (by state of residence) who were born in Liberia
2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

State of residence	Number of persons born in Liberia	Margin of error
Minnesota	9,779	+/-1,261
Pennsylvania	8,888	+/-1,292
Maryland	6,509	+/-1,171
New Jersey	5,474	+/-936
New York	4,742	+/-820
Georgia	4,185	+/-826
Rhode Island	3,391	+/-717

in Pennsylvania (8,532), followed by Maryland (6,072), New Jersey (5,323), and New York

(4,403).

Table 1.1   Number of persons in the United States (by state of residence) who were born in Liberia, 2010-2012 American Community Survey 3-year estimates

State of residence	Number of persons born in Liberia	Margin of error
Minnesota	11,464	+/-1,526
Pennsylvania	8,532	+/-1,473
Maryland	6,072	+/-1,153
New Jersey	5,323	+/-1,196
New York	4,403	+/-908
Georgia	4,345	+/-1,431
Texas	2,796	+/-841
Massachusetts	2,495	+/-650
California	2,343	+/-563
North Carolina	2,230	+/-611

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2012 American Community Survey

Of course, some persons born in Liberia were probably not Liberian, but rather from other West

African countries—namely, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, and Sierra Leone—with significant refugee

populations in Liberia. According to ACS 2012 data, 56,219 (+/-7,480 margin of error) persons

identified themselves as having Liberian ancestry. Table 1.2 shows the top ten states with the

largest numbers of persons reporting Liberian ancestry.[6] The ranking remains the same for the

top six states, though there is variation after that.

Texas	2,553	+/-553
Virginia	2,268	+/-841
Massachusetts	2,217	+/-480

[6] Based on ACS 3-year estimates, 2010-2012. I used ACS 3-year estimates, because it is more recent than 5-year estimates and more accurate than the 1-year estimates. The ranking based on 5-year estimates is below, for comparison. According to the ACS 2012 1-year dataset, 4,545 (+/- 1,998 margin of error) Liberians lived in New York and 6,980 (+/- 2,281 margin of error) Liberians lived in Minnesota.

Table 1.2   Number of persons in the United States reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), by state of residence, 2010-2012 American Community Survey 3-year estimates

State of residence	Number of persons reporting Liberian ancestry	Margin of error
Minnesota	8,711	+/-1,936
Pennsylvania	6,913	+/-1,721
Maryland	4,923	+/-1,268
New Jersey	3,344	+/-1,115
New York	3,220	+/-1,062
Georgia	3,143	+/-1,325
Rhode Island	2,347	+/-729
North Carolina	1,866	+/-709
Virginia	1,607	+/-532
Massachusetts	1,603	+/-593

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010-2012 American Community Survey

Both datasets, however, underestimate the number of Liberians in the United States. In

Minnesota alone, there are at least 25,000 Liberians, according to various news reports and social

service organizations' estimates. The ACS data are useful, therefore, to show the regions in the

United States where the largest numbers of Liberians reside and to demonstrate the growth of the

population over time. For example, in comparison to the 73,131 persons born in Liberia residing

Number of persons in the United States reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-year estimates

State of residence	Number of persons reporting Liberian ancestry	Margin of error
Minnesota	8,050	+/-1,326
Pennsylvania	7,357	+/-1,238
Maryland	4,810	+/-1,062
New Jersey	4,069	+/-882
Rhode Island	3,049	+/-773
New York	2,863	+/-675
Virginia	2,508	+/-1,142
Georgia	1,856	+/-632
North Carolina	1,841	+/-533
Massachusetts	1,601	+/-609

in the United States in 2012, there were 39,029 in 2000, 11,455 in 1990, and 3,728 in 1980, according to U.S. Census figures [Gibson and Jung 2006].

ACS data also confirm the fact that the vast majority of Minnesota's Liberians live in the Twin Cities. According to the 2010 ACS 5-year estimates, 7,611 (+/-1,170 margin of error) persons with Liberian ancestry lived in Minnesota. Of these, 7,083 (+/-1,129 margin of error)— 93 percent—resided in the Twin Cities region (Table 1.3). In comparison, 3,006 (+/-882 margin of error) persons with Liberian ancestry lived in New York state, but only 2,328 (+/-797 margin of error)—77 percent—resided in the tri-state area (Table 1.4). Again, these numbers vastly underestimate the number of Liberians in each locale, yet they are useful for comparison purposes.

Table 1.3 **Number of persons in the United States reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories) in the Twin Cities region, 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables**

	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI Metro Area (part); Minnesota	
	Liberian	
	Estimate	Margin of error
Total	7,083	+/-1,129

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Table 1.4 **Number of persons in the United States reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories) in the New York City region, 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables**

	New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area (part); New York	
	Liberian	
	Estimate	Margin of error
Total	2,328	+/-797

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

History of the Liberian diaspora in the United States: six migration waves

In addition to demographics, it is important to understand the history of the Liberian diaspora in the United States as context for a study on Liberians' transnational citizenship. Migration between the United States and Liberia resulted in the creation of Liberia as a political entity and played an integral role in the conflicts that consumed Liberia in the 1990s and early 2000s. Nearly every Liberian with whom I spoke about the conflicts emphasized the role Liberia's colonization and the resultant class system—including Americo-Liberian elites in the United States—played in instigating the conflicts. In many ways, migration between the two states has defined Liberians' lives. Many Liberians in the United States migrated directly as a result of the conflicts. Others came earlier, but their lives were affected equally by the circumstances of their migration. I outline (see Table 1.5) five distinct historical migration waves between present-day Liberia and the United States and argue that migration is now occurring in a sixth and new phase—that of the "global seagull," characterized by circulatory migration between the two countries.[7]

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[7] "Global seagull" is a term used by Dr. Wang Huiyao to refer to the circulatory nature of immigration and the phenomenon of brain circulation, as described by Chrystia Freeland, "Global Seagulls and the New Reality of Immigration," *The New York Times,* October 6, 2011.

Table 1.5   Migration waves between Liberia and the United States

Wave	Direction	Dates	Description
1	Liberia → United States	1619-1860	African slave trade
2	United States → Liberia	1816-present	"Return" of black Americans to Africa
3	Liberia → United States	1950s-1970s	Liberian students travel to United States
4	Liberia → United States	1980-1991	Elites flee Liberia post-1980 coup
5	Liberia → United States	1992-2005	Refugees from Liberian civil wars resettle in the United States
6	Liberia ↔ United States	2006-present	Circulatory migration of "global seagulls"

The first wave of migration was the forced transfer of Africans as slaves from the continent to North America, beginning in 1619 with the arrival of African slaves in Jamestown, Virginia, and ending in the summer of 1860 when the last recorded group of Africans was brought to Alabama on the slave ship *Clotilda*, more than 50 years after the United States had legally abolished the slave trade.[8]

The second migration wave, overlapping with the first, was the "return" of black Americans to Africa, resulting in the creation of Liberia as a political entity in 1822 and continuing into the twentieth century. Established in December 1816, the American Colonization Society was the first society to organize the emigration of free black Americans to the coast of West Africa, setting up the first colony of "free men of color" in 1822. The original settlers were free-born black Americans (not born into slavery, but denied full citizenship

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[8] For an account of the 110 Africans who arrived in 1860, see Sylviane Diouf [2007]. The Act Prohibiting Importation of Slaves was passed by the U.S. Congress in 1807 and took effect January 1, 1808. Although the federal law made the importation of slaves illegal, it was not always enforced, and slavery remained legal until the passage of the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1865.

rights),[9] freed slaves, and mulattos (children of interracial unions). Although the Liberian national motto and seal proclaim "The love of liberty brought us here," the voluntariness of the emigration was questionable for many. Various sources recount the stories of American slaveholders, such as Isaac Ross of Mississippi and Alexander Donelson of Tennessee, who in their wills (both in 1835) stipulated that their slaves should be freed, but only on condition that they were sent to Liberia.[10] The original American Colonization Society members were an uneasy coalition of abolitionists, primarily Quakers and clergy, and white slaveholders who feared freed slaves would incite rebellion if permitted to remain in the United States. Many abolitionists, while motivated by goodwill, were also racists who believed that former slaves would not be able to assimilate into free society in the United States, and some also sought personal financial gain from the exploitation of resources from West Africa.[11]

Liberians migrated back to the United States in significant numbers in a third wave that occurred beginning in the 1950s and continuing throughout the 1970s. Whereas the first two waves, however, had resulted in permanent settlements—first in the United States and then in Liberia—this third wave was largely temporary in nature. It was comprised of Liberian students who traveled to the United States on private and government scholarships to attend various universities and trade schools. Due to Liberian President William Tubman's Open Door Policy, foreign (mostly U.S.) companies had begun operating and investing in Liberia in large numbers

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[9] Black Americans were not granted U.S. citizenship until 1868 with the passage of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Although citizenship rights varied across states (with some "free states" granting blacks the right to vote and to hold public office) in the first half of the 19th century, the U.S. Supreme Court in the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* case in 1857 ruled that no black person—free or slave—was or could ever become a U.S. citizen. New York, originally a slave state, outlawed slavery in 1827. Minnesota was admitted to the Union in 1858 as a free state. An interesting book by Christopher P. Lehman [2011], however, documents the fact that slavery was practiced in Minnesota in the 19th century. Riverfront cities, such as the Twin Cities and Stillwater, built thriving hotel businesses catering to Southerners who brought slaves with them when they traveled to Minnesota to vacation.
[10] See, for example Alan Huffman [2004] and F.M. van der Kraaij ["How Voluntary was the 'Return' to Africa of People of Color and Freed Slaves?"].
[11] For more on Liberia's colonization, see Claude A. Clegg III [2004]. Clegg provides a fascinating account of more than 2,000 black North Carolinians who emigrated to Liberia and their post-migration lives.

beginning in the 1940s. Although they initially employed foreigners exclusively as managers

and technicians, these companies eventually created opportunities for young Liberian elites to

study in the United States in order to comply with Liberianization Policy.

The fourth wave of migration, from 1980 to 1991, was comprised of Liberians—largely

the Americo-Liberian elite and those with established ties to the United States—who fled Liberia

following the 1980 military coup by indigenous leader Samuel Doe. Some Liberians with the

resources to do so migrated primarily for economic reasons, in search of better work and

educational opportunities in the United States. Many others fled directly as a result of the coup

and were able to obtain asylum in the United States on the basis of their individual claims to fear

of persecution.

The fifth migration wave, from 1992 to 2005, was characterized by the arrival of large

numbers of Liberian refugees in the United States due to the two Liberian civil wars from 1989

to 2003. While some Liberians came directly from Liberia to the United States, many spent

time—sometimes years—in refugee camps in West Africa before finally being resettled to the

United States. Although these refugees may not have had the resources that the elites did to flee

directly to the United States, they entered the United States on an expedited path to citizenship

due to their refugee status.

Finally, the sixth wave, from 2006 to the present day, is what I refer to as the era of the

transnational citizen, characterized by circulatory migration and Liberian diaspora members'

active civic participation in both the United States and Liberia. The 2005 election of President

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and a democratic government in Liberia marked the start of a new

migration pattern between Liberia and the United States, one which can be described as the

"global seagull" phase. "Global seagulls" is a label used to refer to present-day circulatory

migration and has been applied to emigrants who are part of the "brain circulation" phenomenon.[12] Increasingly, Liberians are undertaking transnational activities and leading transnational lives. This study reveals the ways in which U.S. and Liberia state policy structure Liberian political mobilization, creating (and at times restricting) opportunities for civic engagement both locally and transnationally.

Concluding remarks

Invariably, individuals' involvement in transnational activities is a consequence of many factors. A review of the literature and of the case of the Liberian diaspora in the United States, however, demonstrates both the importance of host and home state policies in influencing migrants' civic participation locally and transnationally (specifically with respect to homeland peacebuilding) and the need for studies such as this one that reveal the mechanisms through which state policy influences migrants' transnational citizenship. The following chapters illustrate the ways that Liberian individuals are increasingly becoming transnational citizens through an examination of the impact of host and home state policies on the civic participation of Liberians in their communities in the United States and their diaspora engagement in homeland peacebuilding. I begin, in the next chapter, with an examination of U.S. immigration and reception policy toward Liberians and its impact on Liberians' integration in the United States and their civic engagement locally and transnationally.

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[12] "Brain circulation" was first used by Xiaonan Cao in 1996 to describe the increasing tendency among individuals to emigrate for education and work opportunities abroad and then return to their countries of origin to take advantage of high-level jobs in government and the private sector [Cao 1996]. In 1998, the National Science Foundation published an issue brief on the subject of brain circulation, which concluded that for foreign-born scientists and engineers educated in the United States, brain circulation was prevalent among those from countries such as Taiwan and South Korea, but that the pattern for those from China and India was more one of "brain drain." See, Jean M. Johnson and Mark C. Regets [1998].

2   U.S. immigration and reception policy toward Liberians

> A recipient of TPS [temporary protected status] is very limited; for example, I don't qualify for any student loans or aid, or any of those things. I cannot travel freely; I need to have a parole that has to be approved before I can travel.[13] There are a lot of job opportunities that I'm not privy to because of my status. So, absolutely, it's a good status in that it gives you room to live and work, but it has a lot of limitations. It also limits my participation in community activities; for example, I cannot participate in any political group because I don't have any status, and because of that, there is a limit to how I can participate and do things within my local community. I have to look at the guidelines and see where I have the privilege and be careful that I do not overstep my bounds [MN7, 44-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2002, DED (formerly TPS), Interview with author, October 14, 2010].

Depending on the time period in which they arrived, Liberians were subject to different immigration and reception policies in the United States. Those arriving before approximately 1990 largely came on temporary visas as students or tourists and spent many years trying to legalize their stay—through marriage or work—once those visas expired. The U.S. government eventually granted TPS in 1991 to those who applied for it; however, many Liberians in the United States were unaware of the program or unable to afford the application fees and therefore did not take advantage of TPS. While TPS provides temporary protection, it has left many Liberians (like the individual quoted above) in a state of immigration limbo; TPS was terminated in 2007 and, although deferred enforced departure (DED)[14] has been applied, it will end in September 2014, leaving those without another legal status subject to deportation.

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[13] Individuals with TPS/DED who wish to travel outside the United States have to apply for a travel document (Form I-131) and pay a fee in order to obtain advance parole, otherwise they may not be allowed to re-enter the United States. Travel to Liberia is not permitted.

[14] Deferred enforced departure (DED) is granted by the president of the United States as part of his power to conduct foreign relations. It is not an immigration status. Rather, it is an exemption from involuntary removal (i.e., deportation) and is granted to nationals of designated countries. As of October 2013, Liberia was the only country covered by DED. The president may also provide work authorization as part of DED, in which case individuals covered by DED must apply to receive work authorization. Work authorization has always been provided as a benefit of DED for Liberians.

Liberians arriving later, however, as a result of the two Liberian civil wars (1989-1996 and 1999-2003), typically entered the United States as refugees. Or, they entered with another status and (often with the help of fellow Liberians who had been in the United States longer) applied for and received asylee status, which is functionally equivalent to refugee status.[15] Not only does this mean an expedited path to citizenship, but those arriving as refugees also benefited from a number of social services and government assistance programs designed to facilitate their integration into American life.

Examining the differences between refugee/asylee status and TPS/DED reveals the important role that government policy plays in immigrant political integration. While individual agency matters, so too do institutions. Irene Bloemraad demonstrates this masterfully in her analysis of immigrant incorporation in North America. Comparing the contexts of reception in Canada and the United States, Bloemraad identifies determinants of immigrants' political participation. While acknowledging the role that individual agency plays, Bloemraad criticizes North American "behavioral" approaches to immigrant political integration study that focus too narrowly on "resources, skills, and interests" [2006, 7].

Instead, she argues in favor of an institutional approach, focusing on political opportunity structure, typical to studies of citizenship in Europe. According to Bloemraad, "A model of immigrant political incorporation consequently needs to acknowledge the social, localized nature of acquiring and practicing political citizenship" [2006, 80]. The material and symbolic support

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[15] Both a refugee and an asylee are defined in international law as a person who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" [*1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees,* Article 1A(2)]. The difference is based on the location of the person when applying for protection. If a person is already in the United States at the time of application, United States law dictates that s/he must apply for asylum, with some exceptions, within one year of entry. If s/he is outside the United States, s/he can apply for refugee status, which can be granted by both the United Nations and by states, including U.S. embassies. Refugees who are then resettled to the United States have the same rights, protections, and access to social services as asylees.

that governments provide for immigrant integration influence the degree to which individuals are able to mobilize politically.

> Although people's individual interests, skills, and resources help explain dynamics of political integration, such a lens only provides a narrow view of overall incorporation processes. Contexts of reception channel the beliefs and behaviors of immigrants through a nested process of *structured mobilization.* Immigrants, as outsiders, must mobilize themselves to become politically incorporated. This process of political learning and mobilization is nested in the social organization of the ethnic and mainstream communities. Locally, social networks, community organizations, and ethnic leadership play critical roles in helping newcomers. This local infrastructure is in turn shaped by government policies. Migrants acquire resources and support for political participation through the actions—or inactions—of government, and government actions shape immigrants' very impressions and understandings of citizenship [Bloemraad 2006, 9].

Since refugees and asylees are the only class of immigrant for whom the U.S. government provides active support for settlement and integration, it is useful to compare Liberian refugees' experiences with those of Liberians who were not able to benefit from such assistance. Liberians were one of the first groups to be granted TPS in 1991 and are the group that has benefited from TPS/DED the longest in the United States. While TPS/DED is granted based on humanitarian grounds and offers legal protection similar to refugee or asylee status, by its nature it is meant to be temporary and therefore does not provide access to services that promote integration. The emphasis solely on legal protection, rather than political integration and citizenship, reflects a larger trend (especially post- September 11, 2001) in U.S. immigration and reception policy away from the promotion of political belonging among immigrants in favor of policies that frame immigration as a security issue.[16] As early as 1940, the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration transferred the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) from the

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[16] Bloemraad documents this trend in her 2006 comparison of U.S. and Canadian immigration policy. Since the 1950s, the percentage of foreign-born immigrants who naturalize in the United States has fallen precipitously, which is explained in part by the United States' lack of support for integration programs. By contrast, Canada has pursued an official multiculturalism policy since the 1970s, resulting in greater funding for "interventionist" programs that promote integration and a dramatic rise in the citizenship acquisition rate in Canada during the same time period [Bloemraad 2006].

Department of Labor to the Department of Justice [Bloemraad 2006, 108]; in 2003, it ceased to exist when its functions were transferred to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Refugee resettlement is the one area in which the United States continues to promote actively and provide support for integration. The decision, therefore, to award Liberians TPS/DED rather than refugee or asylee status (all the while promoting TPS as a short-term substitute for refugee/asylee status) demonstrates the United States' lack of concern for and understanding of the importance of participatory citizenship. This chapter compares the experiences of Liberians with TPS/DED versus refugee/asylee status, underlining the arbitrariness with which some Liberians were awarded refugee/asylee status while others—many of whom had spent time in refugee camps in West Africa—ended up with TPS/DED. In so doing, it highlights the increasing tendency in the United States to treat immigration as a legal and security issue rather than to recognize the importance of integration and political participation to citizenship, thus supporting Bloemraad's argument.

This chapter reviews U.S. immigration and reception policy and its role in shaping Liberian transnational citizen identity. It traces the history of U.S. federal policy that has resulted in the current policies toward Liberians and how these policies have affected Liberian integration and civic participation. Outside of West Africa, the United States has the largest population of Liberians in the world. Significant numbers of Liberians reside in many U.S. states, including Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, Georgia, New Jersey, and Rhode Island. This chapter examines differences in reception and immigration policies at the federal level. The first part of the chapter outlines the history of U.S. immigration and reception policy, from the earlier assimilation policies to the present conceptualization of immigration as a security issue. In particular, it highlights the development of federal policy post-1965 and the important

distinctions made between refugees/asylees and those individuals afforded TPS/DED. After outlining and comparing policies over time, I look at citizenship determinants, namely full legal membership and participation. While data on Liberians' legal status in the United States is available from sources such as the Department of Homeland Security, I gathered information on civic participation first-hand through semi-structured interviews with Liberians, conducted between 2006 and 2012. Data from the Liberian case illustrate the important role that government policy plays in facilitating or discouraging civic participation. As Bloemraad demonstrated, participation occurs through a process of structured mobilization.

U.S. immigration and reception policy

Over the course of the twentieth century, U.S. immigration and naturalization policy evolved from a policy based on racial exclusion to one emphasizing civil rights. The race-based policies of the first half of the century, which restricted immigration and access to citizenship through the use of national origins formulas, were replaced in the second half of the century by policies that gave preference to special categories of immigrants: skilled labor, refugees, and those with family ties to U.S. citizens and permanent residents. At the same time, however, U.S. immigration policy evolved to reflect the country's shifting needs, from a need for low-skilled labor to high-skilled labor. Immigration, originally a labor issue, increasingly became a security issue.

The United States Congress first established a formal process for granting citizenship to the foreign born in 1790. The United States Constitution grants Congress the power "to establish an uniform Rule of Naturalization" (Article I, section 8, clause 4). Shortly after ratification of the Constitution, the U.S. Congress passed the first U.S. naturalization law on March 26, 1790 (1

Stat. 103). It stated that "any alien, being a free white person, who shall have resided within the limits and under the jurisdiction of the United States for the term of two years, may be admitted to become a citizen thereof..." The act was repealed and replaced by a new act in 1795 (1 Stat. 414) that raised the residence requirement from two to five years. The Naturalization Act of 1798 (1 Stat. 566) further raised the requirement from five to fourteen years, but was repealed by the Naturalization Law of 1802 (2 Stat. 153).

U.S. immigration and naturalization laws, however, continued to exclude non-whites until 1965. The 1802 act was revised a number of times during the nineteenth century. In 1855 (10 Stat. 604), alien women were given citizenship automatically through marriage to a U.S. citizen or (if the husband was not already a citizen at the time of marriage) upon the husband's naturalization, and in 1870 (16 Stat. 256), the naturalization laws were extended to aliens of African descent. While immigration from Africa was permitted theoretically, racial exclusion acts proliferated until the middle of the twentieth century, effectively excluding non-whites. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 imposed a 10-year moratorium on Chinese immigration and naturalization, which was extended in 1892, and made permanent in 1902, before finally being repealed in 1943. The Immigration Act of 1917 (the Asiatic Barred Zone Act) restricted immigration from the Middle East, Asia, and the Pacific Islands.

The most significant development occurred in 1921 with the passage of the Emergency Quota Act—the first of a series of national origin acts—which placed numerical limits on immigration and created a quota system for immigrants based on U.S. population at the time of the 1910 Census. The 1924 Immigration Act further reduced the annual quota for immigrants from each country, from 3 percent to 2 percent of the number of foreign-born persons resident in the United States, and changed the basis of calculation from the census of 1910 to that of 1890.

Aimed primarily at restricting immigration from southeast Europe and Asia, the national origins acts of the 1920s also effectively excluded Africans.

Citizenship as civil right

The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1952 marked a turning point. While the act retained the national origins formula, it abolished all racial restrictions. It also, importantly, introduced a preferential system for high-skilled labor immigrants, relatives of U.S. citizens, and refugees. The major shift in U.S. policy, however, occurred in 1965 with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (also known as the Hart-Celler Act) [Bloemraad 2006, 103]. The act eliminated the national origins formula and raised the overall ceiling on immigrant admissions, thus opening the gates to large scale immigration from areas outside Europe. It also established a system in which high-skilled labor and relatives of U.S. citizens and permanent residents were given preferential status. This shift away from low-skilled labor in favor of a system that gave preference to high-skilled labor, family reunification, and humanitarian cases reflected a broader ongoing shift in U.S. policy from a focus on immigration as a labor issue to a security issue. In 1940, the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration had transferred the INS from the Department of Labor to the Department of Justice, as part of its Reorganization Plan (Number V) [Bloemraad 2006, 108].

Passed one year after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and in the same year as the Voting Rights Act, the Hart-Celler Act reflected the debates that occurred in the United States in the 1960s and 1970s around citizenship and belonging. Bloemraad points to an important distinction between the "crises of citizenship and cohesion" at the time, which focused in the United States on blacks and whites, and in Canada on French and English speakers.

"Government intervention around diversity in the United States would center on race and civil rights. In Canada it would be grounded in ethnicity, culture, and language, with a strong state interest in integration" [Bloemraad 2006, 103]. This led to differences in how each country approached immigration—the United States taking a *laissez-faire* approach that centered on legal rights and security, and Canada adopting a multicultural approach aimed at facilitating integration and assimilation.

Lines drawn between "deserving" and "undeserving" immigrants

Over the next decades, the immigration conversation focused increasingly on the growing number of undocumented immigrants in the United States. The 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) gave amnesty to those who had entered the United States before January 1, 1982 and had resided since then in the United States without legal status. Individuals had to apply for adjustment of status within 12 months, beginning May 1987. About three million undocumented immigrants were able to adjust their status.

Rather than focusing on integration efforts, however, lines continued to be drawn between the "deserving" and "undeserving" when it came to U.S. citizenship. The 1996 Welfare Reform Act—officially, the U.S. Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act—drew new distinctions between citizens and non-citizens, including those with legal permanent residence. The act delegated responsibility for welfare benefits to states, replacing cash assistance to low-income families through the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program with block grants to states called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). States could deny welfare and Medicaid to non-citizens. Although many immigrants, including those with legal permanent residence, initially lost access to benefit programs such as

food stamps and supplemental security income (SSI), the benefits were later restored to "qualified aliens" including legal permanent residents, refugees, and asylees.[17] For immigrants entering after the enactment of welfare reform (August 22, 1996), eligibility for federal public benefits, however, continue to be determined based on whether an individual is a qualified or non-qualified alien. While refugees and asylees make the list of qualified aliens, individuals with temporary protected status do not.[18] The 2003 transfer of INS's functions to the newly created Department of Homeland Security further underscored U.S. immigration policy's emphasis on security.

Refugee policy

With the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980, the United States, for the first time, established a general federal policy for the admission of refugees. The act created the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) under the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and authorized the Refugee Assistance Program, which provides federal funding from ORR to states for refugee assistance. It created an initial 50,000 cap on the number of refugees admitted each

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[17] The 2008 Farm Bill renamed the Food Stamp Program the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

[18] Those with Temporary Protected Status do not qualify for public assistance. According to 8 U.S. Code § 1641, the term "qualified alien" means an alien who, at the time the alien applies for, receives, or attempts to receive a Federal public benefit, is—

(1) an alien who is lawfully admitted for permanent residence under the Immigration and Nationality Act [8 U.S.C. 1101 et seq.],

(2) an alien who is granted asylum under section 208 of such Act [8 U.S.C. 1158],

(3) a refugee who is admitted to the United States under section 207 of such Act [8 U.S.C. 1157],

(4) an alien who is paroled into the United States under section 212(d)(5) of such Act [8 U.S.C. 1182 (d)(5)] for a period of at least 1 year,

(5) an alien whose deportation is being withheld under section 243(h) of such Act [8 U.S.C. 1253] (as in effect immediately before the effective date of section 307 of division C of Public Law 104–208) or section 241(b)(3) of such Act [8 U.S.C. 1231 (b)(3)] (as amended by section 305(a) of division C of Public Law 104–208),

(6) an alien who is granted conditional entry pursuant to section 203(a)(7) of such Act [8 U.S.C. 1153 (a)(7)] as in effect prior to April 1, 1980; [1] or

(7) an alien who is a Cuban and Haitian entrant (as defined in section 501(e) of the Refugee Education Assistance Act of 1980).

year to the United States. This number, the refugee ceiling, is adjusted each year and, as of fiscal year 2013, stands at 70,000.[19] Most importantly, the Refugee Act of 1980 established procedures for resettling and integrating refugees in the United States.

Groups recognized as prima facie refugees abroad receive protection not available to groups in similar situations already present within the United States

Normally, asylum is granted by states or the United Nations on an individual basis through a process called refugee status determination. An individual is recognized as a refugee, or (if already in the United States) an asylee, after an interview and review of his/her individual claim of persecution. Refugee status determination is a long, labor-intensive process, however, and in cases of large-scale refugee movements due to generalized conflict or violence, there is not enough time to process each person individually. *Prima facie* refugees, therefore, is the term used to refer to entire groups of people who are recognized as *de facto* refugees even though they have not been individually processed.

While groups of people may be recognized as *prima facie* refugees by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and resettled to the United States, there is no similar system for granting protection to groups already in the United States. The Refugee Act of 1980 established a uniform procedure for dealing with refugees, including *prima facie* refugees, resettled from overseas—i.e., persons who have already been recognized as refugees by UNHCR. It also established procedures for processing asylum seekers in the United States on an individual basis. Asylum is granted only to individuals through one of two ways. An individual who has been placed in deportation proceedings may file an asylum application with the

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[19] The annual ceiling for the number of refugee admissions is set each year by the president in consultation with Congress and the executive branch. The president does have the power to raise the ceiling, however, in response to a refugee crisis.

immigration judge; this is known as the defensive process. Alternatively, an individual who has

not been placed in deportation proceedings may file an asylum application with the U.S.

Citizenship and Immigration Services, which is referred to as the affirmative process. In 2000,

the ORR expanded its service provision to include individuals granted asylum in the United

States (i.e., asylees), survivors of torture, and adult victims of human trafficking. In addition, the

authority to provide services to trafficked children was granted to ORR with the passage of the

Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act of 2008.

The United States provides the greatest (relative to other categories of immigrants)

integration assistance to refugees—whether they are recognized on an individual basis through

refugee status determination or on a group basis as *prima facie* refugees. Individuals granted

asylum (defensively or affirmatively) in the United States also receive benefits and access to

services that are designed to help them assimilate in the United States. There is no comparable

status, however, or benefits provided to groups of people of certain nationalities in the United

States who are unable to return to their homelands due to generalized conflict. Instead, the

United States has repeatedly granted such groups temporary protection, which has left many

trapped in legal limbo: unable to return home, yet unable to integrate fully in the United States.

Extended Voluntary Departure (EVD) and Deferred Enforced Departure (DED): group
membership-based protection but limited benefits
In 1960, the United States, for the first time, extended blanket temporary protection to all

individuals of a certain nationality present in the United States. The protection, known as

Extended Voluntary Departure (EVD), was authorized by the attorney general and first granted

to Cubans. Over the next 30 years, EVD was granted for varying periods to nationals of 16

countries.[20] EVD provided protection from deportation and access to some public assistance, but it was never fully defined, changing with administrations and country designations. While it extended protection on a group basis, it did not grant refugee status. Thus, it fell short of the protection and benefits provided by *prima facie* refugee recognition.

In 1989, EVD was renamed Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) when it was applied to Chinese nationals in the aftermath of the events in Tiananmen Square [Frelick and Kohnen 1995, 342]. Up until 1990, however, the U.S. government's method of dealing with *de facto* refugees (those unable to return to their countries of origin due to generalized conflict) was *ad hoc*. Like its predecessor EVD, DED is triggered only when an individual enters deportation proceedings. The codification of TPS in 1990, therefore, marked a turning point.

Temporary Protected Status

In November 1990, President George H.W. Bush signed the Immigration Act of 1990, the most sweeping reform of the U.S. immigration system since 1952. Among other changes, the act established the diversity immigrant visa program, which awards visas based on a lottery system to applicants from countries with low immigration to the United States. As part of the act, the U.S. Congress also established a procedure by which the attorney general[21] could grant TPS to individuals in the United States who were temporarily unable to return to their home countries.[22] Specifically, the act authorized the attorney general to grant TPS to aliens in the United States who were nationals of countries subject to "armed conflict, natural disaster, or other

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[20] Between 1960 and 1990, EVD was granted for varying periods to nationals of 16 countries: Cuba, Dominican Republic, Czechoslovakia, Chile, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Hungary, Romania, Uganda, Iran, Nicaragua, Afghanistan, and Poland. The last time the U.S. government granted EVD to a group was 1981.
[21] The authority to designate TPS was later transferred to the Secretary of Homeland Security in 2003, pursuant to the Homeland Security Act of 2002.
[22] Section 302 of the Immigration Act of 1990 amended the Immigration and Nationality Act by inserting "Section 244A Temporary protected status" (8 U.S.C. 1254a). Full text of 8 U.S.C. 1254a is available at http://www.fourmilab.ch/uscode/8usc/www/t8-12-II-V-1254a.html

extraordinary conditions." The first designation of TPS was extended to Salvadorans for a period of 18 months.[23]

The fact that TPS was created to protect entire groups of people based on the fact that they were unable to return to their countries of origin due to generalized conflict made it appear to be a solution for people in situations similar to those of *prima facie* refugees. Consequently, advocates argued it should have provided the same benefits and protection as refugee status. In reality, however, it was simply a temporary fix, a bureaucratic sidestep that would leave beneficiaries trapped in legal limbo for years to come. Whereas refugee and asylee status both provide paths to U.S. citizenship and support for integration in the United States, TPS does not. The United States' wide-scale use of TPS since the 1990s, in place of an expansion of the refugee resettlement and asylum programs, reflects the United States' narrow focus on immigration as a security issue and its rejection of the importance of political belonging to citizenship.

The Liberian case

Since the program's inception in 1991, TPS has been awarded to nationals of nearly 20 countries.[24] No country, however, has been designated for TPS or DED longer than Liberia, whose nationals have benefited from either TPS or DED continuously since March 1991. On both sides of the immigration debate—those who support expanding immigration and those who

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[23] Section 303 of the Immigration Act of 1990 established TPS for an initial period of 18 months for Salvadorans present in the United States since September 19, 1990. The designation of Salvadorans as the first to receive TPS was in response to a class action lawsuit brought by eight religious and refugee assistance organizations challenging routine denials of asylum requests. The *American Baptist Churches v. Thornburgh (ABC)* settlement required INS to stop the deportation of Salvadoran and Guatemalan refugees in the United States and re-adjudicate all their claims for asylum. It applied to every Salvadoran and Guatemalan denied asylum since 1980.

[24] Countries designated for TPS for some period since 1991 include El Salvador, Kuwait, Lebanon, Liberia, Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, Haiti, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Sudan, South Sudan, Montserrat, Kosovo, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Nicaragua, Angola, and Syria.

seek to restrict it—there is consensus that TPS is a failed policy. Refugee and human rights advocates fault its insufficient protection in comparison to asylee and refugee status. Opponents of immigration criticize the repeated TPS extensions, claiming TPS has been used as a form of backdoor immigration, allowing recipients to stay in the United States long past the time that protection was needed. Because Liberians in the United States have benefitted from TPS/DED the longest, it is instructive to examine the Liberian case to understand the impact TPS/DED has had on individuals, particularly with respect to civic participation.

Liberians in need of protection

When Liberia's first civil war began in December 1989, the United States was slow to react. Throughout 1990, the United States adopted what Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Herman Cohen in his testimony to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee on Africa on November 27, 1990 described as a policy of "neutrality." Despite appeals to intervene by, among others, Concerned Liberians—a group of former Liberian officials in the United States who had fled Liberia during the 1980s—the United States turned a blind eye to the abuses being perpetrated by Samuel Doe's regime.[25]

On the immigration side, however, the United States reacted more swiftly, extending preliminary, though insufficient, protection to Liberians in the United States in July 1990.

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[25] An article in *The New York Times,* titled "Some Liberians Accuse the U.S. of Betrayal," dated August 21, 1990, stated, "In an emotional appeal to President Bush last month, a group calling itself Concerned Liberians, consisting primarily of former Doe officials in the United States, asked that the United States send a peacekeeping force to end the fighting."

Liberians recognized for group status by United States

The United States' first official asylum policy addressing the plight of Liberians affected by the Liberian conflict came in the form of a July 27, 1990 INS cable to its field offices establishing a case-by-case voluntary departure policy for Liberians in the United States. The cable stipulated that Liberians who entered the United States prior to July 27 would be eligible to apply for voluntary departure until January 1, 1991.[26] This meant that Liberians would be allowed to remain in the United States until January 1, 1991 provided that they placed themselves into deportation proceedings. The benefit was that individuals who had overstayed visas or were otherwise in the United States without legal status would be allowed to remain in the United States an additional six months, until January 1, 1991. The policy, however, offered no protection to those arriving after July 27, 1990 and was unattractive to Liberians with valid visas. Even Liberians without valid visas were reluctant to take advantage of the program, since it meant bringing themselves to the attention of immigration authorities, thereby raising significantly the likelihood that they would be deported after January 1, 1991.

Finally, in December 1990, the U.S. Department of State sent a cable to all U.S. overseas posts processing Liberians—namely its embassies in West Africa, Kenya, and Italy—authorizing them to begin processing Liberian refugee applicants for resettlement in the United States. The authorization added Liberians to the United States' list of specially designated nationalities, which allowed refugees who fell into refugee processing priorities 1, 2, and 3, to be accepted for the U.S. resettlement program without referral from UNHCR. Those who fell into categories 4, 5, and 6 could also be considered, but only on a case-by-case basis if referred by UNHCR.[27]

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[26] July 27, 1990 cable reproduced in 67 *Interpreter Releases* 818-19 (July 30, 1990); See also, Human Rights Watch [1991].

[27] In FY 1995, the refugee priority categories were revised. See, U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, U.S. Department of Justice, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [1994]:

Refugee priority categories in place in 1990 were as follows: 1) compelling concern/ interest; 2)

former U.S. government employees; 3) family reunification; 4) other ties to the U.S.; 5)

additional family reunification; and, 6) otherwise of national interest.

The new policy also urged leniency for Liberians applying for U.S. immigrant visas,

noting that documentary requirements could be waived in certain cases. It also advised U.S.

embassies to grant humanitarian parole to non-current immigrant visa applicants—i.e., those who

had applied for immigrant visas but whose applications were not yet eligible to be processed due

to the United States already having reached its yearly numerical limit on immigrant visas for

Liberians. Humanitarian parole cases are generally processed more rapidly than refugee cases

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Priority One
- UNHCR-referred or Embassy-identified persons in immediate danger of loss of life.
- UNHCR-referred or Embassy-identified cases of compelling concern such as former political prisoners or dissidents.
- UNHCR-referred vulnerable cases including women at risk, victims of violence, torture survivors, and individuals in urgent need of medical treatment not available in the first-asylum country.
- UNHCR-referred cases of individuals for whom the other durable solutions are not feasible and whose status in the place of asylum does not present a satisfactory long-term solution.
- Groups of special concern to the U.S. to be established as needed by nationality [for FY 1995, these included groups from Burma, Laos, Vietnam, former Soviet Union, Bosnia, Cuba, Haiti, and Iran].

Priority Two
- Spouses, unmarried sons and daughters, and parents of persons lawfully admitted to the U.S. as Permanent Resident Aliens, refugees, or asylees.
- Unmarried sons and daughters, of any age, of U.S. citizens; parents of U.S. citizens under 21 years of age. (Spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens and the parents of U.S. citizens who have attained the age of 21 are required by law to apply for admission on immigrant visas.)

Priority Three
- Married sons and daughters and siblings of U.S. citizens and persons lawfully admitted to the U.S. as Permanent Resident Aliens, refugees, or asylees.

Priority Four
- Grandparents, grandchildren, uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews and first cousins of U.S. citizens and persons lawfully admitted to the U.S. as Permanent Resident Aliens, refugees, or asylees.

Refugee priority categories are subject to revision each fiscal year and have been revised periodically. For FY 2011, according to the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, U.S. Department o f Homeland Security, and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [2010], the refugee priority categories were as follows:
Priority One– Individual cases referred [by UNHCR, a U.S. Embassy, or NGO] to the program because of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement.
Priority Two– Groups of cases designated as having access to the program by virtue of their circumstances and apparent need for resettlement.
Priority Three– Individual cases from eligible nationalities granted access for purposes of reunification with anchor family members already in the United States.

and are granted when there is compelling humanitarian concern. Under the new guidelines, non-current immigrant visa applicants would be granted humanitarian parole to enter the United States and then would be eligible to adjust their status later when more immigrant visas for Liberians became available.

Even for non-immigrant visa applicants (those seeking temporary U.S. visas) from Liberia, the Department of State recommended "sympathetic consideration" to allow them to travel to be reunited with family members who had "temporary or deferred departure" status in the United States [U.S. Department of State telegram 1990]. The fact that the United States relaxed its visa requirements in order to allow Liberians fleeing conflict in Liberia to enter the United States on temporary (i.e., non-immigrant) visas is extremely significant. While this provided a short-term solution for many Liberians, it meant that individuals who might otherwise have qualified for refugee status were encouraged to travel to the United States on temporary visas and would later end up as TPS holders or undocumented when those visas expired.

Although the United States began processing Liberian refugees for resettlement in December 1990, Chart 2.1 below illustrates how long it took for significant numbers of Liberians to be resettled to the United States as refugees. In 1990, only 2 Liberians were resettled, and in 1991, only one person was resettled. In 1992, however, the number rose to 637 persons. It peaked at 978 persons in 1993, before decreasing to 596 persons in 1994, and then 55 persons in 1995.

Chart 2.1   **Liberian refugee arrivals to the United States, fiscal year 1990-2010**
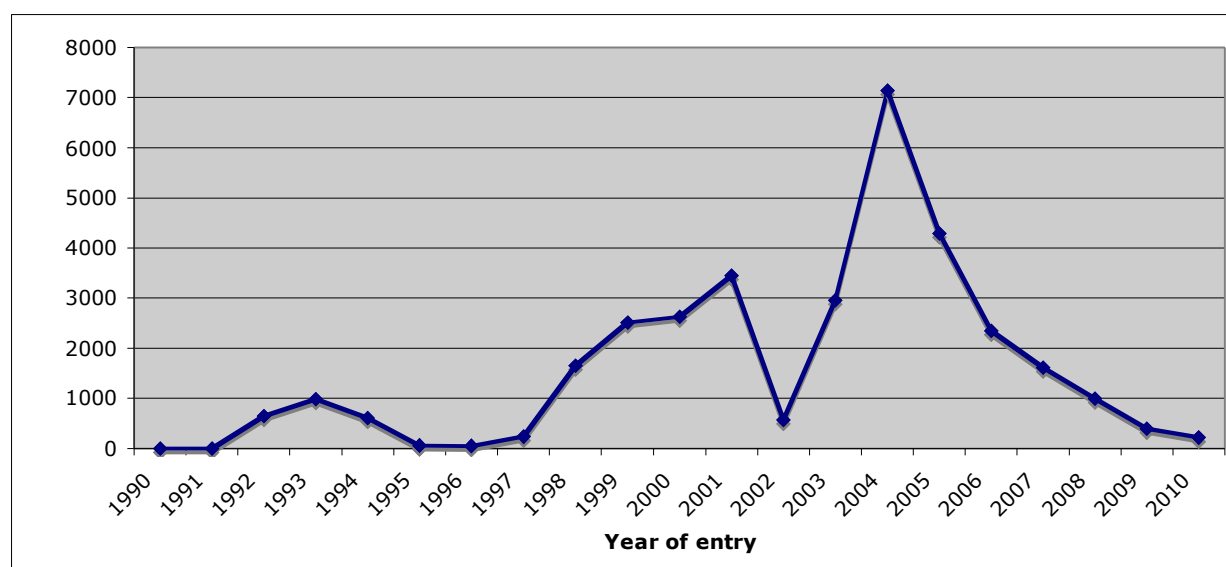
Source: Author's tabulation of data from the Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS) for fiscal year (FY) 1990-2010 (as of July 15, 2010). Data were supplied by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Office of Admissions - Refugee Processing Center.

Not until 1998, just before the Second Liberia Civil War erupted, did the numbers begin to increase substantially. There was a peak at 3,445 persons resettled in 2001, followed by a large dip in arrivals in 2002, which reflected the increased security measures the United States enacted in the aftermath of September 11, 2001. Total refugee arrivals (i.e., refugees of all nationalities who were resettled) to the United States—shown in Chart 2.2—went from 68,388 persons in 2001 to only 27,070 persons in 2002, representing only 39 percent of that year's ceiling. The large dip in 2002, in both Liberian and total refugees resettled, is shown in Charts 2.1 and 2.2., respectively.

Chart 2.2   Annual refugee resettlement ceilings and actual total refugees (from all countries) resettled to the United States, 1983–2011
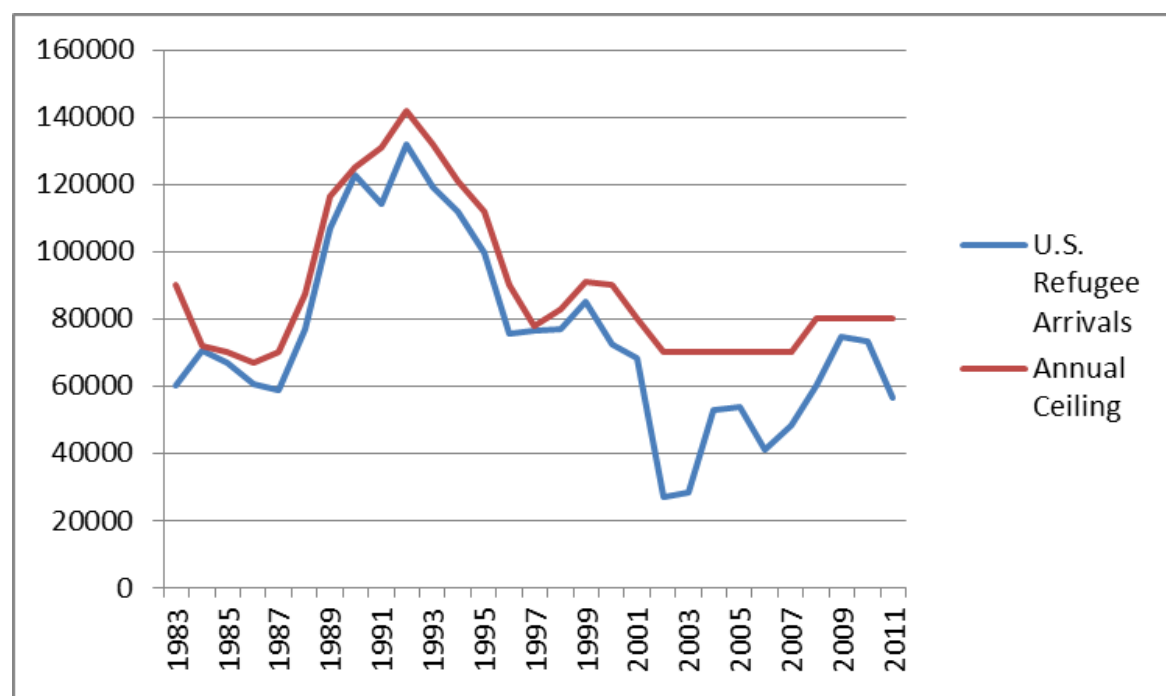
*NB: Y-axis represents number of individuals.

Source: Author's tabulation of data for 1983-1999 from the Office of Refugee Resettlement, Department of Health and Human Services, *Annual ORR Report to Congress 2008,* available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/orr/annual_orr_report_to_congress_2008.pdf; The ORR is required to submit a report to Congress each year, but, as of 2012, the most recent submitted report was for FY2008. Therefore, data for 2009-2011 were taken from Office of Refugee Resettlement, Department of Health and Human Services, "Refugee Arrival Data," available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/data/refugee_arrival_data.htm .
Data on refugee admissions is based on the ORR data system, which began in 1983 and does not include various classes of entrants under ORR's purview, including Amerasians, and Cuban and Haitian entrants.

Refugee arrivals remained low overall the following year: 28,117 persons admitted, representing only 40 percent of the 2003 ceiling. However, Liberian refugee arrivals (Chart 2.1) increased significantly in 2003 and again in 2004. In 2004, the peak year for Liberian refugee arrivals to the United States, 7,140 persons were resettled in reaction to the violence in Liberia, particularly the shelling of Monrovia, and increased media attention in the United States.

Chart 2.3 below also depicts U.S. Annual Refugee Resettlement Ceilings. It gives a slightly longer historical trajectory than Chart 2.2, including data from 1980 to 1982, to show the drop in total U.S. admissions since the passage of the Refugee Act of 1980.

Chart 2.3   U.S. annual refugee (individuals) resettlement ceilings, 1980 to 2010
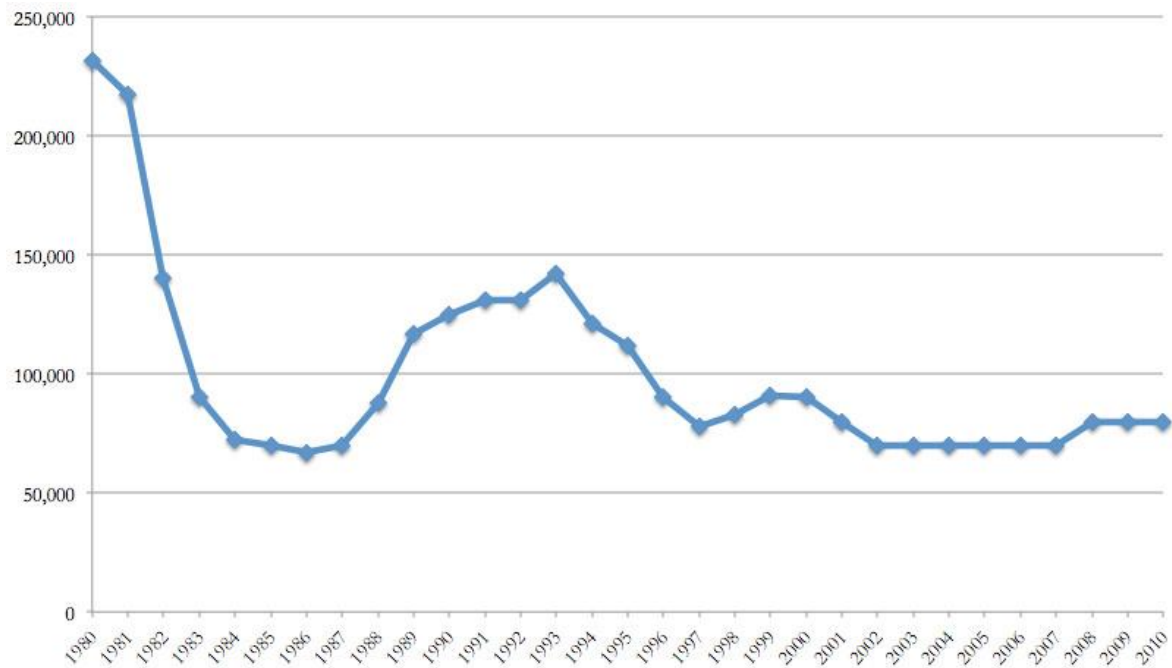
Liberians granted asylee status in United States on an individual basis

At the same time that the United States began processing Liberian refugees for resettlement, the number of Liberians granted asylum in the United States also increased. Prior to 1990, individual Liberians living in the United States had applied for and received asylum in small numbers. During the 1980s, however, asylum was primarily reserved for those who had held high-level positions in Liberian government prior to the 1980 coup and had fled to the United States to escape the Samuel Doe regime.

Table 2.1 below shows the number of Liberians who received asylee status affirmatively

from 1983, the first year asylum status was granted in the United States, to 2010.

Table 2.1   Liberian individuals granted asylum (affirmatively) in the United States, 1983-2010

Year	Liberians granted asylum
2010	36
2009	44
2008	61
2007	50
2006	65
2005	123
2004	315
2003	353
2002	599
2001	760
2000	678
1999	669
1998	495
1997	478
1996	703
1995	614
1994	305
1993	247
1992	209
1991	53
1990	10
1989	20
1988	5
1987	7
1986	6
1985	2
1984	6
1983	11

Source: Affirmative statistics were compiled by the author from the following sources: U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1996-2001,* available online at http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/archive.shtm#1; and Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Services, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2002-2011,* available online at http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/yearbook.shtm. The INS collected data on asylum applicants for selected nationalities since July 1980 and for all nationalities (including Liberians) since June 1983. Defensive statistics are from U.S. DOJ, Executive Office for Immigration Review (EOIR), cited in U.S. Department of Homeland Security, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics 2010,* http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/YrBk10RA.shtm

Overall—i.e., for all nationalities—affirmative cases make up 70-75 percent of the total asylum

grants per year and defensive cases account for 25-30 percent.

Table 2.2   Immigration courts (defensive) asylum statistics: Liberians

Fiscal Year*	Received	Granted	Denied	Abandoned	Withdrawn	Other
2011	121	23	45	3	28	81
2010	140	25	45	5	29	61
2009	220	31	55	13	20	75
2008	167	32	39	7	38	33
2007	190	53	60	26	47	55
2006	206	59	65	14	33	97
2005	301	70	68	20	32	143
2004	409	91	103	29	43	253
2003	421	146	98	26	42	274
2002	664	140	92	31	43	251

*Changes to reporting format make this data unavailable for Liberians prior to 2002.

Source: Author's tabulation of data from annual statistical yearbooks. U.S. Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review, Office of Planning, Analysis, and Technology, *Statistical Yearbook,* 2000–2011, available online at http://www.justice.gov/eoir/statspub/syb2000main.htm

Prior to 2002, the U.S. Department of Justice's *Statistical Yearbooks* do not include a breakdown

of defensive asylum cases for Liberians. However, the 25 countries with the highest number of

asylum grants each year are listed, with Liberia making the list in years 1997 to 2003.[28] After

2003, Liberia drops off the top 25 list.

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[28] **Liberian defensive asylum cases granted, ranked in comparison to all other countries**

Year	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998	1997
Rank	20	16	20	24	22	19	9

Liberians receive TPS

On December 21, 1990, one day after the cable regarding the decision to add Liberian refugees overseas to the United States' list of refugees to be resettled to the United States, INS issued another cable extending voluntary departure until March 30, 1991 for those Liberians who were already present in the United States. The policy, while still only applying to those who had arrived prior to July 27, 1990, referred to a pending decision regarding the "applicability of the Immigration Act of 1990 relating to temporary protected status" to Liberians. [29] As mentioned above, Section 302 of the Immigration Act of 1990 (Public Law 101-649, enacted November 29, 1990) amended the Immigration and Nationality Act by adding section 244A, authorizing the U.S. attorney general to grant TPS to nationals of countries experiencing ongoing armed conflict, environmental disasters, or other conditions that make return unsafe. Section 303 designated El Salvador under the TPS program. Although no other countries were specifically designated, the U.S. Congress, in the conference report to the Immigration Act of 1990 legislation, "strongly urged" the attorney general to grant TPS to Liberians, Kuwaitis, and Lebanese. [30]

Indeed, on March 21, 1991, U.S. Attorney General Dick Thornburgh ordered the designation of Liberia under 244A(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, as amended (8 U.S.C. 1254a), [31] making Liberian nationals eligible for TPS. At the time of the designation, the attorney general estimated that 14,000 Liberians would be eligible to apply for the program. [32] The number of those who applied, however, was far smaller. In fact, only approximately 4,000 Liberians took advantage of the program due to a lack of awareness of the program, the high

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[29] December 21, 1990 cable reproduced in 68 *Interpreter Releases* 50-51 (January 14, 1991).
[30] H.R. Conference Report No. 955, 101st Congress, 2nd Session 127 (1990).
[31] Full text of 8 U.S.C. 1254a is available at http://www.fourmilab.ch/uscode/8usc/www/t8-12-II-V-1254a.html
[32] "Designation of Liberia under Temporary Protected Status Program," Attorney General Order No. 1483–91, Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, 21 March 1991.

application fees, and the short period of coverage. The order took effect on March 27, 1991 and extended only for an initial 12-month period.[33]

"Temporary" protection repeatedly extended and renewed for more than 20 years

Though TPS was meant to be only a short-term status, it was renewed repeatedly. Table 2.3 below lists the many renewals to TPS between 1991 and its expiration in 2007. A policy that was meant to provide temporary protection from conflict in their home country to a broad class of people has left thousands of Liberians in a legal no man's land—allowed to live and work legally in the United States for more than 20 years, but not allowed to immigrate.

Table 2.3 lists the number of Liberians covered by TPS during each period, and later by DED. When the program began in 1991, only those Liberians who enrolled in 1991 were supposed to be eligible for extensions. However, at various times—1997, 1998, 2002, and 2004—TPS was "re-designated" for Liberia. This meant that individuals not previously covered by TPS were eligible to apply at those times. Whereas only 4,000 Liberians had successfully applied for TPS in 1991, by 1998, twice that number were covered by TPS.

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[33] Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration, 56 *Federal Register 12746,* March 27, 1991.

Table 2.3   TPS and DED coverage for Liberia since initial designation in 1991[34]

Date	Designation	Estimated number of persons
March 1991 – March 1992	TPS	14,000 estimated to be eligible[35]
March 1992 – March 1993	TPS	5,000 estimated to be eligible[36]
March 1993 – March 1994	TPS	5,000 estimated to be eligible[37]
March 1994 – March 1995	TPS	4,000 granted[38]
March 1995 – March 1996	TPS	4,000 granted[39]
March 1996 – March 1997	TPS	4,000 granted[40]
March 1997 – March 1998	TPS	5,000 estimated to be eligible[41]
March 1998 – September 1998	TPS	8,000 granted[42]
September 1998 – September 1999	TPS	10,000 estimated to be eligible[43]
September 1999 – October 2002	DED	10,000 estimated to be eligible[44]
October 2002 – August 2003	TPS	15,000-20,000 estimated to be eligible[45]
August 2003 – August 2004	TPS	2,400 granted[46]
August 2004 – October 2005	TPS	3,792 granted[47]
October 2005 – October 2006	TPS	3,792 granted[48]

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[34]To view the actual Federal Registry notices, visit The U.S. Department of Justice's Virtual Law Library, which maintains a list of Federal Registry TPS/DED notices: http://www.justice.gov/eoir/vll/fedreg/tpsnet.html#Lib

[35] 56 Federal Register 12746, March 27, 1991.

[36] 57 Federal Register 2932, January 24, 1992.

[37] 58 Federal Register 7896, February 10, 1993.

[38] 59 Federal Register 9997, March 2, 1994.

[39] 60 Federal Register 16163, March 29, 1995.

[40] 61 Federal Register 8076, March 1, 1996.

[41] 62 Federal Register 16608, April 7, 1997. In 1994, 1995, and 1996, the attorney general had estimated 4,000 Liberians would be eligible for re-registration for TPS based on the numbers who were then covered. This 1997 notice not only extended TPS for those who were already covered by the program since 1991. It also "re-designated" Liberia for TPS, stating that Liberians who did not have TPS previously but had continuously resided in the United States since June 1, 1996 were also eligible to apply. As a result, the number of Liberians with TPS increased from approximately 4,000 to approximately 8,000.

[42] 63 Federal Register 15437, March 31, 1998.

[43] 63 Federal Register 51958, September 29, 1998. This notice also re-designated Liberia for TPS, stating that those Liberians continuously residing in the United States since September 29, 1998 were eligible to apply.

[44] 64 Federal Register 41463, July 30, 1999. This (10,000) is also the number quoted in Ruth Ellen Wasem and Karma Ester, *Temporary Protected Status: Current Immigration Policy and Issues,* Congressional Research Service Report for Congress RS20844, December 13, 2011. Online at http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/179582.pdf

[45] 67 Federal Register 61664, October 1, 2002. This notice also re-designated Liberia for TPS, stating that those Liberians continuously residing in the United States since October 1, 2002 were eligible to apply.

[46] 68 Federal Register 46648, August 6, 2003.

[47] 69 Federal Register 52297, August 25, 2004. TPS was terminated and re-designated for Liberia. Those continuously residing in the United States since October 1, 2002 were eligible to apply.
This (3,792) is also the number quoted in Ruth Ellen Wasem and Karma Ester, *Temporary Protected Status: Current Immigration Policy and Issues,* Congressional Research Service Report for Congress RS20844, November 4, 2004, and January 14, 2005, http://opencrs.com/document/RS20844/2004-11-04/.
RS20844 is also available for 2005, 2008, 2010- Online at http://opencrs.com/document/RS20844/

[48] 70 Federal Register 48176, August 16, 2005. TPS was extended but not re-designated.

October 2006 – October 2007	TPS	3,600 granted[49]
October 2007 – March 2009	DED	3,600 granted[50]
March 2009 – March 2010	DED	3,600[51]
March 2010 – August 2011	DED	3,600[52]
August 2011 – March 2013	DED	3,600[53]
March 2013 – September 2014	DED	3,600[54]

In March 1998, when TPS was extended for a "final" (the notice stated it would be the final renewal, but in fact it was not) 6-month period, 8,000 Liberians were covered. In September 1998, however, the attorney general again extended TPS and re-designated Liberia for TPS, stating that those Liberians continuously residing in the United States since September 29, 1998 were eligible to apply. At the time, the attorney general estimated 10,000 Liberians would be eligible for TPS based on the numbers of those who were already covered and new applicants.

Indeed, TPS for Liberians expired (i.e., was not renewed) on September 28, 1999. However, rather than deporting Liberians without legal status, the Clinton administration granted DED to approximately 10,000 Liberians—i.e., those Liberians who were then covered by TPS. DED, like EVD, is different from TPS in that it is not a status for which individuals can apply; rather it is triggered when a person enters deportation proceedings. DED was subsequently extended until October 1, 2002 when the attorney general again re-designated Liberia under the TPS program for a period of 12 months. At the time that Liberia was re-designated for TPS, it was estimated that there were 15,000-20,000 Liberians in the United States who qualified for the status [Minnesota Advocates for Human Rights 2007]. However, only 2,400 applied and were

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[49] 71 Federal Register 55000, September 20, 2006.
[50] This is the number quoted in the following CRS RS20844 Report updates: September 18, 2008; September 30, 2008: January 19, 2010; September 9, 2010; June 30, 2011. Online at http://opencrs.com/document/RS20844/
[51] 74 Federal Register 14144, March 30, 2009
[52] 75 Federal Register 15715, March 30, 2010
[53] 76 Federal Register 53145, August 25, 2011
[54] 78 Federal Register 17423, March 21, 2013.

granted TPS. In 2004, Liberia was again re-designated for TPS, and the number of Liberians with TPS rose to 3,792. TPS continued to be extended until September 20, 2006 when the Bush administration announced that TPS would expire on October 1, 2007.

When TPS expired on October 1, 2007, however, President George W. Bush issued a presidential directive again providing DED for 18 months to Liberians who had previously held TPS. In March 2009, President Barack Obama extended DED for Liberians for a period of 12 months, and in March 2010, August 2011, and March 2013, he directed the secretary of Homeland Security to extend DED for additional 18 month periods. The current designation will expire in September 2014. As of September 2013, approximately 3,600 Liberians were covered by DED [Wasem and Ester 2011].[55] This is the estimated number of Liberians who have been covered by DED since it was issued in October 2007.

TPS: an inadequate solution

While TPS provides temporary protection from removal and work authorization to foreign nationals in the United States who are unable to return to their countries of origin due to conflict, natural disaster, or other temporary conditions, it is not meant to be a permanent solution; those who receive TPS are expected to return to their countries of origin when the United States government deems it safe to do so. TPS and DED holders are not eligible for permanent legal residence in the United States. Instead, an act of Congress is necessary to adjust their status, such as the one (Public Law 105-277) passed by the 105th U.S. Congress in 1998 enabling Haitians to adjust their status.

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[55] This number has not changed since 2011, since the current DED designation applies only to those Liberians who had TPS on October 1, 2007 when the program was terminated.

However, due to the protracted nature of the conflict in Liberia and the resulting destruction of basic infrastructure, the U.S. government, in repeated reviews since 1991, has determined that Liberia is unable to handle the return of its nationals and has continued to extend some form of temporary protection to Liberians in the United States. Although the U.S. government terminated TPS for Liberia in 2007, since then it has applied DED, which is granted by presidential directive and—in the case of Liberia—is functionally equivalent to TPS, protecting Liberians from removal and providing work authorization while still barring any path to permanent residence or citizenship.

The problem with TPS and DED, however, is that they have left many Liberians in a state of immigration limbo—"temporarily" allowed to work and live in the United States for more than 20 years, but expected to someday return to Liberia even though they have established their lives in the United States and have had children born in the United States who are thus American citizens. Liberia's current DED designation is also scheduled to expire in September 2014, leaving those whom it currently protects subject to deportation, unless it is renewed.

While on the surface, TPS seems to offer protection to those in need, it is flawed in two major ways: the fact that it imposes hefty fees on applicants and its temporary nature. From the outset, refugee advocates argued that the fees were too high and served as a disincentive.[56] Those receiving TPS must re-register and pay a fee to extend their work permits each time the TPS designation for their countries is renewed. As of September 2013, the initial application fee for someone 14-65 years old applying for TPS and a work permit was $515. Re-registration fees (required each time TPS is extended for an individual country) totaled $465.

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[56] When TPS was first established, each individual was required to pay an application fee of $110 ($75 for the I-104 registration form/ temporary status application and $35 for the I-765 work authorization). Later, the work permit requirement was dropped for those under 14 and over 65 years of age.

As a result of the hefty fees, many Liberians who were eligible for TPS and should have benefitted from the program did not apply. In addition, those who did not initially apply in 1991 when Liberians were first designated for TPS were then not eligible to apply when the status was renewed in subsequent years. Only those who were registered in the program could apply for a renewal.

The temporary nature of the program also served as a disincentive. Those who were not able to convert their status (e.g., through asylum or a relative) while registered for TPS were then immediately subject to deportation when the designation expired. Many undocumented Liberians were reluctant to register for TPS, fearful that bringing themselves to the government's attention would cause them to be at greater risk of deportation later. They preferred to remain undocumented rather than apply for TPS, which was initially granted to Liberians for only 12 months. Had they known that the U.S. government would extend continuously TPS/DED for Liberians for more than 20 years, they undoubtedly would have availed themselves of the opportunity to apply; however, TPS was never meant to be the long-term, quasi-permanent status that it has become.

Citizenship determinants: legal status

TPS is a legal status; TPS holders, unlike undocumented immigrants, are allowed to live and (usually) allowed to work temporarily in the United States. However, unlike refugees and asylees, individuals with TPS/DED are not eligible to obtain lawful permanent resident (LPR) status or to naturalize. TPS/DED holders also cannot travel to Liberia. The United States' initial decision to grant Liberians TPS rather than process them for group refugee status in 1991 and its repeated extensions and renewals of TPS/DED have simultaneously negatively affected

Liberians' ability to integrate in the United States while also limiting the extent to which they can engage with the Liberian diaspora.

The final part of this chapter details the impact of TPS/DED on Liberian civic participation both locally in the United States and with respect to the diaspora. First, however, it is useful to examine more qualitatively the difference in legal status and options for future legal status between TPS/DED holders and refugees/asylees.

TPS: legal limbo

Even for those Liberians who did manage to obtain TPS, the status has not brought them peace of mind or the safe haven they had hoped. Although TPS or DED has been extended repeatedly for Liberians since 1991, there is no guarantee that it will be in the future, and the expiration of each TPS/DED period creates anxiety and uncertainty among Liberians. Adrian Bailey et al., examining the impact of TPS on Salvadorans—the first group to be designated for TPS in 1990—refer to the experiences of space-time relations of Salvadorans in northern New Jersey as "permanent temporariness" [2002]. "Drawing on this work, we argue that Salvadoran transnational fields emerge when Salvadorans construct simultaneous daily lives across and between places of core, semiperiphery, and periphery states" [Bailey et al. 2002, 126].

Cecilia Menjívar [2006] describes the situation of Guatemalans and Salvadorans with TPS as "liminal legality." She argues that TPS creates an "in-between" status—in-between documented and undocumented status—that negatively affects not only individuals' labor force participation and access to services but also their sociocultural spheres of life as well [Menjívar 2006, 1000]. Contrary to the notion that increased transnationalism has rendered the state obsolete, Menjívar's study highlights the continued power of the state in immigrants' lives.

Interviews conducted with Liberians covered by DED support the findings of both Bailey et al. and Menjívar regarding the limitations that "permanent temporariness" or "liminal legality" has imposed on Liberians' lives. Many Liberians who registered for TPS and are now covered by DED have been in the United States longer than those who were resettled as refugees in the 1990s and early 2000s. However, those with DED remain stuck in legal limbo, fearing that they will be deported to Liberia when DED expires. As the quote at the beginning of the chapter demonstrates, the negative impacts of TPS/DED are widespread.

In comparison, Liberians who arrived as refugees and those who were granted asylee status in the United States have benefited from status and services that are designed to set them on a path to citizenship. Often what separates a person with refugee/asylee status from one with TPS/DED, however, is simply logistical. One Liberian who likely would have qualified for asylum describes how she instead ended up with TPS.

> I [began] the process a bit late, maybe like 5 months after I was in the States, of applying for asylum, because I came thinking that—like everyone else who went through a war that is short-lived—whatever was happening back home, Charles Taylor would be out of there in a short time [and I would be able to return]. So, I was just kind of biding my time, because I did not come [to the United States] with the intention that I would come and live forever. But then, after those 5 months, I realized that I was in for a long haul. So, I went and applied for asylum. I was referred to the asylum court. The immigration officer assigned me to the asylum court, but then my lawyer at that time and the prosecutor decided that because I had TPS, that I should administratively close my asylum hearing. Can you imagine? Not really explaining to me the repercussions of that.
>
> I think the greatest enemy a new immigrant has is lack of information. You don't know where to go; you don't know the resources that are available to you as a newcomer, and that is a huge barrier. For example, I got this lawyer just by going through a newspaper, because I didn't know anything about [the process]—that I had to appear before a judge—and I knew instantly that I needed a lawyer. So, I just went into a newspaper, skimmed through and came across a lawyer, and that's how I chose a lawyer. It wasn't a reference or any performance basis or anything; it was just through an advertisement. He recommended closing the case and did not tell me the implications. What he actually told me was that, you can close it for now because you have TPS. Somewhere down in the future, if you want to open the case, you can re-open the case. What he did not explain to me was that as long as whoever your claim of threat was, once that person was removed, then you did not have asylum. So, that's what happened. I never did try to re-open the

case, because like I said, Charles Taylor is no longer there, so that case has no material value anymore. It's irrelevant [MN7, 44-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2002, DED (formerly TPS), Interview with author, October 14, 2010].

This individual's experience highlights the arbitrariness of the process separating refugees/asylees from those with TPS. During a conflict, people migrate in many different ways. Those who have the financial or social capital necessary to obtain visas to other countries typically do so rather than subject themselves to the refugee status determination process, which is typically long and frequently flawed. In addition, as mentioned earlier, the United States—as was the case with Liberia in the early 1990s—often relaxes its visa requirements for individuals fleeing countries experiencing conflict. As a result, individuals who may well have qualified for refugee status enter the United States on temporary visas instead.

Once in the United States, individuals—with a few exceptions—must apply for asylee status within one year of their arrival in the United States. Often, however, those fleeing conflict in their homeland do not intend to remain permanently in the United States, or—having recently entered the United States—they do not have the knowledge necessary to navigate successfully the asylum process. By the time they realize that they will not be able to return home and they are made aware of the time restrictions to apply for asylum, it is too late. Instead, they end up with TPS or undocumented after overstaying their visas, and they remain trapped in a legal limbo: unable to return home, yet unable to integrate fully in the United States.

Refugees and asylees on the path to U.S. citizenship

In comparison to countries like Canada, which has pursued a multicultural approach to immigration emphasizing integration and assimilation, the United States' approach to immigration is *laissez-faire.* As outlined at the beginning of the chapter, the United States increasingly treats immigration as a security issue. Refugees and, to a lesser degree, asylees,

however, are the rare exception. The United States actively assists resettled refugees and asylees in integrating in the United States, by providing an expedited path to U.S. citizenship and various services aimed at facilitating their adjustment to life in the United States.

Refugee resettlement in the United States is a multi-phase process. U.S. Resettlement Program officials in countries of first asylum screen and interview individuals who have been recognized as refugees by UNHCR. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) coordinates travel for those who are chosen for resettlement to the United States. Once refugees arrive in the United States, the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)'s Reception and Placement Program funds the initial 3-month reception and placement phase. Federal funding is then provided, through ORR, to states, which work with nine local voluntary agencies, such as Church World Service and International Rescue Committee, to provide employment training, cash and medical assistance, English language training, and other services to resettled refugees.

The goal of the U.S. Resettlement Program is self-sufficiency within eight months of arrival in the United States. However, there is no official definition of "self-sufficiency." Church World Service, one of the nine voluntary agencies working with the federal government to resettle refugees, defines successful refugee integration as follows:

> Integration is a long-term process, through which refugees and host communities communicate effectively, function together and enrich each other, expand employment options and create economic opportunities, and have mutual respect and understanding among people of different cultures [Dwyer 2010, 6].

Refugees and, to a lesser degree, asylees benefit from access to services designed to facilitate their integration in the United States that are not provided to other immigrants. Local voluntary agencies assist resettled refugees in a number of activities, such as locating and furnishing housing, training for employment, learning to drive or use public transportation,

obtaining credit, learning English, locating doctors, enrolling children in school, and managing money. The services provided focus primarily on helping refugees to gain early employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency, rather than acculturating in American society, and they are far less generous than those provided by other countries, such as Canada [Bloemraad 2006].

Still, the services provided to refugees assist them to overcome social isolation and become more actively involved in their communities. One woman describes her experience adjusting to life in the United States after fleeing conflict in Liberia. After having spent two years as a refugee in Sierra Leone, she was able to migrate to the United States in 1992 after her mother, who had been working in the United States, established residency and applied for an immigrant visa for her on the basis of family reunification. She describes her realization that she suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, after the events of September 11, 2001 triggered memories of her experiences in Liberia and Sierra Leone a decade earlier.

> I didn't know at the time but I was very traumatized by the war [in Liberia] and I just couldn't tend to think long term and I just didn't want to… After living those years of not knowing what's going to happen every moment, well, you kind of build this smaller space in front of you and it's just, "I'm just going to take it one day at a time." So this idea of planning for the future took awhile to really get into, because I was in survival mode for a very long time. It was very interesting, because when 9/11 happened, that's when I had all my nightmares and almost like coming out of this... it was weird. I think it was the fear of what's going to happen. That fear that all of a sudden this big thing happened—you saw the bombing [on 9/11]. I had no idea what was going on but for a long time after that, I had lots of nightmares—running to try to get my kids, running… I started shunning things. I can honestly say I am just starting to feel like myself again. Growing up in school and stuff, I was very active, I was very positive, I was just looking forward to living out loud and making things happen, and when I came to America, the place you know, where everything is supposed to happen, I just didn't feel like that anymore. So, I feel fortunate to be able to come out of that or even realize that it happened because some people didn't even get the chance to do that [MN2, 38-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1992, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, October 13, 2010].

Although she lived for two years as a refugee in Sierra Leone, she was not entitled to or made aware of programs to assist new arrivals struggling with the aftermath of conflict, because

she entered the United States on an immigrant visa through family reunification rather than as a refugee. It was not until she attended an information session given by the Center for Victims of Torture at her workplace that she was able to put words to what she was experiencing. Ironically, however, the information session was not intended to assist her. Rather, the purpose was to sensitize staff at her office to what their Somali refugee clients might be experiencing.

> At my first job, we had a lot of Somali immigrant refugees who worked with us because we would teach them how to... It was a workshop, they came in and we had a production floor and then basically, we had to teach them how to work and show them some soft skills training. You know, coming to work on time, calling in when you're sick or you're going to be late or those kinds of things. The Center for Victims of Torture came in to talk to the staff about some of the things that these people might be going through. And I'm sitting there and I'm thinking, "That's me!" [laughs]. You know, that was the first time I heard anything like that and I'm like, "Oh my God, I'm traumatized." It's kind of funny, but I left there very appreciative of the information I had just gotten, trying to make some connection to my own life.

> If you look at me, I didn't come in as a refugee. You know, as far as the system was concerned, I was doing pretty great; there's no reason [supposedly] why I should need that kind of service or be given that kind of service. Speaking for myself, of course, I did [need that service] but I wasn't even aware that there was a service like that or that I would be qualified for that. Because I didn't know what it was, "being traumatized." I had no idea. What people don't realize too is that when you move here from a lot of different countries, there are new words that become part of your vocabulary that you didn't even consider or even think about or you didn't even know were part of the English language [MN2, 38-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1992, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, October 13, 2010].

> Typically, federal funding to community organizations for integration services is

earmarked specifically for refugees and asylees, leaving large numbers of Liberians—many of whom, like the person above, are in the same situation as refugees even though they are not classified as such—without assistance. One Liberian community leader describes a program that was run through the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota (OLM) with funding from Minnesota's Department of Human Services. The program exclusively targeted refugees and asylees who had been in the United States less than five years. The individual describes the difficulties this caused in trying to deliver services to those who needed them.

During that period, we were able to get some grants from Hennepin County, the Jewish Action Network, the Department of Human Services at Minnesota, [and] also from other various institutions that network with the Liberian community in Minnesota. What we did at the DHS level… the $75,000 contract we had for one year was to provide services to immigrants who have [been in the United States] five years and less. They had to be from the refugee camps or [have] political asylum. And we provide housing—low income housing, foods and education, medical and all their social needs. Then we do what we call cultural training to get them to be able to cross the road safely, to be able to navigate the American judicial legal system, be able to [go to] a driving school… and all the complexity that comes with an immigrant who has not used a microwave, and [then] 24 hours [after leaving] the refugee camp, we hand him a microwave. How do you deal with that? [We teach them] the difference between a gas stove and electric stove so that [they] do not kill [themselves].

We were also involved in a project, on a foreclosure program. During the boom of the Clinton economy, a lot of Liberians bought homes, but as the recession moved they could not afford to pay for their homes. Also, most of them were given the primary mortgage stuff where the prices go up on a daily basis, and we have to go to the Jewish Action Network through Hennepin County, then we would get some money and get them to a counselor or to a lawyer or what we call a "cash for key" program… [] It was a six month program; it's ended now. We have not had new funding to date… []

When I was there, we had up to 600 or 700 persons [in the program]… [but] the criteria of the project was to [target only a] minority, as compared to the number of people who have been here already for more than ten years. So, it was difficult [because] not many people come from the refugee camp now. So, we had to go into the community and find those who qualify for the project… []

There were people who really were in need but the project did not cover them, so we couldn't work with them. No TPS. It had to be exact. One, you have to be here as a refugee or asylee, and then two, you have to be here five years or less. But, there were people who were here as refugees or asylees but who were here over five years. So, what we did was, we were providing services to them, but we couldn't record the services we were providing to them.

And we also had a problem with the issue of citizenship and the green card. People who were here five years and less, we could help them get their green card in partnership with World Relief… [] But there were people who wanted to apply for citizenship, who wanted to apply for the green card, but could not do it, because they have been here over five years. So, we had to do that on our own, on our own resources, because we can't tell them to leave. We were still providing services to them, but that could not be [part of] our project because the project was not covering them [MN3, 45-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1998, asylee, Interview with author, July 26, 2010].

This is just one example of how differences in legal status—most significantly, the difference

between TPS/DED and refugee/asylee status, but also the differences within groups (for

example, between those refugees who arrived recently and those who have been in the United States for more than five years)—have created divisions between Liberians and obstacles for effective community organizing. Community leaders in both Minnesota and New York repeatedly lament the divisions among Liberians and the challenges they pose to community fundraising and political mobilization. Some of these divisions—along the lines of ethnicity and political ideology—mirror those in Liberia and are carried over from the Liberian conflicts. Others, however, are created by U.S. reception and immigration policies, which provide integration assistance only to a narrow subset of Liberians.

Naturalization among Liberian immigrants

Unlike those with TPS/DED, refugees are eligible (and in fact, required) to obtain lawful permanent residence one year after their date of entry to the United States. They are also eligible for an expedited path to U.S. citizenship. Whereas the normal wait time for green card holders (i.e., those with lawful permanent residence) to naturalize is five years, refugees may count their entire time in the United States (including the time before they obtained lawful permanent residence) toward the five-year qualifying period. In other words, a refugee who enters the United States in 2000 but does not apply for and obtain a green card until 2004 is still eligible to naturalize in 2005. Asylees are also eligible to obtain lawful permanent residence one year after they receive asylum. However, unlike refugees, they may only count a maximum of one year of the time they had asylee status toward the five-year eligibility period. So, an asylee who obtains asylum in 2000 but waits until 2004 to get a green card still has to wait another four years to naturalize. Even so, this is better than the standard five-year wait required for most green card holders.

The number of Liberians naturalizing has risen steadily over time (see Chart 2.4). However, it is still relatively low, in comparison to the number of Liberians who presumably—based on the number of Liberian refugees resettled to the United States—are eligible to do so. This is due in part to the fact that many Liberians who are eligible to apply for naturalization have chosen not to, because it would mean forfeiting their Liberian citizenship.[57]

Chart 2.4   Liberian naturalizations, fiscal year 1987-2011
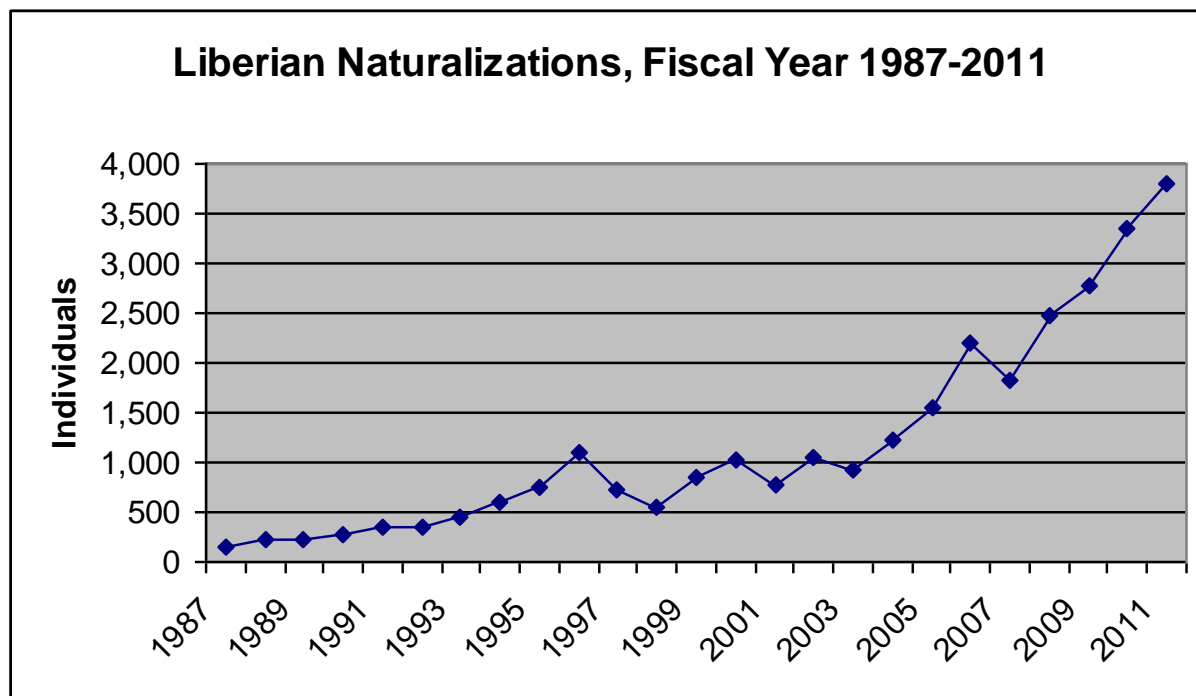
Source: Numbers for FY 1991-2011 are for naturalizations of persons born in Liberia and were compiled by the author from two sources: Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Services, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2011,* Table 21, available online at http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/YrBk11Na.shtm, and Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Services, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics, 2004,* available online at http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/YrBk04Na.shtm. Numbers for FY 1987-1990 are for naturalizations of persons whose country of last allegiance was Liberia and were taken from: U.S. Department of Justice, Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1998,* available online at http://www.dhs.gov/files/statistics/publications/YrBk98Na.shtm.

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[57] The decision by many Liberians not to naturalize in the United States is discussed at greater length in Chapter 4.

The majority (78 percent) of Liberians in the United States are first generation immigrants, meaning they were born outside the United States. Table 2.4 shows the citizenship status of persons with Liberian ancestry in the United States. Of those who were not born American citizens, only 26 percent have naturalized.

Table 2.4   Citizenship status of persons in the United States reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables[58]

	United States	
	Liberian	
	Estimate	Margin of error
Total:	52,299	+/-2,673
U.S. citizen, born in the United States	11,443	+/-1,084
U.S. citizen, born in Puerto Rico or U.S. Island Areas	0	+/-119
U.S. citizen, born abroad of American parent(s)	467	+/-194
U.S. citizen by naturalization	10,531	+/-1,042
Not a U.S. citizen	29,858	+/-1,974

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Table 2.5 shows Liberians' citizenship status broken down based on their year of entry to the United States. Of the 40,856 persons with Liberian ancestry who were born outside the United States, 2,004 entered before 1980, 2,661 entered between 1980 and 1989, 11,637 entered between 1990 and 1999, and 22,554 entered in 2000 or later.

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[58] As mentioned in Chapter 1, ACS data underestimate the number of Liberians in the United States. However, the ACS data highlight important trends and are useful in terms of comparison.

Table 2.5   Year of entry by citizenship status of persons in the United States reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables

	United States	
	Liberian	
	Estimate	**Margin of error**
Total:	40,856	+/-2,269
Entered 2000 or later:	22,554	+/-2,138
Native	224	+/-146
Foreign born:	22,330	+/-2,112
Naturalized U.S. citizen	2,339	+/-560
Not a U.S. citizen	19,991	+/-1,964
Entered 1990 to 1999:	11,637	+/-1,156
Native	55	+/-52
Foreign born:	11,582	+/-1,149
Naturalized U.S. citizen	4,373	+/-588
Not a U.S. citizen	7,209	+/-934
Entered 1980 to 1989:	4,661	+/-591
Native	144	+/-122
Foreign born:	4,517	+/-572
Naturalized U.S. citizen	2,439	+/-395
Not a U.S. citizen	2,078	+/-389
Entered before 1980:	2,004	+/-345
Native	44	+/-38
Foreign born:	1,960	+/-340
Naturalized U.S. citizen	1,380	+/-293
Not a U.S. citizen	580	+/-180

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Chart 2.5 shows the same information in pie chart format. Although the numbers reported in the American Community Survey underestimate the number of persons with Liberian ancestry in the United States, the percentages show that the majority of persons entered in 2000 or later.

Chart 2.5   **Year of entry by citizenship status of persons in the United States reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables**
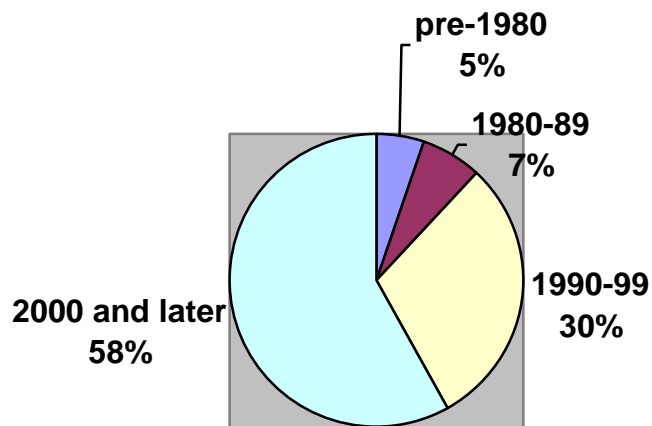
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Table 2.6 shows the number of persons with Liberian ancestry in the United States broken down by sex. Fifty percent of Liberians are female and 50 percent are male. Slightly more women (44 percent) than men (42 percent) are U.S. citizens.

Table 2.6   **Sex by age by citizenship status of persons in the United States reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables**

| | United States | |
| | Liberian | |
	Estimate	Margin of error
Total:	52,299	+/-2,673
Male:	26,122	+/-1,529
Under 18 years:	8,249	+/-861
Native	4,389	+/-656
Foreign born:	3,860	+/-587
Naturalized U.S. citizen	480	+/-244
Not a U.S. citizen	3,380	+/-504
18 years and over:	17,873	+/-1,134
Native	1,634	+/-340
Foreign born:	16,239	+/-1,075
Naturalized U.S. citizen	4,414	+/-530
Not a U.S. citizen	11,825	+/-939
Female:	26,177	+/-1,564
Under 18 years:	7,729	+/-815
Native	4,354	+/-533
Foreign born:	3,375	+/-576
Naturalized U.S. citizen	384	+/-174
Not a U.S. citizen	2,991	+/-543
18 years and over:	18,448	+/-1,048
Native	1,533	+/-339
Foreign born:	16,915	+/-1,035
Naturalized U.S. citizen	5,253	+/-587
Not a U.S. citizen	11,662	+/-939

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Officially, the United States does not allow dual citizenship. However, court rulings in cases such as *Afroyim v. Rusk* and *Vance v. Terrazas* have established that a U.S. citizen cannot

have his/her citizenship revoked against his/her will, even if s/he takes on a new citizenship.[59] Subsequent court rulings and U.S. State Department policy have repeatedly upheld an individual's right to citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment and have established *de facto* dual citizenship. This applies to both natural-born Americans and those who have naturalized. As part of all U.S. naturalization ceremonies, immigrants are required to swear an Oath of Allegiance to the United States to "absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which [s/he has] heretofore been a subject or citizen." While this promotes a belief among some immigrants that they are required to "step or spit on" their home state's flag in order to become a U.S. citizen [Jones-Correa 1998], in practice, the rights and privileges of dual citizenship are protected.

Although the United States allows *de facto* dual citizenship, a naturalized citizen's home state may not allow dual citizenship and the decision to naturalize in the United States may, therefore, result in the loss of one's home state citizenship. This is true of Liberia. Legislation to amend Liberia's Aliens and Nationality Law of 1956 to allow dual citizenship was proposed in the Liberian legislature in 2008, but, as of 2013, it has not been passed. Therefore, Liberians who naturalize in the United States automatically lose their Liberian citizenship.[60] As a result,

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[59] In *Afroyim v. Rusk,* in 1967, the court ruled that Afroyim's act of voting in a foreign election (in this case, Israel) did not give Congress the right to revoke his citizenship, because citizenship could not be revoked without an individuals' consent. *Vance v. Terrazas,* in 1980, upheld this finding and determined that the act of renouncing U.S. citizenship as part of an oath or swearing of allegiance to another country did not establish intent to give up U.S. citizenship.

[60] Section 22 of Liberia's Aliens and Nationality Law of 1956 states:
> § 22.1. Acts causing loss of citizenship.
> From and after the effective date of this title, a person who is a citizen of Liberia whether by birth or naturalization, shall lose his citizenship by --
> (a) Obtaining naturalization in a foreign state upon his own application, upon the application of a duly authorized agent, or through the naturalization of a parent having legal custody of such person; provided that citizenship shall not be lost by any person under this section as the result of the naturalization of a parent or parents while such person under the age of 21 years, unless such person shall fail to enter Liberia to establish a permanent residence prior to his twenty-third birthday; or
> (b) Taking an oath or making an affirmation or other formal declaration of allegiance to a foreign state or a political subdivision thereof; or

many Liberians in the United States who are eligible to naturalize have chosen not to do so. One individual interviewed had been in the United States since 1975, but had still not naturalized for fear of losing his Liberian citizenship [NY14, 53-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 1975, LPR through marriage, Interview with author, December 28, 2011].

However, due to the post-conflict state of affairs in Liberia, the Liberian government's need to focus on more urgent matters, and its desire to attract investment from the diaspora, the Sirleaf administration has turned a blind eye to the numbers of Liberians who naturalize in other countries. In fact, among Liberians in the United States, it is widely believed that a significant number of Liberian government officials have obtained a foreign citizenship. In 2006, during the Liberian Senate confirmation hearings for Loseni Dunzo, President Sirleaf's nominee to head the Ministry of Public Works, Dunzo admitted that he was a U.S. citizen but declared that he would renounce his U.S. citizenship [Sieh 2012]. In 2008, the nominee for Deputy Minister of Justice for Economic Affairs, Sam Ross, also vowed to renounce his U.S. citizenship before the Senate. As pointed out by Rodney Sieh, however, such an act is not sufficient to renounce American citizenship [2012]. The dual nationality debate and its impact on Liberian transnational citizen identity are examined more closely in Chapter 4 on the Liberian state's diaspora engagement policies.

(c) Exercising a free choice to enter or serve in the armed forces of a foreign state, unless, prior to such entry or service, such entry or service is specifically authorized by the President;
(d) Voting in a political election in a foreign state or voting in an election or plebiscite to determine the sovereignty of a foreign state over foreign territory; or
(e) Making a formal renunciation of Liberian nationality before a diplomatic or consular officer of Liberia in a foreign state in such form may be prescribed by the Secretary of State.

§ 22.2. Citizenship lost solely from performance of act.
The loss of citizenship under Section 22.1. of this title shall result solely from the performance by a citizen of the acts or fulfillment of the conditions specified in such section, and without the institution by the Government of any proceedings to nullify or cancel such citizenship.

Liberians obtaining lawful permanent resident status

Because so many Liberians, fearful of losing their Liberian citizenship, choose not to naturalize in the United States, it is instructive when assessing legal status among Liberians to examine the number of Liberians who obtain lawful permanent resident (LPR) status. Although LPR does not afford individuals the full rights and benefits of citizenship—most notably, lawful permanent residents cannot vote in the United States—it is a measure of integration and participation in the political system.

Chart 2.6 below shows the number of Liberian refugees and asylees as a percentage of the total number of Liberians granted permanent resident status in the United States each year, from 1980 to 2012.

Chart 2.6 **Liberian refugees and asylees granted lawful permanent resident status and total Liberians granted lawful permanent resident status in the United States, fiscal year 1980-2012**
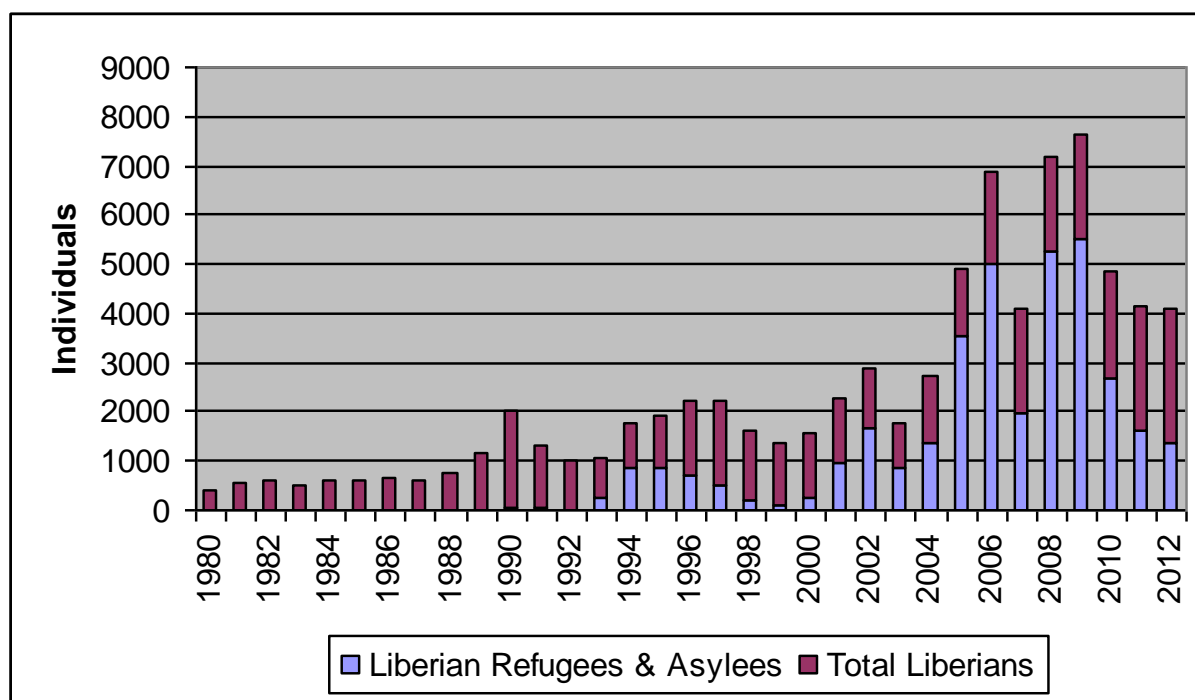
Source: Author's tabulation of data from annual statistical yearbooks, 1980-2001. United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C.
Author's tabulation of data from annual yearbooks of immigration statistics, 2002-2012. United States Department of Homeland Security, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics,* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics.

Refugees and asylees make up a significant percentage of the total number of Liberians granted LPR each year (Chart 2.6). Refugees and asylees may also petition for family members to join them in the United States. Table 2.7 shows the breakdown of Liberians granted LPR status between 1980 and 2012.

Table 2.7   Liberians (by region and country of birth) granted lawful permanent resident status by class of admission, fiscal year 1980-2012*

Year	Liberian refugees and asylees	Liberians total
1980	1	426
1981	16	556
1982	25	593
1983	17	518
1984	1	585
1985	2	618
1986	3	663
1987	7	622
1988	5	769
1989	7	1175
1990	26	2004
1991	42	1292
1992	25	999
1993	239	1050
1994	851	1762

Year	Liberian refugees and asylees	Family-sponsored preferences	Employment-based preferences	Immediate relatives of U.S. citizens	Diversity	Other	Liberians total
1995	855	173	101	610	161	29	1929
1996	700	242	113	771	335	45	2206
1997	505	235	94	819	522	41	2216
1998	225	137	57	643	547	8	1617
1999	124	167	52	493	470	52	1358
2000	273	217	63	552	424	46	1575
2001	976	206	56	608	417	22	2285
2002	1680	156	79	568	382	14	2879
2003	883	107	38	341	391	8	1768
2004	1368	183	72	569	548	5	2745
2005	3548	178	55	712	373	14	4880
2006	4989	224	73	1298	294	9	6887
2007	1949	288	47	1259	550	9	4102
2008	5240	221	40	1211	468	13	7193
2009	5524	210	57	1058	751	41	7641
2010	2658	190	37	1174	762	16	4837
2011	1615	397	43	1186	900	10	4151
2012	1387	364	42	1304	1003	9	4109

*The Immigration Act of 1990 allowed for 40,000 immigrants to enter as diversity immigrants each year during the transition period, beginning in 1992. The transitional diversity program was replaced with a permanent program beginning in 1995.

Source: Author's tabulation of data from annual statistical yearbooks, 1980-2001. United States Immigration and Naturalization Service, *Statistical Yearbook of the Immigration and Naturalization Service*, U.S. Government Printing Office: Washington, D.C.
Author's tabulation of data from annual yearbooks of immigration statistics, 2002-2012. United States Department of Homeland Security, *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics,* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Office of Immigration Statistics.

In addition to refugees and asylees (Chart 2.6 above), individuals with family ties to U.S. citizens or to refugees and asylees already in the United States make up the majority of Liberians granted LPR each year. In recent years, a growing percentage of Liberians have also obtained LPR through the diversity lottery program. However, this category still accounts for less than a quarter of the total Liberians granted LPR.

Citizenship determinants: civic participation

While naturalization and LPR rates give some indication of Liberians' integration in the United States, full citizenship is determined not just by full legal membership but also by participation. When comparing individuals' experiences, there is no doubt that those with TPS/DED find it more difficult to participate in their communities—both locally in the United States and transnationally with respect to the diaspora—than those with refugee/asylee status.

TPS/DED has limited Liberians' civic participation in a number of important ways. Overall, those with TPS/DED are less likely than Liberians with refugee/asylee status or LPR/U.S. citizenship to engage in political activities both locally in the United States and in Liberia. Due to travel restrictions, they are unable to travel to Liberia. They are afraid also of coming to the attention of immigration authorities in the United States, and therefore, do not

participate in large numbers in immigration rallies and events. As one individual on DED who is

very active put it,

> Participation is [restricted to] certain areas. For example, when it comes to the immigration campaign, even though we are the ones that are affected, you do not see most of the Liberians on DED. Most of the Liberians on DED do not participate in immigration rights [campaigns], because they have the fear that if they are known they can be caught anytime. Somebody can show them out to the security or the immigration. And so their participation in the immigration campaign itself is below one's expectation. It's true of all DED holders that they do not—not all, most of them, I can tell you 80 percent of Liberians on DED in the United States and not only Minnesota—they don't get involved directly in immigration rallies, in meetings, or advocate for themselves. That is very true throughout the whole country. That is very true, which is very, very sad.

> And sometimes I get frustrated and I want to leave it… [] Because it is I who will have to be carrying the fliers around [saying] that a DED meeting is coming up and that it will be on the Internet. People that are on DED, they don't want to come out to show themselves. In fact, when we go on television, a few others say, "Oh you're putting yourself in trouble. The immigration will come." So that fear is there. [People think that] the more you keep yourself in your corner, the less you get yourself in trouble with the immigration. And so we have to go around and say, "Okay, so here I am. I'm not another exception by the immigration." But, there are very few of us. I think we are about 10 people out of the 1,100 [on DED in Minnesota]… [] We say, "We are not supernatural, we are not exempted from any arrest by immigration. As long as you don't commit crimes, you can live in this country as long as you want to on DED. We've been on DED/TPS since 1991. How many people have you seen that say, 'Oh, they just caught a person walking in the street because they know that…'? It doesn't work that way." And that is the reason some just decided, "Look, let me just stay out of this stuff until I get my green card." Then, when they get a green card, again they want to get involved in politics and fights [MN28, 54-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1998, DED (formerly TPS), Interview with author, October 15, 2010].

Those on TPS/DED remain more isolated, from both the Liberian and the greater American

communities.

Exacerbating old divisions between Liberians

By awarding some Liberians refugee/asylee status and leaving others to languish with TPS/DED, U.S. policy also exacerbates class and ethnic divisions between Liberians that existed prior to migration. Although neither those with TPS/DED nor those with refugee/asylee status are homogenous groups, larger numbers of those who were resettled as refugees are indigenous Liberians. Americo-Liberians and others with the resources to do so emigrated from Liberia earlier on a more individual basis. While some were then able to obtain asylum, others overstayed visas and ended up with TPS/DED. Therefore, the distinction between those with TPS/DED and those with refugee/asylee status in the United States in some ways mirrors class and ethnic divisions among Liberians in Liberia.

In addition, indigenous Liberians with TPS/DED, when they do participate in civic activities, tend to do so through Liberian tribal organizations.[61]

> And so what these people do is that they resort to the tribal organizations to do whatever they have to do…[] Most of them remain isolated. No, no I retract that statement. Most of them do not go out in the general Liberian community activities; they don't get involved. But they get involved in the tribal activities. And the second thing is that some of them don't like the politics, the community politics, the fight for power, and who has power, who doesn't have power; most of them don't like that [MN28, 54-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1998, DED (formerly TPS), Interview with author, October 15, 2010].

Unlike other community organizations, however, these tribal organizations serve to further divide Liberians in the United States by encouraging Liberians to organize themselves according to ethnic identity. The fact that U.S. policy perpetuates ethnic identity is significant. Ethnicity was used and differences exploited by leaders during the Liberian conflicts to commit gross atrocities and human rights violations. Ethnic divisions among Liberians in the United

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[61] Liberians refer to these organizations as "tribal," distinguishing them from other types of Liberian community organizations. In Liberia, there are 16 indigenous ethnic groups, in addition to the Americo-Liberians—the descendants of the American settlers. In each region of the United States with a large Liberian population, there are Liberian community organizations (whose membership is open to all Liberians) as well as ethnic or tribal organizations whose members are generally all of the same ethnicity or who hail from the same county in Liberia.

States persist and suspicion about what role if any individuals played in the violence exists, but in many ways, migration to the United States has been a unifying experience. Many Liberians actively dissociate with tribal organizations in the United States and choose not to identify themselves as members of any particular ethnic group. A number of Liberians subscribe to a "post-ethnic" identity, preferring to identify themselves as Liberians only. As one Liberian in the United States put it,

> I have tried as much as [possible to] shy away from the tribal affiliation and all of that, because I think it's divisive…[] The whole thing about tribal affinity or tribal affiliation, I don't subscribe to that. I see every Liberian first and foremost as a Liberian before anything else. And I think that's one of the problems that has led to this civil war back home…[] I don't think it's helpful if Liberians can't look at themselves first and foremost as Liberians before their own tribal group. I [don't] think it will serve the country well [NY10, 46-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 1984, LPR through marriage (formerly undocumented), Interview with author, July 21, 2006].

Another man, an Americo-Liberian, describes how migrating to the United States has brought him in contact with indigenous Liberians and taught him democratic values:

> One good thing that being in America is doing for us [Liberians] is that it is shaping our socio-political mentality. We begin to understand how democracy works, and a lot of people say we can disagree and still we can collaborate in a lot of positive ways. So, people are developing these American democratic values. So, even though we disagree—like [mentions the name of the head of a Liberian organization] is an indigenous—but here, we collaborate, we're very good friends; we don't think about where I come from and where he comes from. We don't think about; we're just Liberians, and we collaborate, we operate, and we're friends [MN4, 51-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2000, asylee, Interview with author, October 4, 2010]..

> Unfortunately, though Liberians in the United States strive to move beyond ethnic

identities, they remain defined by them in many ways, with members of different ethnic groups suspicious of each other's roles in the Liberian conflicts. Nearly every Liberian community organization in the United States is plagued by internal divisions and rivalries, with members accusing leaders of tribalism (favoring members of their ethnic groups), nepotism, and self-serving behavior. An article in *The Liberian Journal,* an online newspaper, titled "US-Based

Liberian Organizations: Why the Internal Rivalries?" analyzed the problem, arguing the causes

were "electoral fraud, corruption, arrogance, and tribalism" [Sandy n.d.].

> Tribalism is another contributing element to the current war of words. In most Liberian groups or institutions, there are individuals and community leaders, who thrive on tribalism. These individuals often portray themselves as more Liberian than their fellow citizens. They preach division by questioning the citizenship of other tribal groups such as the Mandingoes. Such people inadvertently believe citizens from other tribal groups including the Mandingoes should not be given leadership positions because they are subservient to the others [Sandy n.d.].

Speaking about the repercussions of the infighting, the author noted the negative effect that it has

had on the Liberian community's image among Minnesotans. He recounts a conversation

between Wynfred Russell, a Liberian who ran for Brooklyn Park mayor in 2011, and

Congressional Representative Erik Paulsen:

> The prevailing situation accounts for the disintegration of most well-intentioned organizations and the split in Liberian communities in the Americas. Families and friends, who were once in-separable, have fallen apart. They have become polarized along factional lines; many are now lifetime foes.

> Furthermore, the situation is eroding the credibility and image of US-based Liberian organizations in championing the cause of the community on immigration, social, and educational matters. A year ago, Mr. Wynfred Russell, a former aspirant in the 2011 Brooklyn Park, Minnesota, mayoral election, quoting US Representative Erik Paulsen in a news article on the split in the Minnesota Liberian community declared "You need to speak with one voice to make progress. Join the school board, join the city council; you should be the champion of your causes, but you have to first be unified." [Sandy n.d.]

> Interestingly, a Liberian woman living in Minnesota who recently returned from a trip to

Liberia observes that Liberians in Liberia seem to be moving beyond tribal affiliations more

effectively than Liberians living in Minnesota:

> You know, one thing that's interesting is… When the immigrants come here, they're sort of stuck in what was happening when they left [Liberia], and then the people there… The identity of a Liberian here and the identity of a Liberian in Liberia are so different, because they [the people in Liberia] had to move on, so to speak. Here, people are so stuck on, "Oh, my child wants to marry so and so and you don't like it." They won't even try [to intermarry with other ethnic groups]. Over there [in Liberia], everybody is living in Monrovia, or most people I should say, and it's congested, and you're getting along with people that you may not have gotten along with at a lot of places and whatever; the divisions are different. I don't know where this tribal thing came from, to

tell you the truth, but it's certainly a big deal to the Liberians in Minnesota. People mention it, but I don't get it [MN1, 34-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1985, LPR through marriage, Interview with author, October 14, 2010].

In 2008, the Union of Liberian Associations in the Americas (ULAA)—the umbrella organization of Liberian organizations in the United States—split into two factions, following contested presidential elections results. For three years, the two factions battled one another. ULAA-K denoted the Philadelphia-based group backing Anthony V. Kesselly as president of ULAA; ULAA-S referred to the followers of Chicago-resident Mariah Seton. During the dispute, supporters of Seton leveled accusations at Kesselly, alleging he was a formal rebel leader during the Liberian wars, on On Liberian Medium—an online forum with 2405 members, as of January 10, 2014.[62] Articles in *People to People: Liberia Online News,* a Liberian online newspaper, also compared Kesselly to Charles Taylor ["Like Warlord Charles Taylor Like Rebel Anthony Kesselly" n.d.; Toomey 2011]. The dispute lessened in intensity with the 2011 election of Chicago-based Gaye Sleh, Jr. to the ULAA-K presidency and Anthony Kesselly's return to Liberia to act as public policy advisor to Liberia's Vice President Joseph Boakai. Tensions remain, however, and in 2013, ULAA-S elected Nellie Sirleaf-Savice to be its president.

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[62] OnLiberianMedium@yahoogroups.com is the largest (in terms of members) of several online forums where Liberians daily post messages, ranging from birth and death announcements to heated political discussions that typically employ character assassination attacks rather than fact-based arguments. The group describes itself as follows:

> The On Liberian Medium will feature stories from Liberia and other parts of the globe. Members are allowed to post announcements on reunions, graduations, health, food, music, job fairs, sports, travel, documentaries, research, elections in Liberia, and all items of interest to our partners [On Liberian Medium].

Messages posted to the site averaged 569 posts per month in 2013. 2008 was the year with the highest average monthly postings (1160 messages per month) since the site was created in October 2005 [Author's tabulation of messages from On Liberian Medium].

> Other sites include: alja1@yahoogroups.com, which has 475 members as of January 10, 2014 and describes itself as, "a forum for free but healthy exchange of views; encourages participatory engagement in discussing relevant issues pertinent to development initiatives in our communities and in Liberia" [ALJA1]; HorizonNewsMedia@yahoogroups.com, which has 1383 members as of January 10, 2014 and describes itself as "an online news organ responsible to disseminate news affecting the people of the world" [News Media Organization]; and TheLiberianCommunityUSA@yahoogroups.com, which has 363 members as of January 16, 2014 and describes itself as a "community forum and activities. Will be a point for free flow of information for the Liberian Community in the USA. It will promote peace, unity and understanding" [The Liberian Community USA].

Likewise, both the Staten Island Liberian Community Association (SILCA) and the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota (OLM), the two major Liberian community organizations in New York City and the Twin Cities, respectively, have suffered from infighting between leaders in recent years, with individuals accusing one another of tribal loyalties, corruption, and using organizational funds to line their pockets.[63] An article in an online Liberian newspaper lamenting the divisions between OLM leaders asked the question, "Is OLM a Tribal Organization?" [George, n.d.].

U.S. immigration policy creates new divisions between Liberians

In addition to exacerbating existing ethnic divisions, differences in legal status—between those with TPS/DED and those with refugee or asylee status—have created new divisions between Liberians in the United States. Often these are expressed as divisions between those who immigrated earlier (typically those who had the resources to leave Liberia in the 1980s, whether in search of political asylum or economic opportunity, or during the early years of conflict in the early 1990s) and those who arrived in the United States later, often after having spent years in refugee camps in countries neighboring Liberia. The earlier-arriving Liberians, facing new challenges to their community leadership positions, resent the allegations of corruption typically leveled at them and criticize the intentions and commitment to the community of newly-arrived Liberians. Those who arrived prior to the 1990s also view those arriving later as upstarts, seeking positions of leadership within the community without having paid their dues, and referring to them as Johnny Just Come(s) (JJCs) [Semple 2008].

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[63] These Liberian community organization problems are discussed further in Chapter 3. Divisions, along ethnic as well as ideological lines, caused OLM to fracture in 2008, resulting in the formation of a rival organization based in St. Paul, the Liberian Community of Minnesota (LCM). See, for example, Liberian Community of Minnesota ["Press Statement"].

Whereas Liberians who immigrated prior to 1990 were more likely to be those with the financial and social capital to do so, the large waves of refugees who entered after 1990 benefitted from programs and services that were denied to Liberians arriving earlier. As one person who entered the United States on a tourist visa in the 1980s and became undocumented after overstaying the visa but eventually obtained a green card through marriage to a U.S. citizen put it:

> Yeah it's like – you came here and overstayed your time, you're illegal here and you just have to do whatever you have to do to regularize your status. And there are other people who had the upper hand because of the war situation. They were brought here, given different amenities and all of that. So obviously if I'm here for this long and somebody just came here and they have all of these amenities and all of the services provided to them, I will be envious as well, but does that translate into tension? I'm not sure [NY10, 46-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 1984, LPR through marriage (formerly undocumented), Interview with author, July 21, 2006].

While the person above—who immigrated earlier and did not benefit from targeted refugee assistance—downplays the divisions created by U.S. immigration policy, a Liberian who spent time as a refugee in Ghana before obtaining asylum in the United States discusses the hostility he felt upon arrival in the United States from Liberians who had been there longer:

> The post–[1980] coup migration were more or less the privileged few in terms of American-Liberians who were in power. They had access to state resources, they sent their children overseas to school, to America, paid for them… They were coming, they were flying here. You didn't need a visa when you were coming to America before…[] Then 1989/1990 to the present, the people who came were mostly people running from the war, refugees. And people who came, they got asylum, they have authorization to work here, everything was like bread and butter. So there's a huge tension between people who came in the 80s and people who came during the war…[] People who came in the 80s, they didn't have work authorization. Some had to marry American spouses to have papers, some had to pay people to get married, arrange marriages to get papers. Some had to work off the books for many, many years, and they were able to get work documents after the TPS was proclaimed…[] So they look at people who just came in then who have all of the opportunities… There's a little tension between them and the people who came [] in the 1990s/2000s. They're a different set of people. So one of the problems that I had when I started my work here… The challenges that we faced came from people who were here before. Some people who stayed here, who came here in the 80s, they stayed here over 20 years, 30 years, and unfortunately some of them did not really improve themselves academically. Some who were here, some were very envious,

because [they thought] "Who is this guy just coming into our community?" So it was a huge challenge, but we were able to establish our own credibility and people began to trust us [NY12, 35-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 2002, asylee, Interview with author, July 20, 2006].

Of course, these divisions are not entirely clear cut. As mentioned above, some Liberians who arrived in the United States fleeing the civil wars, and who would have otherwise qualified for refugee or asylee status, ended up on TPS instead due to the United States' decision to relax entry requirements for Liberians during the period of conflict in Liberia. Also, as Liberians languished for years in refugee camps in West Africa waiting to be resettled, many looked for and some found alternate routes to the United States. In addition to those Liberians who were resettled as refugees to the United States, 10 of the 40 (25 percent) of the Liberians interviewed for this study reported having spent time as refugees in one or more countries bordering Liberia prior to their arrival in the United States. They obtained visas to the United States through a variety of methods, including: family reunification; marriage to Americans; the diversity lottery; and invitation from American religious and educational institutions to participate in conferences and programs in the United States.

The divisions are not entirely new either. In many ways, they mirror the class system that existed, and persists, in Liberia between elites (Americo-Liberians and the indigenous who were adopted into that class) and the indigenous. The Liberian quoted below (who migrated as part of the later wave of refugees and asylees in the 1990s) attributes the divisions between Liberians who migrated pre-1990 and those who migrated later as refugees to class divisions in Liberia. Asked about the endemic use of character assassination attacks (rather than discussions of substantive issues) by rivals within Liberian community organizations in the United States and on Liberian media sites, he blamed it on class divisions among Liberians. He argued that the Liberian elites who founded the organizations feel threatened by the arrival of newly arrived

refugees (who were not in power in Liberia but who have elevated themselves through education in the United States and are seeking leadership positions in the community) and therefore resort to character assassination attacks:

> There are people who are here who never in their lives had the opportunity to come into the United States and for the opportunity to come, they are serious. You know what? We're going to make use of this opportunity we have. It goes to the issue of class—the elite. They [focus on] who was doing this and who was doing that… [] Now, you take somebody who's never been in an organization; you make them a representative. How do they react? That's the problem we have now here. People came from the refugee camps. They came, they're privileged to have gone to the University of Minnesota, University of St. Thomas, Hamline, everything. And then they see the [elite] class of people who they were dealing with yesterday in Liberia. These are the same people who in Monrovia were into student leadership, but what are they doing here now? So, it's my time to be a leader too, and I have it. So [these character attacks are] not more…[] They're not about the issue [MN3, 45-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1998, asylee, Interview with author, July 26, 2010].

Interestingly, both the previous quotes link status within the Liberian community to education, specifically higher education. Chapter 3 examines a number of factors—such as neighborhood, gender, and race—at the local level that affect Liberians' participation in the United States and in Liberia. The remainder of this chapter discusses the important role that education plays in Liberians' civic engagement.

Education as a key to participation and citizenship

One of the key mechanisms linking Liberians to political membership in both the United States and the diaspora is education. The importance of higher education to Liberians cannot be over-emphasized. Liberians, like most immigrants, place enormous importance on education. In fact, education is a key mechanism through which Liberians practice citizenship. In addition to being a route to improved socioeconomic standing, higher education is considered a status symbol among Liberians.

One negative of TPS/DED mentioned repeatedly by Liberians is the impact it has had on individuals' access to higher education. Those on TPS/DED are typically not eligible for in-state tuition or able to obtain loans or other forms of financial aid to attend college. The quote at the beginning of this chapter demonstrates the importance that Liberians place on education. When the individual was asked how TPS affects her life, she responded by first emphasizing the negative impact TPS has with respect to educational opportunities.

Education has been Liberians' path to accessing many other opportunities and services. Liberians in the United States see education as a way of obtaining prestige, moving beyond ethnic identities for political participation, and for making up for time lost to the war. The difference in educational opportunities available to those with different statuses is therefore extremely significant.

Education and community leadership in the United States historically seen as entrée to participation and positions of power in Liberia

Historically, it was thought that involvement in diaspora activities discouraged immigrants from integrating in the host society. Recently, however, scholars have shown how ethnic organizations act as training sites for political participation in the United States [Bloemraad 2006, 94]. For Liberians, the United States has always been a democratic training ground for those interested in Liberian politics. Many of the Liberian community organizations in the United States, including the Union of Liberian Associations in America (ULAA)—the umbrella organization for Liberian community organizations in the United States—were originally student organizations from which young Liberians launched political careers in Liberia. The following

quote details ULAA's history as a student organization and the important role that it has played

in Liberian politics:

> The Union of Liberian Association started many years back. I believe, officially the records state that it started in 1974, but there were activities much longer than that, because earlier on when Liberians came to the United States, they came primarily for school, and then after school they would go home, get a nice government job, etc. Now, over the years as many of these students came [to the United States] they formed what you call student organizations and the purpose of the student organization initially was not necessarily political but to sort of provide support to one another, serve as networking environments and so forth. And that worked well for awhile, but then as things sort of changed and governments changed back home, many of those who were now joining the groups over here, some of them were indigenous Liberians who were not [previously] involved in the government or in the politics at home. And so with the exposure here, they began to see things a little differently in terms of how it related to their own lifestyle and their relatives back home. And so you got some students who now began to be very conscious of the political climate at home…[] And so with that, they soon began to change the focus of the group from that of a passive student support-based organization to looking at how the government back home is treating our people, [and they thought] with their exposure to democracy over here, "How come things are not the way they should be back home?" And so some of these students now decided, well, we have to be involved, we have to begin to speak to some of what is happening at home. Well, they couldn't do that in the student organization that they had, so a group of them decided they were going to get involved politically; they were going to form some sort of a political action group, and the Union of Liberian Associations really emerged out of that whole process.

> Over the years, the Union has been very actively involved in politics in Liberia. There have been a number of times where the Union has been very critical of what the government in Liberia has been doing. And it's because, as I said, many of those who came later on really realized that their own generation of people, their families and others did not benefit from the system as much as they should have. And so that must have really turned some of them to anger and so forth and that must have also led to some of the level of political activities in which they were involved. But mostly, the involvement with respect to Liberia was critiquing some of the things that the government was doing recently—the people, the one party system, one party formed a government in Liberia and so forth—and even to the point where they were not just passively involved in terms of just writing statements or making phone calls, but they were also actively involved in terms of having political rallies and demonstrations and so forth and having demonstrations against government officials who came over here…[] And many of the leaders in Liberia and in recent times really emerged out of the Union of Liberian Associations… []

> Now, the Union is still actively involved in what is happening at home, but the approach now is a little different as opposed to just necessarily being critical of the government. The other focus is how we can be involved in terms of relieving some of the hardship that our people are undergoing. How can we be in partnership with the government in a

positive side, instead of… Obviously if the government is still doing anything that is what we call undemocratic or not necessarily in the interest of the people we speak against those and address them. But I think, also, you find that people are more interested in seeing what positive contributions can be made, not just to talk and to demonstrate but to be able to positively contribute in leading the Liberian people. So that's what happened…[]

The Union of Liberian Associations by its own charter really should not be involved in the level of politics that it finds itself involved in at times. And so there was a time that you found out that there was conflict in terms of the Union's own role. So, we felt that maybe forming an organization that was strictly focused on political activism, sort of a political action group maybe was the way to go. And so the Movement for Democratic Change was basically that, just using that as a political action group to really bring about awareness and to bring international awareness to what was happening at the moment, maybe to bring some old pressure to really speeding up democratic change in Liberia [NY15, 45-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 1982, LPR, Interview with author, July 12, 2006].

While those within ULAA emphasize its role as a catalyst for democratic change in Liberia, most Liberians in the United States do not view the organization in such a positive light. Instead, they decry its role as an instrument that elite Liberians historically used for personal gain at the expense of the diaspora community the organization was created to serve.

For generations prior to the Liberian civil wars, the United States was the staging ground for elite Liberians' political ambitions. Liberians who could afford to do so traveled to the United States to attend university and obtain degrees that would then provide entrée to positions of power, particularly in government, in Liberia.[64] Higher education and community activism in the United States were once the springboards—only accessible to Liberia's elite—to government positions and power in Liberia. In fact, the umbrella organization ULAA, which began as a

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[64] Perhaps the earliest reference to Liberians traveling to the United States for education and to advance a future career in Liberia is the case of Reverend Hening, mentioned in the Annual Report of the American Colonization Society in 1837. Rev. Hening is described as a Methodist missionary on his way back to Liberia who, after having been manumitted previously by his slave master in Virginia for the purpose of going to Liberia, then returned to the United States for further education.

> He had been to the Colony, and after making his observations and laboring for a time as a preacher of the Gospel both among the Colonists and the Natives, had returned to the United States to improve his education and qualify himself for more extensive usefulness. Having for two years past pursued his studies at the Wesleyan Academy in Wilbraham, Mass., and in other parts of New England, he was about to return and spend his life in the Colony, proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ on the shores of Africa. [American Colonization Society 1837, 8.]

student organization, was historically used as a springboard for those in the diaspora seeking

positions in Liberian government. A former head of the organization describes ULAA's historic

role as a launch pad for elites' political ambitions in Liberia and recent efforts to rehabilitate the

organization's image and to de-politicize the organization:

> I took a decision to seek the leadership in the Union because over time there has been a
> lot of criticism that many of those who have emerged as leaders in this country [the
> United States], in Liberian organizations, did so simply because their focus was to seek,
> what they call, the limelight for an opportunity to get a job back home in government.
> But I was convinced and I believe there are many Liberians who really want to see a
> change and to seek the interest of the people… who are not necessarily interested per se
> in a government job… and that there are many other Liberians here who really have, I
> would say, the commitment but also have the leadership ability that can produce
> results…[] Obviously, like any Liberian, I would love to have an opportunity to
> contribute to the redevelopment of Liberia, and there are many others who would like to
> do that. But we feel that there are many ways that we can contribute and not necessarily
> by holding a government position.

> So we took on the leadership of the Union to try to demonstrate that the organization
> really got a bad rap. Because, as I said Mr. [Charles] Taylor and others who were
> associated with the organization, and some leadership in Liberia, demonstrated that
> Liberians in the diaspora, given the opportunity, will come in, exploit you and so on and
> so forth and really not make much of a good contribution to the country. And we don't
> think that it's true. You do have a lot of talent, a lot of good leadership in the diaspora,
> and given the opportunity I think those leaders can emerge and I think they can certainly
> provide leadership that will be positive and that will be forward looking for Liberia
> [NY15, 45-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 1982, LPR,
> Interview with author, July 12, 2006].

In the past, travel to the United States, higher education, and membership in ULAA were

attainable only by the elite. Consequently, education was linked in many people's minds not

only to the American dream but also to the elite class. The Liberian conflicts, however, brought

to the United States thousands of refugees, mostly indigenous Liberians and many of whom have

pursued higher education as a means to improve themselves and to obtain the skills necessary to

contribute to Liberia's post-war recovery.

Migration's and education's equalizing effect: For youth robbed of their "time," education is a path to diaspora civic engagement

Migration is often an equalizing force. For Liberians, education is one of the key mechanisms through which migration has had an equalizing effect. For many young Liberians who migrated to the United States as a result of the Liberian wars, their experience of conflict has been a motivating factor for their civic engagement with the diaspora. Many describe feeling that they were robbed, by corrupt self-serving elites who perpetrated the violence of their youth, of their opportunity for education and their "time." Consequently, they have pursued education as a path to positions of power in government, business, and the non-profit sector. They have also chosen to identify themselves with political ideals—such as transparency and accountability—rather than tribal affiliations. One young Liberian who arrived in the United States in the 1990s explains,

> For me personally, I've always been involved and interested in the politics of my country, especially the parties of Liberia, because like I said, a lot of us who grew up together, like [Nobel Peace laureate] Leymah [Gbowee] and I grew up together, so if you understand where Leymah is coming from in her fight, that's exactly where a lot of us are at. Because it was our time, it was our youth, our education, our everything. We were at the cusp of our youth and getting into adulthood and all that, and that's when this war erupted. We got a lot taken away from us, our normal life, and all those kind of things that they—the perpetuators of the war—enjoyed. And so we just felt that we had been disadvantaged and we wanted to take a stand. So a lot of people who came are just from that place, you know, who came together, "Hey we are starting a movement," and you hear about it and you're on board because, hey, you're invested, you're invested from the heart. It's not for any one individual or whatever, it's for you, it's for your country because you know- what can you do to make it better, because we've come out and we've seen how other people, how other democracies work. And we have a so-called democracy in Liberia but we want to be sure that we actually do have a real democracy in Liberia [MN22, 33-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1997 through family reunification (father had asylum), Interview with author, October 8, 2010].

Liberians arriving in the United States post-1990 as part of the refugee wave attribute political and personal rivalries within Liberian community organizations in the United States to

class divisions. And, they are more likely to emphasize the equalizing effect of migration, claiming that they—having an opportunity, through education, to participate in politics that they would not have had in Liberia—are more focused on the issues. They claim that the former elites, however, expect to continue "politics as usual" in the United States, and therefore, as mentioned previously, resort to character assassination attacks against their new rivals.

A young Liberian describes divisions between those in positions of power within Liberian community organizations in the United States and the new generation of Liberians, who—feeling that they missed out on education and their youth in Liberia due to the wars—are obtaining higher education degrees in the United States and want to combat corruption. The challenges—emphasizing transparency and accountability, and combating corruption—such youth pose to those in power in community organizations in the United States reflect challenges being posed to those in power in Liberia. Asked about divisions among Liberians in the United States, the individual stated,

> Maybe [there aren't divisions] on the line of democrats and republicans, but [rather] on the line of people of a certain generation and having a new generation of leaders coming up. What happened with the Liberian Community Association elections on Staten Island was that the new group that came up to challenge the incumbent stressed the need for transparency and accountability, and they actually accused the others of not being transparent in what they do, embezzlement and all of that. And that kind of mirrors the Liberian situation, where we have had independence for over 150 years with natural resources that have been embezzled by a group of people or a clan, whereas the majority of the people are left to fend for themselves…[] I believe that we should have a new generation of people who actually believe in transparency and accountability who can deliver the goods to the people, not people who have their own personal agenda. I think the Liberian community here in the States actually doesn't reflect the community divisions that we have back in Liberia, because in Liberia we have sixteen different tribes and it's just hard [to have] that here, because in Staten Island, for example, if you have four thousand Liberians, you can never have one tribe as the majority within the four thousand people. So, I think what people try to actually associate themselves with is the philosophy of a group or a party, and that's the most important thing… [] It's not the tribe or it's not the ethnic groups that people are trying to identify themselves with. They want to identify themselves with a purpose, what you stand for, and what do you do for the community, and that's the most important thing…[] What I have observed as a person is

that once people stay long in a situation, they tend to want to stay on if they have the opportunity. That's the kind of mentality that Liberia has suffered for in the past. Someone who has been a leader or who has been a minister always wants to remain a minister. Even if they have someone who is better educated, who has just maybe acquired his master's degree, or maybe a PhD, they always look on the new people as intruders…[] But for me, in my own personal view, I don't think that should be something that—especially people who have been in power for a long time—should be afraid of, because it is in diversity that we are able to build for the better. So, if you believe that people who have just come up and especially the young generation of people who maybe have better education, or who recently graduated... I think they should be given an opportunity… [] I left Liberia when I was 22 years old. I had just turned 18 years old when the war started, so it was my time to enjoy my life; I was just out of high school, and my parents sent me to school very young and I missed out on that, I missed out on it [NY1, 35-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 2003, asylee (formerly a refugee in Guinea for 10 years), Interview with author, August 2, 2006].

In addition to emphasizing the feeling that those who fled Liberia in their youth missed out on "their time," the statement above expresses the widely held view among young Liberians that higher education is a path to participating more fully as citizens in both the United States and Liberia. Higher education in the United States is a way of making up for lost time and lost opportunities in Liberia and the tool needed to be effective and be respected within the Liberian community. A community leader, however, issues a cautionary note:

You know people come here and go to school and they acquire wealth, knowledge and for some people they are construed as an education. But a lot of these so-called educated people have not behaved the way they should. Because they've fallen back to that same trap or inclination… [] And I'm very careful to distinguish between education and degree. Degree is the formal acquisition of knowledge. But education is the ability to – the wisdom to try and solve everything properly. So a lot of people have degrees but they're not educated, because if someone is educated they will look far beyond their own tribal interest. They will see your national interest; they will see your country interest; they will see a group interest. Unfortunately, a lot of Liberian groups have not graduated beyond that level. So even though the tribal stuff was playing on the ground, most of them who have come here, who have been to school, who have been exposed to a lot of the system still cling to those tribal affinities, and it's not very helpful [NY10, 46-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 1984, LPR through marriage (formerly undocumented), Interview with author, July 21, 2006].

The two statements above—the first by a former refugee who entered the United States in 2003, and the second by a Liberian (a former member of the elite in Liberia) who entered the

United States on a tourist visa in 1984—highlight the class divisions between Liberians that create problems for Liberian community organizations. Whereas the first man argues that Liberians (who were not part of the elite class in Liberia) who obtain higher education in the United States are most qualified and should be given the opportunity to lead the community, the second man continues to view former non-elite Liberians as driven by tribal affiliations. An article in *The Liberian Journal* analyzing the causes of internal rivalries within Liberian community organizations attributes both viewpoints to "arrogance" among community leaders who consider themselves (either due to formal education or former elite status) exclusively qualified for leadership and are unwilling to share power with others:

> They show little or no respect for others they consider less sophisticated or socially accomplished. They are known for treating their fellow countrymen with condescension and narcissistic tendencies; unless an idea emanates from them it is not "good." Furthermore, when they are not in control of any group(s) or organization(s), such groups or organizations by their egoistic definitions are not "good." They often portray themselves as the "god fathers" of the community or the "Jacks of all trades, but masters of none." They dabble into every community issue without defined missions [Sandy n.d.].

These quotes also highlight the fact that higher education is too often used by Liberians as a status symbol. Even in Liberia, higher education—especially that obtained in the United States—is such a mark of distinction that a number of prominent Liberians have lied about their education, including President Sirleaf's nominees for ministers of internal affairs, gender and development, and national security, as well as the chair of the National Investment Commission [Sieh 2012]. A member of ULAA explains how Liberia has long experienced a problem with those in government lying about their education in the United States and how it has become more difficult to get away with such deceit since the advent of the Internet. Still, it remains a significant enough problem that ULAA leaders would like to create a database of Liberian professionals in the United States in order to be able to track and verify individuals' information.

[The database] is something that we're still working on and we hope that we'll be successful. I think that even if we don't get the ordinary Liberians, [it would be helpful] if we can get [information about] the professional Liberians. Because one of the challenges that we've had is that many times in the past folks will go back to Liberia and seek employment and say, "I have a masters in this or I have this degree in this, and I went to this school." And, in reality, they never went to those institutions. But, in the old days before the advent of the Internet and all of these online searches and all of that, people got away with it. But even nowadays, unless efforts are made from that end to really research and pursue these things, you find some people still getting through. So, what we hope to do and to achieve through this is that the government or any agency or any organization over there [in Liberia] can reference that database, because when the database is created, we'll also try to do some verification of some of the information that is in there, so that when people reference that, it's going to be accurate [NY15, 45-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 1982, LPR, Interview with author, July 12, 2006].

Citizenship as a relationship of care and education as a path to diasporic citizenship

Despite the misuse of education credentials, higher education remains one of the most identifiable ways in which Liberians seek to participate more fully as citizens in both the United States and in Liberia. Many Liberians explain their focus on obtaining higher education as a means of contributing to peacebuilding efforts back in Liberia and "making themselves useful." They view their time in the United States as an opportunity to improve themselves in order to better contribute to Liberia's recovery and development. This is due both to Liberia's historic relationship with the United States—the fact that Liberian elites traveled to the United States for education and then returned to Liberia—and the circumstances of recent migration to the United States—the fact that those fleeing conflict in Liberia hoped that the conflict would be short-lived and intended to return home when it ended.

Looking at Liberian refugees, Hana Brown observes, "Being Liberian means participating in relationships of care that also makes Liberians constructive and deserving members of society" [Brown 2011, 155]. Brown focuses on immigrant integration in the United States. Looking at the claims for rights that refugees make on the host state, she argues that

refugees understand refugee status, citizenship, and social membership in terms of relationships. In contrast to other immigrants who generally are incorporated through the labor market in liberal states such as the United States, refugees are also incorporated through the welfare state. Whereas non-refugee immigrants typically make claims on the state based on their participation in the labor market and may fear the state, refugees feel a sense of entitlement to benefits and support from the state that is based on their early resettlement experience and the special benefits and services they received as refugees. In interactions with individual state bureaucrats and caseworkers, they assert their rights to citizenship based on their refugee status rather than on their workforce participation. They conceive of "refugee" both as a "political-legal relationship" obligating the host state to step in and provide for them in the absence of support and protection from the home state and as an "affective personal relationship" entitling them to social assistance to replace lost support from personal networks and ties that have been severed by their resettlement [Brown 2011, 151]. "Receiving welfare assistance therefore entails not a demeaning series of bureaucratic interventions but a process of dialogue, of relationship building, and of care giving with the state" [Brown 2011, 155].

Along those same lines, it is the ability to participate in development efforts in Liberia that defines Liberians' diasporic citizenship, and education that allows them to do so. One Liberian stresses the importance of education for those wanting to participate in reconstruction efforts in Liberia:

> As a Liberian, if I come over here I want to get the best I can get out of here—the best education, the best experience I can get from a job… and being financially stable in a way that I'm able to financially assist a family member or loved one back there. That way, when I talk… If I say I want to participate in a Liberian community activity, then my educational program can back me up, as a credential I can use to be able to… if I want to, say, become a minister. But for most of the time as Liberians… Most Liberians who come here want to realize the American dream, that's for sure. They want financial

stability. They want to be able to own a home someday. I'm working on that personally. I want my family to come over.

But speaking from a Liberian experience… What I have noticed in the past—[having been] born in Liberia, grown up there, and lived there—Liberians actually love America so much that they'll do anything; they will give up [anything] to come over here. Once a Liberian comes here and he learns and he has his PhD or his masters [though], he always wants to go back home someday. He has that thinking that someday he wants to go back home and make a difference in his country. And who can you blame for that?

Yeah, that's how I see it. I think it is an opportunity for immigrants like us to be able to take the American influence back home and be able to apply what is positive and what is good over here back there. And I even think that… all of those politicians we have in Liberia—most of them, 75% of them—have been educated here in the states [NY1, 35-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 2003, asylee (formerly a refugee in Guinea for 10 years), Interview with author, August 2, 2006].

Higher education is important both for the knowledge gained and as a symbol of

Liberians' ability and readiness to contribute fully to one's community. Individuals can

contribute meaningfully without a higher education, but higher education provides access for

those Liberians who would historically have been denied positions of power in Liberia. Whereas

TPS/DED denies Liberians access to higher education, refugee/asylee status encourages the

relationships of care that Brown finds promote immigrant integration. The importance of

relationships of care to refugees demonstrates Irene Bloemraad's argument about the social

nature of political involvement.

The challenges that Liberians face in participating fully and integrating in the United

States will be looked at more closely in the next chapter examining factors influencing

integration at the local level. It is clear, however, that policies that promote integration and

political participation in the United States also allow Liberians to participate more fully as

diasporic citizens. While Liberians in the United States with aspirations to hold political office

in Liberia have chosen not to naturalize in order to keep their Liberian citizenship, for those who

have naturalized, access to education has been one of the driving factors. A Liberian who was

resettled to the United States as a refugee explains how he chose to naturalize in the United

States—even though it meant giving up his Liberian citizenship—in order to attend the

University of Minnesota. Despite the fact that he forfeited his Liberian citizenship by acquiring

another, he plans to return to Liberia to aid in the rebuilding effort. While the loss of his

Liberian citizenship means that he technically will not be eligible to hold political office in

Liberia, in reality a number of Liberian politicians hold foreign citizenships[65]:

> Well, there are a lot of obstacles we face as refugees when we enter the United States. Some of these obstacles include [the fact that] some of us have decided to learn, to go to a better university. If you are not a citizen, there are certain things that you would not enjoy. Take for instance if I apply as just an immigrant from West Africa, wanting to go to one of the best universities here, the University of Minnesota. There would be certain requirements. If I'm not a citizen, I cannot acquire those, cannot get that education. So, it's a very painful thing to have to, for awhile, turn your eye on paper to your country [referring to the fact that those Liberians who naturalize in the United States automatically lose their Liberian citizenship]. But, if you have to prepare yourself to go back home and undertake the daunting task of rebuilding the country, somehow you have to get some solid education. So, many of us are doing this. It's not that we want to do it, but it is the necessity that we would have to go through. My ultimate goal is to get a solid education and go back [to Liberia]. I have no intention of living in America for long. My mother is there [in Liberia]; I have siblings there. I strongly believe that Liberia needs me more than they needed me five years ago. Liberia needs me more than they needed me ten years ago. However, if I were to leave the United States right now and go back home without a degree from here—and I hadn't left the country for 20 years—it would be as though I've been living here all this time without an education. But having had a degree in Ghana, I got two here in the University of Minnesota, and I'm back there [at the university] trying to get my double masters. I think I can go back [to Liberia] and contribute meaningfully…[]
>
> And all of these [degrees are] just my way of preparing myself so that when I get back home, I am able to contribute…[] I write, I participate in community meetings, educating immigrants about what they need to succeed in this country, what they need to do to go back home and be good citizens, because what faces us back home is more than what was there. Liberia has never been developed; it's 163 years this year. We have nothing to show…[] Perhaps it would take the generation that is coming after me to really get that country where it needs to be. And to do that we need people to be transformed mentally. We need people to see beyond the now, and the way to do that is to prepare your mind, educate your people so that they can go home and help to build the country [MN5, 41-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1999 with refugee status, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, July 29, 2010].

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[65] The issue of dual nationality and Liberian politicians who hold foreign passports is discussed further in Chapter 4.

The statement above illustrates how U.S. citizenship has provided Liberians opportunities to participate more fully, both in their communities in the United States and in Liberia.

Concluding remarks

Policy matters. U.S. immigration and reception policy has shaped Liberians' legal status and participation in the U.S. and diaspora political systems, and thus their transnational citizenship. While refugee and asylee status provide clear paths to permanent residence and U.S. citizenship, TPS has trapped thousands of Liberians in an immigration purgatory. The conflict in Liberia resulted in large-scale migration, which often has equalizing effects. For Liberians, refugee resettlement and asylum in the United States have allowed many to gain access to higher education, which had long been accessible only to Liberia's elite. The United States' policy of granting TPS/DED as a short-term solution rather than addressing the long-term needs and reality of Liberians in the United States, however, has exacerbated old and created new divisions between Liberians. In comparison to TPS/DED, refugee and asylee status promote Liberians' integration in the United States and provide opportunities for Liberians to participate in transnational activities. In comparison to other countries, such as Canada, that actively pursue multiculturalism, however, the United States falls short. In the next chapter, I turn to a comparison of factors influencing transnational citizenship at the local level in Minnesota and New York.

3   Local context: civic participation among Liberians in New York and Minnesota

While state policy—especially legal status—remains the most important factor in shaping individuals' civic engagement, structural determinants at the municipal level are equally important in encouraging individuals to participate fully both locally in the United States and transnationally. Participation in transnational activities varies between cities and even neighborhoods. For the municipal level comparison, I focus on New York City and Minneapolis/ St. Paul (the Twin Cities). Initially, I planned to compare policies also at the U.S. state level—i.e., New York and Minnesota. However, I found that it was difficult to identify the impact of such policies on Liberians' lives and that they were far less consequential than factors at either the federal or municipal level. Additionally, U.S. state-level policies often play out at the municipal level. Therefore, in this chapter, I address these where relevant to the study.

This chapter begins with an overview of the two communities in New York and Minneapolis/St. Paul. Exact population counts of the two communities are impossible to obtain, since the number of Liberian individuals in each area is too small for the U.S. Census to capture accurately. U.S. Census figures, however, do reveal interesting trends about the two regions and are supplemented by qualitative data collected through interviews, observation, and document research. The rest of the chapter shows how factors at the local level affect Liberians' civic participation in the United States and with respect to Liberia. In particular, it highlights the impact that neighborhood has on Liberians' engagement locally and in transnational activities.

Little Liberia v. Little Monrovia

The Liberian community on Staten Island—commonly referred to as "Little Liberia"—has been the subject of a few recent studies.[66] Among Liberians and those familiar with Liberian communities in the United States, Staten Island is known to host the most densely concentrated population of Liberians living in the United States. Estimates are that 5,000-8,000 persons with Liberian ancestry live in New York City, though these numbers are generally cited with respect only to the community in the Park Hill neighborhood of Staten Island. Some reports claim that as many as 10,000 persons with Liberian ancestry live in New York City.[67]

Less has been written about the Liberian community in Minnesota. Liberians across the United States refer to the population in Minnesota as the largest in any state in the United States, with estimates ranging from 25,000-30,000 Liberians residing in the Twin Cities region. The Liberian population of Minnesota is not easily identifiable, however, despite its large size. Due to the much greater size of the Somali and Hmong immigrant populations, Liberians often go unnoticed in terms of immigrant politics, with the exception of the neighborhoods where they are most populous.

Minnesota

The largest Liberian community in the United States

According to Liberians and community leaders, Minnesota hosts the largest number of Liberians in the United States. Although verification of this is impossible, Census figures—as mentioned

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[66] See Jonny Steinberg [2011] and Bernadette Ludwig [2013].
[67] Kirk Semple's article [2008] cites 9,000 Liberians in New York City, with half in Staten Island. According to Vamba S. Fofana [2012], 10,000 Liberians live on Staten Island alone.

in chapter 1—do show that Minnesota has the largest Liberian population of any U.S. state (8,711 Liberians), with Pennsylvania trailing not far behind (6,913 Liberians). In fact, the difference between the two states is within the margin of error for both the 2007-2011 American Community Survey 5-year estimates and the 2010-2012 American Community Survey 3-year estimates. The Liberian community in Philadelphia is one of the fastest growing in the United States. As of 2013, however, Minnesota is likely still home to the largest Liberian community in the United States.

The Census figures underestimate the number of Liberians. The 2000 U.S. Census—the last time in which long-form data were collected—for example, noted that there were only 3,126 Liberians in Minnesota, out of a total of over 43,000 African immigrants in Minnesota. Considering that Liberians were the third largest African immigrant group in the state at the time, however, the figure of 3,126 is undoubtedly incorrect. The fact that 43 percent of African immigrants in Minnesota were classified as "African Other" may help to explain the disparity between Census data and other statistics. Earl P. Scott, citing data from the Twin Cities School District, the U.S. Census, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services), and local social services agencies, notes that estimates of the number of Liberians in Minnesota in 2006 ranged from 10,000 to 30,000 [Scott 2006, 142].

History of Liberians in Minnesota
Unlike New York City, which has long been a primary point of entry for immigrants to the United States, the Twin Cities area is a re-emerging gateway due to the fact that it is attracting significant numbers of immigrants once again after having lost popularity as an immigrant destination in the middle of the twentieth century [Singer 2004].

Liberian students travel to Minnesota for technical training

Although Minnesota is home to the largest number of Liberians in the United States, the settlement of Liberians in Minnesota is a relatively recent phenomenon. The earliest Liberians to reside in Minnesota were students who traveled—on government and private scholarships—to Minneapolis to study at Dunwoody Industrial Institute, which changed its name to Dunwoody College of Technology in 2001. As early as 1959, Dunwoody records show that there were three Liberians studying at the institute; two trainees were sponsored by the International Cooperation Administration of the United States and the other was the recipient of a Liberian government scholarship ["International Student Body at Dunwoody,"1959, 1]. In the 1970s, more than 20 Liberian students were profiled in *The Dunwoody News.*

After the 1980 coup in Liberia, a small number of Liberians who had previously studied in Minnesota returned with their families. Like in other parts of the United States, those who settled in Minnesota were typically members of the elite—some of whom were able to obtain asylum in the United States—and those in search of economic opportunities.

Refugee resettlement

Liberian migration to Minnesota, however, began in earnest in the mid-1990s, spurred by a targeted (i.e., federally sponsored) refugee resettlement and family reunification program coordinated by Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, among others [Scott 2006, 141]. The U.S. Department of State (DOS) Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM)'s Refugee Processing Center (RPC), tracks the number of refugees resettled to the United States as part of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). Data from the Worldwide Refugee

Admissions Processing System (WRAPS)[68]—the computer system that processes and tracks the refugees—show that the first USRAP Liberian arrivals occurred in fiscal year (FY) 1990,[69] when PRM resettled 2 Liberians to Los Angeles, CA. Liberians began arriving in Minnesota in small numbers in 1992, but it wasn't until 1998, when the number of arrivals rose to 225, that the Liberian population of Minnesota began to grow significantly.

Secondary migration

Minnesota is well-known as a targeted refugee resettlement location, meaning that the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Office of Refugee Resettlement provides federal funding to local nongovernmental organizations—chiefly, Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, Catholic Charities, and the International Institute of Minnesota—which in turn provide services to refugees. Therefore, at the outset of the study, I expected to find that the majority of Liberians in Minnesota were resettled there as refugees. What I found, anecdotally and supported by WRAPS numbers, is that Minnesota is the site of substantial secondary migration for Liberians. Liberians moved to the Twin Cities in the late 1990s and early 2000s attracted by the availability of jobs, the affordability of housing, high performing schools, and the recommendation of fellow Liberians who praised its welcoming attitude toward immigrants and determined it a desirable place to live.

The Brooklyns of Minnesota

The Liberian community in Minnesota centers on two northwest Minneapolis suburbs—

Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center—referred to by Liberians as "Little Monrovia." The Twin

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[68] http://www.wrapsnet.org/
[69] U.S. Government Fiscal Year 2000 is October 1, 1999 to September 30, 2000.

Cities region is one of the whitest and most affluent metropolitan areas in the United States.[70] According to the 2010 U.S. Census, however, Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center were the two suburbs that became majority-minority, with Brooklyn Park being the area's most diverse suburb—50 percent non-white.[71] Both suburbs rank among the highest in access to jobs and transportation, but the two areas rank among the lowest overall in terms of opportunity—a summary measure of school quality, quality of life, access to jobs and transportation, and local fiscal health [*Access to Opportunity in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area* 2007].[72]

Brooklyn Park hosts the larger number of Liberians. Estimates range from 7,000 to more than 9,000 Liberians living in Brooklyn Park. It is the sixth-largest city in Minnesota and the fourth-largest in the Twin Cities metropolitan area.[73] It is also the metropolitan area's most diverse suburb.

New York

New York City provides an interesting comparison study to the Twin Cities since it has been the site of a more constant flow of Liberian immigrants since the early 1980s, as indicated by U.S. Census data. Newspaper and community estimates of the Liberian population in Staten Island, New York are roughly 5,000 to 8,000 persons. While this is a significantly smaller population than that of Minnesota, the more constant and individual nature of immigration to New York makes it an interesting case to compare with Minnesota.

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[70] Out of the 25 largest metropolitan areas in the United States, the Twin Cities ranks the second whitest and fourth most affluent according to Myron Orfield and Thomas Luce [2009].
[71] Racially diverse areas are those that are 20-60 percent non-white. See Marlys Harris [2012].
[72] Local fiscal health: Brooklyn Park, moderate opportunity; Brooklyn Center, lowest opportunity
Quality of life: Brooklyn Park, lowest opportunity; Brooklyn Center, lowest opportunity
School quality: Brooklyn Park, lowest opportunity; Brooklyn Center, lowest opportunity
Access to jobs and transportation: Brooklyn Park, highest opportunity; Brooklyn Center, highest opportunity
[73] Brooklyn Park website, accessed December 1, 2013, http://www.brooklynpark.org/

Refugee resettlement to New York

Liberians have settled in Minnesota in significant numbers only since the mid-1990s, whereas the population in New York consists of large numbers of refugees resettled in the 1990s and 2000s, as well as earlier arriving Liberians. In fact, despite the image of the Liberian community in Minnesota as one created by refugee resettlement, more Liberian refugees were resettled to New York than to Minnesota between 1990 (when Liberian refugee resettlement to the United States began) and July 2010, according to WRAPS numbers (Table 3.1 and Chart 3.1). Of the 33,257 Liberian refugees resettled to the United States, the greatest number—4368 Liberian refugees—were resettled to New York. The second largest number—4319 persons—went to Pennsylvania, and the third largest number—3394 persons—went to Minnesota. Texas was next with 2097 Liberians, and all other states received fewer than 2000 Liberian refugees. The fact that greater numbers of Liberians were resettled to New York but Minnesota's Liberian population is much larger supports the finding that Minnesota has been the recipient of significant secondary migration.

Table 3.1   Liberian refugee arrivals to the top five states, fiscal year 1990-2010

Year	NY	PA	MN	MN Primary Refugees (Dept. of Health)*	TX	NJ
2010	28**	33**	14**	18	25**	13**
2009	23	38	18	26	32	8
2008	80	166	112	58	72	68
2007	89	264	300	379	66	80
2006	235	355	302	371	168	119
2005	441	407	461	449	422	180
2004	594	540	329	418	556	252
2003	308	456	315	374	138	225
2002	73	98	128	262	23	30
2001	569	653	384	315	130	320
2000	584	531	238	335	74	139
1999	559	388	400	451	86	225
1998	336	210	225	204	88	145
1997	43	30	26	122	17	0
1996	5	0	0	18	6	0
1995	4	5	4	13	0	0
1994	59	67	59	47	26	39
1993	216	56	50	70	119	59
1992	122	22	29	34	49	54
1991	0	0	0	1	0	0
1990	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	**4368**	**4319**	**3394**	**3965**	**2097**	**1956**

*Primary Refugee includes "Primary Refugee," "Asylee," "Parolee," "Amerasian," and "Victim of trafficking."
Source: http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/refugee/stats/index.html

**As of July 15, 2010.

Source: Author's tabulation of data from the Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS) for FY 1990-2010 (as of July 15, 2010). Data were supplied by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Office of Admissions - Refugee Processing Center.

Chart 3.1   **Liberian refugee arrivals to the top five states, fiscal year 1990-2010**
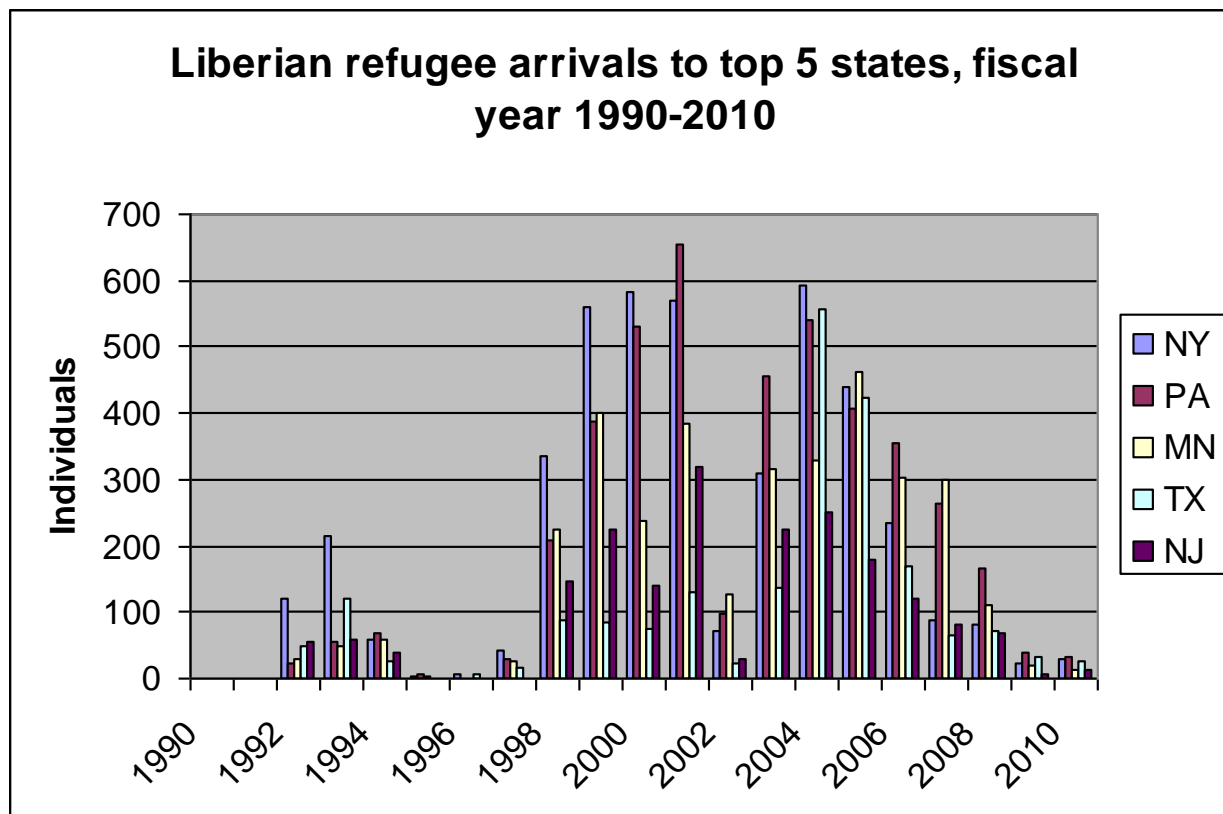
Liberian refugee arrivals to top 5 states, fiscal year 1990-2010

**As of July 15, 2010.

Source: Author's tabulation of data from the Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS) for FY 1990-2010 (as of July 15, 2010). Data were supplied by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Office of Admissions - Refugee Processing Center.

New Jersey was the state that received the fifth largest number of Liberian refugees—1956 persons. Many of these individuals live within the New York City metropolitan area, which includes the six largest cities in New Jersey—Newark, Jersey City, Paterson, Elizabeth, Trenton, and Edison—and their environs.

U.S. Census data on Liberians in New York

According to 2000 U.S. Census data, there were 4,984 persons living in Liberian-headed

households—defined as households where the head of the household was born in Liberia—in

New York (Table 3.2).[74]

Table 3.2   Persons living in Liberian-headed households in New York City in 2000

HH is Liberian Born

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	No	7817766	99.9	99.9	99.9
	Yes	4984	.1	.1	100.0
	Total	7822750	100.0	100.0	

However, it should be noted that while 4,984 persons lived in Liberian-headed

households, only 1,582 (31.7 percent) of those living in Liberian-headed households identified

themselves as being of Liberian ancestry; an additional 1,882 (37.8 percent) identified

themselves as being of African ancestry, however (Table 3.3).

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[74] The 2010 U.S. Census did not include long form data. Therefore, 2000 U.S. Census data are used to highlight
aspects of the Liberian community in New York.

Table 3.3   Ancestry of persons living in Liberian-headed households in New York City

Ancestry Code 1

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	English	15	.3	.3	.3
	Jamaican	53	1.1	1.1	1.4
	Trinidadian	50	1.0	1.0	2.4
	West Indian	35	.7	.7	3.1
	Ghanian	21	.4	.4	3.5
	Liberian	1582	31.7	31.7	35.2
	Nigerian	123	2.5	2.5	37.7
	African	1882	37.8	37.8	75.5
	African American	559	11.2	11.2	86.7
	Black	47	.9	.9	87.6
	American	79	1.6	1.6	89.2
	Other	44	.9	.9	90.1
	Not Reported	494	9.9	9.9	100.0
	Total	4984	100.0	100.0	

This figure—4,984 individuals living in Liberian-headed households—represents a tiny fraction (.1 percent) of the total number of persons in New York. For this reason, statistics drawn from the Census data are largely unreliable. Nevertheless, some meaningful conclusions about the Liberian caseload can be drawn.

According to the 2000 Census data, nearly half of all persons living in Liberian-headed households in New York lived on Staten Island (Table 3.4 and Chart 3.2).

Table 3.4   Persons living in Liberian-headed households broken down by New York City neighborhood

PUMAID

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Williamsbridge	85	1.7	1.7	1.7
	Bedford Pk Knightsbridge	152	3.0	3.0	4.8
	Highbridge	221	4.4	4.4	9.2
	Soundview Castle Hill Parkchester	87	1.7	1.7	10.9
	Mott Haven Hunts Point	20	.4	.4	11.3
	West Harlem Hamilton Hts	38	.8	.8	12.1
	Central Harlem	203	4.1	4.1	16.2
	Turtle Bay Stuyvesant Town	15	.3	.3	16.5
	Village SoHo Tribeca BPC	91	1.8	1.8	18.3
	Lower SI	2459	49.3	49.3	67.6
	Bklyn Hts Boerum Hill Ft Greene	82	1.6	1.6	69.3
	Cypress Hills Starrett City	481	9.7	9.7	78.9
	So Flatbush East Flatbush	285	5.7	5.7	84.7
	Lefferts Gdns No Flatbush	150	3.0	3.0	87.7
	Prospect Park South Midwood	161	3.2	3.2	90.9
	Coney Island Brighton Beach	32	.6	.6	91.5
	Cambria Hts Rosedale	230	4.6	4.6	96.1
	Rego Park	29	.6	.6	96.7
	Woodhaven Richmond Hill Ozone Park	72	1.4	1.4	98.2
	South Jamaica St Albans	91	1.8	1.8	100.0
	Total	4984	100.0	100.0	

* Public Use Microdata Area ID

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Chart 3.2   Liberian-headed households by New York City neighborhood
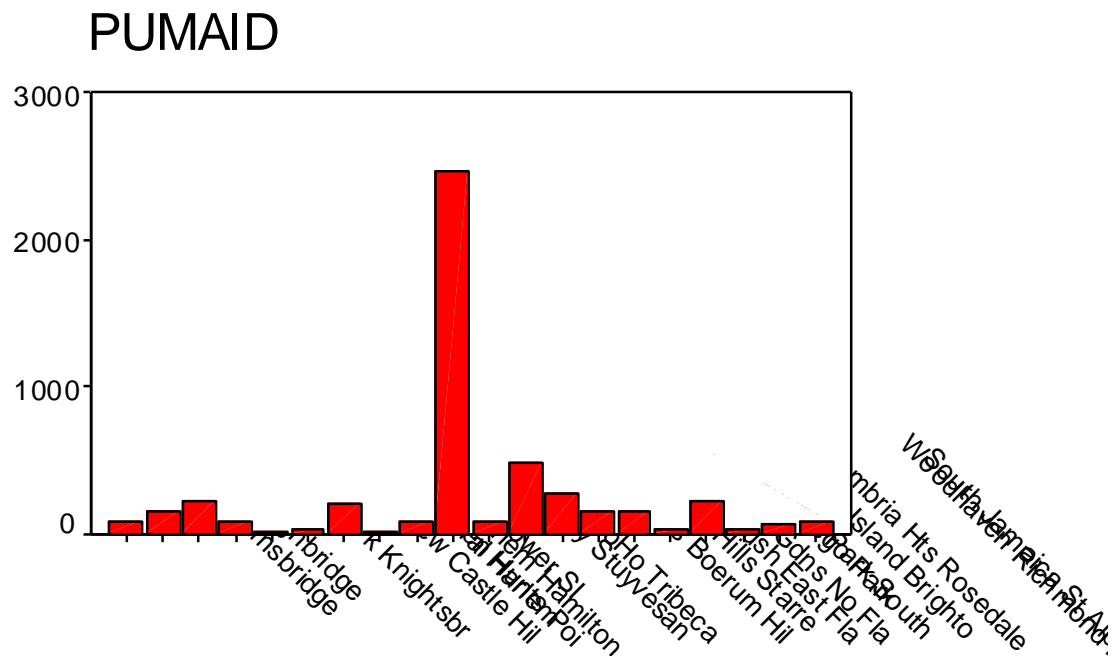
PUMAID

PUMAID

Cases weighted by PWEIGHT

This percentage is also true if one looks at the number of persons of Liberian ancestry

who lived on Staten Island—1060 persons out of 2151 total—and correlates with media reports

and claims by area residents that there are an estimated 5,000 to 8,000 Liberians living in the

Clifton neighborhood of Staten Island, concentrated almost entirely along Park Hill Ave. and in

the Park Hill Apartments—a series of six-story privately owned but federally subsidized

apartments with more than 1,000 units, built in the 1960s—which form the center of "Little

Liberia." Once notorious for drug dealers and the gang violence that plagued the area in the

1980s and 1990s, the neighborhood's crime rate has dropped significantly from the time when

residents referred to the area as "Crack Hill" and "Killer Hill" [Branch 2006]. Approximately

two-thirds of the Park Hill Apartments' residents are Liberian; the remaining third are African American, with small numbers of West Indians and Hispanics [Ludwig 2013].

Other than Staten Island, there is no large concentration of Liberians in any other part of the city. The remaining 50 percent of persons living in Liberian-headed households are spread throughout different neighborhoods in Queens, Brooklyn, the Bronx and Manhattan (Table 3.4 and Chart 3.2). This finding is supported by refugee resettlement data, which show that 44 percent of Liberians—1889 persons—who were resettled to New York between 1990 and July 15, 2010 went to Staten Island.[75]

WRAPS data also support community estimates that close to 8,000 Liberians reside on Staten Island. The 2000 U.S. Census was conducted before the largest influx of targeted refugee resettlement of Liberians occurred. As shown in Chapter 2 (Chart 2.1), significant numbers of Liberian refugees were not resettled to the United States until 1998, with the greatest numbers in 2004, 2005, 2001, and 2003. Of those resettled to Staten Island between 1990 and 2010, 65 percent arrived after 2000. Assuming the overall population of Liberians on Staten Island grew at a similar rate, the Liberian population of Staten Island would be approximately 7,000 persons. Indeed, the Census indicates that about a quarter of all Liberians in New York in 2000 had arrived in 1999, at the start of the second Liberian war, and community leaders report that there was a strong influx to New York during the subsequent several years.

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[75] Data are from the Worldwide Refugee Admissions Processing System (WRAPS) for FY 1990-2010 (as of July 15, 2010). Data were supplied by the United States Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, Office of Admissions - Refugee Processing Center.

Legal status among Liberians in New York and Minnesota

One might not expect that the local region in which an individual lives would affect a person's legal status. Policies at the federal level typically determine whether an individual is able to obtain lawful permanent resident (LPR) status in the United States and to become a citizen eventually. Data on the number of persons in the United States obtaining LPR status each year, however, reveal interesting trends regarding the relationship between Liberians' legal status and the regions in which Liberians reside. Between 2003 and 2011, Liberians adjusted their status in largest numbers in Pennsylvania (with the exception of 2003 and 2004) and Minnesota (Chart 3.3).

Chart 3.3   Number of Liberians obtaining LPR by state, 2003-2010
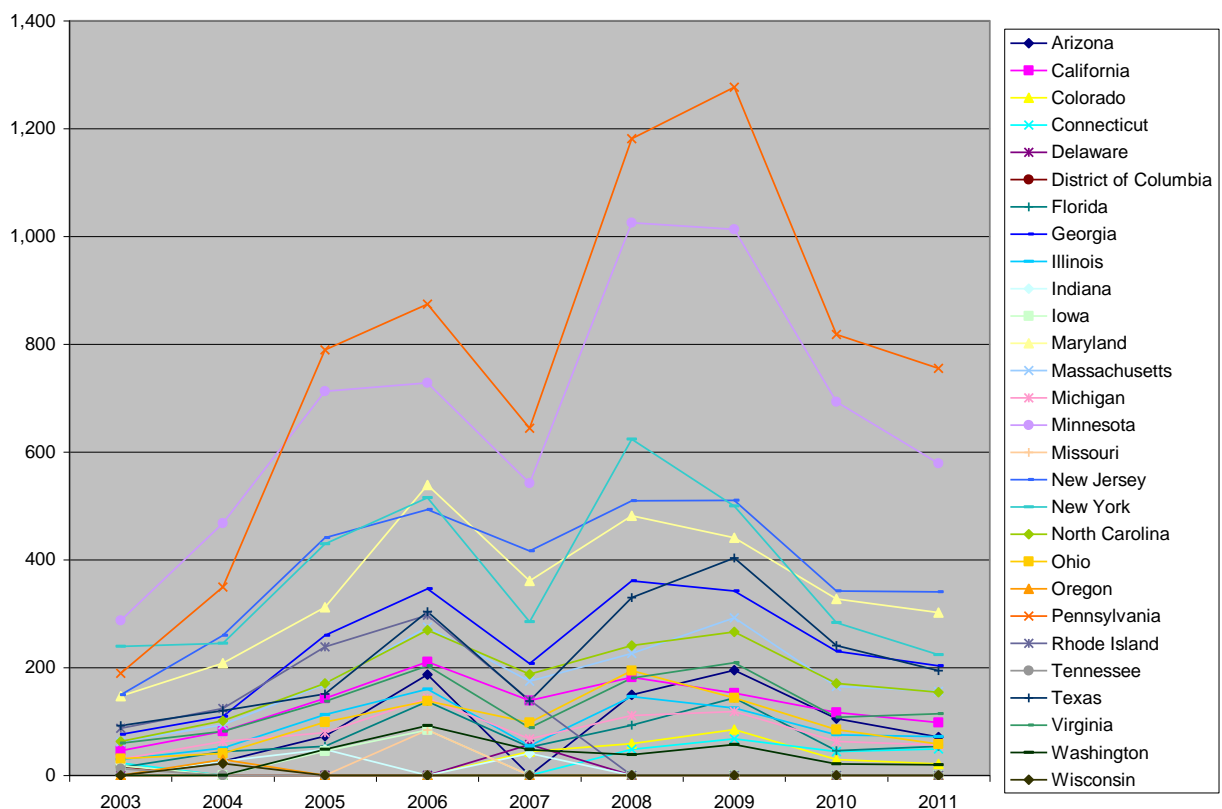
Source: Author's tabulation of data from United States Department of Homeland Security, "Profiles on Legal Permanent Residents," accessed March 20, 2013, http://www.dhs.gov/profiles-legal-permanent-residents

This could mean two things. Assuming Liberians in all states are obtaining permanent residency at the same rate, the data show that the largest numbers of Liberians reside in Pennsylvania and Minnesota, with New York—along with Maryland and Georgia—trailing distantly behind. Alternatively, the data suggest that a greater percentage of Liberians in Pennsylvania and Minnesota are seeking and obtaining permanent residency. Despite the fact that the first statement is known to be true, the second statement also appears to hold true. New York received greater numbers than Minnesota of resettled Liberian refugees, who—unlike other categories of immigrants—are able to obtain LPR within one year of arrival in the United States. Despite this, more Liberians obtained LPR in Minnesota each year than in New York. This suggests that non-refugee Liberians are also having success adjusting their status in Minnesota.

Why more Liberians are seeking and obtaining LPR in Minnesota than they are in New York is difficult to determine. Advocates for Human Rights—an NGO based in Minneapolis— has worked closely with the Liberian community on immigration issues—advocating for extension of TPS/DED and a Congressional bill that would allow Liberians to adjust their immigration status from temporary to permanent. The Advocates also headed up the Diaspora Project of the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, collecting statements from Liberians in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Ghana, and organizing public hearings in Minnesota. A number of Liberians reported receiving assistance from the Advocates with their asylum cases. However, the vast majority of Liberians interviewed in both New York and Minnesota stated that they received assistance from friends and family, rather than from service provider organizations, in adjusting their status.

The data also show that Liberian women consistently obtain LPR at higher rates in all states, meaning they adjust their status to permanent residency (and likely naturalize) in greater

numbers than men do. Looking at legal residency numbers, more Liberian women have adjusted

their status than men every year since 2003. However, more men report being interested in

returning to Liberia to potentially run for political office—which is not possible if they naturalize

in the United States—so if the Liberian government grants dual citizenship in the future, it may

result in more men choosing to naturalize in the United States.[76]

Tables 3.5 – 3.10 show interesting comparisons between the Liberian populations in

Minnesota and New York. According to 2006-2010 American Community Survey data (Table

3.5), 44 percent of Liberians in Minnesota are U.S. citizens (27 percent by birth and 17 percent

through naturalization). 56 percent of Liberians are not U.S. citizens.

Table 3.5   **Citizenship status of persons in Minnesota reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables**

	Minnesota	
	Liberian	
	Estimate	**Margin of error**
Total:	7,611	+/-1,170
U.S. citizen, born in the United States	1,991	+/-479
U.S. citizen, born in Puerto Rico or U.S. Island Areas	0	+/-93
U.S. citizen, born abroad of American parent(s)	102	+/-96
U.S. citizen by naturalization	1,265	+/-313
Not a U.S. citizen	4,253	+/-665

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

In comparison, 54 percent of Liberians in New York are U.S. citizens (20.5 percent by birth and

33 percent through naturalization); 46 percent are not (Table 3.6).

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[76] The issue of dual citizenship for Liberians is discussed further in Chapter 4.

Table 3.6   **Citizenship status of persons in New York reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables**

	New York	
	Liberian	
	Estimate	**Margin of error**
Total:	3,006	+/-882
U.S. citizen, born in the United States	609	+/-268
U.S. citizen, born in Puerto Rico or U.S. Island Areas	0	+/-123
U.S. citizen, born abroad of American parent(s)	7	+/-12
U.S. citizen by naturalization	997	+/-421
Not a U.S. citizen	1,393	+/-478

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Of those Liberians living in New York who were born outside the United States (Table 3.7 and Chart 3.4), 10 percent entered the United States before 1980, 15 percent entered in 1980-1989, 34 percent entered in 1990-1999, and 41 percent entered in 2000 or later.

Table 3.7 **Year of entry by citizenship status of persons in New York born outside the United States and reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables**

	New York	
	Liberian	
	Estimate	Margin of error
Total:	2,397	+/-701
Entered 2000 or later:	983	+/-365
Native	0	+/-123
Foreign born:	983	+/-365
Naturalized U.S. citizen	112	+/-129
Not a U.S. citizen	871	+/-344
Entered 1990 to 1999:	803	+/-353
Native	0	+/-123
Foreign born:	803	+/-353
Naturalized U.S. citizen	508	+/-294
Not a U.S. citizen	295	+/-155
Entered 1980 to 1989:	363	+/-185
Native	0	+/-123
Foreign born:	363	+/-185
Naturalized U.S. citizen	189	+/-96
Not a U.S. citizen	174	+/-111
Entered before 1980:	248	+/-112
Native	7	+/-12
Foreign born:	241	+/-111
Naturalized U.S. citizen	188	+/-99
Not a U.S. citizen	53	+/-50

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Chart 3.4 shows the percentage of Liberians in New York, according to year of entry, who are naturalized U.S. citizens and those who are not U.S. citizens.

Chart 3.4   **Year of entry by citizenship status of persons in New York born outside the United States and reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables**

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Of those Liberians living in Minnesota who were born outside the United States (Table 3.8 and Chart 3.5), 3 percent entered the United States before 1980, 4 percent entered in 1980-1989, 33 percent entered in 1990-1999, and 60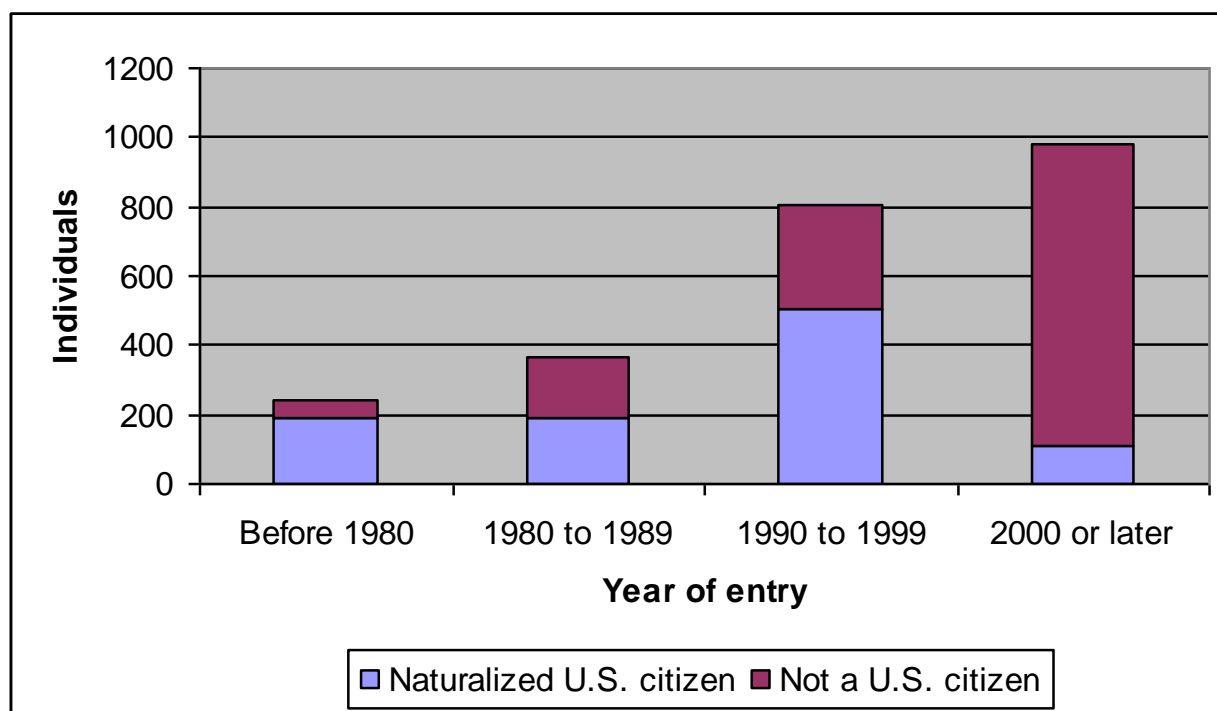 percent entered in 2000 or later. This confirms that, in comparison to the population in New York, the Liberian population in Minnesota arrived more recently, with the majority of foreign-born Liberians entering the United States in 2000 or later.

Table 3.8   **Year of entry by citizenship status of persons in Minnesota born outside the United States and reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables**

	Minnesota	
	Liberian	
	Estimate	Margin of error
Total:	5,620	+/-823
Entered 2000 or later:	3,392	+/-693
Native	102	+/-96
Foreign born:	3,290	+/-677
Naturalized U.S. citizen	310	+/-143
Not a U.S. citizen	2,980	+/-652
Entered 1990 to 1999:	1,838	+/-378
Native	0	+/-93
Foreign born:	1,838	+/-378
Naturalized U.S. citizen	672	+/-229
Not a U.S. citizen	1,166	+/-292
Entered 1980 to 1989:	238	+/-111
Native	0	+/-93
Foreign born:	238	+/-111
Naturalized U.S. citizen	169	+/-94
Not a U.S. citizen	69	+/-74
Entered before 1980:	152	+/-106
Native	0	+/-93
Foreign born:	152	+/-106
Naturalized U.S. citizen	114	+/-89
Not a U.S. citizen	38	+/-59

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Chart 3.5 shows the percentage of Liberians in Minnesota, according to year of entry, who are naturalized U.S. citizens and those who are not U.S. citizens.

Chart 3.5   Year of entry by citizenship status of persons in Minnesota born outside the United States and reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables
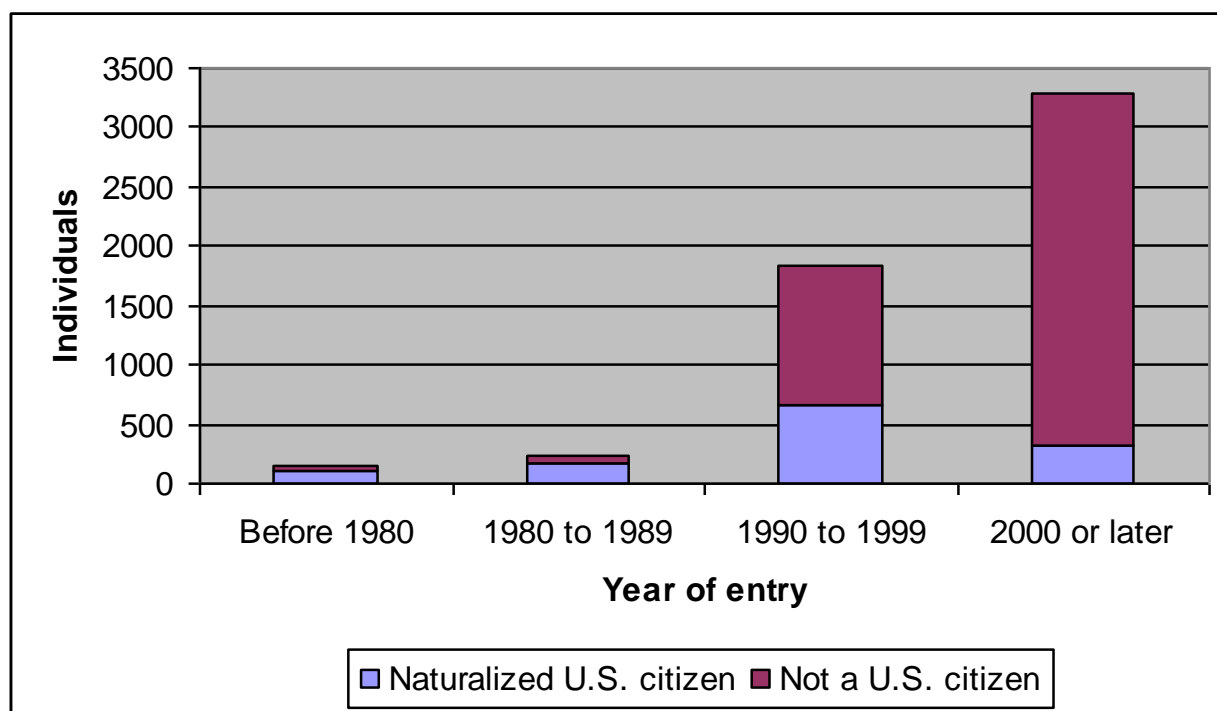
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

These percentages hold true when looking at the local level in Minnesota as well. Of those Liberians living in the Twin Cities who were born outside the United States (Table 3.9 and Chart 3.6), 3 percent entered the United States before 1980, 4 percent entered in 1980-1989, 34 percent entered in 1990-1999, and 59 percent entered in 2000 or later. These are almost identical to the percentages of Liberians living in Minnesota (Table 3.8) who entered during those time periods, confirming the fact that Minnesota's Liberian population lives almost entirely in the Twin Cities region.

Table 3.9   Year of entry by citizenship status of persons in the Twin Cities region born outside the United States and reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables

	Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI Metro Area (part); Minnesota	
	Liberian	
	Estimate	**Margin of error**
Total:	5,195	+/-792
Entered 2000 or later:	3,070	+/-658
Native	0	+/-93
Foreign born:	3,070	+/-658
Naturalized U.S. citizen	268	+/-136
Not a U.S. citizen	2,802	+/-631
Entered 1990 to 1999:	1,747	+/-392
Native	0	+/-93
Foreign born:	1,747	+/-392
Naturalized U.S. citizen	596	+/-228
Not a U.S. citizen	1,151	+/-292
Entered 1980 to 1989:	226	+/-109
Native	0	+/-93
Foreign born:	226	+/-109
Naturalized U.S. citizen	157	+/-92
Not a U.S. citizen	69	+/-74
Entered before 1980:	152	+/-106
Native	0	+/-93
Foreign born:	152	+/-106
Naturalized U.S. citizen	114	+/-89
Not a U.S. citizen	38	+/-59

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Chart 3.6 shows the percentage of Liberians living in the Twin Cities, according to year of entry, who are naturalized U.S. citizens and those who are not U.S. citizens.

Chart 3.6   Year of entry by citizenship status of persons in the Twin Cities region born outside the United States and reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

In comparison, of those Liberians living in New York who were born outside the United States (Table 3.7 and Chart 3.4), 13 percent entered the United States before 1980, 18 percent entered in 1980-1989, 44 percent entered in 1990-1999, and 26 percent entered in 2000 or later. Unlike in Minnesota, the numbers for New York City indicate that the Liberian population is more widely dispersed throughout the state.

Table 3.10   Year of entry by citizenship status of persons in the New York City region born outside the United States and reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables

	New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area (part); New York	
	Liberian	
	Estimate	**Margin of error**
Total:	1,796	+/-622
Entered 2000 or later:	469	+/-228
Native	0	+/-123
Foreign born:	469	+/-228
Naturalized U.S. citizen	112	+/-129
Not a U.S. citizen	357	+/-209
Entered 1990 to 1999:	784	+/-348
Native	0	+/-123
Foreign born:	784	+/-348
Naturalized U.S. citizen	489	+/-291
Not a U.S. citizen	295	+/-155
Entered 1980 to 1989:	315	+/-180
Native	0	+/-123
Foreign born:	315	+/-180
Naturalized U.S. citizen	159	+/-90
Not a U.S. citizen	156	+/-109
Entered before 1980:	228	+/-105
Native	7	+/-12
Foreign born:	221	+/-104
Naturalized U.S. citizen	168	+/-91
Not a U.S. citizen	53	+/-50

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Chart 3.7 shows the percentage of Liberians living in New York City, according to year of entry, who are naturalized U.S. citizens and those who are not U.S. citizens.
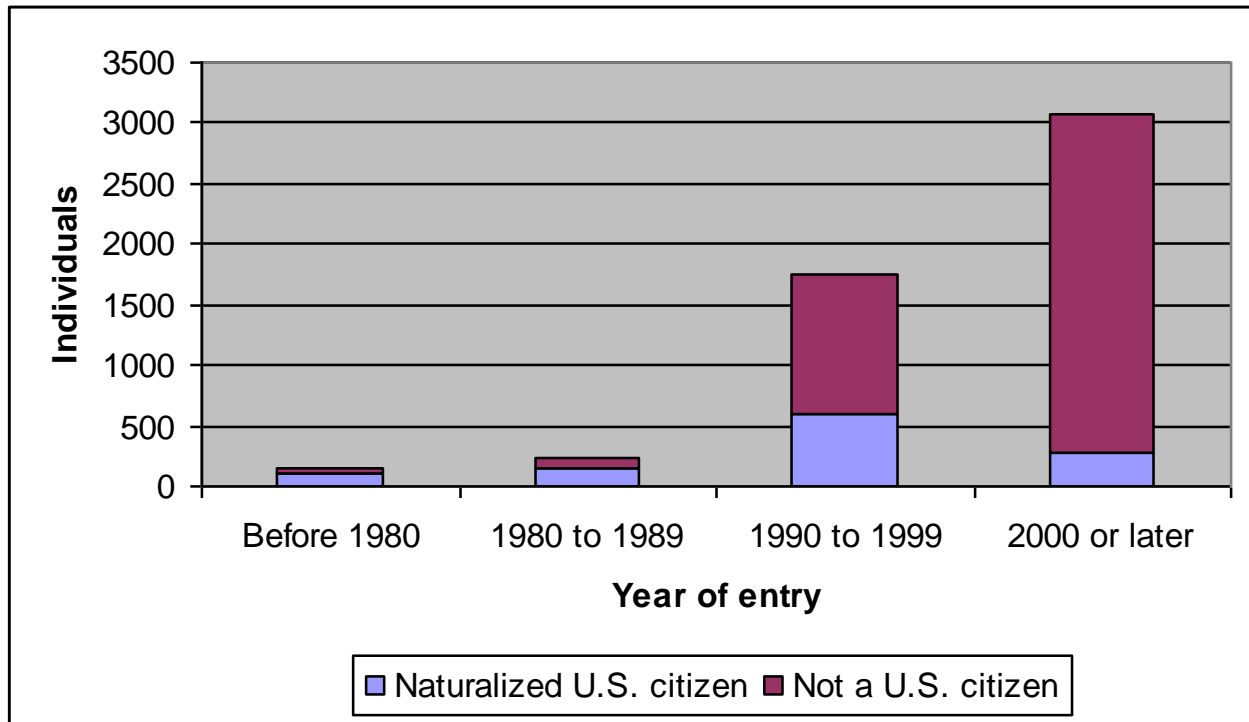
Chart 3.7   Year of entry by citizenship status of persons in the New York City region born outside the United States and reporting Liberian ancestry (for those reporting one or more ancestry categories), 2006-2010 American Community Survey selected population tables
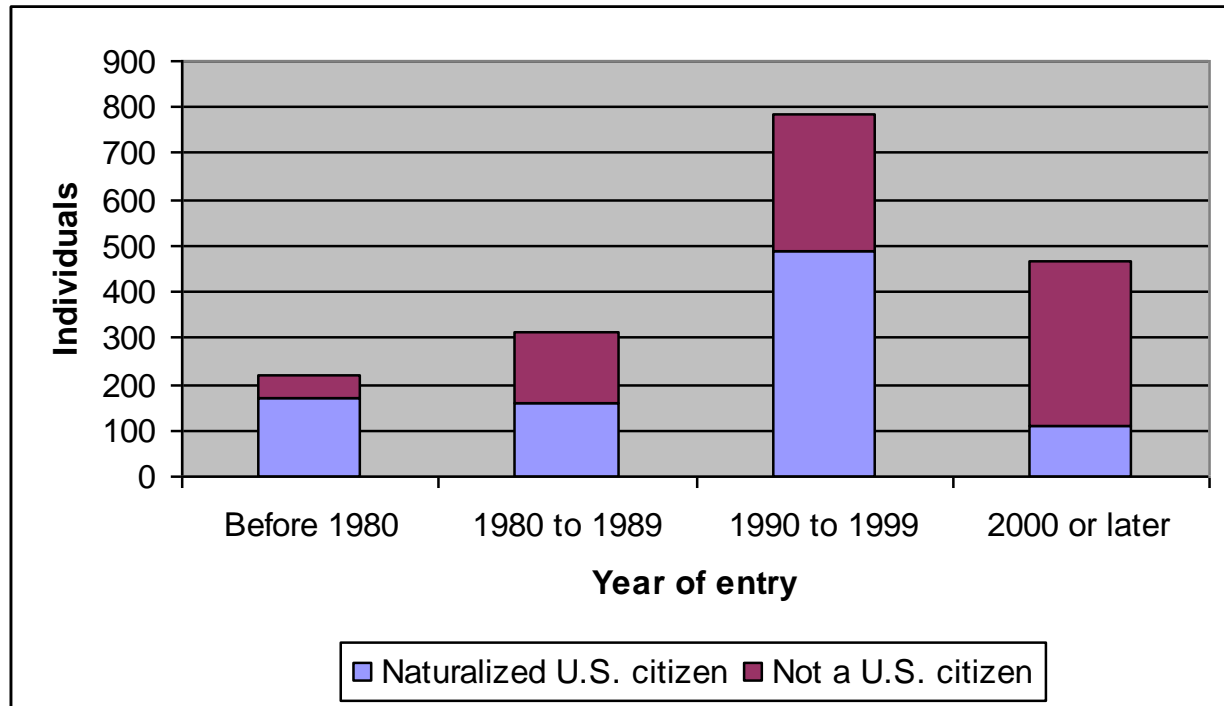
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey

Comparing Chart 3.7 above to Chart 3.4 also reveals that a large percentage of Liberians living in New York who arrived in 2000 and later settled outside the New York City metropolitan area. The most interesting comparisons between Liberians living in New York City and those living in the Twin Cities, however, relate to civic participation.

Civic participation

While the effect of legal status on Liberians' ability to become citizens in the United States and to attain diasporic citizenship is best explained at the state (U.S. and Liberia) level, local context plays an important role in determining Liberians' civic participation.

A positive correlation between local and transnational civic participation

Data from the 40 interviews for this study demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between local and transnational civic participation. I selected each of the Liberians interviewed because they were active either locally in their communities or had participated in transnational activities.[77] Plotting each individual's local (x-axis) and transnational (y-axis) activities, however, reveals that those with the greatest amount of local activity were also the ones who participated most frequently in transnational activities (Chart 3.8).

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[77] The categories used to code for local participation were the following; Liberian (community)*; Issue (women); Issue (children); Issue (African); Issue (race); Issue (immigrant); Politics (community board); Politics (office); Politics (party); Religious (leader); Religious (other). The categories of transnational participation were the following: Liberian (community)*; Liberian (tribal); Issue (development); Issue (alumni); Issue (schools); Issue (human rights); Politics (expert); Politics (TRC); Politics (party); Media (forums); Media (newspaper).

*The category "Liberian – community" is listed under both local and transnational participation, because these organizations profess to be local social service providers, but in fact their service (food pantry, adult literacy) programs are limited. To the extent that individuals reported being involved in these programs, their activity was coded as "local participation." To the extent that their involvement in the organizations was to gain political standing in the Liberian community, their activity was coded as "transnational participation."
For further explanation, see Appendix I.

Chart 3.8   Local v. transnational civic activity among Liberians in the United States
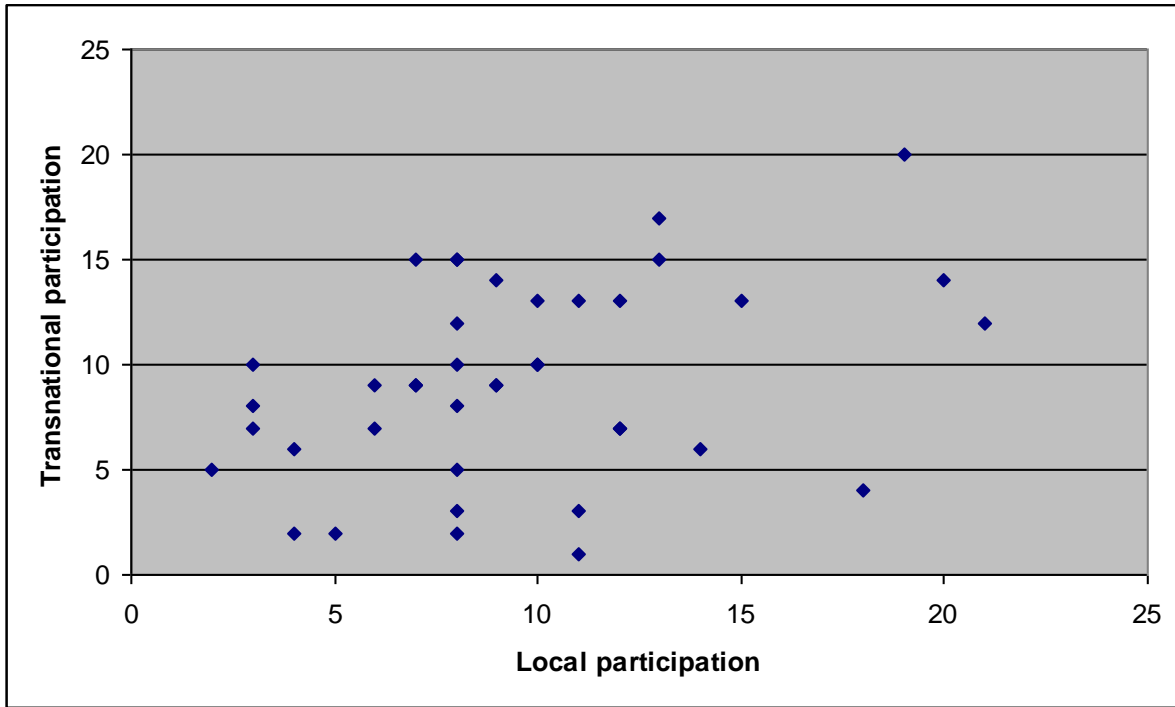
Source: Author's tabulation of data from interviews and online Liberian media.

Also significant is the fact that all 40 of the individuals participated (to varying degrees) in both local and transnational activities. Participation in transnational activities did not preclude participation locally and vice versa; rather, participation in one sphere seemed to promote participation in the other.

In this section, I highlight the importance of local context—particularly neighborhood— in structuring Liberians' identity as citizens in the United States (i.e., their integration in the United States) and as diasporic citizens (i.e., their engagement in transnational activities). The impact of race and gender are also discussed as they relate to individuals' participation in their local communities and in transnational activities.

Ethnic neighborhoods: help or hindrance?

The question of whether ethnic neighborhoods provide support for individuals to mobilize

politically to confront challenges or whether they further isolate groups from mainstream politics

in the United States is debated [Portes and Rumbaut 1996, 2001a; Portes and Zhou, 1993]. The

segmented assimilation approach suggests that, depending on the availability of resources in

one's family and community, immigrant communities can be sources of strength and provide

economic mobility for immigrants. Concentration of immigrants in disadvantaged

neighborhoods, however, puts "immigrant children in close contact with the cultural models of

the inner city," which can lead to downward assimilation [Portes and Rumbaut 2001a, 310].

Downward mobility has also been connected to race, concentration in urban areas, and lack of

access to labor markets [Landale, Oropesa, and Llanes 1998].

John Logan, Wenquan Shang, and Richard Alba distinguish between "immigrant

enclaves" and "ethnic communities" arguing that the former are the traditional transitional

neighborhoods of new immigrants characterized by "their physical characteristics (by the usual

standards of mainstream society, they are less desirable as places to live) and by the

characteristics of the people who live in them (they concentrate immigrants who are recently

arrived and have few socioeconomic resources)" [2002, 300]. More upwardly mobile group

members typically avoid these areas, choosing to settle in neighborhoods that are "less ethnically

distinct and have greater economic resources" [Logan, Shang, and Alba 2002, 300]. By contrast,

ethnic communities are communities of choice rather than constraint and are often located in

suburbia. They are "favored destinations" rather than starting points that attract group members

with more economic resources and afford residents the opportunity for spacial assimilation

[Logan, Shang, and Alba 2002; Massey 1985].

While Brooklyn Park officials state that they believe the city hosts the largest concentration of Liberians in the United States [Hernandez 2012], Staten Island's Little Liberia remains the most densely concentrated Liberian population in the United States. Nowhere else in the United States is a neighborhood so readily identified as Liberian. The dense concentration of Liberians in the Park Hill Apartments—a low-income, high-crime area—has both advantages and disadvantages [Ludwig 2013]. For Liberians with TPS and those who are undocumented, the ethnic neighborhood offers protection. It provides anonymity, networks, and social capital. For the second generation, it also offers a connection to one's history and culture and an identity that is a source of pride for young people. However, Little Liberia is more accurately described as an immigrant enclave than an ethnic community. Parents complain of gang violence, prostitution, and lack of educational opportunity. They also cite the problem among the Liberian population of former child combatants who have not been properly rehabilitated. Liberians have moved out into the more affluent neighborhoods surrounding Park Hill, but Little Liberia remains an immigrant enclave.

As one Liberian who moved to Park Hill from Brooklyn to live within a Liberian community explains, the experience of living in an area with such a high concentration of Liberians, particularly when that area is geographically and politically isolated, can be empowering but also alienating:

> One issue that actually prevents Liberians from being successful in tapping the resources here in New York City… Actually, in Staten Island the community in a way is integrated with the rest of… You'll find various minorities in New York—Hispanics, and African Americans on Park Hill, and maybe a couple of Caucasians. But around that, you have Caucasians and other nationalities that live around there. But the Liberian experience is such that once people get within the Liberian community in Staten Island, they kind of just cut off the rest of the connections with the larger American community, and I think that's one of the downsides of just having a concentrated community of Liberians in Staten Island. Because, people get so comfortable. It's easy to associate amongst [one another], so they cut off that link with the rest of the world. I was president of

international students in my college for three years. I had the opportunity to meet people from different countries almost around the world. And it's a different experience, because we organize activities, we go out, and we share experiences, we learn from one another's culture; it's different. If you are in the Liberian community, most of their activities, most of their social events always have Liberian themes, like baby showers, weddings and all that. They might do it with the American flavour, but the invitees most of the time are Liberians. 90 or 99 percent are Liberians. And so it kind of cuts off that connection with the greater American diverse population. And I'm not sure what there is to be done for that. There are positives in that Liberian people have been able to experience their culture a million miles away from their home.

I think one of the impediments to Liberians being able to mobilize is that they don't have a common front. They don't have a common vision or objective. They don't share anything. You know what I mean? I'm not sure if I'm making myself clear. Liberians, when it comes to social events, even if you don't invite them, they're going to come. But usually, when it comes to other important events, it will take you more resources and more effort to get them to actually participate. I'm not sure why, but they just shy away from that. And not presenting a common front. They don't have a shared objective. Everyone here – they just want to be able to make [their] living as much as they can… [] They just want to mind their own business. When people come here they hear so many things. Sometimes… some of the things they hear… they get so afraid. So, they are even afraid to associate themselves with certain associations. They're afraid to get into trouble; they're afraid of the law. They're afraid that they might get arrested. They're afraid that they might get labelled for certain comments or opinions they express. They're afraid that associating themselves with certain groups might even have repercussions on their families and loved ones back in Liberia… [] We are just afraid and skeptical of one another… coming from different backgrounds, from different countries. Most [Liberians] never knew [each other] back home. I've never met someone on Park Hill whom I knew back home. It's amazing. So that also is going to lead people to be very skeptical [NY1, 35-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 2003, asylee (formerly a refugee in Guinea for 10 years), Interview with author, August 2, 2006].

In contrast, the areas in which Liberians reside in Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center are ethnic communities rather than immigrant enclaves. Adjacent to one another, approximately 10 miles northwest of Minneapolis, the two suburbs are racially diverse. Brooklyn Park—the suburb with the larger Liberian population—has a population of 75,781, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, which is approximately 50 percent white, 25 percent African American, and 15 percent Asian. Liberians are drawn to the city due primarily to the cost and availability of housing and access to transportation, and secondarily to the proximity to social support networks, as well as African restaurants, shops, and services.

A Liberian woman who relocated from the Boston area to Minneapolis in the late 1990s

states that she was drawn to Brooklyn Park at the time solely due to convenience:

> I just wanted a place to live. At that point the concept wasn't even there [that Brooklyn
> Park] is where Liberians live and all of that, because when I came, most [Liberians], we
> actually thought, were [living] in [the central] Minneapolis area. So, I think it was just
> easier to get an apartment with no credit history, no rental history, nothing; it was just
> easier to get an apartment. They could easily give us the apartment without all of that, so
> it was convenient [MN22, 33-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United
> States in 1997 through family reunification (father had asylum), Interview with author,
> October 8, 2010].

Although Liberians report being attracted initially to Brooklyn Park due to its

affordability rather than due to a desire to live in a Liberian neighborhood, almost all Liberians

interviewed reported having benefitted from social networks in the area. Most Liberians in

Brooklyn Park moved there on the recommendation of friends or family and reported receiving

assistance, especially rides and help finding jobs, from fellow Liberians.

A man who lived in the New York City area upon initial arrival from Liberia and then

moved to Minnesota upon the invitation of a Liberian friend, explains how he originally lived in

Brooklyn Park but later moved out to a more affluent Minneapolis suburb:

> I came and stayed [in Minnesota], and then after sometime I managed to get a job. I
> started to stay for awhile, and I began to like it. And then I said, "Well, maybe I'll make
> this my home." So, I've been here since then…[] I live in Ramsey[78] [now], but initially I
> lived in Brooklyn Park because most Liberians prefer living in Brooklyn Park, because
> it's very easy to navigate your way when you live in Brooklyn. Because there are
> hundreds of Liberians there; some of them you can just call and they can give you a ride
> to work. They can pick you up from school; they could come and take you to shopping
> with the car, and those kinds of things. You could spend the test time [the initial period
> upon arrival] with them. And I mean you can walk even from one apartment to another if
> you don't have a car. So, if you coming for the first time from Liberia, that's a good
> place to start. So, a lot of us who came first, that was the place we started off. And then
> when you were on your feet, you could afford to buy a car, you could afford to get a
> home, those kinds of things. Then you can move on to other communities. I started off
> in Brooklyn and then I moved to St. Paul. I stayed in St. Paul for up to 5 years, I guess.
> And then when my children came from Liberia, I thought that they should have an

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[78] Ramsey city, in Anoka county, is a northern suburb of the Twin Cities. At the 2010 U.S. Census, it had a
population of 23,668.

environment with less destruction, because I wanted them to be in school and be serious with school and those kinds of things. So, we moved; we got a home and then we moved to Ramsey where we are right now [MN12, 50-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2000, asylee, Interview with author, October 6, 2010].

Similarly, another Liberian man who moved from Harlem, New York to Minnesota

describes how he benefitted from social networks living in Brooklyn Park. In Harlem, he lived

with family but knew few other Liberians. It was important to him to live in a Liberian

community, and he was aware of the large community of Liberians on Staten Island, having

visited Staten Island, but he chose to move to Minnesota upon the recommendation of friends:

> Because I [had] just moved to Minnesota and I saw [Brooklyn Park]. I saw [there was] a big group of [Liberians] and I said, "Wow, there are a good number over here so we can socialize and we can do stuff." So, I've been in Minnesota for nine or ten years, and I've been living in Brooklyn Park… [] My friends were close by and I can just pickup the phone and say, "Are you home? Yeah, okay I'm coming there." [] And the good thing, when I came to Minnesota (what makes Brooklyn Park better too for me), is that the help that I needed as a newcomer I could easily find it in Brooklyn Park, because my friends were there, my cousins, my family… Most of the other people were here in the Brooklyn Park area, and they were not far from each other. So when I needed a ride to look for a job, I just needed to call two people at a time, and people will just come pick me up, drive me to work and bring me back… [] I love to stay around where my people are so that… People helped me when I came and somebody may come and they may need my help, so I stay by also to help other people [MN24, 43-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1998, asylee, Interview with author, October 6, 2010].

Another man who moved from New York to Minnesota stated that he was attracted by what he

read about Minnesota being a "state of immigrants." After moving to Brooklyn Park, he was

pleased to discover there were a number of Liberians he knew living in the city:

> I'm not used to a fast life like that… [] So, Minneapolis, it turned out, has some great suburbs like the Brooklyn Park / Brooklyn Center area where, when I came, I realized there were more than 12 persons that I knew from the high school that I attended [in Liberia]. When they heard I was here, everybody kept calling, saying, "Oh, you're here," and they would just…[] show up [at my apartment]. I doubt very much whether that would have happened in New York. Yes, so I have a great community of Liberians here, many of whom I knew from back home. So it makes it very easy for me [MN5, 41-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1999 with refugee status, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, July 29, 2010].

Liberians in Minnesota also report feeling more connected to their local officials.

Speaking about the experiences of TPS/DED holders, one interviewee stated that the situation

was better in Minnesota than in other states, noting the fact that Minnesotan officials in both the

House of Representatives and Senate have repeatedly advocated for extensions of TPS/DED for

Liberians and have sponsored bills to allow Liberians to adjust their status to permanent

residency in the United States:

> Even with the TPS situation…[] It's always been good, because even the officials here, most of the time the Congress people are always heading the team, speaking to their friends, so they can renew the TPS for the Liberian refugees who are here. And that has been very well. It is because of that that Liberians feel comfortable to stay here [MN8, 47-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2004, LPR, Interview with author, October 15, 2010].

> In both New York and Minnesota, areas with high concentrations of Liberians—whether

immigrant enclave or ethnic community—provide Liberians with networks of social support.

Such areas also attract government and NGO service providers initially. In both New York and

Minnesota, however, perceived divisions within the Liberian community have caused funders to

discontinue support for many programs.

Community organizations as sites of civic engagement in the United States and Liberia

Both Minnesota and New York host a wide range of Liberian organizations, including general

Liberian community organizations, tribal organizations, and issue-based organizations, almost all

of which are registered as 501c3 nonprofit organizations.

Liberian community organizations: sites of political contestation rather than service providers

Both New York City and the Twin Cities have Liberian general community organizations

affiliated with the umbrella organization ULAA, which has 20 member organizations throughout

the United States. Out of the 40 Liberians interviewed for this study, 33 reported participating in these organizations. However, 6 stated that they did so only nominally; they were members but did not participate in meetings or they had participated in the past but no longer did so. Some also stated that they were members only because all Liberians were members "by definition."

In New York, the Staten Island Liberian Community Association (SILCA)—first established in 1984 when it broke away from the Liberian Community Association of New York County (LICANY), formerly the Liberian Students Association of New York (LISANY)—claims to represent the region's Liberians. In fact, the organization has relatively few voting members or community activities and has been plagued by political strife that has divided the community.[79] The organization's 2006 election results were so contested that the losing faction filed a lawsuit—which was dismissed—in New York State Supreme Court alleging misuse of funds and fraud [Semple 2008]. Most Liberians view the organization as "too political" or corrupt and question elected officials' commitment to serving the community, noting that most reside in more affluent neighborhoods on the North Shore[80] of Staten Island and are disconnected from the Park Hill residents they claim to represent. Elected officials are also accused of using their positions as platforms to gain standing within the larger Liberian community in the United States and in Liberia, with an eye towards running for political office in Liberia—what I refer to as "nonprofiteering." Still, no other comparable organization exists in New York. The organization received 5,000 USD in expense funding from the New York City Council FY 2013 budget through Councilwoman Debi Rose's (Democrat- 49th Council District) office and

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[79] In the hotly contested 2012 SILCA presidential election, 494 votes were cast [Fofana 2012].
[80] The North Shore encompasses the neighborhoods of Mariners Harbor, Port Richmond, Westerleigh, Meiers Corners, Graniteville, Castleton Corners, West Brighton, New Brighton, St. George, Tompkinsville, Stapleton, Clifton, and Rosebank.

receives 10,000 USD yearly from the Staten Island Borough Office; SILCA's major activity each

year is the organization of the annual Liberian Independence Day celebrations [Wrobleski 2012].

In Minnesota, the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota (OLM) also evolved from a

student organization in the 1970s. Like SILCA, OLM officials are criticized widely by

community members for nonprofiteering—focusing too heavily on political posturing and using

the organization to further their standing within the community in Minnesota and in Liberia.

When asked if she participated in OLM activities, one Liberian woman in Minnesota stated,

> Not really, not really. I was disappointed with the OLM. There's always infighting and
> so on with the OLM; they've been to court several times. And the thing with the OLM
> and some of the [other] Liberian organizations that I don't like is it becomes political,
> because it is almost like a training ground to go back to Liberia for political office. They
> are calling people "Mr. President" at the OLM; I mean, that's [what you call people] in
> the [government] ministry, not for an organization. You know? Come on. So, I think
> that type of thing, it turns me off, because it kills sincerity to me. People need services,
> and I think we should just provide them the services instead of all the pomp and
> circumstance [MN1, 34-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in
> 1985, LPR through marriage, Interview with author, October 14, 2010].

A Liberian man in Minnesota echoes these sentiments, stating that OLM leaders use the

organization as a way of gaining name recognition among Liberians in the United States and in

Liberia in the hopes of being appointed to government positions in Liberia. He relates how the

former OLM president Kerper Dwanyen left the organization in 2008 to pursue his own personal

interests in Liberia:

> The Liberian community here in Minnesota and in the United States still has serious, real
> problems with meeting the basic needs of our people. We have hundreds of thousands or
> tens of thousands of older people who don't speak English. They do not know their way
> around. They have nowhere to go to sit and pass the time. They are here [confined] in
> their houses. They were not born here. They came here in their very old age and this
> environment is very hostile to them. These are some of the things that I would have
> thought that our leadership, our leaders, would strive to create some environment to make
> these people very comfortable, but it seems to me that really nothing has been achieved
> that direction…[]
>
> [Instead], we turn to Liberian politicians who tend to use these community organizations
> as a way of selling their names, and once they get to the point there—the national level,
> people say, "Look, oh yeah, Kerper is doing this; he's writing this. Well, let us call him

in." The next thing you know, he's gone [MN5, 41-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1999 with refugee status, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, July 29, 2010].

Another woman blames the organization's problems partly on its constitution, stating that the organization is meant to be a service provider but functions more like a political instrument:

> There are a lot of internal struggles, and from my analysis, the problem is that the very document that forms the organization… For example, the Organization of Liberians in Minnesota, that document in itself is a problematic document, because OLM is supposed to be like a non-profit, like a social [service provider], but the document itself is written as a political document, and so it contradicts itself in a lot of places. Consequently, people use those differences in the interpretation of the document itself to further their own agendas. So, over the years, OLM has not been able to function, because some people feel that this is a social group, other people treat it as a political group, and so it's just dysfunctional [MN7, 44-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2002, DED (formerly TPS), Interview with author, October 14, 2010].

The Liberian community in Minnesota—more than the one on Staten Island—has a reputation throughout the United States and in Liberia for being politically powerful. OLM frequently hosts Liberian officials and dignitaries who visit Minnesota to rally support for the Liberian government's policies and to campaign during election cycles.[81]

In 2008, however, a group of disaffected members left OLM to form the Liberian Community of Minnesota (LCM) based in St. Paul, Minnesota. One of the former presidents describes the organization's founding, based on both tribal affiliations and regional needs:

> Oh, the Liberian Community in Minnesota. You see, because of the peculiar political culture that we inherited back home, [Liberians] are so polarized, and between people like us and those who are aborigines we call them—from tribes of people whose parents and forbearers inhabited Liberia prior to the coming of the settlers from North America— there is friction. Actually, we don't get along well even in the United States. So when we came, they had this community organization called OLM…[] When I came, the guy who was president, he was very friendly and very open to all Liberians… [] Interestingly, he was from the tribal group but he was a guy who was very open-minded and he started to reach out to all Liberians despite ethnicity and that kind of stuff… [] But then afterward, the guy who ascended, he was a tribalist, a sectionalist, and he started to marginalize a certain segment of Liberians, especially the group that I come from—my ethnicity, Americo-Liberian, and other people. So a lot of us decided to plead and to

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[81] A visit by Liberian Finance Minister Amara Konneh in July 2013 to Brooklyn Park was criticized by Liberian Minnesotans who complained of corruption by the finance ministry [Regan 2013].

advocate and complain but he didn't listen, so a group of us in St. Paul… also people in St. Paul who are of tribal lineage, a lot of them too were not being reached. OLM, it was like a Brooklyn Park organization. So we got together and said, "Look, we need to organize because there's a lot of things that we can do for ourselves in St. Paul since the people in Brooklyn Park have isolated us." So it is against that background that we decided to organize the LCM, Liberian Community [MN4, 51-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2000, asylee, Interview with author, October 4, 2010].

LCM claims to be more effective as a service provider than OLM, but its activities have

been limited in the years since its founding.

Tribal organizations: cultural affiliation as source of strength and exclusion

In addition to the ULAA affiliates, both New York and Minnesota host a wide range of tribal

organizations, often called county organizations, since they are frequently associated with a

Liberian county—e.g., Sinoe County Association in the Americas (SCAA), Grand Gedeh

Association in the Americas (GGAA), and Grand Bassa County Association in the United States.

The organizations primarily focus on hosting cultural and social activities locally in the United

States (including beauty pageants) and on raising money and supporting projects within the

members' hometowns in Liberia. A community leader explains:

> I have tried as much as possible to shy away from the tribal affiliation and all of that, because I think it's divisive. By the same token, given the fact that everything is centralized in Monrovia, people who come from the different counties that are in remote areas, they have to organize themselves to mobilize resources to help those areas. Because, the central government for the most part is not doing as much as it should be doing. So, take for instance, if I come from Lofa [county] in Liberia. Over the past fourteen years of the civil war, Lofa was one of those places that was highly victimized, because Lofa has a lot of resources, and the warlords needed those resources to exploit them in order to persecute and pay for the war. So, Lofa took a very huge hit. So Lofians, as well as other tribal or ethnic groups in America, do have to mobilize themselves—I mean, organize—as a way of mobilizing resources to send back to help their own people back there. To the extent that that is done, I think that's okay [NY10, 46-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 1984, LPR through marriage (formerly undocumented), Interview with author, July 21, 2006].

The organizations typically have local chapters that are then members of national organizations. For example, the Grand Bassa County Association's Minnesota chapter is a member of the United Bassa Organizations in the Americas (UNIBOA). The local chapter holds a bi-annual beauty pageant whose winner goes on to compete at the national level.

Tribal organizations help Liberians in the United States maintain a connection to their ethnic heritage and fund community development projects in Liberia. Members contribute to small projects such as well construction or scholarship funds to support school children in Liberia. Nineteen of the 40 Liberians (48 percent) interviewed for this study reported being involved in tribal organizations. However, most stated that they had minimal involvement in the organizations and were members in name only or paid dues but did not attend meetings regularly. Only 2 of the 13 women (15 percent) interviewed stated they belonged to tribal organizations, as compared to 17 of 27 men (63 percent). Many Liberians, such as the individual quoted above, in the United States, however, avoid associating with tribal organizations, viewing them as divisive—perpetuating divisions among Liberians that contributed to the Liberian conflicts.

Another type of transnational membership organization to which many Liberians belong is alumni associations. For example, Liberians who attended Booker Washington Institute in Liberia may become members of a local alumni organization in the United States. Organized according to educational institution rather than tribal affiliation, the associations serve a similar purpose—as forums for social networking among Liberians in the United States and as vehicles for the institutions to raise funds for development projects in Liberia. A Liberian in Minnesota describes why he participates in an alumni association:

> People are here in the States with no idea that they [friends from Liberia] were all in the
> United States. So, when you say Cuttington University College Association, what it

means is that all the friends who were in school in Cuttington… You're going to see all your schoolmates, all your classmates, all your buddies; everybody will be there. So, if you see these little small organizations, they're serving to bring them back together to remember the old days. At the same time, these organizations do contribute to the schools; they do send money. [They] collect money and send [it to Liberia] to rebuild the school, to provide computers for the school. And so these things have the economic and social impact both here for the association of the old friends and home [in Liberia] for the development of the institution or organization they belong to [MN3, 45-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1998, asylee, Interview with author, July 26, 2010].

Although the alumni associations are not "tribal" organizations, to the extent that attendance at the schools in Liberia was dependant on both class and regional factors, they can also be viewed as perpetuating divisions between Liberians. One Liberian mentioned a desire to build a political base in the Liberian community in the United States so that he could eventually return to seek political office in Liberia as a reason for participating in both tribal organizations and alumni associations. For the vast majority of Liberians, however, participation in the alumni associations is a means of connecting with old friends and giving back, helping to rebuild schools in Liberia that suffered greatly during the wars.

Issue-based organizations: doing good at home and abroad

Finally, Liberians in both Minnesota and New York have founded numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Having witnessed government corruption and instability in Liberia and having experienced the onslaught of NGOs that descended upon Liberia in the conflicts' aftermath, many Liberians in the United States view NGOs as alternatives to government. As is the case with the other types of organizations mentioned, there are Liberians who have pursued leadership positions in NGOs as platforms for their political careers—what I call "non-profiteering." While these organizations claim to represent and serve the Liberian community, many have failed to deliver on promised services. As a result, initial funding from city, county,

and NGO sources has dried up over the years and made it more challenging for organizations that are actually providing services to the community to obtain adequate funding.

Unlike the general Liberian community organizations and the tribal organizations, however, the issue-based organizations (at least, those that function effectively) connect Liberians to other immigrant and American groups. Members forge relationships that encourage integration in the United States and, in some cases, civic activism on the international level. Thirty-five of the 40 Liberians (88 percent) interviewed for this study reported being involved in (working or volunteering for) issue-based organizations (typically, two or more) in the United States. The largest numbers of Liberians participated in organizations servicing immigrants (25 individuals), children (22 individuals), Africans (22 individuals), women (14 individuals), and the black community (11 individuals).

The organizations that do provide services effectively are typically those that respond to an identified need locally, especially those focused on Liberian children in public schools. Such organizations act as points of access for Liberians, helping to promote civic participation both in the United States and in transnational activities. Concepts of "good citizenship" and service to community translate between activities in the United States and in Liberia. As mentioned in Chapter 2, many Liberians hope to return one day to Liberia and view their time in the United States as an opportunity to gain education and skills that will help them to participate in the reconstruction of Liberia. The leader of an organization in Minnesota that assists immigrant professionals in transferring their degrees and locating appropriate jobs for their skills-level in the United States describes what she sees as the relationship between civic engagement in Liberia and Liberians' local communities in Minnesota:

> We took a trip to Liberia in 2007 to look at some of the needs there and to see what we should be learning to be able to contribute, because the main thing is that you notice

especially in Minnesota… I don't know what the situation is in other states but the Liberians are sort of not taking advantage of all the opportunities. A lot of the youth end up in trouble, not doing well in school and most Liberians have a temporary status here, so one day, some people may have to go back. We don't know but while we're here, the thing is to maximize, so you go back and you contribute rather than going back and being a burden to an already burdened system. And that's kind of the idea behind it—to help Liberians integrate in Minnesota, learn as best as they can, to contribute here too, because we want to be good civic citizens of Minnesota as well.

Four of us went and we looked at the social determinants of health which is gaining popularity too now in Minnesota. But we talked with a lot of government officials and heads of institutions… [] We looked at the health care system, education system, social justice and the idea of, you know, if you are stressed out about political unrest, you are not going to be healthy. We looked at entrepreneurship opportunities and looked at some of the peacebuilding efforts that were going on, and we went to colleges. So we talked to the people, the leaders, and then we talked to the general public to find out what they could do to fix Liberia—not what they are expecting someone else to do, but they themselves today, tomorrow. What could they do to add value to the country? To get people thinking about more civic engagement, community involvement and engagement, versus, "I want the West to bring money and to fix it." Because, this is not going to fix the situation, necessarily. It will help, but it won't solve the problem [MN1, 34-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1985, LPR through marriage, Interview with author, October 14, 2010].

The above statement highlights the connection in many Liberians' minds between civic engagement in the United States and in Liberia. As mentioned in Chapter 2, Liberian refugees identify citizenship in terms of relationships of care [Brown 2011].

A civic spirit

Minnesotans are well-known for their civic-mindedness. According to the Corporation for National and Community Service, the U.S. federal agency for service and volunteering, Minneapolis-St. Paul consistently ranks highest among large cities in the United States in volunteerism. In 2011, the volunteer rate was 37 percent, well above the national average of 26.8 percent. In comparison, New York City ranked 49th with a rate of 18.1 percent [Volunteering and Civic Life in America 2011].

Raj Chatty et al., the authors of the Equality of Opportunity Project, highlight the importance of civic engagement in creating opportunities for upward mobility. They identify correlation (not causation) between upward income mobility in the United States and four factors: dispersion of poor among mixed-income neighborhoods, two-parent households, better elementary schools and high schools, and more civic engagement [Leonhardt 2013].

A number of recent studies, however, document Minnesota's declining civic spirit and its increasingly negative attitude toward immigrants. The National Conference on Citizenship, chartered by Congress in 1953, publishes civic health indices of states. The most recent Civic Health Index for Minnesota was published in 2009. The report focused on the role of education and schools as centers for civic engagement in Minnesota, citing the need to reconnect communities and education, as schools that once functioned as community centers have increasingly become "walled off."

> Through Minnesota history, schools functioned as civic centers in many ways. In cities and towns alike, principals, teachers, and staff were often important civic leaders, taking part in the civic life of the community in ways that stretched far beyond the classroom… [] The strong tie between education and the civic life of communities has been embodied in education policies pioneered in Minnesota, from community education to community service and early childhood family education. This link has begun to be renewed over the last decade in the Twin Cities, particularly in St. Paul where neighborhoods, working with schools and the city government, have been organizing to improve learning for children by reconnecting education to civic life and developing a *culture of learning* throughout the local community [National Conference on Citizenship 2009].

While the above report puts a positive spin on the current situation (highlighting efforts in the Twin Cities), the "Changing Shape of Minnesota" study [Greenberg et al. 2004], as noted in Chapter 1, identifies troubling trends among Minnesotans in attitudes toward immigrants. Minnesotans outside urban areas feel that immigrants are shunning integration and are a drain on public resources, especially public schools [Greenberg et al. 2004, 3]. The authors also find that, although there is still a strong commitment to volunteerism among Minnesotans, civil society

and community are on the decline [Greenberg et al. 2004, 4].   Still, Liberians report feeling

welcomed in Minnesota and repeatedly mention knowledge of Minnesota as welcoming of

refugees and immigrants as a reason for their secondary migration:

> For me it was a choice. I chose to come here because Minnesotans were very accepting
> to refugees and they accepted for the most of them to come over here, because they are
> very accommodating. And also, I think Minnesota is one of the states [in which it] is
> easy to get along with the people. You know, they are very generous people—the
> services, government services in terms of providing help for the poor, the hard-pressed,
> the refugees, displaced people who came here. So, [those people] feel fine even though
> it's very cold here; they find it more comfortable than many states, because it's not easy
> in many states, but here I think things have been very well [MN8, 47-year-old male living
> in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2004, LPR, Interview with author, October 15,
> 2010].

The Liberians interviewed as part of this study repeatedly mentioned Minnesota's

reputation for civic engagement and volunteerism as one of the factors that drew them to the

region. In contrast, Liberians living on Staten Island report tension with both African Americans

and whites.

Ethnic neighborhoods: race as a factor in local and transnational citizenship

Bloemraad [2006] notes the failure of U.S. (in comparison to Canadian) immigration and

reception policy to promote political belonging and immigrant integration.

> In the United States, migrants understand citizenship as offering rights and legal
> protections, such as protection from deportation, as well as economic opportunity,
> notably the freedom to achieve economic success. Such rights and freedoms do not lead
> to a strong conception of political belonging but rather to legal or economic citizenship.
> In Canada, migrants link citizenship to economic opportunities and rights—especially
> since the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms increased the salience of rights appeals in
> Canada. But immigrants in Canada also link citizenship to government protection and
> support. The result is a greater sense of political citizenship. In addition, the greater
> ethnic focus of Canadian multiculturalism generates a sense of recognition as an
> immigrant, with a unique cultural, linguistic, and historical background. American
> multiculturalism, couched largely in categories of race, requires immigrants to move
> away from specific cultural and identity backgrounds. In doing so, American citizenship
> appears to imply membership as part of a pan-racial group, creating ambiguities about
> one's place in the nation [Bloemraad 2006, 9–10].

Race is an important factor influencing the extent to which immigrants integrate in the United States, yet it alone does not determine outcomes. The authors of the Equality of Opportunity Study found that dispersion of poor among mixed-income neighborhoods correlates with upward income mobility; conversely, segregation and lack of public transportation correlates with low levels of mobility. Staten Island is the most sparsely populated New York City borough and the only borough with a non-Hispanic white majority (64 percent, according to the 2010 U.S. Census). It is racially segregated, with the majority of the borough's black residents living north of the Staten Island Expressway, concentrated within the North Shore. Often referred to as the "forgotten borough," the island is connected to the other New York City boroughs only by ferry to Manhattan and buses to Brooklyn.

While the majority of Staten Island's Liberians live on the North Shore, a small number have settled south of the Staten Island Expressway. One woman describes the racism she encounters living on the West Shore:

> I moved to Staten Island because the rent was cheaper compared to other parts of the city. For me it wasn't an issue of being [near the Liberian community] in Park Hill. I never lived in Park Hill… [] We didn't know Staten Island too well. I didn't know the whole borough, and that's what [the realtor] found for us. And they were very racist from the beginning. For us to get in there it was very, very – it was a tough sell for us, but we were able to overcome it. At the time, it was 1 percent Black when I moved in. Actually, when I moved into my building, most people thought I was working there… [] It's very segregated and it's very racist compared to other boroughs in the city. For me, it wasn't anything, because I have dealt with people from different nationalities. So, living there, it wasn't an issue for me, but it was an issue for my husband… [] When I took [my daughter] out in the carriage, they always thought that I was taking care of someone else's child or something. I didn't care; it wasn't a problem for me. Even up to now, it's not a problem for me. Even though I know the racism is still there, the segregation is there, because believe me the Staten Island Expressway divides... They call it the Mason-Dixon, and they're not willing to hide it or anything. They feel that they're entitled to this borough and they show you that they're entitled to it. They tell you sometimes that certain places, you're not allowed there. But with me, I was able to overcome it because of the different organizations I'm in, the different clubs and the different women [NY7, female in her 40s living in New York, entered the United States in the late 1980s, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, December 20, 2011].

As mentioned, Park Hill—the area where the majority of New York City's Liberians reside—is an area with a high crime rate due to drugs and gang activity. Many Minnesotans view Brooklyn Park—the area with the highest concentration of Liberians in Minnesota—as an equally undesirable place to live, but this is mostly due to racial prejudice, since the area has a large percentage of blacks, mostly Africans. In fact, Brooklyn Park is a community of choice for Liberians and the city's attempts to desegregate the neighborhood have been met with organized resistance by Liberians. In one case, Liberians successfully opposed a city plan to demolish overcrowded high-rise apartments (viewed as urban blight by native Minnesotans) in Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center (the two neighborhoods with high concentrations of Liberian residents) that would have dispersed residents throughout the city. While admittedly overcrowded and in poor condition, the apartments represent a physical community for Liberians who live there in close proximity to one another and offer affordable entry-level housing for Liberians.

One Liberian describes how Liberians in Brooklyn Park campaigned against the demolition of the Zane Avenue Corridor apartment buildings, where many Liberians live, in order to prevent Liberians from being dispersed throughout the city.[82] Rather than framing the issue as a fight against racism, the Liberians chose to present it as a tax issue, pointing out that lower density housing would reduce the number of residents and raise property taxes. The interviewee describes the decision to try to build partnerships and a coalition with the "larger white community" rather than seeking allies within the African American community:

> Those of us on the committee, we did a lot of community meetings; we did a lot of visits to the different churches trying to dissuade folks from accepting that proposal, because

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[82] Zane Avenue Corridor is a term used to describe the area of high-density housing in Brooklyn Park. It is bounded 85th Avenue to the north, a line parallel to Zane Avenue one mile to the west, a line parallel to Zane Avenue one mile to the east, and the Brooklyn Park boundary to the south.

we saw it as some sort of wearing down of our community. Because that would have affected our businesses, it would have affected our churches. A lot of institutions within the community would have been affected if you had demolished a good number of those apartment complexes and dispersed the folks all around the city and stuff like that. And we saw Brooklyn Park as the nucleus of the Liberian community in Minnesota; that's the hub of the community. So if you go there and you tear down… and the number of people that live in those complexes… a vast minority of folks that live there are Liberians. So we saw it as some sort of way of trying to disperse our political base and so we fought against that.

One of the ways that it was defeated…[] We had to sort of form a partnership and build a coalition with the larger white community… [] [There was an article] that tried to portray the city authorities as being racist, but [to take that approach] would have been counter-productive because at the end of the day, Liberians, we have more people there [in the apartments] than African Americans. We saw [the demolition] directly impacting all of our businesses and stuff there… a lot of Liberian businesses there [MN21, 38-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1992, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, July 26, 2010].

The city had already demolished one building and the question of whether or not to demolish the remaining buildings and relocate the residents had been put to public referendum.

We needed voters and we didn't have that… [] If we go with this whole racialized focus to this whole thing, the white folks are going to kick against it; it's not going to work. So we had to recast the conversation locally strictly as a dollar and cents type issue, because if this were to pass, part of the taxes were going up. People didn't want the taxes to go up, so we said, "How do we bring these people onboard?" Because [whites] had the number, they voted majority. Minority people don't vote that as much as majority folks do, and even a lot of minority people in this case in Brooklyn Park are not even eligible to vote… [] We didn't want our power base to be dispersed or be weakened, so that's how we were going to bring these people to the table. When they came, we said, "Okay, sell it to them as a dollar and cents type issue." And that's the only way it became sort of palatable to them. So, during election day, it was voted down over 64 percent. It didn't go through, because we had the support of the majority of the white voters who saw [the demolition] as a way of trying to increase their taxes. So, at the end of the day, we got what we wanted out of it; there was no large-scale demolition of these apartment complexes that would have dispersed our folks all around the Twin Cities. The larger community got what it wanted; taxes are going to stay the same [MN21, 38-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1992, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, July 26, 2010].

This story demonstrates how areas with high concentrations of Liberians, while seen as urban blight by outsiders, provide individuals with important networks of support (both social and financial) and cultural ties.

Better to be African? The neighborhood effect

Although Liberians on Staten Island encounter racism frequently, in other New York City

boroughs, Liberians identify more readily as African or Muslim and report integrating more

easily into American society. A Muslim Liberian male in his 30s who was undocumented after

overstaying a tourist visa but eventually obtained asylum in the United States explains why he

chose to live in the Bronx:

> Well, I chose the Bronx because the Bronx is a place of mixed immigrants. Staten Island is majority Liberian, but I wanted to know about other immigrants-- their culture, how they live, and because of those things I decided to stick in the Bronx… [] Bronx is affordable and it's a much more accessible place to stay. And not only that, Bronx… a lot of Africans when they came compared to other immigrants… They settled in Manhattan at the beginning and then in a little while they began to move into the Bronx. So the majority of Africans was based in the Bronx and Manhattan at that time. Staten Island was the Liberian base [NY9, male in his 30s living in New York, entered the United States in 1998, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, January 1, 2012].

Asked about his experience with racism, the individual acknowledged that racism was a large

problem for Liberians on Staten Island but said he did not experience it as much in the Bronx:

> I know there's a lot of racism in the United States, but fortunately I have not experienced that. I'm not saying it's not happening; it's happening every day… [] but I have not experienced it a lot… but once in a while [NY9, male in his 30s living in New York, entered the United States in 1998, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, January 1, 2012].

Liberians in Queens, the Bronx, Manhattan, and Brooklyn also report less tension

between Liberians (and, Africans in general) and African Americans than on Staten Island. On

Staten Island, Liberians attribute the tension between Africans and African Americans to

competition for scarce resources, citing "jealousy" among African Americans of the attention

and benefits that Liberians received as part of the refugee resettlement program. A Liberian

community leader on Staten Island describes the way he observes such attitudes affecting

relations between Liberians and African Americans:

[There is] a little friction between the African Americans and Africans; let's put it that way. I think [it is] purely, surely out of jealousy. It's not something that we [Liberians] did or anything... Many times I've met with the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] people, [and] I sit down; I say, "Let's talk about this." You'll be in a meeting, and I'll tell the people, "*You* should be the ones showing us the way here. We are all from the same place. You're black like me!" I don't care how long you've been here; [even though] you were born here, your root is from Africa. If you reject your root, you're going nowhere. If I'm thrown out of America, I have a place to call home; you don't have a place to call home if you're rejecting the Africa soil. You're here, [but] you're not settled, you're not happy. So why are you treating me like... What can you do? They don't respect us. I'll give you an example with the law... If two cops (an African American and a white cop) show off [make an example of] an arrest, most of the time the white cop watches, [but] the African American cop will go off [will have an attitude with] the African. I watch that a lot. Trust me, I watch that a lot. The white cop will always back off a little bit, stand there backing his men. And his men [the African Americans] will go off, *showing it off* there. It shouldn't be like that; it shouldn't be like that [NY2, 44-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 1986, LPR through marriage (formerly undocumented), Interview with author, July 17, 2006].

Long before Liberians arrived in large numbers, Park Hill was a neighborhood linked with drug activity and gang violence. As mentioned, the neighborhood was referred to as "Crack Hill" and "Killa Hill" in the 1980s during the crack cocaine epidemic.[83] The neighborhood has improved and is safer than it was in the 1980s, but the large influx of Liberians (including former child soldiers) and other Africans in the 1990s has resulted in gangs that identify as African, in competition with African American gangs. Every Liberian in New York interviewed as part of this project lamented the lack of rehabilitation services provided to former child soldiers on Staten Island and noted the problem of gang violence in Park Hill. Interestingly, while all those Liberians living in New York who were interviewed for this project complained of gang violence on Staten Island, some (such as the woman below) reported preferring the African gangs to the American ones:

Right now, you have more Africans immigrants on Staten Island than the original blacks. At the 2010 U.S. census, the 12 percent increase in the black community was from the African immigrants. I mean, out of five blacks on Park Hill, three of them are African

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[83] A film by Liberian-born filmmaker Gerald K. "Gee-Bee" Barclay titled "Killa Hill: The Park Hill Documentary," documents the area's history. Also, a 2011 article in the *Staten Island Advance* recounts the history of one of the neighborhood's most notorious gangs [Annese 2011].

immigrants. You have more Liberians on Park Hill than anywhere else. If you are to walk down Park Hill, that street is strange; you have trees. The place is so clean. You barely see the African Americans. Where they hang out sometimes is on Targee Street. The crime is still there, don't get me wrong, but you can park your car, leave it, and nobody is going to break in there. They only break in your car if you do something wrong to them, if you make them angry. It's the African gangs that control Park Hill, not the American gangs. So, as a result, this street is safe. If you walk, you see the [Liberian] market women sitting there and selling their groceries in the day. You still have the gangs, but it's a different form of it. Basically, the African gangs are more... Even the NYPD [New York Police Department] are afraid of the African gang, because they can shoot to kill. They can stand here and shoot at 100 feet because they are former soldiers.

There's not much of a breakdown in the Africans. You have the African gang. The African gang is whole together [not divided between Liberians, Sierra Leoneans, etc.]. They are educated; they are smart; they are working. Some of them are working; some of them are not working. Not only are they smarter... So, right now, they have gained control of Park Hill. You still have the Americans gangs; they are as rampant as they were before. But, right now the Africans are in control of Park Hill [NY7, female in her 40s living in New York, entered the United States in the late 1980s, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, December 20, 2011].

In the other boroughs, however, Liberians live in smaller numbers than they do on Staten Island and do not report the same problems with gangs. When asked about tensions between Liberians and other immigrant groups or African Americans, none of the Liberians from boroughs outside Staten Island who were interviewed for this project reported experiencing tensions. As one community leader in Queens responded,

I have heard of a lot of serious tension in places like Staten Island and other places. But in Queens it's a lot different here. A kid may come here and not be able to properly articulate himself or herself. But it's not a speech impediment; there's a speech difference here. So we try to work with that. I mean children are very quick to learn, after a short period of time they get adjusted and they speak very fluently. So we've not had the kind of tension that is reminiscent of what is happening in Staten Island and other places. In Staten Island and some other communities, you have a huge concentration of Liberians within one particular geographical region, so black Americans—African Americans—may see them as a threat, as trying to replace them, as trying to take away jobs, accommodation and other stuff. In this community, we don't have that kind of problem here. The Liberians are dispersed, Africans are dispersed; it's a mixed community, and people seem to get along well [NY10, 46-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 1984, LPR through marriage (formerly undocumented), Interview with author, July 21, 2006].

Similarly, a Liberian in the Bronx, when asked about tensions between Liberians and African Americans, said,

> No, there's not a problem in the Bronx. Staten Island is a lot of Liberians and a lot of African Americans, so the population is close to 50-50. So, automatically there are some groups formed; there will be some tensions. Especially the kids, they get involved in that stuff. But [in the Bronx], no, not at all. No, there's no African gangs here; they haven't formed that here yet. I'm not saying there are no Africans who don't do bad stuff, but the gangs don't have groups. No, they don't have groups [NY9, male in his 30s living in New York, entered the United States in 1998, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, January 1, 2012].

In contrast to the community on Staten Island, individuals living in the other four boroughs are also more likely than those on Staten Island to identify as African or as members of an ethnic group (e.g., Mandingo) rather than as Liberian. Asked why he chose to join the Liberian Mandingo Association of New York (LIMANY) rather than ULAA or other broad-based Liberian organizations, one Liberian living in the Bronx explained,

> LIMANY was a Mandingo [organization] first and [then] a Liberian organization. I'm a Mandingo first. So, there are a couple of Mandingo Muslims in West African countries. We've got Guinea, we've got Sierra-Leone, we have Liberia... and you can name the rest. So, they were able to convince me that they're Mandingo first and then Liberian second. So, based on that, I was part of it [NY9, male in his 30s living in New York, entered the United States in 1998, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, January 1, 2012].

According to Liberians in New York, however, a larger percentage of Liberians living in the Bronx (compared with other boroughs) are Muslim, a group which has suffered discrimination and is a minority in Liberia; Muslims account for 12.2 percent of Liberia's population in comparison with Christians who account for 85.6 percent [U.S. Department of State 2013].[84] Likewise, members of the Mandingo ethnic group (who are predominantly Muslim) have suffered discrimination and been portrayed historically as outsiders in Liberia [Dolo 2010]. In July 2013, during a Liberian Independence Day celebration in Brooklyn Park,

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[84] Muslims, as compared to Christians, were also resettled as refugees in much smaller numbers in the United States. For example, out of the 1,892 Liberian refugees resettled to Staten Island between 1992 and 2010, only 84 were Muslims [WRAPS 2010].

the keynote speaker, Liberia's Minister of Finance Amara Konneh (who is Mandingo), addressed

the discrimination against Mandingos in Liberia and the tendency for other groups to call them

"foreigners" by pointing out that other ethnic groups also exist in significant numbers in

countries outside Liberia:

> Our [Mandingo and Fula] population is denser in other countries such as Guinea, Ivory Coast, Senegal and Mali – that's why we are not considered Liberians. But equally so, the Lormas and the Kpelles, Krus, and Krahns are regional groups. In fact, there is a much stronger Lorma presence in Guinea than there is in Liberia [Fasuekoi 2013].

This may explain, in part, why Liberians in the Bronx choose to identify as members of

ethnic groups or as African before Liberian. A Muslim Liberian living in the Bronx describes

the role that religion plays in his intention to remain in the United States rather than return to

Liberia:

> First of all, our religion says that the place that you can stay and worship for God, that's your home. Anywhere you go and stay and make a family, that's your home. I felt that America is my home; that's why I decided to become a citizen [NY9, male in his 30s living in New York, entered the United States in 1998, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, January 1, 2012].

The label "African" carries both positive and negative associations. In one sense,

Liberians in boroughs outside Staten Island report identifying as African at higher rates than

those on Staten Island and also report feeling more integrated into American society. On the

other hand, community leaders, such as the one in Queens quoted below, feel that the label has

negative connotations within the broader American culture.

> Funding has been an extremely difficult problem. I think part of that has to do with the name African Center. Whatever is African in the society has a negative connotation. If you read the papers and look in the general media, whatever you see about Africa is always the negative. And so when we named the place African center, I guess in the mind of people it carries some negative perception. So funding has been a very difficult problem. So with the limited funding that we have here, we don't have the capacity to increase in actually rehabilitation and psychological treatment and all of that. And so what basically we've done has been referral [NY10, 46-year-old male living in New York, entered the United States in 1984, LPR through marriage (formerly undocumented), Interview with author, July 21, 2006].

In Minnesota also, Liberians feel that the term African has negative connotations and resist being

identified as such. Because Liberians are a small population relative to Somalis—a population

that has received much more attention in Minnesota, much of it negative[85]—Minnesotans often

do not distinguish between the two:

> If you look at the news about communities, a lot of the stuff that happens with the
> African community… and, I've brought this up a couple of times and people don't like to
> talk about it, because as Africans we think we always need to be nice, we only need to
> say nice things in public… but, there's the idea that the African community equals the
> Somali community. And, so basically what the general public know is that if you're
> African, you're probably a Muslim, you don't speak English and everything else… all the
> negative things, of course, because the news likes the negative stuff. So, because of that,
> we find the younger generation not wanting to be Africans. And, the older generation,
> we are probably "Africans," because if we're not Africans, then we're African Americans
> and then we don't want to be African Americans. So, it's like all these different things…
> Depending on the time and the place, you know, I could be African American or I could
> be African. It's just unfortunate. One of the things I keep thinking, especially for my
> group, is that there's probably a way for us to teach our daughters and our sons that it's
> okay to be African, there's nothing wrong in being African. There are some really good
> things, and so we need to push the good things and we need to elevate those, make sure
> we tell them those good stories [MN2, 38-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered
> the United States in 1992, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, October 13,
> 2010].

The above statement demonstrates how individuals' identities are formed often in

response to external influences. Looking specifically at refugees in the United States, Hana

Brown observes that Liberian refugees' definition and understanding of good citizenship is

highly racialized, constructed in opposition to what they view as African Americans' "failed

citizenship" [2011, 155]. Studies have shown that black immigrants often emphasize their

foreign identity as a strategy to avoid perceived downward social and economic segmented

assimilation into a racialized society [Mary Waters 1999, Kasinitz et al. 2008]. Employers in the

United States discriminate against native-born blacks, favoring foreign-born blacks and other

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[85] According to Census data, there are 32,000 Somalis living in Minnesota, though community leaders report that the
number is much higher. The community has been linked to stories of gang violence [Starr 2012] and reports of
Somali youth returning to Somalia to join Al-Shabab—a Somali Islamist group that has been identified by the U.S.
government as a terrorist group—have stigmatized the entire community [Davey 2013].

immigrants whom they believe to be hard workers [Kasinitz et al. 2008]. In reaction, black immigrants cultivate ethnic networks and identities in opposition to African Americans. The importance of race, especially for black immigrants, in the construction of transnational identity is documented by François Pierre-Louis in his study of Haitian immigrants in New York [2006]. Linda Basch et al. [1994] also highlight the role of race in structuring migrants' transnationalism, emphasizing the fact that transnational identities are often forged in reaction to a desire to avoid segmented downward assimilation into a racialized society. A Liberian woman in Minnesota emphasizes the fact that her organization—an African women's organization—focuses on local community needs rather than Liberian politics:

> You know, I have a friend whose situation is so terrible. I mean he has a very deep accent and he's been out of work for almost two years. He has a really good resume on paper because he has a couple of graduate degrees and all that. Really good strong work experience, work history. Every time he does a phone interview, they never call him back. Then he changed his name because he thought it sounded too African and it's still not helping. Yeah, it's just sad. So, I think when it comes to really getting involved in policy making and politics and stuff in the U.S. people feel like, "I don't belong so I shouldn't be doing this. I'm not going to spend my time getting behind policies and politics when I'm not the one they're looking to make life better for or whatever." You know, they don't see themselves as belonging, and so they don't want to participate. Now how is that going to affect our children who watch us not participating? Are we passing that on to them? I mean the schools do a really good job. My kids come home and then they have all the government thing—the American culture. That's what they teach them, but [they lose their connection to their parents' culture because they see that as negative.] As parents, lots of us are just going through the motions... we are. It's sad how many people think, "You know what? I'm just here for awhile." They have that dream of going back and all this stuff but then the reality is—this is your life now. [Many don't realize how different they have become living here.] One of the things that we try to stress... That's why for my organization, I choose to really focus on us here now and getting involved in the communities here and seeing what we can help to influence here. Not to lose sight of where we're from, but this is our home right now. And for many of us, it's going to be our home forever, whether we want to accept it or not. So how can we become part of this community instead of just living on the edge of it? Because that's what we're doing [MN2, 38-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1992, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, October 13, 2010].

In both Minnesota and New York, women report being more involved than men in local community activities outside the Liberian community. Their participation in the broader community assists them in integrating more fully in the United States and also provides knowledge and experience that many women then use to become more involved in transnational activities.

Gender differences in participation

For first generation Liberians, the desire to identify as Liberian and to get involved in the Liberian community is partly, especially for men, a form of defending oneself against the racism encountered in the United States and an attempt to reclaim status lost as a result of migrating to the United States. For Liberian men, participation in ethnic organizations affords them recognition and respect in the community that helps to counter racism. Michael Jones-Correa observed the same was true for middle-class Latino migrants [1998].

There is disagreement among Liberians as to whether men's experience of racism in the United States is more pronounced than it is for women, generally. Some report feeling that women more easily obtain employment and are viewed as less threatening to employers. Because many Liberians work in the healthcare sector (as nurses and home health aides), there is also a sense that employers prefer women, seeing them as more nurturing. In fact, the 2000 U.S. Census showed the healthcare sector as the largest employer of Liberians in New York and, overall, women were employed at slightly higher rates than men, which is supported by interview data.

Others, however, deny that women face less racism or discrimination. Instead, they argue that Liberian men have a harder time dealing with racism in the United States and loss of

status due to migration. Because they were more likely than women to have held positions of power and advanced degrees in Liberia, which they were then unable to transfer in the United States, they seek out forums in the United States where they are recognized for their former achievements. These tend to be the Liberian community organizations, churches, and tribal organizations, rather than the issue-based service organizations. One woman talks about men's participation in ethnic and religious organizations as an attempt to recapture status lost due to migration and racism:

> You see the men pushing for status in the church because that's another community area, in the community organizations all the time, because they oftentimes feel that they no longer have that status. Or on the jobs, they're not the people making the decisions, because they feel that they're the ones who are told to do something, so they want to change that, make that switch when they come to the community and some people hold on to their past life. Like, "Do you know who I am? Do you know what I did?" And the community [members] are the ones who know that. So we the women, again coming back to this collaborative, plurative beings that we are, we are looking to learn new things. How can we put those to work by putting these new ideas into play in the community? And the men are more just stepping back and deciding they're not going to do anything or they act up more in the community and in the churches and stuff [MN2, 38-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1992, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, October 13, 2010].

Liberian organizations run by women tend to focus more actively on addressing problems within local communities and schools. Filtering participation data by gender reveals an interesting pattern among the 40 individuals interviewed for this study.

Chart 3.9   Local v. transnational civic activity among Liberians in the United States, broken down by gender
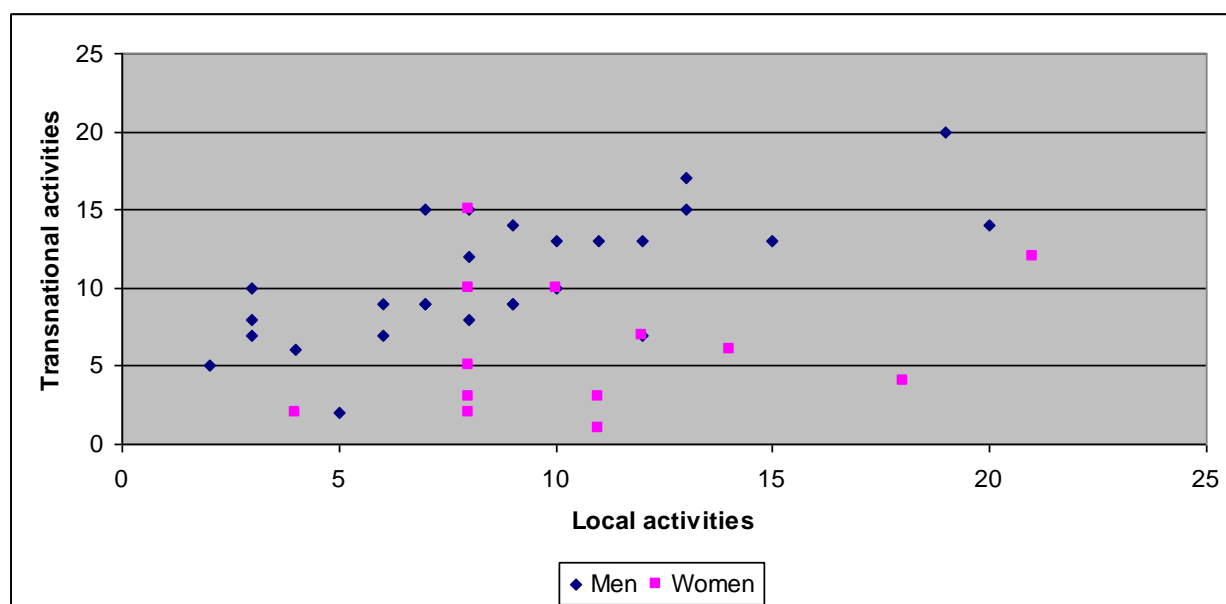
Source: Author's tabulation of data from interviews and online Liberian media.

In comparison to men, women reported participating more actively locally in their communities. All of the women interviewed also participated in transnational activities, but in all but two cases, women's local activities outweighed their transnational activities. This confirms what women mentioned repeatedly regarding women being more invested than men in their lives in the United States and being better able to envision a future for themselves in the United States. Conversely, only 4 of the 27 men (15 percent) interviewed participated more actively locally than they did in transnational activities. The remaining 85 percent either participated equally or more actively in transnational activities. In addition to tribal organizations, these included issue-based organizations (development, alumni, schools, and human rights) as well as activities such as participation in the Liberian TRC, participation in Liberian party politics (campaigning,

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fundraising, and returning to Liberia to vote), serving in or providing expertise to the Liberian

government, and posting to online media forums and news sites.

Women report being more attached to children's future in the United States than men

who report being more interested in pursuing government positions or business interests in

Liberia.

> The Million Man March actually connected me and gave me the opportunity to become
> involved in other groups on [Staten] Island, and my advocating with the International
> Mothers of Liberia—meeting other women on the international level—made it easier for
> me to assimilate in other groups compared to the guys in the community. The guys in the
> community, they're in a vacuum. I don't know why, but they don't attend any
> functions... [] I don't know about other men; I will say [that with] Liberian men in
> particular, in general the Africans – their egos most of the times come in to play, because
> they feel that where they're from, the men are in control and the women always sit at the
> back. So when they come here, they find a society where they are not willing to let go,
> especially the Muslim men. But the Liberian men are the same. That's all. They believe
> that the women should always be at the back; the men should be upfront in terms of
> political activities. So, because of that, sometimes they find it hard to easily assimilate in
> other groups [NY7, female in her 40s living in New York, entered the United States in
> the late 1980s, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, December 20, 2011].

The statement above from a woman in New York also demonstrates how participation in local

and transnational activities reinforces one another, promoting integration in the United States and

activism on the transnational level. Below, a woman in Minnesota points to the fact that the

Liberian women's organization of which she is a part, unlike most Liberian organizations, is not

registered as a 501c3 and does not have a formal organizational structure or hierarchy.

> I think, even in Liberia, that's what the men do; they just sit down and talk about politics.
> It's second nature (laughs). I think the women probably adapt easier here, so that may be
> some of it. Maybe women are more inclined to collaborate. I mean, our group, we don't
> have a head of the group. Some Liberians don't understand that. We're not incorporated
> or anything like that; we're just trying to work on action steps [MN1, 34-year-old female
> living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1985, LPR through marriage, Interview
> with author, October 14, 2010].

Liberian women, highlighting gender differences in participation, also state that, unfortunately,

women's civic activism in the United States is sometimes viewed as a challenge to their

husbands' masculinity:

There's a lot we're doing; we've made a lot of progress. The African women are just doing amazing things. The men are having a little harder time... with people trusting that they'll do... I don't know why, I don't know what it is, but I think women are less threatening; we tend to be more collaborative. People feel like they can really work with us. So a lot of things are happening for a lot of women. Oh gosh, there's so much to talk about. I had a summit last year about leadership, African women's leadership, and I had a panel of women, and so we talked about this idea about leadership and the change of roles... you know especially African women who are put into the leadership of the community... [] You have to be out there, you have to spend a lot of time in the community or doing other things outside of the home. A lot of it is passion; we have passion and fortunately live in a society that supports women going out and doing what they do. We have all these support [systems], whether we have to pay for a babysitter or whatever it is. So we talked about going out there and being upfront and being a leader and some of the negative things that are still in the community, where men feel like... and we had a few men there too, so we did a breakout session and I was actually with the men. There were "a few brave men," that's what I called them, and one of the things they said, this guy said that "in my community, when you have a wife who's always out there and she's the one speaking out and she's in the newspaper or on the radio or TV or whatever, there's this perception that she's the one that runs the household and so then you feel like you can't really speak up in the community because everybody would be like, 'you're such a wuss,' because you have a wife who is dominant and controlling even though it might not be like that." Then the men talked also about how the women tend to, with the passion, and all these things they're doing, they're focused on the community, and they use the family money—like me, I'm guilty [laughs]—to promote these causes and these passions, and so that's one of the things they find very challenging. They want to put things away for the future or they have some plans or dreams for the family, and here's the woman trying to do things for the community, doesn't have the funding or has to go after the funding and be separated from the family…[] And then, the time away from home... they just want their wives to be home when they're home; they don't want to always have to be home alone with the kids. And all that, I mean, I get it, I get it… [] So, it's a very challenging thing. Actually, all families go through it. But for an African man who grew up with his mom doing that, focusing on the children and the family, it's like, "Isn't our family enough for you?" [MN2, 38-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1992, naturalized U.S. citizen, Interview with author, October 13, 2010].

Participation in community activities opens doors for Liberian women, affording them

opportunities for further activism. While such activities help women to overcome social

isolation and become more politically involved, women continue to shoulder primary

responsibility for their families and often complain of becoming over-extended.

Local integration efforts by city officials

In both New York and Minnesota, local city officials point to the Liberian communities as sources of collective pride. Staten Island officials attend important Liberian functions, such as Liberian Independence Day celebrations, and the 2009 visit of Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf to Curtis High School. In Minnesota, however, local city officials have extended themselves much further in attempts to forge relationships with Liberian residents in their communities.

Brooklyn Park officials reach out to Liberians

Brooklyn Park city officials have made concerted efforts to reach out to Liberian community leaders and to incorporate Liberians, forging formal ties between Brooklyn Park and Liberia. In March 2012, Brooklyn Park Mayor Jeffrey Lunde, City Manager Jamie Verbrugge, and Brooklyn Park Police Community Liaison Robin Martinson visited Liberia in an effort to become more "culturally competent" and to better engage Liberians in Brooklyn Park. "We consider ourselves to be the largest Liberian city outside of Liberia," said Lunde, and discussed plans for the possible establishment of a Liberian consulate in Brooklyn Park [Hernandez 2012].

City officials believe that as many as 9,800 of Brooklyn Park's residents are Liberians and that Liberians account for 10 percent of Brooklyn Park's population [Young 2012]. In August 2012, the Brooklyn Park City Council approved a sister-city relationship with Kakata, Liberia. A visit to Brooklyn Park by the Liberian Vice-President and Liberian Ambassador to the United States followed in September 2012. In honor of the visit, a conference room at the Brooklyn Park City Hall was renamed the Kakata Room [*Brooklyn Park Pages* 2013]. Also in 2012, a Liberian firefighter traveled to Brooklyn Park for training, and firefighters from the

Brooklyn Park Fire Department visited Liberia, donating fire hoses and uniforms to their

counterparts in Liberia. After returning to the United States, they raised money for a fire truck,

which was donated in July 2013 [Young 2013]. Speaking about the city's efforts to connect with

Liberians, Rev. Alexander Collins—a Liberian living in Brooklyn Park who helped plan the visit

by Liberia's Vice President Joseph Boakai's to Minnesota—stated,

> What Brooklyn Park is doing is saying we believe in you, we believe in the country you
> come from. It means a lot to everyone that is involved to substantiate the saying that we
> have a relationship. It makes it visible. It makes it believable. It creates a sense of
> belonging [Collins, quoted in Baca 2012].

The Joint Community Police Partnership (JCPP)

The police departments of Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center, Hopkins, and Richfield have also

collaborated to do outreach with immigrants in their cities. The initiative, known as the Joint

Community Police Partnership (JCPP), is supported by the Hennepin County Office of

Multicultural Services and the Northwest Hennepin Human Services Council [Cultural Outreach

2013]. The JCCP provides:

> training for community members about police procedures and laws in order to improve
> community members' knowledge and understanding about what is expected of them;
>
> training for police officers, including the provision of information about cultural groups
> residing in their cities as well as Spanish language instruction;
>
> the hiring of community outreach personnel, including community liaisons who work at
> the police departments, multicultural cadets, and multicultural community service
> officers; and
>
> the creation of a Multicultural Advisory Committee to serve as a communication bridge
> between the police departments and diverse community residents [Joint Community
> Police Partnership and Multicultural Advisory Committee].
>
> JCPP community liaison officers attend Liberian community events, church services, and

sporting events. The police community liaison officer for Brooklyn Park reports that a large part

of her time is spent with the Liberian community.[86] Rather than holding events at the police department and expecting Liberians to attend, the liaison officers go out into the community, visiting apartment complexes and recreation centers to reach elderly Liberians and youth. The officers also connect Liberian residents with resources in the local community and educate native Minnesotans about their new neighbors in an effort to foster understanding and avoid conflict. The Brooklyn Park police department also trained a Liberian in Minnesota who then traveled to Liberia to train Liberian police officers. Brooklyn Park's community liaison officer was also one of the city officials who visited Liberia in 2012 in order to better engage Liberians. The initiative demonstrates the value that Brooklyn Park officials place on engaging the Liberian community and the recognition of the connection between civic participation locally in Minnesota and in transnational activities in Liberia.

Concluding remarks

An examination of Liberians' civic participation at the local level in New York and Minnesota demonstrates the ways in which civic engagement locally in the United States impacts Liberians' participation in transnational activities in Liberia. Comparing the experiences of Liberians in New York City and the Twin Cities reveals the important role that local context plays in encouraging Liberians to participate politically both in the United States and as diasporic citizens.

Areas with high concentrations of Liberians provide important networks of support and cultural ties for Liberians. Ethnic communities provide support for individuals to mobilize politically to confront challenges. Immigrant enclaves, however, such as Little Liberia on Staten

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[86] Author's interview with Robin Martinson, Brooklyn Park Community Liaison Officer, 2010.

Island, isolate Liberians from mainstream politics in the United States and create tension with non-Liberian groups. Liberians living in other New York City boroughs outside Staten Island report higher rates of integration and greater identification with other immigrant groups and African Americans. Concentration of Liberians in neighborhoods attracts initial support from government and NGO service providers, but in both New York and Minnesota, perceived divisions within the Liberian community have caused funders to discontinue support of many programs.

Looking at the role of general Liberian community organizations, tribal/county organizations, and issue-based organizations in facilitating integration and motivating transnational activity—on the one hand, Liberian organizations can and do organize political activity, helping immigrants to mobilize to address challenges and coordinate relief and investment in Liberia. Such organizations also serve as sources of ethnic pride for Liberians, especially men, in the face of racial discrimination in the United States. However, it is important to what extent these organizations seek to liaise and build relationships with other immigrant and civic groups in the United States or focus exclusively on homeland politics. In Minnesota, for instance, there are more than 40 Liberian community groups, often which end up competing for limited resources. Liberian organizations run by women tend to focus more actively on addressing problems within local communities and schools, with women reporting being more attached to children's future in United States than men who report being more interested in pursuing government positions or business interests in Liberia. Local city officials, in Brooklyn Park especially, through initiatives designed to engage Liberian residents, are helping to integrate Liberians in the United States and to support civic participation in transnational activities.

In the next chapter, I turn to the policies of the Liberian state for an examination of the role that sending states such as Liberia play in creating and instituting diasporas, by encouraging expatriate Liberians' involvement in home state development and peacebuilding activities.

4 Reaching out to the diaspora: the Liberian state's formulation of a diaspora policy

Nearly 700 people filled every seat and all available standing room in the Staten Island high school auditorium as they waited eagerly to hear Liberia's Iron Lady speak on November 9, 2010. It was the first time that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, the first democratically elected female head of state in Africa, would be addressing the Liberian community in Staten Island as president of Liberia. Sirleaf was no stranger to the U.S.-based diaspora; after fleeing Liberia in 1980, Sirleaf herself lived for many years in the United States before returning to Liberia and winning the presidency in 2005. She had even campaigned in Staten Island in the densely Liberian-populated neighborhood of Park Hill, known as "Little Liberia," in the summer of 2005. But her visit to Staten Island in late 2010 was her first as Liberia's president, and, as such, it marked an important turning point in the Liberian state's efforts to formally engage the diaspora.

After being elected in 2005, in Liberia's first elections following the 2003 Comprehensive Peace Agreement that brought 14 years of civil conflict to an end, Sirleaf had focused on reconstruction, rebuilding Liberia's infrastructure and mapping out a strategy for the country's economic growth and development. Informally, the Liberian government had always identified the diaspora as a potential key contributor to Liberia's recovery, encouraging Liberian emigrants to invest in their homeland and recruiting individuals from the diaspora to work in government. Only since 2008, though, had the state taken formal steps to enlist the diaspora. In so doing, it was attempting not only to harness the vast resources of the diaspora but also to expand its realm of governance outside its traditional territorial borders.

Historically, states have focused on managing immigration rather than emigration. Beginning in the final decades of the twentieth century, however, emigrant states have increasingly turned their attention toward engaging their "citizens abroad." This chapter reviews how Liberia fits into this pattern of an emerging trend among states to reach out to and "incorporate" their diasporas. It traces Liberia's policies toward the diaspora, including its attempts over the past few years to formulate an official diaspora engagement strategy. These policies are important in that they provide further evidence of the emergence and institutionalization of a "transnational citizen"[87] identity—defined by individuals' civic participation in a transnational space—among Liberians in the diaspora. As mentioned, for the purposes of this study, transnational political behavior is used as evidence of transnational citizen identity. Individuals who participate in transnational activities are considered to be identifying with the diaspora and as transnational citizens.

The previous chapters outlined how U.S. immigration and reception policy, as well as the local regions in which Liberians reside, have shaped Liberians' legal status and participation in the U.S. and diaspora political systems, and thus their transnational citizenship. Similarly, varying policies of the home state, Liberia, toward the diaspora have affected Liberian immigrants to the United States over the last three decades. Since 1980, Liberia has experienced numerous power and policy shifts that have impacted Liberians living in the United States. Most recently, the democratically elected government in Liberia has actively encouraged the involvement of the diaspora in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission process and as

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[87] I define "transnational citizen" as a person who not only has legal status in both a host and home state, but who participates in transnational civic activities aimed at effecting change in the homeland. Liberians often describe the desire to live meaningful lives in both the United States and Liberia as a desire to live in a "house with two rooms." The concept of transnational citizenship is based on Irene Bloemraad's of "full citizenship" (alternately referred to as "political incorporation") in a host state. "Full citizenship" includes not only legal status (in the case of a host state, naturalization) but also political participation—what she refers to as "participatory" or "substantive" citizenship [Bloemraad 2006, 5].

financiers of the rebuilding effort and has taken significant initiatives aimed at engaging the diaspora. This chapter examines migration policy from the Liberian side, detailing the Liberian state's role in creating a transnational space and a transnational citizen identity for Liberians in the diaspora.

Liberians increasingly more involved in transnational activities

As mentioned in the preceding chapters, full citizenship is achieved through not only full legal membership but also participation in a political system. By undertaking transnational activities, Liberians are reformulating concepts of political belonging. As Hana Brown notes, Liberians understand social membership and citizenship in terms of relationships of care. She argues, "Being Liberian means participating in relationships of care that also makes Liberians constructive and deserving members of society" [Brown 2011, 155]. Likewise, this study finds that as individuals increasingly participate in both local and transnational activities, they are formulating a transnational citizen identity that casts them as "deserving members of society." As mentioned in the previous chapter, there is a positive correlation between local and transnational participation. All 40 Liberians interviewed for this study reported being involved in both local and transnational activities. Those Liberians who participated most frequently in local activities also did so most frequently with respect to Liberia (Chart 3.8 is reproduced below).

Chart 3.8   Local v. transnational civic activity among Liberians in the United States
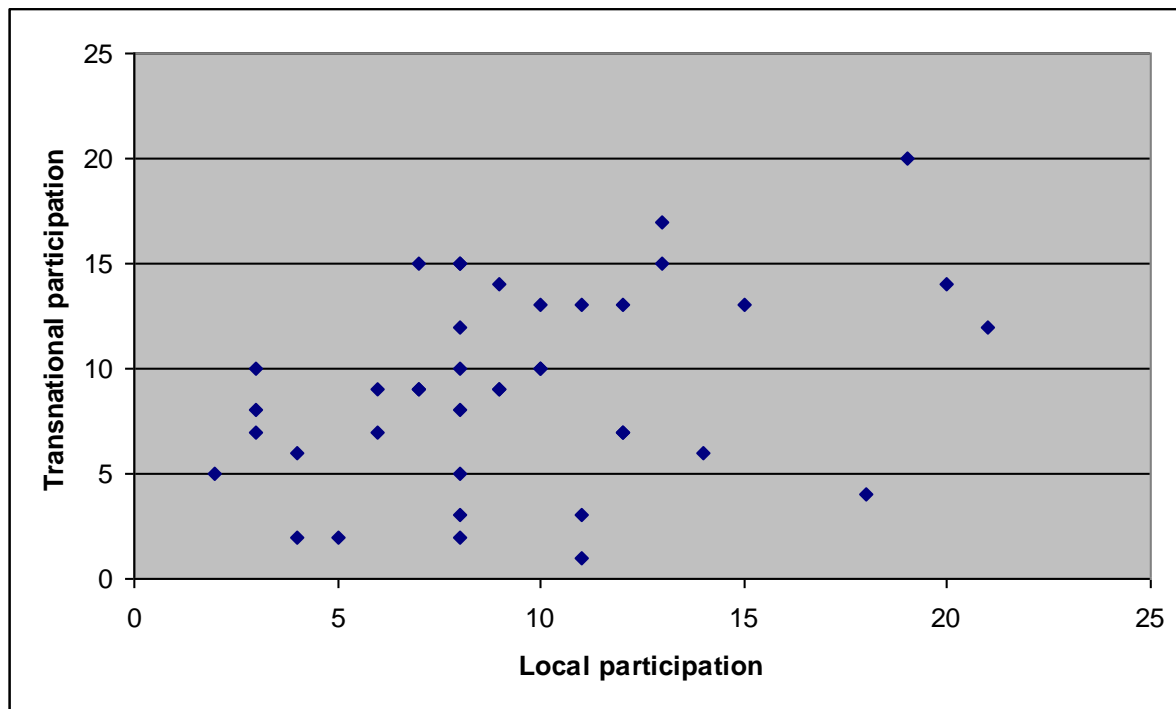
Source: Author's tabulation of data from interviews and online Liberian media.

To some extent, Liberians' involvement in transnational activities is undoubtedly a product of the Liberian wars. Civic engagement among Liberians in the United States was motivated by a desire to assist family and friends in Liberia and to help rebuild the country. Chart 4.1 shows that Liberians who migrated prior to the wars tend to be more actively involved in local as opposed to transnational activities.

Chart 4.1   **Local v. transnational civic activity among Liberians in the United States, broken down by year of migration to the United States**
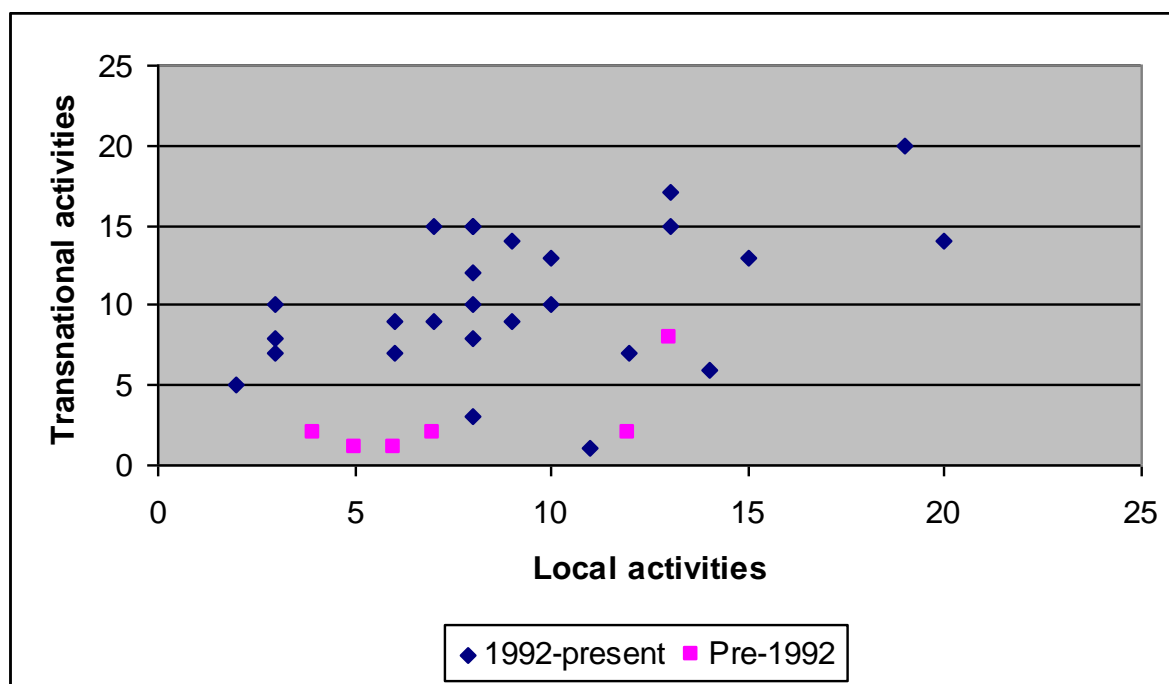
Source: Author's tabulation of data from interviews and online Liberian media.

Interestingly, however, 37 of the 40 individuals interviewed reported being more involved in transnational activities now (at the time of interview) than they were during the conflict. The wars may have been the initial catalyst for civic engagement, but data show that (for a significant number of individuals) participation in transnational activities creates opportunities for and encourages Liberians to become more civically engaged in their communities in the United States. Twenty-three of the 40 Liberians interviewed reported feeling that participation in activities aimed at Liberia had brought them into contact not only with other Liberians, but also with other civic organizations in the United States, and had helped to promote their integration in the United States.

Transnational participation can be both a unifying and divisive process for Liberians, however. As mentioned in the previous chapter, participation in tribal organizations, as well as party politics, perpetuates divisions between Liberians in many ways. In a 2013 visit to the Twin Cities to raise support for the government's development agenda, Liberia's Minister of Finance Amara Konneh also warned Liberians in Minnesota that their participation in transnational activities may be viewed negatively in Liberia:

> We've all heard the words "Congo" or "Country," used in less than affectionate ways, or used those words ourselves, in private conversations. You'll be interested to know that, in as much as your community here [in the United States] has its tensions - which are normal - it will be a whole different ball game when you get back to Liberia. Because, as a Krahn man or woman, for example, your American accent, nice clothes, respectable car and personal affluence will out of a sudden earn you the label of "Congo." Because the term is no longer used only to describe African American settlers; it is now used as a blanket label for all those who have risen to a certain income bracket. It is especially used, now, on those of us who have lived abroad for a certain length of time [Konneh 2013].

While the previous chapters focused on the influence that U.S. policy and local context have on individuals' participation, this chapter demonstrates the role that the Liberian state is playing in motivating individuals to participate in transnational activities.

Diaspora engagement policies: an emerging trend

States' interest in formalizing links with their diasporas has increased in response to a number of factors: large waves of migration from the global South to the global North following decolonization and, later, civil wars, such as those that occurred in Liberia from 1989 to 2003; advances in global technology and communication, most notably the Internet, that have increased the speed and ease of travel and allowed people to maintain contact across the globe; and the identification of the "brain drain" phenomenon—the large-scale emigration of skilled labor—as a significant economic cost to emigrant states. By extending certain privileges and rights to

diaspora members, emigrant states can lay claim to diaspora wealth and extract obligations from diaspora members.

Alan Gamlen's [2006] analysis of 70 states' diaspora engagement policies documents the widespread adoption of diaspora policies by emigrant states. Through "instituted processes" [Smith 2003b], states extend "thin membership" [Smith 2003b] to emigrants, drawing diasporas into a "web of rights and obligations" [Bhagwati 2003]. Whether coordinated or not, Gamlen argues, diaspora engagement policies serve to "transnationalize governmentality."[88] In other words, they "(re)produce citizen-sovereign relationships" [Gamlen 2006, 4–5] between states and diaspora members. This transnationalization of states problematizes the Westphalian concept of sovereignty, signaling a shift in what Francesco Ragazzi labels the "art of government" [2009]. While the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States codified the core elements of state sovereignty as 1) a permanent population, 2) a defined territory, and 3) a functioning government, states' increasing attempts to engage their diasporas shift the focus from territory to community [Ragazzi 2009].

Importantly, however, Gamlen argues that diaspora engagement policies are not part of a "unitary, coordinated state strategy," but rather form a "constellation of institutional and legislative arrangements and programmes that come into being at different times, for different reasons, and operate across different timescales at different levels within home-states" [Gamlen 2006, 4]. This is clearly true in the Liberian case.

Similarly, David Fitzgerald [2006] argues that emigrant states' interests alone are an inadequate lens through which to examine migration policies. Instead, the formulation of diaspora policies can only be understood through a "neopluralist approach disaggregating 'the

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[88] Gamlen uses the term "governmentality" as developed by Michel Foucault to describe the means and practices by which subjects are governed.

state' into a multilevel organization of distinct component units in which state incumbents and other political actors compete for their interests" [Fitzgerald 2006, 260]. Alexandra Delano's [2011] richly detailed description of Mexico's relationship with its diaspora in the United States demonstrates the usefulness of this type of multi-level approach. Gamlen, in his analysis of diaspora engagement policies, however, emphasizes the need for more comparative case studies, which this study of the Liberian diaspora addresses.

Historical Liberian state policy toward the diaspora

Migration between Liberia and the United States has always played an important role in defining Liberian identity. Increasingly, however, the Liberian state has sought to incorporate the diaspora into its sphere of governance, thereby contributing to the emergence of a transnational space in which members of the diaspora are increasingly carving out a transnational citizen identity. In order to understand fully the impact of home state policy on the emergence of transnational citizenship, it is necessary to examine the historical development of Liberian state diaspora policy.

Liberian policy pre-1980

From 1847 to the 1950s, migration between Liberia and the United States was largely immigration from the United States to Liberia. Until 1904, citizenship in Liberia was reserved exclusively for Americo-Liberians—the descendents of the original American settlers—and afterwards, a system of social and legal segregation persisted that denied full citizenship rights to indigenous Liberians. As late as 1944, Liberian President William Tubman, in his inaugural address, declared,

> What is termed the "Americo-Liberian population" is diminishing. It needs vigorous new blood of our own race from without to assist in the Herculean task set before them as the bearers of the torch of Christianity and civilization to their uncivilized brethren. I am therefore wholly inclined to the view that we should use every legitimate means at our disposal to encourage the immigration of our kith and kin to Liberia from the United States [First Inaugural Address of President William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman in Guannu 1980, 319].

During Liberia's first century, the ruling Americo-Liberians had faced numerous revolts among the indigenous population and spent heavily on military operations to secure the hinterland.[89] The Ports of Entry Act, in effect since January 1, 1865, had also contributed to the state's financial and security problems, restricting the government's ability to raise revenue through foreign trade and angering Liberia's indigenous peoples. The act specified that foreigners could only land their vessels and conduct trade with Liberians at certain ports of entry on the Liberian coast, thus prohibiting inland tribes from trading with foreigners.

By 1944, Liberia's economy was struggling, the country remained underdeveloped and in need of basic infrastructure, and the state faced continued internal security challenges. It was against this backdrop that Tubman came to power and immediately and aggressively pursued both a National Unification Policy and an Open Door Policy, which would eventually create opportunities for young Liberian elites to study in the United States, thus leading to the third wave of migration[90] between Liberia and the United States.

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[89] The distinction between the coastal region, where the Americo-Liberians settled and established the original counties, and the interior region, inhabited by indigenous peoples, has played an important role in Liberian history. At the time of Liberian independence in 1847, the republic consisted of three coastal counties—Grand Bassa, Montserrado, and Sinoe—that had been established on land purchased by the colonization societies from African tribal leaders and that extended only 40 miles inland from the coast. The area beyond the 40-mile demarcation zone was referred to simply as the "hinterland," and although the new republic had trading interests and posts in the region, it had no jurisdiction or sovereignty. Competition from European powers to gain control over the resource-rich interior in the second half of the nineteenth century led the Liberian government to expand its jurisdiction over the hinterland, establishing the department of the interior by an act of the Liberian legislature in 1869, and instituting a system of indirect rule over the hinterland in 1904 under President Arthur Barclay.

[90] This is the third wave of migration, as referred to in chapter 1. I identify six major historical waves of migration between Liberia and the United States. In summary, the first wave of migration was the forced transfer of Africans as slaves from the continent to North America, beginning in 1619 with the arrival of African slaves in Jamestown, Virginia, and ending in the summer of 1860 when the last recorded group of Africans was brought to Alabama on the slave ship *Clotilda*. The second wave, overlapping with the first, was the "return" of black Americans to Africa,

Liberia's Open Door Policy

Tubman pursued the Open Door Policy, hoping to emulate the U.S. policy with China, to increase foreign investment in Liberia. In his 1944 inaugural address, he stated,

> We shall encourage the investment of foreign capital in the development of the resources of the country, preferably on a partnership basis, and we shall accord to investors the necessary protection and fairness of treatment [First Inaugural Address of President William Vacanarat Shadrach Tubman in Guannu 1980, 321].

The policy was not an entirely new one. Liberian President Arthur Barclay (1904-12) had taken strides to attract foreign investment and increase the number of concessions to foreign firms, and it was President Edwin Barclay (1930-44), Tubman's predecessor, who had repealed the unpopular Ports of Entry Act as one of his first official acts as president.

In 1926, the Liberian government had signed the country's first foreign concession agreement with the Firestone Plantations Company. When Tubman entered office in 1944, Firestone was the only foreign company operating in Liberia. As a result of the Open Door Policy, however, by the early 1960s, 25 major foreign companies were operating and investing in Liberia.

Early mining concession agreements between foreign (mostly U.S.) companies and the Liberian government included "Liberianization" clauses, but they were extremely limited in scope. Essentially the companies were not allowed to import unskilled labor without the Liberian government's approval and were required to obtain the Liberian secretary of the

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resulting in the creation of Liberia as a political entity in 1822 and continuing into the twentieth century. The third wave was largely temporary in nature and occurred from the 1950s to 1970s, when Liberian students traveled to the United States on private and government scholarships to attend various universities and trade schools. The fourth wave, from 1980 to 1991, was comprised of the Liberians—largely the Americo-Liberian elite and those with established ties to the United States—who fled Liberia following the 1980 military coup by indigenous leader Samuel Doe. The fifth wave, from 1992 to 2005, was the arrival of large numbers of Liberian refugees in the United States due to the two civil wars from 1989 to 2003. Finally, the sixth wave, from 2005 to the present day, is what I refer to as the era of the transnational citizen, characterized by circulatory migration and Liberian diaspora members' active civic participation in both the United States and Liberia.

treasury's approval to hire more than 150 white employees.[91] The notable exception to this was

Firestone, which was permitted—in its 1926 planting agreement with the government of

Liberia—to hire up to 1,500 white employees. Due to the lack of technical training available in

Liberia, virtually all the companies' managerial and technical positions went to foreigners, with

Liberian workers filling tens of thousands of low-level positions. A 1958 law imposed penalties

on companies found guilty of discrimination against Liberians in hiring practices, but it did little

to change the balance of power due to the lack of qualified Liberian candidates.

In 1953, the mining concession agreement between the Liberian-American-Swedish

Minerals Company (LAMCO) and the Liberian government stipulated, for the first time, an

obligation on the part of LAMCO to train Liberians in the company's operations. LAMCO's

1960 mining concession agreement also included this requirement, and a 1974 agreement,

supplemental to the 1960 agreement, went further, stating an obligation "to provide on-the-job

training, to operate vocational training centers, and to provide scholarships" for Liberians.[92]

Such training requirements became standard practice after William Tolbert became

president in 1971. Tolbert's administration passed a series of laws in the early 1970s, beginning

with the Investment Incentive Act of 1973 (expanded in 1983), which collectively became

known as the Liberianization Policy. Embodied by the General Business Law of 1975 (amended

in 1998), the Liberianization Policy restricted foreigners from participating in 26 types of

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[91] For example, these requirements were part of both the 1945 Liberian Mining Concession agreement and the 1958 National Iron Ore, Ltd. Agreement. See, Annex 12, F.M. van der Kraaij [1983, 579-594].

[92] The three agreements are as follows:
> 1. Concession Agreement made and entered into between the Government of Liberia, Represented by the Honorable William E. Dennis, Secretary of the Treasury, R.L., and the United African Corporation, Represented by its President L.E. Detwiler, September 9, 1953.
> 2. Mining Concession Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of Liberia and the Liberian American-Swedish Minerals Company and Bethlehem Steel Corporation, April 28, 1960.
> 3. Supplemental Agreement Among the Government of the Republic of Liberia and the Liberian American-Swedish Minerals Company and Liberia Bethlehem Iron Mines Company, Successor To and Assign of Bethlehem Steel Corporation, February 26, 1974, including Appendix I and Exhibit A.

The full text of all three agreements are included as Annex 14, F.M. van der Kraaij [1983, 587-594].

"small" business reserved solely for Liberian investors and, importantly, required foreign

investors to "employ and train Liberians at all levels and increase their numbers in case of

expansion," in order to be eligible for incentives [The Republic of Liberia's National Investment

Commission 2007, 30].

Concession agreements for gold and diamond mining in the 1970s also included

"Liberianization" clauses requiring companies to take measures such as the following:

employing Liberians as a certain percentage of staff personnel; allocating a certain percentage of

voting shares to Liberians; giving preference to Liberian goods and services; allowing the

Liberian government to purchase the concessionaire's output; and training Liberians "for staff

positions and for skilled labour" in order "to realize Liberianisation of staff personnel."[93] Still,

Firestone managed to maintain its privileged position in Liberia. During a 1974 renegotiation of

Firestone's 1926 planting agreement, the Liberian government proposed requiring Firestone to

add an "affirmative program of training, and constant upgrading of qualified Liberian staff," to

which Firestone responded by saying the request was neither "appropriate" nor "necessary."[94]

The third migration wave: Liberian students arrive in the United States

As a result of the numerous concessions agreements between U.S. firms and the Liberian

government and the subsequent Liberianization Policy, Liberian students began traveling to the

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[93] The four agreements are as follows:
        1. Gold Concession Agreement Between The Government of Liberia and Lawrence L. Trumbull, May 7, 1970, Monrovia, Liberia.
        2. Diamond Mining Concession Agreement Between The Government of The Republic of Liberia and Globex Minerals, Inc. of California, U.S.A., December 23, 1957.
        3. Gold Mining Concession Agreement Between the Government of The Republic of Liberia and African Mining Partners, August 1, 1973.
        4. An Act Approving The Mining Concession Agreement Entered Into By And Between The Government of The Republic of Liberia And Liberian Gold And Mining.
The full text of all four agreements are included as Annex 9 [van der Kraaij 1983, 567-570].
[94] See, "Summary Table of Renegotiation of the 1926 Planting Agreement with Firestone 1974-1975-1976," Annex 8, F.M. van der Kraaij [1983, 557].

United States for technical training in the 1950s. In Minnesota, for example, Dunwoody

Industrial Institute (renamed Dunwoody College of Technology in 2001) hosted a steady stream

of Liberian students on scholarships funded by the Liberian government and also by private

entities (notably LAMCO). Liberian students are first mentioned in the institute's newsletter *The*

Dunwoody News in 1959, which states,

> There are three trainees from Liberia, two of whom are in the Machine Shop and one in
> the Automobile department. Two of these trainees are sponsored by the International
> Cooperation Administration of the United States; the other is studying under a Liberian
> Government scholarship ["International Student Body at Dunwoody" 1959, 1].

The next mention of Liberian students at Dunwoody is not until 1972 (1 student), followed by

1974 (1 student), and 1975 (2 students). In 1977, however, *The Dunwoody News* profiled a

Liberian woman, Serina Cooper-Klimpacher, who was at the institute for a special five-week

assignment in personnel management. Described as a married mother of three children, Cooper-

Klimpacher was referred to as a staff administrator in the personnel division of LAMCO, which

"is presently emphasizing the replacement of many supervisors and workers with Liberian

employees. Dunwoody has aided this development by providing training for several supervisory

employees as well as the training of mechanics and craftsmen" ["LAMCO Employee Attends

Special Courses" 1977, 3]. From 1977 to 1979, an additional 19 Liberian students (all but two

LAMCO employees) were profiled in *The Dunwoody News.* In 1980, however, the flow of

Liberian students to Dunwoody ended abruptly.

Liberian policy 1980 to 2005

The period from 1980 to 2005 is most notable, in terms of migration policy, for the mass exodus of Liberians[95] that occurred as a result of a coup d'état and two civil wars. From its founding until 1980, Liberia had been ruled by the Americo-Liberian elite as a one-party state. On April 12, 1980, Samuel Doe, an ethnic Krahn—one of Liberia's 16 indigenous groups—led a military coup that toppled William Tolbert's administration and killed President Tolbert. Ten days later, 13 cabinet members and high-ranking officials in the former Tolbert government were publicly executed. Hundreds of government officials—those with money, connections, and valid visas— including Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, fled to the United States. After a 1985 coup attempt by Thomas Qwiwonkpa (an ethnic Gio) failed to unseat Doe, he grew increasingly paranoid, launching bloody reprisals on real and perceived opponents, including ethnic Gios and Manos, whom he blamed for the attempted coup. These reprisals led to a sharp increase in the level of emigration.

Mass emigration from Liberia

Prior to 1980, Liberian net migration—the number of immigrants minus the number of emigrants—had been quite small but always positive, with immigration higher than emigration. From 1980 to 1985, net migration was zero. After the 1985 coup, however, emigration from Liberia increased dramatically and continued in massive numbers—as shown in the table below—following Charles Taylor's invasion of Liberia in 1989 and throughout the First Liberian Civil War, from 1989 to 1996.

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[95] According to the final report of the Republic of Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission, an estimated 250,000 people died during the two conflicts; another 1 million were displaced internally and hundreds of thousands became refugees (collectively, nearly half Liberia's population) [2009, 44].

Table 4.1   Liberian net migration, 1950–2010

	1950-1955	1955-1960	1960-1965	1965-1970	1970-1975	1975-1980	1980-1985	1985-1990	1990-1995	1995-2000	2000-2005	2005-2010
Net migration (thousands)	- 0	8	8	11	11	12	0	- 368	- 284	453	- 73	300

Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects: The 2010 Revision,* CD-ROM Edition, April 2011, http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Excel-Data/migration.htm

High emigration among the tertiary-educated population

Although the net migration rate went from negative to positive in the period from 1995 to 2000, it was largely due to the repatriation of Liberians from refugee camps in bordering countries— those who had had the fewest resources and had only been able to flee on foot—in the period from 1996 to 1999, between the Liberian civil wars. Significantly, the outflow of Liberian elites—those with the highest level of education and the greatest access to resources—that had begun already in the early 1980s, continued unabated throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s.

Skilled emigration remained a constant concern for Liberia. In 2000, for example, the emigration rate of Liberia's tertiary-educated population was 45 percent (i.e., 45 percent of those who earned tertiary degrees in Liberia emigrated) [Ratha et al. 2011]. This was an increase from the 32 percent skilled emigration rate recorded in 1990 [Docquier and Marfouk 2006]. As late as 2004, the most recent year for which data are available, 51 percent of physicians trained in Liberia emigrated.[96] The Liberian government's desire to reverse this "brain drain"—to turn it into a "brain gain"— has driven Liberian policy toward the diaspora in recent years.

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[96] "Revised panel dataset on physician emigration," description in Bhargava et al. [2011]; dataset available at "International Migration Data Sets," Frédéric Docquier website, http://perso.uclouvain.be/frederic.docquier/oxlight.htm; Medical brain drain: Physicians emigrating- 1991 to 2004 (expressed as percentage of physicians trained in Liberia)

1991	46.096	1998	47.768
1992	48.789	1999	49.579
1993	49.387	2000	49.756

Liberian policy post-2005

Following the 2005 elections, the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf administration immediately reached out to individuals in the diaspora—largely former government officials—beckoning them "home" to fill government positions. In one of the more widely publicized cases, Sirleaf appointed Beatrice Munah Sieh, a woman who had previously served as deputy chief of police in Liberia, to be Liberia's new chief of police in 2006. At the time, Sieh had been working for 10 years as a special education teacher in Trenton, New Jersey, after having survived an assassination attempt and fleeing Liberia in 1996.

Beyond the identification of key individuals in the diaspora who could assume positions of power in the new government, however, the Sirleaf administration was slow to recognize the diaspora's huge financial and political potential. It was not until the end of Sirleaf's first five-year term neared that the administration began taking official steps to engage the diaspora more broadly—to entice them to reinvest in Liberia and, at the same time, to incorporate them into its realm of governance. Following a review of the Liberian diaspora's political importance, the remainder of this chapter details the actions by the Liberian state since 2005 to engage the diaspora and explains how these actions contributed to the creation of a transnational space in which diaspora individuals are increasingly choosing to operate.

1994	48.626	2001	49.351
1995	48.685	2002	49.840
1996	47.908	2003	50.255
1997	47.870	2004	51.219

The Liberian diaspora's political importance

Among Liberians, the diaspora is often referred to as Liberia's 16th county (Liberia has 15

counties), reflecting the important (though not always positive) role that the diaspora is

acknowledged to play in Liberian politics. On the November night that Sirleaf spoke in Staten

Island, tickets were free but hard to come by due to the fact that Staten Island's North Shore

neighborhoods boast the highest concentrated population of Liberians outside of Africa. Those

without tickets had come dressed for the occasion anyway, mingling among those in the crowded

line outside the school before the event in the hopes of receiving extra tickets from a friend or

stranger. The Staten Island Liberian Community Association (SILCA) had lobbied for years,

since Sirleaf's election in 2005, to host the Liberian president, but it was only in late 2010, in the

run-up to the October 2011 presidential election, that Sirleaf made her first presidential visit to

Staten Island.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's 2010 visit to Staten Island that night was undoubtedly in part

stumping for the presidential election in October 2011. Although few Liberians residing in the

United States travel back to Liberia to cast ballots in elections, the diaspora is able to influence

Liberian elections in a number of important ways.

In September 2010, the Organization for the Promotion of Development in Liberia

(OPODL)[97]—a diaspora political pressure group registered in Minnesota and created to support

the 2011 presidential re-election campaign of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf—dispatched one of its

members, Alonso S. Ngumbu, to Liberia for a three-week "assessment and engagement visit,"

which included setting up a local OPODL office in Liberia and meeting with the leadership of

Liberia's Unity Party [Kiatamba 2010]. Speaking to *The Liberian Journal* prior to his trip,

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[97] A statement by OPODL's public relations officer, Abraham Kamara, regarding the organization's founding can be found at "OPODL: A Huge Setback if Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is Not Re-elected" [2010].

Ngumbu stated, "We need to put some boots on the ground, to positively impact the course of political events in Liberia, because the 2011 elections are right before us." The following month, OPODL sent another member of its public relations team to Liberia. Speaking about the purpose of the trip and OPODL's specific objectives, Abraham Kamara said,

> OPODL hopes to achieve several things. First, the trip is meant to send a loud and clear message to the Liberian people that we cannot afford to turn back the clock. President Sirleaf has placed Liberia on an irreversible path to success, and OPODL doesn't want any turn in the wrong direction. We also intend to conduct a press conference, laying out a more detailed case to Liberians and the world about our support for President Sirleaf's candidacy. The press conference will also provide an opportunity to address any questions about our organization and our efforts. As part of a broader strategy, we will finalize plans to put strong and heavy boots on the ground, a local office in Liberia. There seems to be a huge interest in OPODL in Liberia, and our emergence has certainly inspired so much interest in the uniqueness of our aggressive approach. This is perhaps why our growth as an organization seems unprecedented, especially given our relatively short history. Lastly, we hope to meet and engage several senior level government officials and Unity Party bosses, including the Iron Lady, to build a more sustained working relationship across many fronts [Abraham Kamara, quoted in Kiatamba 2010].

Liberians in the United States also raise money and provide support for fellow Liberians traveling back to Liberia to campaign for candidates during elections. Ten of the 40 individuals (25 percent) interviewed for this study reported being involved in party politics in Liberia—fundraising, campaigning, and (in two cases) returning to Liberia to vote. Those who cannot afford to travel to Liberia to participate in the elections provide support for others who make the journey. As one Liberian living in Minnesota explained,

> There are people who will go back [to Liberia] to canvass to vote and to do the ground work. I don't know whether I would be able to go. But at the same time... because we live in United States, we have influence over our people. For example, my family, I send them money every month. I send money to my mom every month and my dad every month to buy a bag of rice and for her up-keep. I send her money every single month, so if I told her, if I sit and have a conversation with her and say, "Look, yeah I think this person would do it for us," she would listen to me. I mean, maybe not 100 percent of everybody would do that, but a lot people know that you have a son or daughter in the United States and when you tell them something like that, they would listen to you. So, again we have a way of influencing elections, so many ways in Liberia. There are some of us who are American citizens, but we can still go home and we can canvass. I'm not an American citizen yet, so I'm free to go home, and I can canvass, but [I don't] because I

believe there is still a fear for my own life. So, I would probably not do that, but I can coordinate what they do there. We can do some fundraiser to help in small ways those people who want to go back, help them to pay their plane tickets, help them to be able to survive while they're on the ground, because in Liberia nobody would give them money to sustain themselves. So, for those who would be going, we raise money to help them go back home and cover and help [MN12, 50-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2000, asylee, Interview with author, October 6, 2010].

As the individual above notes, the diaspora also plays a key role in influencing how family members back home, and others to whom they send remittances in Liberia, vote. As one Liberian in Minnesota[98] put it, "The people here are so integral in elections in Liberia because they tell people whom to vote for. Even, you had candidates come here to do speeches that were running there because they know… They did it during the election of Ellen" [MN1, 34-year-old female living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1985, LPR through marriage, Interview with author, October 14, 2010].

In April 2011, in fact, during an induction ceremony for officers of the Unity Party (Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's political party) Minnesota Chapter, Varney Sherman—the chairman of the Unity Party in Liberia—encouraged those in attendance to use their connections and money to influence voters and the political process back in Liberia:

A telephone call to those who receive the barrel [referring to shipments of goods] from you regularly; a telephone call to those who receive the [money transfer] control number from you regularly can make a tremendous difference [Varney Sherman, quoted in Kiatamba 2011].

Another Liberian residing in Minnesota explained the Liberian state's practice of sending government ministers and officials to Minnesota in order to raise awareness of and "sell" the government's agenda in this way:

And they come here and I tell you what, Liberians in the United States, in the diaspora, we're huge, we're part of the economy. We fuel the economy in Liberia. And that's not gonna stop even if we have a [World] Bank president[99] because we're sending some monies to our families. But they come here because they feel that when we send monies

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[98] Minnesota is the U.S. state with the largest Liberian population, estimated to be around 25-30,000 persons.

[99] Referring to the fact that Ellen Johnson Sirleaf previously worked as a senior loan officer at the World Bank.

to our families, we control our families back home. We can say, you know, "Vote for this person," or "Do not vote for that person," because we're sending you money, we're supporting you, and if this is the person that we want, you better vote for that person, because otherwise you're not gonna get money from us. But they also come here because they figure out they can sell that agenda. And once they sell it to us we can all call our people and say, "Well, you know, the Liberian government is doing great things lately, you know; we heard it's doing this," and the people are like, "uh-huh" [MN11, 36-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1995, naturalized U.S. citizen through marriage (formerly refugee in Ghana and Côte d' Ivoire), Interview with author, October 7, 2010]

Liberians have also returned to Liberia in large numbers to take up positions in government.

One interviewee describes the large percentage of Minnesotans in Liberian government:[100]

There are a lot of people from Minnesota who are part of the present government. I'm told they have a giant share of the government in Monrovia, people [from Minnesota] who participate as compared to other states. Yeah, I don't have data that would say this is it, but what I'm told… Yeah, I know a lot of friends right here who work for government. But the remittances are still there, on a monthly basis. Nearly every friend I know is building a house in Liberia. Either they have finished [a house] or they are trying to build one or they are building a second one. I know that for a fact. I also do know that on a daily basis people leave from Minnesota to [go to] Liberia either for a visit or for vacation—for many different reasons. I do know people who move to Liberia from Minnesota on a daily basis. So what I'm trying to say is in Minnesota we play a major role both in the economic and political situation in Liberia today. This is why you see that most of the [Liberian] government officials come to Minnesota. A lot of the Liberian people live [here]; they used to be in Rhode Island and Philadelphia but now Minnesota is the highest number of concentration of people and so a lot of the programs center around [here]. ULAA is having the meeting right in this same hall in September. So everything is centered around Minnesota most of the time. So Minnesota is very important in some of the economic and political decisions that are made in Liberia [MN3, 45-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1998, asylee, Interview with author, July 26, 2010].

As noted by the interviewees, the Liberian diaspora is an enormous source of capital for Liberia.

According to the World Bank, Liberia received 400 million USD in remittances in 2013 [World

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[100] Liberians in Minnesota repeatedly mentioned the fact that a large number of individuals had returned to Liberia to take up positions in government. Attempts to verify this information, however, were unsuccessful as it was difficult to confirm whether or not government officials had resided in Minnesota.

Bank, "Migration and Remittances Data"]. The figure represents more than 20 percent of the

country's gross domestic product (GDP), which was the ninth highest percentage worldwide.[101]

Table 4.2   Annual remittances to Liberia, 2004–2013 (updated as of October 2013)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013 (estimated)	Remittances as a share of GDP (%)
Remittances (USD millions)	58	32	79	62	58	25	31	360	360	400	20.4 %

Source: World Bank staff calculation based on data from International Monetary Fund Balance of Payments Statistics database and data releases from central banks, national statistical agencies, and World Bank country desks. See Migration and Development Brief 12 for the methodology for the forecasts [World Bank, "Migration and Remittances Data"].

Even more important in terms of political influence than individual remittances, however,

is the potential investment power of the diaspora. According to the World Bank, in 2009 there

were an estimated 400,000 Liberians in the diaspora with a potential 600 million USD in

savings. This means that emigrants' potential savings equaled 66.8 percent of Liberia's gross

domestic product (GDP) [Plaza and Ratha 2011, 15].[102] This is significant, especially when

considered in light of the fact that of the 20 African countries included in the study, the Liberian

diaspora's estimated savings relative to the country's GDP was the highest of any country. In

fact, the country with the second highest amount was Zimbabwe, where emigrants' potential

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[101] The countries that ranked above Liberia were as follows: Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Nepal Lesotho, Moldova, Armenia, Haiti, and Samoa.

[102] Data on migrants' savings was not available after 2009. However, in 2013, the World Bank reported that Liberia's GDP was 1,733,823,553 USD. Dividing 600 million USD by this number yields a potential savings equal to only 35 percent of Liberia's GDP.

savings represent only 34.4 percent of the country's GDP. Morocco and the Democratic

Republic of the Congo (DRC) tied for third place with 10.5 percent. According to the study,

> estimates are based on the assumptions that members of the African diaspora with a college degree earn the average income of their host countries, the migrants without tertiary education earn a third of the average household incomes of the host countries, and both skilled and unskilled migrants have the same personal savings rates as in their home countries. Understandably, savings are higher for the countries that have more migrants in the high-income OECD countries [Plaza and Ratha 2011, 14].

Early efforts to engage the diaspora

While investment potential from the diaspora represents an enormous opportunity for Liberia,

the Liberian government, by its own estimation, has been slow to recognize and exploit its

potential. In the words of Amara Konneh, then Liberia's minister of planning and economic

affairs, in May 2010,

> No post-conflict country has ever successfully recovered without tapping into the potential of its Diaspora community. True, we recognized that probably a little too late. But, I think it's never too late for a country like Liberia to reach out to all of its citizens no matter where they are, particularly those who have the capacity to help with the recovery process [Amara Konneh, quoted in Butty 2010].

While the Liberian government's formulation of a diaspora policy is still in its nascent stages, the

Liberian government has in recent years undertaken significant initiatives aimed at engaging the

diaspora.

The Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission Diaspora Project

In 2007, for example, the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), in an effort to

construct a durable peace after 14 years of conflict, became the first TRC (of more than 30

worldwide) to take statements from individuals—victims, witnesses, and perpetrators—in the

diaspora. Partnering with Advocates for Human Rights, a non-governmental organization

headquartered in Minnesota, the TRC and an army of volunteers gathered 1,631 statements from

Liberians in Ghana, the United States, and the United Kingdom. More than 80 percent of these, however, were taken in Ghana, and only 237 were recorded in the United States.[103]

The reasons for the low participation rate in the United States are many. Due to the fact that the Liberian TRC was not empowered to give amnesty to those who testified, Liberians—both in Liberia and in the diaspora—were reluctant to do so. Liberians in the United States, however, also blamed a lack of knowledge of the commission's work for their decision not to testify. As one person put it,

> Well, I wasn't interested in that... I had lots of stuff running through my brain at the time. I mean I could have given a statement of course because I experienced my own share of persecution and all kinds of stuff, but I thought they had enough people. And the day that they came to Minnesota, that weekend or that time, I think [it was the] second [time] they came, then they said the people who they had were people whom they had already scheduled a long time ago. So, I think I missed some kind of information, technical thing, so that's why I couldn't give a statement. But, I mean, I could have given one. [MN12, 50-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2000, asylee, Interview with author, October 6, 2010].

The same person also mentioned another important reason that many Liberians in the United States chose not to participate in the TRC—namely, fear that their statements could be used against them should they someday return to Liberia.

> Well some people that did not talk thought…[] about going back home some day, and they didn't feel that it was too safe for them to give statements, because you have people here who were active combatants in the war. And if you are identified, you know, they felt they could get in trouble, things like that. I mean, I was thinking about [that] too, but I think my not giving a statement was just mainly technical [MN12, 50-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2000, asylee, Interview with author, October 6, 2010].

Other Liberians stated that they feared their testimony could put relatives in Liberia at risk:

> I was contacted by the Advocates for Human Rights [and asked] if I could explain my story. I told my lawyer, and my lawyer said, "Well at this time, we haven't been granted asylum yet, so I'll advise you not to talk anything about it until we hear from the judge,"

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[103] The regions in the United States where the greatest number of statements were collected were as follows: the Twin Cities (70 statements); Staten Island (61 statements); and Philadelphia (30 statements).

because… [] we were thinking the judge could deny me asylum… [] So that was the reason why I did not go, but definitely I would have. There are other reasons, too. If it wasn't for my asylum case that was pending, probably the only reason I wouldn't have done that [was] because my mom lives in Liberia. My daughter lives there [too], and exposing her through what I was going to explain would not be too good for her [MN16, 32-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2006, asylee (formerly refugee in Ghana), Interview with author, July 23, 2010].

Tribal divisions also played a role in suppressing participation. In conversations (both interviews and informal conversations) with Liberians, when asked why they thought so few people participated in the TRC process, many Liberians mentioned viewing the process (especially in Minnesota) as dominated by indigenous Liberians, notably ethnic Krahns.[104] An Americo-Liberian who said he did not testify because he wasn't invited to explains that he thinks the TRC process was driven by indigenous Liberians:

> I would have [given a statement]. I don't know why they didn't ask me, but I'll tell you what [I think] the reason is why they didn't ask me. [It's] because I would have quite a different perspective being an Americo-Liberian [in terms of] how I saw it [the conflict], you know. Maybe they didn't want me, those indigenous [Liberians] who work with the Advocates for Human Rights, they didn't want to get my perspective, because I would have been honest and what not, and say it like it is [MN4, 51-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2000, asylee, Interview with author, October 4, 2010].

Most interestingly, many Liberians in the United States stated that they had not given a statement to the Liberian TRC because they were not asked to do so; or conversely, when asked why they had given a statement, said they had done so because they were asked personally. One Liberian, when asked why he had not testified, replied, "Well, one, I was never called; and two, I'm not one of the most aggrieved party in the conflict, I did not play any role at all [leading up] to the conflict. I was neither on any side of the conflict" [MN3, 45-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1998, asylee, Interview with author, July 26, 2010]. One religious leader who helped to raise awareness of the TRC's activities when asked if he gave a

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[104] During the Liberian wars, Minnesota was known as a fundraising site for the rebel group Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) whose members were largely Krahn and Mandingo. See, for example, "Accusations of Rebel Ties Divide Minnesota's Liberian Community" [Schmitz 2003].

statement, said, "No, I did not give a statement, because they didn't ask me. I went through the war and I have my own story, but they didn't ask me" [MN8, 47-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2004, LPR, Interview with author, October 14, 2010].

Individual efforts to engage the diaspora

Besides the work of the TRC, early efforts by the Sirleaf administration to engage the diaspora were primarily undertaken on the initiative of individuals, rather than as part of coordinated government action. Arguably the most significant individual efforts were those of Milton Nathaniel Barnes, the former minister of finance in Charles Taylor's government from 1999 to 2002, who was appointed by Sirleaf as Liberia's ambassador and permanent representative to the United Nations in 2006. He served in that position for two years, and then as Liberia's ambassador to the United States from 2008 to 2010.

In November 2007, Barnes presented an overview of the Liberian government's strategies to promote diaspora participation in Liberia to a panel at one of the events that constituted the United Nations Institute for Training and Research's (UNITAR) Migration and Development Series. The presentation focused on the types of opportunities that increased diaspora participation would afford, namely economic (remittances and investment), technological, capacity building (including better work ethic and time management skills), intellectual property, and political lobbying in the United States [Barnes 2004]. Individual strategies to engage the diaspora and encourage return to Liberia were also outlined.

Ambassador Barnes and his wife, Dawn Cooper-Barnes, a former professor of arts and dance instructor, also founded the Liberian Renaissance Foundation (LRF) in spring 2007. A non-profit organization, the LRF's mission was "to bring the Liberian diaspora together in

celebration of the Liberian people, culture and arts" and to act as "an agent for positive change in Liberia by improving the image of Liberia in our global community and by providing opportunities for empowerment of the Liberian people rather than through mere charity" [Liberian Renaissance Foundation, n.d.].

In a December 31, 2008 address posted on the *Liberian Journal* website, designed to appeal to the diaspora's feelings of goodwill and obligation towards family, friends, and countrymen during the Christmas and New Year's holiday season, Barnes announced his intention to form a Liberian Diaspora Advisory Board to liaise with the Liberian embassy in Washington, D.C. ["Ambassador Nathaniel Barnes to Form Liberian Diaspora Advisory Board (Special New Year's Message)" 2008]. The Embassy of Liberia officially launched the Liberian Diaspora Advisory Board in February 2009 ["Liberian Embassy In Washington Launches Liberian Diaspora Advisory Board" 2009; "Diaspora Advisory Board Established to Help 'Lift Liberia,'" 2009]. The original 14 members convened for two days (February 20-21, 2009) at Ambassador Barnes's residence, and Barnes continued to promote his vision for the Board in public appearances throughout 2009. Speaking to the Liberian community in Indiana in November 2009, for example, Barnes noted a "paradigm shift" in the diaspora's attitude toward Liberia from one of criticism to one of active involvement, and spoke of the diaspora's obligation—as Liberians—to effect positive change in Liberia. He asserted:

> …let me state emphatically that the Liberians here in Indiana are just as vital to the revitalization of Liberia as the people living in Liberia. We all must do our part, and the leadership and initiatives that you all have shown, is exactly what Liberia needs as we embark on the path to rebuild our battered nation…[] you, as Liberians living abroad, with more resources and educational opportunities, are an integral part of the formula for success…[] Trust me when I say that not only your community in America, but your country of Liberia desperately needs your help. No matter how much, or how little you can render, your expertise, advice and support is greatly needed. Remember that no matter how much support we receive from our international partners, only Liberians can deliver lasting and sustainable development for Liberia [Barnes 2009].

In 2010, however, President Sirleaf recalled Ambassador Barnes,[105] and without him at its helm, the Liberian Diaspora Advisory Board and its work fizzled out quickly, never resulting in any concrete action.[106]

Liberia's Diaspora Engagement Strategy

By the time Ellen Johnson Sirleaf took the stage in Staten Island a year later in November 2010, however, something significant had shifted in the Liberian government's approach to dealing with the diaspora, which the president's official appearance embodied. On the one hand, her appearance seemed to be just business as usual—a Liberian candidate stumping in Staten Island. As mentioned earlier, it was not the first time that Sirleaf had campaigned in Staten Island; every major Liberian candidate made appearances in Staten Island whenever elections were held in Liberia. Financial support from the diaspora was a critical component of Liberian politics, helping to fund political campaigns and fueling 14 years of civil war, from 1989 to 2003. But, on the other hand, there was something undeniably novel and electrifying about Sirleaf's visit.

What was different about that November night was that it was the Liberian state that was there to address the community, to summon diaspora Liberians back to Liberia, and Liberians had come from far and wide to attend the event. Some, including members of the group Campaign to Re-elect Ellen (CARE) who had traveled from Philadelphia to be there, wore t-shirts, held signs, and distributed pamphlets and pens supporting Sirleaf's re-election campaign

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[105] In 2010, President Sirleaf recalled him amid rumors that he had intentions to challenge Sirleaf in Liberia's 2011 presidential election. Barnes—a graduate of Rider College in New Jersey (BS Finance 1978) and Pace University in New York (MBA 1979) who fled Liberia in 1980 and then returned in 1996 to work in the Ministry of Finance, eventually becoming the Minister of Finance—had lost to Sirleaf in the 2005 presidential elections, in which he ran on the Liberia Destiny Party ticket. In December 2010, after being recalled, he stated that he would again run in 2011, but later, in July 2011, announced that the Liberia Destiny Party would not field a presidential candidate in the elections.

[106] Author's interview with Robtel Pailey, former Liberian special assistant to the minister of state for presidential affairs and a member of the Liberian Diaspora Advisory Board, November 8, 2011.

for the presidency in 2011. There were numerous green—the color of the president's Unity

Party—handkerchiefs and bandannas being waived in solidarity with Sirleaf.

But also in attendance were those who were critical of the president and her decision to

run for a second term. These critics were skeptical of her candidacy for two reasons: She had

previously made a formal declaration that she would not seek another term after winning the

presidency the first time in 2005; and the Liberian TRC had included Sirleaf on a list of 49

persons[107] it recommended in its 2009 final report should be banned from political office in

Liberia for 30 years.[108] Still, even those critical of Sirleaf had descended upon Curtis High

School that night—many in their finest traditional African and Western attire—to take pride in

their leader and their homeland. They had gathered to hear Sirleaf recount Liberia's successes

over the previous five years and to witness her receive awards and recognition, including a

proclamation by the New York City Council that Staten Island had been home to 10,000

Liberians for the past 30 years.

For the night was not only a celebration of the woman who had become a "rock star" in

the West and the "darling of the international community,"[109] credited with leading post-conflict

Liberia into a period of relative stability and democracy. It was also recognition by the Liberian

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[107] The "List of Persons Subject to/Recommended for Public Sanctions" includes 49 persons whom the Liberian TRC recommended be "barred from holding public office, elected or appointed, for a period of thirty (30) years as of July 1, 2009." In addition, the TRC recommended both prosecuting and barring from office another 182 persons, which included 124 persons responsible for "gross human rights violations" and 58 persons who committed "egregious violations" ["List of Persons Subject to/Recommended for Public Sanctions" 2009, 361].

[108] The TRC had added Sirleaf's name to the list due to her onetime support of Charles Taylor. In testimony to the Liberian TRC in 2009, Sirleaf admitted that she originally sympathized with Taylor during his invasion of Liberia in 1989. Many Liberian elites who fled Liberia when Samuel Doe took over in 1980 viewed Taylor as someone capable of restoring Americo-Liberian rule to the country. Sirleaf stated that she was a founding member of the Association for Constitutional Democracy in Liberia (ACDL), then operating in Washington DC, which raised 10,000 USD in support of Taylor and that she visited Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) rebel headquarters in Nimba County during the conflict. She has not, however, stated how much money she individually contributed and emphasizes that her support of Taylor ended sometime in mid-1990 when the atrocities he was committing became known.

[109] The author's Google search for the phrase "Ellen Liberia darling of international community" on November 10, 2011 pulled up thousands of media mentions of the phrase.

state and New York City government of the Liberian diaspora and an affirmation of its political, cultural, and economic importance in New York and Liberia. In her address to the diaspora that night, Sirleaf asked them to "come back home,"[110] saying Liberia needed "to infuse the system with people like yourselves." She stressed the importance of remittances to the country's economy and stated that her government's greatest success was that "today, you can be proud to be a Liberian."

Beyond the rhetoric, however, the president had concrete developments to discuss and incentives to offer. She highlighted the government's creation of the Senior Executive Service (SES), officially launched in December 2008 and funded by the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the governments of the United States, Greece, and Germany, as well as Humanity United.[111] The program was designed to recruit a cadre of public servants to transform the civil service, making it more accountable, professional, and effective. It had already, she reported, pulled in over 100 Liberians from abroad. Sirleaf also mentioned her administration's efforts to create a diaspora database to match individuals' skills to job openings in Liberia. She noted that dual citizenship was "just around the corner," and might be approved as early as January 2011[112] when the Liberian legislature returned from its holiday recess, though not in time for those in the diaspora to vote in the 2011 elections.

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[110] Quotes from the president's November 9, 2010 visit were taken by the author while attending the event.
[111] For more information on the SES, see: "More Efforts to Build Liberian Capacity: Senior Executive Service (SES) Launched" [2008]; ["Senior Executive Service" n.d.].
[112] At the time of writing, in December 2013, however, the Liberian legislature had not yet approved dual citizenship.

"Diaspora Homecoming"

Shortly following President Sirleaf's November 2010 visit to Staten Island, the Liberian

government hosted its first-ever Diaspora Homecoming in December 2010. The week-long

series of events was scheduled to take advantage of the large numbers of Liberians who had

returned to Liberia for the holidays and was modeled on the "best practices" of other African

countries' engagement with their diasporas through "large scale, Government facilitated, once-a-

year Homecomings to reorient the Diaspora, and provide them with a birds' eye view of

development initiatives, opportunities for employment and investment, and cultural

reconnection" ["President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Addresses Diaspora Liberians Visiting Home for

the Holidays" 2010]. A government press release stated,

> Having recognized that the Liberian Diaspora represents vast wealth potential through
> private sector development, middle-class entrenchment, and public sector capacity
> building, the Government of Liberia seeks to formalize its relationship with the Diaspora,
> recognizing that they are partners in development. To that end, the Government has
> begun collecting data, through a strategic questionnaire, in order to devise a Liberian
> Diaspora profile that will allow it to continue to create an enabling environment for
> Diaspora return, institutional engagement, and/or investments in education, health,
> agriculture, and infrastructure. It is also on the cusp of benefitting from a US$.5 million
> grant from the World Bank to formally incubate a Diaspora Unit within the Ministry of
> State for Presidential Affairs to handle matters related to Diaspora engagement and policy
> formulation ["President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Addresses Diaspora Liberians Visiting
> Home for the Holidays" 2010].

The homecoming, which was attended by over 100 Liberians from abroad, included the

following: a meet-and-greet cocktail with President Sirleaf in the foreign ministry; one day of

site visits to development projects; a day-long Liberian diaspora forum on the theme "How to

Effectively Navigate the Investment and Job Market" with a concurrent job/ideas fair of

employment and investment opportunities; and, a half-day consultation for Liberia Rising

2030—the government's growth and development strategy to make Liberia a middle-income

country by 2030.

The homecoming drew inspiration from the "best practices" of other African countries, such as Ghana, South Africa, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone, which had all organized their own "homecoming" events. In December 2006, Sierra Leone had organized its first diaspora homecoming. In the same year, dual citizenship (a recognized priority for the diaspora) was granted to Sierra Leoneans who had acquired citizenship in another country, which (like in Liberia) had not been allowed previously.[113] And in 2007, Sierra Leone created an Office for Diaspora Affairs, located within the Office of the Presidency. Other countries had also begun to formally engage their diasporas. Nigeria, under President Obasanjo, established a special presidential advisor for diaspora affairs, and Ghana, Mali and Senegal all had ministers whose jobs included diaspora affairs [Chikezie 2011]. According to Robtel Pailey, the Liberian special assistant to the minister of state for presidential affairs at the time, however, Sierra Leone was the only country to which Pailey traveled for a week-long study tour while in charge of formulating a policy on diaspora engagement for the Liberian government.[114]

Diaspora as partner in Liberia's Poverty Reduction Strategy and "Liberia Rising 2030"
Also in 2010, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf's government launched a formal initiative to engage the diaspora in the government's "Lift Liberia" Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS)—the three-year framework for national development begun in April 2008 and aimed at reducing poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals [Butty 2010]. Covering the final three years of Sirleaf's first term, the PRS served both as an aspirational roadmap for the administration's reconstruction efforts and as a rallying point for private sector investors, both in Liberia and the diaspora. Recognizing that the diaspora was a significant player in Liberian politics, the Sirleaf

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[113] Parliament amended the Sierra Leone Citizenship Act of 1973 in 2006 to allow dual citizenship.
[114] Author's interview with Robtel Pailey, November 8, 2011.

administration sought to engage and partner with diaspora members, thus neutralizing potential

opposition forces by giving them a financial and political stake in the administration's

development plan.

By January 2010, the Sirleaf government, looking beyond the PRS's end date of June

2011 to the October 2011 presidential elections and the possibility of a second presidential term,

had initiated "Liberia Rising 2030." In January 2010, at her annual address to the national

legislature, Sirleaf announced her intention to run for a second term in the October 2011

presidential elections. In the same speech, she called on the legislature to legalize dual

citizenship for Liberians in the diaspora [Sirleaf 2010].

In 2010, the administration also sent a team of government officials to rally support for

the PRS at town hall meetings with Liberians in five U.S. cities: Staten Island, New York;

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Providence, Rhode Island; Minneapolis, Minnesota; and, Atlanta,

Georgia. The ministers emphasized the role diaspora members could and should play in

reducing poverty and combating corruption through private sector wealth creation and economic

growth. As explained by Amara Konneh, then Liberia's minister of planning and economic

affairs, in 2010,

> The private sector is going to be the key in terms of employment because employment is
> the only way that we can create wealth for our people. And to employ, you need massive
> foreign direct investment; you also need to make doing business easier for Liberian-
> owned businesses because those informal businesses are the ones that are actually
> employing relatives and providing critical support to Liberians inside Liberia.
>
> The new frontier is going to be about how do we address the issue of human capital to
> reverse the brain drain situation in Liberia into a brain gain; how do we encourage
> Diaspora Liberians, who are the middle class of Liberia but not in the country, to return
> home to tap into the private sector potential; how do we work together to address the
> issue of corruption? [Amara Konneh, quoted in Butty 2010].

In October 2010, just a month before Sirleaf's visit to Staten Island, Liberia had submitted an

application to the World Bank for an Institutional Development Fund (IDF) grant in the amount

of 500,000 USD to create an Office of Diaspora Affairs.[115] The grant application, titled "Liberia Will Rise Again Diaspora Engagement Program," sought support to "enhance the capacity of the Government of Liberia's Diaspora Engagement program, through a Diaspora Unit within the Ministry of State" and to "assist in the formulation of a National Liberian Diaspora Policy devised to buttress the implementation of the third year of the Lift Liberia Poverty Reduction Strategy and the forthcoming Liberia Rising 2030 development agenda" [World Bank Africa Diaspora Program, 24]. In 2012, Liberia's proposal was funded in the amount of 443,000 USD, effective January 2013. The target completion date for the project is January 2016 [World Bank, "Liberia Will Rise Again Diaspora Engagement Program"].

Dual citizenship

Finally, at the forefront of the Sirleaf administration's strategy to engage formally the diaspora is a push to legalize dual citizenship in Liberia. Since its founding, Liberia has not allowed citizens to hold any other citizenship, and acquiring citizenship of a foreign country results in loss of Liberian citizenship. It is important to note, however, that while this is technically the case, in practice many Liberian elites, including those in public office, hold foreign citizenships.

In 2008, four Liberian senators—Cletus Segbe Wotorson of Grand Kru County, Sumo G. Kupee of Lofa County, Jewel Howard-Taylor of Bong County, and Abel Massalay, of Grand Cape Mount County—proposed the Act to Establish Dual Citizenship for Liberians by Birth to the second session of the fifty-second Liberian national legislature. Despite having the support of the Sirleaf administration, the act remained (as of December 2013) stuck in committee for years and the subject of intense political debate both in Liberia and among those in the diaspora.

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[115] Author's interview with Robtel Pailey, Liberian special assistant to the minister of state for presidential affairs, November 8, 2011.

Although the bill has widespread support among the diaspora, it is unpopular in Liberia.

Robtel Pailey sums up the two sides of the issue as follows:

> Those in favor of dual citizenship argue that Liberians by birth should not be punished for fleeing the civil war and seeking greener pastures abroad. Those opposed to dual citizenship argue that Liberians who naturalized in other countries are traitors who only want dual citizenship now because Liberia is stable and ripe for exploitation [Pailey 2013].

Beyond the ideological debate, however, there are a number of specific problems with the proposed legislation. Pailey points out that the proposed bill, "does not include important provisions about the statutory rights and responsibilities of would-be dual citizens, such as voting in national elections, holding high political office, paying taxes, or serving in the military" [Pailey 2013]. Other problems include the fact that there are no reliable data on the number of diaspora Liberians who might take advantage of dual citizenship, and the allegation that those pushing for passage of the legislation within Liberia's government are the very individuals who have obtained foreign citizenships themselves, creating an obvious conflict of interest. While Liberians in the diaspora argue that they contribute to the country's development through remittances, Pailey notes,

> The challenge herein is proving whether or not diaspora remittances have had significant national development outcomes beyond household consumption, such as the construction of essential infrastructure, the provision of basic social services, or the establishment of viable businesses. While some invoke remittances, others cry foul about the presumed high rate of capital flight. They claim that money leaving Liberia to support transnational lives - mortgages, school fees, student loans, and taxes paid to foreign governments - could very well be equivalent to remittances sent to Liberia, thereby canceling out remittances altogether [Pailey 2013].

In 2010, OPODL launched a petition drive to gather 10,000 signatures in support of dual citizenship. Abraham Kamara, OPODL's public relations officer, explained the reasoning behind the push for dual citizenship and addressed Liberians' fears that those returning from the diaspora would be competing for jobs in Liberia:

We support dual citizenship because we believe it is in the economic interest of Liberia. It's also in the national security interest of Liberia to have dual citizenship. We believe (for) a country emerging from 14 years of civil war, it is important to introduce dual citizenship because it will give Liberians, almost 500,000 who are in the United States and other parts of the world, and who have gained United States citizenship to go back home and contribute to the development of Liberia…[] We believe this issue of dual citizenship should not come down to jobs because Liberians in the United States who want to go back home are not going back home to take jobs. There are not enough jobs in Liberia to absorb everyone. The majority of Liberians want to go back home to establish businesses. So, our message to our fellow Liberians is that this issue is not about jobs; it's about the development of our country [Abraham Kamara, quoted in Butty 2011].

Despite the fact that many Liberians do hold dual citizenship, and this is often overlooked by the Liberian government, many Liberians in the United States who are eligible to naturalize have chosen not to, fearing it might prevent them from holding office in Liberia in the future.

When asked if he had naturalized, one religious leader in the United States replied,

No, not yet. I have some political ambitions, perhaps in the near future, and naturalization will inhibit that because the Liberian constitution does not allow dual citizenship, not as yet. The American Constitution does, but you would be doing yourself a disadvantage because today you can't hide that; everybody will know. So most political situation or individuals who are interested in politics are affected by that [MN8, 47-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 2004, LPR, Interview with author, October 15, 2010].

Another interviewee emphasized the benefits of naturalization, yet still had not naturalized:

It's important to be a U.S. citizen, especially when you have children who need to go to school, and you have children who are born here. So there are a lot of reasons people make a decision. I am a resident; I qualify to be a citizen if I want to apply. I have not done that. It's a choice that I have to make. If I want to do so, it would be my choice to do it or not to do it… []

Well, I have not made up my mind to. I don't know whether I'm going to seek office [in Liberia] one day. If I've made a decision and I'll seek office one day, then I have to think whether I can be a citizen of the United States [MN3, 45-year-old male living in Minnesota, entered the United States in 1998, asylee, Interview with author, July 26, 2010].

Those supporting dual citizenship have pointed to a double-standard among Liberia's leaders, alleging that many of those in Liberian government have already naturalized in the United States and Europe. In 2012, Frederick A.B. Sayweh, a Liberian lawyer residing in Denver, Colorado, argued that,

Absolutely, Liberian Citizens should no longer remain sitting around, barred from dual citizenship while many of their leaders, in the Executive, Legislative, Judiciary, and other sectors of Liberia hide and fly by-night to become United States and European Citizens. This Campaign is about naming and exposing those Government officials from top to bottom of the Sirleaf's Government, publishing their names and dates of denaturalization, members of their families already naturalized as United States Citizens, and forcefully encourage the National Legislature of Liberia to proceed, amend, and reform Liberia's Aliens and Nationality Law of 1956 [Jayweh 2012].

Even though an estimated third of Liberia's population fled to other states during the civil wars, Liberia does not face a population shortage. Many of those who fled to refugee camps in neighboring countries eventually returned, and although Liberia is a small country, with an estimated population in 2010 of just under 4 million[116]—ranking it 130th among the world's countries—it has the world's seventh highest population growth rate at 3.820 percent.[117] At that rate, Liberia's population will double in only 18 years.[118] The issue for the Liberian government moving forward, however, is not necessarily how to encourage Liberians in the diaspora to return to Liberia, but rather how to extend the Liberian state's influence and governance power outside its territorial borders, to include the diaspora. A formalization of dual citizenship would be a means to that end.

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[116] In 2010, the UN Department of Social and Economic Affairs' Population Division estimated Liberia's population to be 3.99 million [Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat 2010]. The most recent official census, conducted in 2008, recorded a population of 3,476,608 Liberians [Liberia Institute of Statistics and Geo-Information Services 2009], which made it the 130th most populous country in the world.

[117] Population growth rate is "Average exponential rate of growth of the population over a given period. It is calculated as ln(Pt/P0)/t where t is the length of the period. It is expressed as a percentage" [UN DESA 2013]. UN DESA's World Prospects: 2010 Revision ranked Liberia as having the world's fourth highest population growth rate at 4.543, but the 2012 Revision lowered Liberia's rank to seventh.

[118] A country's doubling rate is calculated by dividing 70 by the annual growth rate. The average world population growth rate in 2011 was 1.17 percent.

Concluding remarks

The Liberian state's recent steps to formalize its relationship with the diaspora—in particular, its attempts to formulate a diaspora engagement strategy—mark a turning point for the Liberian state. It remains to be seen to what extent recent events represent a true shift in the "art of government" or are merely an economic strategy aimed at harnessing the vast resources of the diaspora. At the very least, as demonstrated in this chapter, engagement efforts have been driven as much by individual actors' interests as by concerted state policy. Still, there is solid evidence to suggest that, collectively, the Liberian state's actions constitute part of a larger developing trend among emigrant states to extend their realm of governance outside their traditional territorial borders.

As the Liberian state reaches out to the diaspora, it is "creating diaspora," redefining what it means to be Liberian and what it means to be a member of the Liberian diaspora by creating opportunities for civic engagement. As individuals participate in civic activities aimed at the homeland, they are reformulating their own identity and assuming a "transnational citizen" identity. The following chapter summarizes the study's conclusions.

Conclusion

This study makes a number of important theoretical contributions to the literatures on transnationalism and immigration incorporation. The study set out to understand the relationship between civic participation in homeland peacebuilding and immigrants' political incorporation and integration in their local communities in the United States. The objective was to investigate:

- the extent to which participation in transnational activities in Liberia helps or hinders Liberians' integration in American society, and vice versa, and

- the impact that state policies—both Liberian and U.S. policies—have on individuals' transnational citizenship, defined as full legal membership and civic participation.

Chapter 1 reviewed the literature relevant to this study. It argued that while there is significant interest among scholars in the transnational activities of diasporas and the diaspora policies of sending/emigrant states, there has been less focus on host state policy's impact on transnationalism. It revealed the need for studies such as this one that demonstrate the mechanisms through which state policy influences migrants' transnational citizenship.

The study originated, however, in an interest in conflict-generated diasporas and the role that diasporas play in promoting peace or prolonging conflict in their homelands. Specifically, I was interested in the Liberian diaspora's participation in the Liberian Truth and Reconciliation Commission—the first TRC to take statements from the diaspora. What I found, however, was that participation among Liberians in the United States in the TRC's work was quite limited, with only 237 statements taken. The reasons for this were many, as mentioned in chapter 4.

Although the study's original focus was on activities directed at the homeland, in order to fully explain Liberians' transnational citizenship, the scope of the study was widened to look at

Liberians' integration and civic engagement locally in their communities in the United States and to investigate the relationship between transnational and local civic participation among Liberians in the United States. What I found, in support of Dufoix's [2008] approach to diaspora, is that the Liberian diaspora is neither homogenous nor is it static. Those Liberians who fled the Liberian wars in the 1990s and early 2000s arrived in the United States into communities of Liberians that had existed prior to the wars. Likewise, the wars and the mass influx of refugees redefined the existing communities, thus "creating" a new diaspora.

The question then remained, "What explains civic engagement with the diaspora?" Why had Liberians not participated in large numbers in the TRC process? And, what other types of activities, if any, were Liberians participating in? Borrowing from Bloemraad's [2006] study on the influence of state policies in structuring immigrants' political incorporation, I hypothesized that Liberians' local and transnational civic participation was influenced by structural determinants at three levels: the host state, the home state, and the municipal/local level. Chapter 2 examined the ways that U.S. reception and immigration policies—with respect to the designation of TPS/DED v. refugee/asylee status—affect local integration in the United States and transnational citizenship. Data from the Liberian case illustrate the important role that government policy plays in facilitating or discouraging civic participation, thus supporting Bloemraad's [2006] conclusions by demonstrating that full citizenship—defined as full legal membership and participation in a political system—occurs through a process of structured mobilization.

The immigration and reception policies to which Liberians were subject impacted Liberians' civic participation in two important ways. The policy of awarding refugee/asylee status to some Liberians while leaving others to languish with TPS/DED has exacerbated old

ethnic divisions among Liberians and created new divisions. TPS/DED has also prevented Liberians from obtaining higher education, which is a key mechanism through which Liberians seek to participate more fully as citizens in both the United States and in Liberia. Many Liberians explain their focus on obtaining higher education as a means of contributing to peacebuilding efforts back in Liberia and "making themselves useful." They view their time in the United States as an opportunity to improve themselves in order to better contribute to Liberia's recovery and development. It is the ability to participate in development efforts in Liberia that defines Liberians' diasporic citizenship, and education that allows them to do so. Higher education also provides access for those Liberians who would historically have been denied positions of power in Liberia.

While TPS/DED is granted based on humanitarian grounds and offers legal protection similar to refugee or asylee status, by its nature it is meant to be temporary and therefore does not provide access to services that promote integration. The emphasis on security and legal protection, rather than political integration and citizenship, reflects a larger trend in U.S. immigration and reception policy away from the promotion of political belonging among immigrants.

The study also makes a theoretical contribution by demonstrating the ways that local context or place structures Liberians' civic participation. Chapter 3 identified the mechanisms through which place, particularly the neighborhoods where Liberians reside, affects individuals' engagement locally in the United States and in transnational activities. In so doing, it supports the findings of studies such as Daniel Posner's [2004] that argue that cultural cleavages do not exist in a vacuum but rather become important within specific political contexts and climates. In both New York and Minnesota, areas with high concentrations of Liberians (such as the North

Shore of Staten Island and Brooklyn Park) provide Liberians with networks of social support. In support of Logan et al. [2002], however, the study highlights the differences between immigrant enclaves (Staten Island) and ethnic communities (Brooklyn Park) in influencing Liberians' civic participation. On Staten Island, racial segregation and lack of access to transportation have isolated Liberians, putting them at risk of downward mobility and segmented assimilation. By contrast, Liberians in Brooklyn Park benefit from networks of support that exist due to the large number of Liberians living in the area, yet they also have forged strong ties with local officials who have made concerted efforts to engage Liberians.

Contrary to the theory [Waters 1999] that race determines black immigrants' political mobilization and assimilation, the study emphasizes Liberians' agency in selecting where they reside and the importance of place or local context in influencing Liberians' civic participation. Rather than treating Liberians as a homogenous group, the study illuminates the many divisions and layers of difference that exist among Liberian immigrants in the United States. Although large numbers of Liberian refugees were resettled to Minnesota, more were actually resettled to New York. Minnesota hosts the largest Liberian community in the United States as a result of secondary migration. Liberians chose to move to the area on the recommendations of friends and family who praised the availability of jobs and transportation, the high-performing schools, and Minnesotans' welcoming attitude toward immigrants. Although the study focused on areas with high concentrations of Liberians, thus raising the problem of selection bias, the study demonstrates the ways in which the communities in which Liberians have settled in New York and Minnesota have become self-reinforcing.

Chapter 3 also highlighted gender differences in Liberians' civic participation. The study's findings with regard to differences in participation rates according to gender—with

women participating at higher rates in their local communities and men at higher rates in transnational activities, particularly overtly political activities, in response to racism and a perceived loss of status in the United States—also support findings in other studies, such as Jones-Correa's [1998] research on Latino immigrants' political mobilization in New York City.

Chapter 4 documented the Liberian state's efforts to "create diaspora," redefining what it means to be Liberian and what it means to be a member of the Liberian diaspora, by creating opportunities for civic engagement with the homeland. As individuals participate in civic activities aimed at the homeland, they are becoming transnational citizens. The Liberian state's efforts to reach out to the diaspora, however, while unifying Liberians in some ways have underscored divisions among Liberians in the United States as well. Although the TRC process failed to engage significant numbers of Liberians in the United States for a variety of reasons, one was the perception among Liberians (particularly Americo-Liberians) that the process was driven by indigenous Liberians (particularly ethnic Krahns who reside in large numbers in Minnesota). While the Sirleaf administration seeks to harness the vast resources of the diaspora and promises to champion dual citizenship for Liberians in the United States, Liberia's government remains divided on the subject of dual citizenship with many in Liberia viewing Liberians in the United States as opportunists or (in some cases) traitors who fled Liberia during the wars and are now seeking to return to exploit Liberia for personal gain.

In addition to the theoretical contributions, this study makes a substantive contribution to the literature on Liberian—and, more broadly, African—immigrants in the United States by compiling and aggregating existing data and creating new data. As such, it adds to the historical record on the Liberian and African diasporas.

Future research agenda

This study highlights the important influence that state policy has on immigrants' civic participation in their local communities and in transnational activities. Therefore, one possible avenue for future research would be to expand the study's scope to compare U.S. policy with other host states' policies. A comparison with Liberians' experiences in Canada would make most sense given the fact that this study's theoretical framework draws from Irene Bloemraad's [2006] comparative study of U.S. and Canadian immigration and reception policies, which touts the benefits of Canada's multiculturalism policy in incorporating immigrants.

Another interesting possibility for future research would be to compare the study's findings with the experiences of other immigrant groups, especially conflict-generated diasporas from Africa such as Sierra Leoneans or Somalis, living in the same regions—New York City and the Twin Cities. Such a study would offer insights into home states' influence and impact on individuals' civic participation. Researching these immigrants' experiences on Staten Island and in Brooklyn Park, and expanding the research area to other neighborhoods in New York City and the Twin Cities, would also allow me to investigate the effect of neighborhood on African immigrants' identity and civic participation. Similar to Liberians' concentration in the Park Hill area of Staten Island, Somalis live in dense concentration in the Cedar-Riverside area of South Minneapolis—an area that could be labeled an immigrant enclave. Comparing civic participation among Somalis in Cedar-Riverside and other neighborhoods that host large Somali populations with Liberians' civic participation on Staten Island and in Brooklyn Park would contribute to research on the impact of immigrant enclaves versus ethnic communities on immigrants' civic participation and integration.

As mentioned, the study's findings with regard to gender support findings in other studies by authors such as Jones-Correa [1998]. Therefore, it would be interesting to expand the research to focus on other immigrant groups (such as Somalis or Hmong) with high population concentrations in the regions of study, in order to look more closely at the differences in women's and men's civic participation. By expanding the study to include more immigrant groups, I could examine whether or not gender differences—with women more invested in their local communities and men more interested in homeland politics and return to the home state—observed in this study of Liberians hold true for other immigrant groups.

One final avenue for possible future research would be to collect data from the second generation [Kasinitz et al., 2008] of Liberians, to compare younger Liberians' experiences with those of the first generation. Only one person interviewed for this study was a second generation Liberian. Two others could be considered 1.5 generation Liberians, but the vast majority of the individuals interviewed were first-generation immigrants. Expanding the study to include the second generation would provide insights into the impact of place on Liberians' engagement with the diaspora and transnational citizenship. Is transnational political activity among Liberians related to the Liberian civil wars and thus unlikely to be taken up by subsequent generations or will efforts by the Liberian state to engage the diaspora resonate with the second generation as well? Will the second generation also become transnational citizens?

Concluding thoughts

In researching the effect of state policies on diaspora engagement, I found that civic participation in homeland politics is closely related to Liberians' civic participation in their local communities in the United States. The relationship between civic engagement in the United States and in

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transnational activities, therefore, is not an adversarial one. In fact, those Liberians who participate most actively in their local communities in the United States are also the ones who engage most frequently in transnational activities. Engagement with the diaspora correlates positively with integration in the United States and vice versa. The ability of Liberians to participate fully in their local and transnational communities, however, is affected by U.S. immigration and reception policies that have promoted integration for refugees and asylees but, at the same time, trapped many Liberians with TPS/DED in a legal limbo.

Likewise, in most cases, participation in Liberian organizations in the United States encourages individuals to engage with their local communities and promotes Liberians' integration in the United States. This depends, however, on the extent to which ethnic organizations build partnerships and coalitions with groups locally in the United States, rather than focusing exclusively on politics in Liberia. For some Liberians, particularly males, participation in transnational—typically, overtly political—activities is a response to their low level of integration in the United States and an attempt to avoid racism and downward assimilation into American society.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates: the effect that host state (in this case, U.S.) immigration and reception policy has on Liberians' integration in the United States, and their civic engagement in the United States and with respect to Liberia; the impact of local context on Liberians' civic participation in New York and Minnesota; and the role of the home state (in this case, Liberia) in creating diaspora and encouraging Liberians' participation in transnational activities. It highlights the social nature of political involvement and confirms that citizenship in a political system is realized through a process of structured mobilization [Bloemraad 2006].

Appendix I – Coding Datasheet

Using data from interviews with 40 Liberians, as well as online Liberian forums and news sites, I coded each individuals' activities, assigning them to one of 11 types of local (U.S.) civic participation or one of 11 types of transnational (aimed at Liberia) civic participation. One-word labels (in bold, below) were used for each of the 22 categories, and examples of each category follow the labels. I also tracked individuals' activities regarding remittances and building private houses in Liberia (number "3," below) but did not include these data in the study as they were not evidence of civic participation.

1. **Local** (U.S.) participation
   a. **Liberian** organizations
      i. **Community*** (SILCA, OLM, LCM, ULAA)
   b. **Issue**-based organizations (charitable NGOs)
      i. **Women** (Women's Roundtable, African Women Connect, Liberian Women's Initiative (LiWIM))
      ii. **Children**
         1. schools (parental involvement, student retention)
         2. sports (soccer) (Roza Promotions, A-Mon-Nue, Century Dance Complex)
      iii. **African** (African Assistance Program, African Refuge, African Women Connect)
      iv. **Race** (Black Heritage Family Day Parade)
      v. **Immigrant**
         1. immigration assistance (adjustment of status), bridging with other immigrant groups (African and American Friendship Association for Cooperation and Development (AAFACD))
         2. TPS/DED advocacy (Coalition of Liberians on DED (COLD))
   c. Local government **politics**
      i. **Community board** / liaison (Multicultural Advisory Board, Staten Island Immigrants Council)
      ii. Elected official / representative **office**
      iii. U.S. political **party** / elections (fundraising, campaigning)
   d. **Religious**
      i. Religious **leader**
      ii. **Other** activities

*The category "Liberian – community" is listed under both local and transnational participation, because these organizations profess to be local social service providers, but in fact their service (food pantry, adult literacy) programs are limited. To the extent that individuals reported being involved in these programs, their activity was coded as "local participation." To the extent that their involvement in the organizations was to gain political standing in the Liberian community, their activity was coded as "transnational participation."

2. **Transnational** (aimed at Liberia) participation – civic
   a. **Liberian**
      i. **Community*** (SILCA, OLM, LCM, ULAA)
      ii. **Tribal**- county organizations (Grand Gedeh, Sinoe, Lofa), ethnic organizations (LIMANY)
   b. **Issue**-based orgs (charitable NGOs)
      i. **Development** projects in Liberia (bridges, roads, AAFACD)
      ii. **Alumni** associations (Booker Washington Institute National Alumni Association of North America (BWINAANA))
      iii. **Schools** in Liberia (I-HELP), scholarships, supplies
      iv. **Human rights,** women's and children's rights
   c. Government **politics**
      i. **Expert** knowledge transfer, government position
      ii. **TRC**
         1. Gave statement
         2. Helped coordinate diaspora participation
      iii. Political **party** / elections (fundraising, campaigning, return to Liberia to vote)
   d. **Media** (online)
      i. **Forums** (OnLiberianMedium, TheLiberianCommunityUSA)
      ii. **Newspaper** (The Liberian Journal, People to People)

3. Liberia participation – private
   a. Remittances (support family)
   b. Build house or business for return

Local civic participation	Transnational civic participation
Liberian – community*	Liberian – community*
Issue – women	Liberian – tribal
Issue – children	Issue – development
Issue – African	Issue – alumni
Issue – race	Issue – schools
Issue – immigrant	Issue – human rights
Politics – community board	Politics – expert
Politics – office	Politics – TRC
Politics – party	Politics – party
Religious – leader	Media – forums
Religious – other	Media – newspaper

After assigning each activity to a category, I weighted the activity from 1 to 3, with 1 representing occasional (monthly) participation, 2 regular (weekly) participation, and 3 frequent (daily) participation. Below is an example of an individual's weighted activities:

Local civic participation		Transnational civic participation	
Liberian – community*	2	Liberian – community*	3
Issue – women		Liberian – tribal	3
Issue – children	3	Issue – development	2
Issue – African	3	Issue – alumni	1
Issue – race		Issue – schools	
Issue – immigrant		Issue – human rights	
Politics – community board		Politics – expert	
Politics – office		Politics – TRC	1
Politics – party		Politics – party	1
Religious – leader		Media – forums	2
Religious – other	2	Media – newspaper	
TOTAL	**10**		**13**

Finally, I plotted each person's participation on a graph, with local participation along the *x*-axis and transnational participation along the *y*-axis. For example, the above person's participation would be graphed as the point (10, 13). Below is the graph of all 40 persons interviewed:

Local v. Transnational Civic Activity Among Liberians in the United States
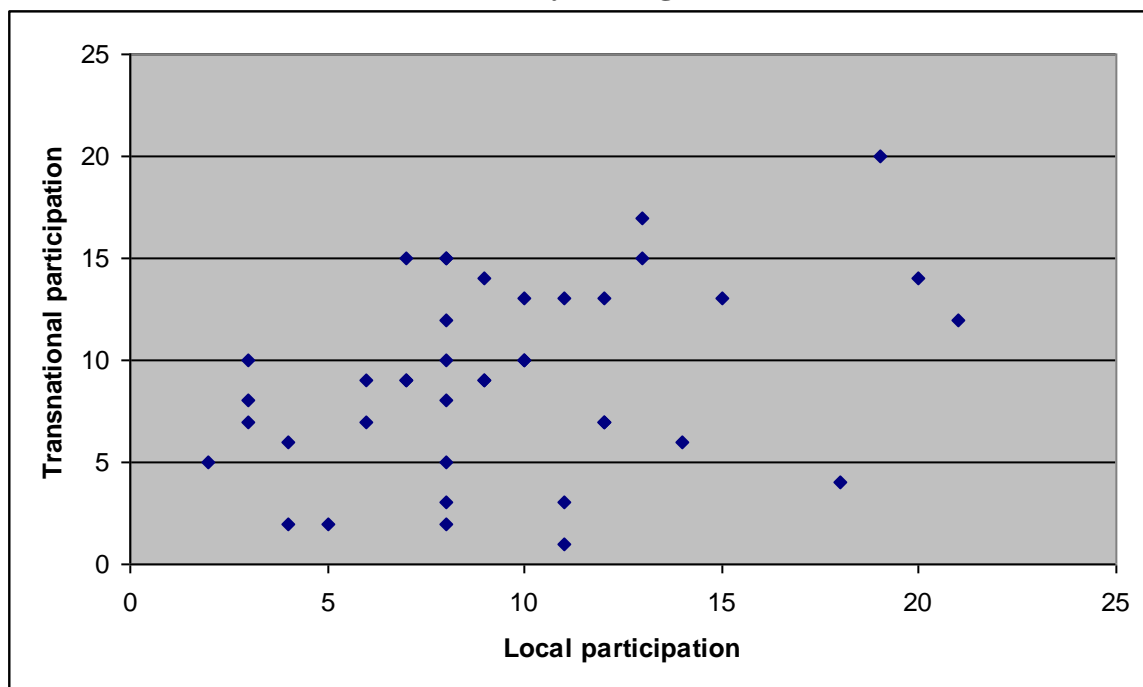
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